

Springer International Handbooks of Education

Paul Smeyers

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Morwenna Griffiths *Editors*

International Handbook of Interpretation in Educational Research

 Springer

Springer International Handbooks of Education

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International Handbook of Interpretation in Educational Research

 Springer

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Preface: How the Handbook Came into Being

It all started on December 1, 2009, with an e-mail from Yoka Janssen (Springer), who invited me (Paul Smeyers) to edit an international handbook on methods in philosophy of education. Though appealing, I immediately had reservations concerning the particular topic. Following Wittgenstein and many other philosophers, I was not sure whether there was such a thing as a method in that area. But even the plural, “methods,” which Wittgenstein does use, has in my opinion the wrong connotations. My skepticism was not refuted by the publication in the same year of a special issue (*Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 2009, ed. by Claudia Ruitenberg) with the provocative title “What do philosophers of education do? (And how do they do it?).” I held and still hold the belief that it is difficult to speak of a method in the sense that we normally attach to that word when talking about educational research. But there was something we could do in this area I thought. Some 10 years earlier, I co-edited a collection with Bas Levering (*Opvoeding en onderwijs leren zien* [Teaching to see education and child rearing]) addressing various qualitative methods used in educational research. Typically in that book authors would not only describe their theoretical stance and the method they used for their investigation (e.g., a case of action research) but also, and to a large extent, deal with an example of their particular research, showing what they actually did. For many years, I made use of this collection in my own teaching in the context of a course on qualitative research methods in the M.A. educational sciences degree at KU Leuven. This proved to fulfill its intended purpose of providing: an initiation into research which exemplifies what it is exactly that a researcher bears in mind, the possible pitfalls, the problems, the tensions, and much more that needs to be taken into account when engaging in trying to make sense of a particular educational context. I took this idea with me when I discussed Springer’s question with Yoka Janssen, and Springer was excited about it, not in the least because I told them that that particular collection was highly successful, as was shown by the thousands of copies that Boom sold (not only in Belgium but in The Netherlands as well) since it was published in 1998.

It was overwhelmingly clear that it would be impossible for me to take on the editorship just on my own. It so happened that in January 2010 David Bridges and

I were together in Addis Ababa preparing for the forthcoming biennial conference of the International Network of Philosophers of Education, and so I talked to him about the project. Going through what we thought could be part of an international handbook, it furthermore became clear that it would not be a bad idea to look for a team of general editors, say four, to combine our expertise and to be able to cope with such a demanding task. I approached Morwenna Griffiths who gladly accepted, mentioning among other things that she would like to work with us, because of the kinds of discussion that she thought we would surely have. In the discussion I subsequently had with Springer in February 2010, various ideas were exchanged; Nick Burbules, who was delighted to be part of this, was added as a general editor and we were strongly encouraged by Springer to put a formal proposal together for the handbook. Thus the four of us met in June 2010 and decided that the focus of the handbook would be on interpretation in educational research methods and that extensive use would be made in all chapters of examples of educational research, and reflections on the role of interpretation in that research, whatever the methods. We were also very much occupied with realizing a truly international collection. Moreover, we would explicitly try to balance the gender of the authors. The lengthy proposal was sent out to six reviewers by Springer, and slightly amended based on the comments that were received. It reached its final shape in September of that year. Now we could really start.

As we were fully aware of the high level of specific methodological expertise that was required, we decided to look for contributing or section editors who could help us in identifying authors for the various approaches of educational research. Though our initial plan was to finalise everything within 3 years or so, we experienced several delays. It was not easy to find experts in a particular genre or approach who could also deal with the eight substantive fields of educational research we had in mind (e.g., learning, or teaching and teacher education; see the introduction for a detailed discussion of genre and field). The plan was indeed to put a collection (an 8 by 8 matrix) together that could be read either with a focus on a particular genre or methodological approach (such as narrative or history) or by reference to a particular substantive field (such as curriculum and hidden curriculum or educational organizations and leadership). Moreover, for some genres the editors encountered quite frustrating challenges, and thus it took us 5 years to finalise everything. After hundreds and hundreds of e-mail exchanges, we finally got there. The resulting handbook, with the collaboration of more than 100 authors from 27 countries worldwide, is around 760,000 words.

We are grateful to our section editors for their substantial work in guiding the authors to what the focus of this collection is. Without their suggestions and comments it would not have been possible to produce an international collection that in each genre presents excellent work reflecting the various kinds of educational research. And we are indebted to the authors who took on the task not only to present their work, but to discuss extensively at the beginning and at the end of their chapters; where and how interpretation plays an important role, to show the reader how they proceeded when setting up the research, collecting their data, interpreting these, justifying their conclusions, and offering a meta-level reflection. Due to

delays that we were confronted with at various stages, some of the authors had to wait a long time before they could see the publication of their work. Some genres were already finished after 2 years; others things were more difficult and more time was required. We learned to be patient, and appreciated that it was frustrating not only for us, but more importantly for our section editors and many of the authors. However at last we were able to produce something like what we had wanted to produce. For us, the general editors, it was not only an intellectually very stimulating experience, but moreover and at a more personal level a very engaging, demanding, and rewarding endeavor. Though we worked efficiently, we needed each other's encouragement and we always looked forward to the many meetings we organized and the face-to-face discussions which we enjoyed both academically as well as socially. Without each other's support it would never have been possible to bring this to a good end.

Finally, we thank Yoka Janssen, Annemarie Keur, and all the other staff from Springer. It was a pleasure to work with them. And we thank the universities of Ghent and Leuven, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) for their support in this task that was much more demanding than we ever expected. We are confident that this book will assist junior researchers (at master's and Ph.D. level) and our colleagues who are teaching methodology courses to highlight the utmost importance of interpretation at all levels and stages of educational research. We are also confident that it will stimulate and challenge more experienced researchers, as it has challenged and stimulated the four of us, to think again about the processes and purposes of educational research more generally.

Ghent, Belgium
May 2014

Paul Smeyers
and on behalf of
David Bridges
Morwenna Griffiths
Nicholas C. Burbules

General Introduction

**Morwenna Griffiths, David Bridges, Nicholas C. Burbules,
and Paul Smeyers**

This book helps researchers to understand better the role of interpretation in educational research—and we hope to understand better the variety of ways that interpretation enters into the research process. It focuses on the specifics of interpretation in the actual doing of educational research, but it is not a how-to book.¹ *The International Handbook*

¹ The title of this collection could give occasion to some confusion for the reader. According to *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Pearsall 1998) a “handbook” is “a book giving information such as facts on a particular subject or instructions for operating a machine.” It is derived from the Old English *handboc* translated from the Latin *manualis*. There is another term in English that is derived from this Latin word, i.e., “manual,” which refers to “a book of instructions, especially for operating a machine or learning a subject” (ibid.). Similar references are found in Dutch, where “handboek” refers to a publication which gives the state of the art in a discipline or sub-discipline, or in the German “*Handbuch*” which refers to an organized compilation of fragments of human knowledge which can be used as a reference book.

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of Interpretation in Educational Research does not offer specific instruction about how to proceed when engaging in educational research, but rather offers the possibility of what Lave and Wenger called “legitimate peripheral participation” in witnessing a variety of forms of research covering a broad range of issues and settings. Educational research pursues different kinds of theoretical interests and uses a diversity of modes of explanation. The Handbook reflects this variety through its international array of authors, settings, questions, and methods, emphasizing that the field of education includes some very diverse objects of inquiry and that researchers in different parts of the world give priority to different aspects of educational policy and practice as well as to different ways of investigating them. It is in the focus on *interpretation* that we try to bring these different approaches into conversation with each other.

Focusing on interpretation necessarily draws one into philosophy. Yet what we offer is not a philosophical discussion of interpretation as such, though there is some of that, both in the introductory chapters in the part we labeled “The Theoretical Landscape” as well as in some of the chapters further on in the book. No single answer to the question of the role interpretation plays in educational research is offered here. Instead the approach of the collection should be seen more in a Wittgensteinian spirit of, “assembling reminders for a particular purpose” (Wittgenstein 1953, pp. I, # 127). Or as he himself writes about the *Philosophical Investigations*,

The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which we made in the course of these long and involved journeyings. (ibid., p. vii)

He says that his thoughts were soon crippled

... if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination – And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction. (ibid., p. vii)

What we wanted the authors to focus on is how interpretation is conceived in the actual doing of it, in practice, when they are doing their work: we invited them to *show* what interpretation means in the very act of doing research. For us, then, what is offered are “reminders” that range “over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.” This distinct mode of argument and presentation is one suited, we believe, to a more open-ended examination of a theme, and not a prescription of the “right” or “best” way of doing things. It is through observing and comparing the different ways that the authors deal with interpretation that an understanding of its nature and role in the research process emerges—but then it is also a consequence that different readers will discover this in different ways.

We want to say something in this introduction about how the Handbook can be used, but this requires first detailing how it has been set up, clarifying the various steps that were taken in order to achieve what we have in mind. This Handbook focuses on the often-neglected dimension of interpretation in educational research. It argues that all educational research is in some sense “interpretive,” and that understanding this issue belies some usual dualisms of thought and practice, such as the sharp dichotomy between “qualitative” and “quantitative” research. On our

view, interpretation extends from the very framing of the research task, through the sources which constitute the data, the process of their recording, representation, and analysis, to the way in which the research is finally or provisionally presented to others. The thesis of the Handbook is that interpretation cuts across all forms of research, philosophically, organizationally, and methodologically. Thus, for example, not only qualitative researchers, or philosophers, historians, and cultural theorists, but also quantitative researchers rely on interpretation and cannot avoid it.

By covering a comprehensive range of research approaches and methodologies, the Handbook gives educational researchers, including novices and early career researchers, a set of signposts to the complex landscape of educational research, indicating something of what particular genres of approach can offer for the investigation of a number of enduring issues, or “fields” as we call them (see below). A glance at the contents list will show something of this range, and also of the many settings in which the research took place, from Swedish school classrooms to the street children of Indonesia, from artisan stonemasons in Italy to videogame design in North America, from teacher education in the UK to citizenship testing in Colombia. Each chapter provides a full description and explanation of why specific research choices were made in particular circumstances, together with reflections on the benefits or shortcomings of these choices—combined in each case with consideration of the role of interpretation in the research process.

The Handbook selects examples of a large number of methods traditionally classified as “qualitative,” “interpretive” or “quantitative,” across the broad area of the study of education. Along one dimension of organization, we commissioned research studies across eight “fields”:

- Learning
- Teaching and teacher education
- Curriculum and hidden curriculum
- Evaluation and assessment
- Educational organizations and leadership
- Equity, justice, and diversity
- Policy
- Non-formal education and informal education

Along a second dimension of organization, we divided the book into eight sections marked as much by the variety of approaches within them as by the differences between the sections. We describe these clusters of methods as *genres* or *approaches*:

- Narrative approaches
- Analysis of language and significations
- Ethnography *of* education: sociological and anthropological approaches
- Ethnography *in* educational research: applying ethnographic methods in educational inquiry
- Historical approaches

- Philosophical approaches
- Quantitative approaches
- Cultural-transgressive approaches

Within each genre, we tried to provide at least one example addressing each of the fields.

It will thus be possible to use the Handbook to explore either a field of educational inquiry and an overview of genres used in that field, or to use particular genres to examine different fields of enquiry within the theory and practice of education. The following table (genre number followed by chapter number in that genre) gives a starting point for doing that.

Genre	Learning	Teaching teacher education	Curriculum hidden curriculum	Evaluation assessment	Organization leadership	Equity justice diversity	Policy	Non-formal informal
Narrative	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.8	1.7	1.2
Language significations	2.6	2.8	2.2	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.1	2.5
Ethnography of education	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.2
Ethnography in educational research	4.2	4.7	4.1	4.8	4.6	4.3	4.5	4.4
Historical	5.3	5.2	5.5	5.4	5.1	5.6	5.7	5.8
Philosophical	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.8
Quantitative	7.1	7.7	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.8
Cultural-transgressive	8.1	8.7	8.8	8.4	8.5	8.2	8.6	8.9
	8.3							

By including a research report in each chapter, the Handbook offers not just an outline of particular methods but a concrete example of the way these have been applied in research practice. Throughout, authors are also self-conscious about the role of interpretation in the selection and execution of particular genres of research, and thus on the “why” questions underlying the “how” questions of actually doing the research.

There are many good handbooks on methods in educational research within either a quantitative or qualitative stance, and there are many good books dealing with meta-theoretical issues. However, hardly any of them focus particularly on interpretation and its centrality in the process of research and research writing. We think it is remarkable how little attention the process of interpretation itself receives either in the index or text of most of these books, even books that claim to be dealing with “qualitative and interpretive” research. In usual practice, we have found, “interpretive” just becomes a synonym for “qualitative,” or with specific qualitative methods without being explained or defined very clearly. Finally, although a significant number of educational research studies include both quantitative and qualitative methods, few books include both, except to contrast them. We want to emphasize their continuities as well as their differences, which also gives this book a distinctive niche.

Many handbooks also give a lot of space to history, i.e., how methods have been used in the past. Others focus predominantly on philosophical meta-theories, especially ontology and epistemology. Typically they do not include examples of actual research which has been carried out in diverse educational contexts. If one wants to know more about that, one is obliged to turn to books which address the use of a method in a particular educational area—but this goes with the disadvantage that the researcher has to go through several books in order to learn enough to make an informed decision about what is appropriate for her particular research. It goes without saying that this also confronts university lecturers who teach Methodology courses with the difficult task of selecting published material that is apt for their purposes.

Finally, there is another dimension that is largely lacking in the material that is available and which is important for the study of education, i.e., the international. Education is typically one of those areas that is given shape within particular societal contexts. An “international handbook” on educational research, therefore, should give examples from across the globe, thus exemplifying the different “opportunities and constraints” that educational research has to confront in different societies. And this became a third organizational strand, trying to the greatest extent possible to represent research from a variety of national and cultural settings. Having done so, it then became a principled choice to reflect this diversity of site and context wherever possible in the titles of the chapters. What is offered here is the work of more than 100 scholars from all continents. Around 60 % of them are female, around 30 % are from the UK, again around 30 % are from the rest of Europe, slightly over 20 % are from the USA or Canada, slightly less than 20 % are from other parts of the world. In the Afterword, we discuss some of the issues raised by this endeavor to represent the “international” in this Handbook.

The themes that are addressed by the authors and the way they have set up their research exemplifies the enormous variety of what is offered nowadays in the study of the education. Thus—and the following should only be seen as a list of examples organized in the order of the various genres—Michael Watts deals with Life History Research in Higher Education; Kate Pahl with literacy practices through ethnography; Francesca Gobbo offers a methodological ethnological autobiography; whereas György Mészáros presents an autoethnography, a critical interpretation of the subject (the “Gay Eye” of a researcher and a student in a Hungarian school); the history of secondary education is interpreted by Gary McCulloch; philosophical approaches to justice, democracy, and education are dealt with by Janet Orchard; Elias Hemelsoet addresses the quantification of irregular migrants but also deals with “knowing how to go on” and what this implies for the kind of research one engages in; whereas Olena Fimyar foregrounds the place for autoethnography in the study of education policy in Kazakhstan. Within each of the eight genres, these essays provide clear examples of the very different ways that interpretation enters the research process.

In order to identify and recruit this large and diverse range of authors, the four editors invited colleagues, authorities in their respective areas, to take the lead as section editors in identifying authors who could contribute to the particular approaches

they represented. Their international perspectives and networks of colleagues were indispensable to giving this collection the diversity and scope that it achieved. Of course, to avoid overlapping, and to ensure that as much ground as possible was covered, the general editors were also involved in identifying contributors.²

As described, we began this project with a fairly discrete 8×8 matrix in mind. Not surprisingly, as the contributions came in, these strict boundaries and sharp category distinctions proved not sustainable. Research in all these genres or approaches is characterized by what might be termed crossover research, creating a rich array of hybrids. Individual chapters often address more than one educational field, and their positioning in a discrete genre, though not entirely arbitrary, was nevertheless not as straightforward as we expected. In some respects, their positioning was a challenge to our model of classification as much as a confirmation of it. This was overwhelmingly clear for genres 3 and 4 (ethnography), but also surfaced in other genres.

The contributing or section editors asked authors to provide a chapter that *shows* that a problem in an educational area has successfully been addressed through research—in other words that this research made a difference. This could mean among other things that solutions are presented, that future similar problems can be anticipated, that a present context or situation has been viewed critically and not as “natural” or “inevitable,” or that future research, perhaps from a different conceptual schema, is necessary to yield a fuller understanding of the issue. All of the research presented here is, we believe, of exemplary quality in terms of the use of a particular method (or methods)—but sometimes too in showing the limits of certain methods, or the need to experiment with less conventional approaches. The chapters are written in a way that they could each be read on their own, but as we have tried to show, the 65 chapters can just as well be clustered in ways that suit a reader interested in a particular setting or context (e.g., research about Roma/travelers/migrants, or about teaching and learning using IT and e-learning), or by regional authorship, or by specific method (e.g., the use of interviews, visual data, or autoethnography).

The Handbook starts off with four introductory chapters intended to give an overview of the theoretical landscape. In “Varieties of interpretation in educational research: How we frame the project” the four editors offer their own framework for thinking about interpretation in educational research. This essay lays out the overall rationale of the Handbook project and addresses the reasons why the supposed dualism between quantitative and qualitative research has to be reframed as related dimensions of inquiry as opposed to a dichotomy. It offers a careful examination of the varied meanings and functions of “interpretation” in inquiry. It develops the idea that it is important to *show* how research in the educational field is conducted, and not just to identify meta-reasons for choosing particular methods.

² This worked well for most of the genres. In one case (quantitative), for various reasons a different route had to be followed.

This framing chapter fulfilled another crucial role: an earlier version was sent to all contributors to use as the overall point of reference for developing their own contributions. While individual accounts certainly differ or even disagree with certain aspects of the framing argument, it helped to provide greater coherence to the Handbook as a whole. This framing chapter is followed by three in-depth discussions of interpretation focusing on epistemological issues (Kerdeman), ethical issues (LeCompte), and the purposes of educational research as a change agent (Peters).

In the main part of the Handbook, 65 chapters³ are offered organized within the mentioned eight genres and addressing eight educational fields. Each chapter of the book provides a reflective account of a particular research project carried out by the author. Though, as outlined above, this is not a “How to . . .” guide, it does include, however, sufficient description of how the researcher actually carried out his or her work for new researchers to see what was involved in the actual doing of it. Each chapter describes the topic that is addressed and makes the research transparent (i.e., what is going on in a particular research approach, and why.) Each chapter consists of a description of the problem that is addressed, the focus of the research, identifies sources, data (raw material), and answers questions such as: “What did you do as investigator and author?” “How did you get the data?” “What processes did you follow (and why did you select these)?” “What theoretical frameworks did you use?” “How did you interpret your results?” and “How and why did you decide to present your results in the way you did?” Each chapter makes explicit the reasons for choosing an approach (and not another), whether for theoretical, political, philosophical, or autobiographical considerations, and/or because of contextual constraints. Each chapter pays attention to how the researcher justifies an approach, why he or she thinks this was the best approach; and what the limitations, constraints, strengths and weaknesses, and impact of that approach might be. Chapters also identify other important publications related to the “method” or the use of it in the educational field.

At the forefront of this reflective account is the role of interpretation and what it meant in the context of each kind of study that was done, and at various stages of the research process. Each chapter thus addresses how one sets about teasing out an interpretation of the data, thus making transparent what an educational researcher actually does when he or she successfully addresses a problem.

The table cross-linking educational fields and research genres clarifies how particular educational issues can be dealt with using different methods, as well as how particular methods can be applied across different fields of educational research. All examples highlight *educational* research and not just any area where a particular method is applied. Together they foreground the application of educational research across a range of different international settings. Moreover, they contain a range of educational contexts drawn from different age-levels and from compulsory, post-compulsory, and informal education contexts. Thus the

³ True to the spirit of its title, the cultural-transgressive section ended up with an extra chapter.

Handbook adopts itself a “case study” approach; it gives examples, but deeply reflects upon and analyses those.

Finally, in the “Afterword” the editors reflect on the material that is offered in this Handbook, and what we learned from putting it together. Details about the authors, editors, and finally an author and subject index assist the reader to contextualize the research that is dealt with and to locate specific cross-cutting issues. As we have noted, readers will see patterns of organization that might parallel, or might diverge from, our own. To facilitate these alternative systems of organization, and to allow some customization of the text for teaching purposes, the publisher of this volume will allow users to design and order organized subsets of the essays published here, to be used in different configurations for different courses, whether classes in specific research methods, or more analytical courses designed to orient novice researchers to the epistemological and normative issues implicit in their methodological choices.

Of course, we also expect that these reflective insights from real examples will be beneficial to experienced researchers as well, by showing a broad range of research possibilities and approaches that each have something to teach us.

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The Theoretical Landscape

Varieties of Interpretation in Educational Research: How We Frame the Project

Nicholas C. Burbules, David Bridges, Morwenna Griffiths,
and Paul Smeyers

Interpretation and the Research Enterprise

The thesis which has shaped this handbook is that interpretation is central to all kinds of educational research and enters into it at every stage of the process. The selection of the focus of inquiry depends on a certain reading, an interpretation, of the arena of policy and practice and of the existing research and other literatures as well as of the interests of the researcher. The formulation of a research question or questions draws upon conceptual and value assumptions that frame a particular version or interpretation of the world. The selection of a mode or method of enquiry, of sites for the research, of participants, and of the forms of data or other resources to be assembled depends on an understanding, an interpretation, of the nature of the matter to be investigated and of the kinds of conclusions that different forms of enquiry can be expected to yield. Some of the data assembled will themselves be constituted by

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participants' interpretations of events and experiences—their responses to new educational programs or teaching styles, their life histories, their understandings of policy requirements, etc. The processes of organizing data, identifying what is important and worth paying attention to, selecting what will be reported, and trying to make sense of it all through some appropriate form of analysis or argument all entail interpretive judgments. The write-up of research results, and choices about the forms and media for representing those results, requires interpretation. And finally, the uses made of research, the conclusions drawn for policy and practice, and the formulation of further research questions are all interpretive at their heart. These conclusions are themselves the product of interpretations not only of the research but of the place of research within wider educational theories.

It is important to say at the outset that the phrase “collection of data and other resources” emphasizes that educational research is not simply a social science or one of the humanities. Rather, it is a field of study that draws on a range of disciplines including social sciences and humanities, while itself remaining a discipline distinguishable from any of them.¹ The set of “genres” that have been identified as structuring the book indicate this clearly, including not only ethnographic and quantitative methods but also historical and philosophical approaches. Interpretative frameworks are thus (i) brought to a piece of research, (ii) embodied in the data and resources we assemble through research, (iii) generated out of interaction between the theoretical frameworks that the researcher brings to the research and all that he or she encounters through the research process, and (iv) reflected in the kinds of writing and publication of outcomes, given the particular audience for which they are intended. As is discussed later in this chapter, educational research is often carried out in order to make a difference or an improvement within educational settings, so researchers are necessarily required to interpret how that might best be achieved. Interpretation, as we deal with it here, is not a method in itself, but a characteristic of any research method—indeed of the research process itself. And while our examples in this text are all drawn from educational research, we believe that these arguments pertain to research in every domain, from the social to the natural sciences, from the humanities to astrophysics.

This is the framework of expectations that we put to our editorial team and authors, along with an invitation to test out that framework in relation to specific worked examples of research from a wide range of approaches to educational inquiry. These would demonstrate, we believed, the importance of interpretation across all forms of educational research, as well as illustrating some of the different ways in which interpretation plays out in different research traditions. This has been borne out in the different chapters of the handbook. The Introduction gave some examples of how educational researchers have reflected on their own interpretations in the course of a single piece of research or of a set of connected projects, or in some cases nearly a lifetime of research. How far these differences are constrained and affected by different research approaches is something to which we return in the Afterword.

¹ Viv Ellis (2012): Living with Ghosts: ‘Disciplines’, Envy and the Future of Teacher Education, *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, 19 (2) (pp. 155–166).

Qualitative/Quantitative Dichotomies

Given the attention it gives to a multiplicity of research genres and its focus on interpretation, this handbook has to position itself in relation to the ongoing debate in the social sciences about clusters of approaches that are typically described (roughly) as qualitative and quantitative traditions in educational research. We see four predominant positions in the field. The first argues for the irreconcilability of the two traditions: that qualitative and quantitative perspectives represent Kuhnian paradigms that are incommensurable, in which advocates of each can neither understand nor appreciate the value of the other. Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln were probably the best-known advocates of this position, though not the only ones.² Interpretation, in these accounts, is usually seen as a feature particular to qualitative approaches to research or, in some cases, as one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world.³

The other three positions argue against a duality, emphasizing ways in which the two sets of approaches can be seen to be reconcilable and offering perspectives from which they can be seen as more similar than different. A second stance is mixed methods inquiry, in which researchers argue for the compatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods on the grounds of their complementarity.⁴ Each gathers and analyzes data that the other neglects, so that a fuller account is gained by, for example, interdisciplinary projects that study a problem—especially a large and complex problem, such as school dropouts or adult literacy campaigns—through multiple lenses. The evidence and associated understanding gained from one approach can enrich the evidence and understanding gained from the other. Of course, the use of mixed methods also introduces an extra stage of interpretation. When methods are mixed, they can produce conflicting results, and researchers have to make a judgment about how to reconcile them. This is discussed in the chapter by Vanderhoven, Raes, and Schellens. Such conflict is part of a more general problem of mixing methods, regardless of how “quantitative” or “qualitative” they

² Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). London: Sage. Also see Denzin and Lincoln (2011) ‘The discipline and practice of qualitative research’. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1–21). London: Sage.

³ Denzin and Lincoln (2011) ‘The discipline and practice of qualitative research’. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* p. 3.

⁴ See, for example, Johnson, R. B., and A. J. Onwuegbuzie. 2004. Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher* 33 (pp. 13–36), Jennifer C. Greene, *Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry* (Jossey-Bass, 2008), John W. Cresswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark (Eds.) *Designing and Conducting Mixed-Methods Research* (Sage, 2010).

are, as Snell and Lefstein explain in their chapter about using both video and ethnographic methods of “lurking and soaking.”

From a third position, researchers argue that the two sets of approaches are compatible because of their similarities. They argue that all methods are at heart empirical, and so the basic rules of evidence apply to all.⁵ Different things may be done with this evidence, but the pursuit of evidentiary support forces any mode of inquiry into broadly similar methodological constraints: a research question frameable as a hypothesis, collection, and analysis of data, accountability to evidence of agreement or disagreement with the hypothesis, and correction of a hypothesis or of initial assumptions in the light of unexpected counterevidence. From this angle, (so-called) qualitative research depends on the same fundamental epistemic conditions as does (so-called) quantitative research.

The fourth position, the one elaborated in this project, sidesteps these arguments. It emphasizes the significance of interpretation in all forms of research: whether or not an approach comes from a particular epistemic paradigm and whether or not different methods can be seen as complementary or basically equivalent. It could be argued that this fourth position runs the equivalency of the third position in the other direction: (so-called) quantitative research depends on the same fundamental epistemic conditions as does (so-called) qualitative research. However, what these processes of interpretation look like and how they are carried out, differ in their particulars. We undertook this project with the expectation that this investigation would reveal similarities as well as differences among different approaches to research—and, in this, undo some of the fruitless dualities that have often kept educational researchers from reading and learning from each other’s work, let alone seeing a basis for more constructive relationships.

Hence, we have tried to avoid language that identifies “interpretive” with “qualitative,” as if they meant the same thing or as if only qualitative research involves interpretation, or, indeed, as if only empirical research involved interpretations. In this, our view is similar to Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, when they say, “All research is interpretive. It is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.”⁶ Our difference here is to try to give interpretation a more grounded and practical meaning than just “a set of beliefs and feelings about the world.” Here we want to focus the discussion on what researchers *do*; and in this doing, they are involved with multilayered interpretation throughout the process of the research endeavor, regardless of their methodology or theoretical outlook.

⁵ D. C. Phillips and Nicholas Burbules, *Postpositivism and Educational Research* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

⁶ Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*, 2nd Ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), p. 33.

Abstractions Versus Practices

Another theme running throughout this book is that relentlessly meta-level discussions have often impeded understanding of these disputes about research approaches. We would hardly deny the importance of philosophical, and specifically epistemological, considerations in evaluating and choosing research approaches. But meta-level discussions are abstractions, and abstractions necessarily hide some features at the same time as they bring others into focus. So we do not think that these meta-level considerations can ever settle the issue of which approach, or approaches, is suitable for the different kinds of questions or problems. The very idea that a second-order argument could ever universally settle the question of how to do research is itself a kind of ontological error. The issues are too complex and plural to be encapsulated into a few tidy abstract categories. Complex and sometimes seemingly interminable disputes about ontological and epistemological abstractions in research need grounding in particular, we believe. The practice of research entails choices about the kinds of information that are relevant to answering questions: which methods of analysis will provide what kinds of guidance to help us decide what to do and what normative and value commitments are relevant to drawing conclusions? All of these choices vary depending on context and circumstance—for example, on the level of analysis: what an individual teacher needs to know and understand in order to help a particular student with a reading difficulty must be different from what a state-level policy board needs to know in deciding upon and implementing a broad-scale reform. These choices, as we have mentioned, provide a framework for the interpretation and evaluation of data. Dewani's chapter illustrates narrative research with the potential to influence policy, at least within the NGOs working with street children in Indonesia but also more widely. On the other hand, Wihlborg's study is not intended to affect policy at all, but rather to enable a rethinking of justice, equality, and diversity in relation to academic poststructuralist writing practices.

Methodological choices are often seen as grounded on prior ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of the research field and what methods of inquiry will produce answers that are more likely to be taken as true, reliable, trustworthy, or giving a warrant for action. (And all of these terms are themselves subject to fierce, abstract, conceptual dispute.) Gallons of printer ink have been squandered over these debates: some scholars accuse others of sloppy, loose methods that substitute anecdote and impressionistic conclusions for systematic inquiry; opponents say that cold, numbers-driven approaches lose touch with a deeper human reality. Overall, stereotypes, oversimplifications, and forced dualities abound. The pragmatic approach we draw from here emphasizes that human needs and purposes differ in the doing of research, and while rigor and accuracy matter, there is no single approach that always offers the *kinds* of rigor and accuracy needed that sometimes a large sweeping account is more useful and at other times too general and not contextually specific enough; similarly, an intense study of particulars may provide rich contextual understandings, but require a different, perhaps

“naturalistic,” kind of generalizability⁷ which those more accustomed to statistical probabilities might find uncomfortable. Focusing on these questions of purpose should help tone down the often highly charged, partisan and blinkered way in which different theoretical and research traditions characterize one another.

Another aspect of this pragmatic approach is to focus on what researchers do when they are doing research. Rigor and accuracy come not from choosing one method over another, but from applying an appropriate method carefully, with integrity, skill, and experience. We use the word “discipline” to describe fields of investigation for a reason: methods and traditions of inquiry, a body of literature, and a scholarly community of peers support and provide structure to the discipline of inquiry for any individual scholar. One of the crucial dimensions of this discipline, we are arguing here, is the reflective self-awareness of the role of interpretation and judgment in the processes of inquiry.

Interpretation and the Understandings Which Are Brought to Research

All research traditions acknowledge that researchers do not embark on their research as blanks whose ideas and understandings are shaped exclusively by the data that they collect, unaffected by any previous experience or presuppositions. Indeed, it is a good thing that researchers bring all sorts of experience, scholarship, rigorous training and theoretical and practical understandings to their research. But with all this they bring preformed, preestablished “horizons,” as Gadamer might refer to them preexisting interpretive frameworks, and these very same horizons can become impediments, biases, or blind spots. We asked contributors to consider what frameworks they brought to the research that they carried out and how they affected the development and outcomes of their research. It is interesting to compare, for instance, the reflections on assumptions in two chapters in the quantitative approach sections. Bowbrick, an insider to quantitative methods, discusses a range of assumptions that need to be taken into account by anyone collecting and analyzing large data sets; Smeyers, an outsider, discusses some assumptions about simplicity and causality that underpin any quantitative approach in educational research.

Different research traditions have of course different ways of dealing with such interpretive frameworks. In the traditions of the natural sciences and in those social science traditions which aspire to the condition of the natural sciences, the presence of the researcher and all his or her preexisting understandings, expectations, and

⁷Stake, R.E. & Trumbull, D. (1982) Naturalistic generalisations, *Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science* 7, 1–12 and see Bridges, D. (2010) n=1: The Science and art of the single case in educational research in eds P. Smeyers & M. Depaep, *Educational research: The ethics and aesthetics of statistics*, Springer, Dordrecht.

interpretive frameworks can be viewed as potentially biasing the research. In these contexts the aim is as far as possible to neutralize any such biases. Thus the research genre requires, for example, experimental controls that neutralize the presence of the researcher and any influence that he or she might exercise on the events being studied. In cases where the observer changes the situation simply by observing (as in many areas of natural science), an attempt is usually made to eliminate the effect of any specific individual observer, as opposed to a generalized observer. Thus, even the reporting style of such research attempts to render the researcher un-present by the use of the third person (“the researcher” rather than “I” or “we”) and the passive voice (“the sample was taken” rather than “I/we took the sample”).

Researchers working within some other genres of research acknowledge the inevitability of such presuppositions and personal commitments and do not seek to neutralize them. However they attempt to minimize the effects of individual subjectivities through a scrupulous exercise of personal reflection and self-scrutiny, rendering possible a kind of distance and objectivity. How a person conducts an interview, for example, and tries to identify comments or values quite different from one’s own, or tries to give fair credence to positions they personally disagree with, is an indicator of an attempt to acknowledge one’s own horizons but then avoid being trapped by them. These researchers take the view that the subjectivity of the researcher is both a help and a hindrance. As Shuman puts it in her chapter, explicitly likening it to physicist Karen Barad’s approach, “we can view the researcher’s lens of observation as a tool, like other tools, requiring attention to its limits and usefulness.”

Yet other genres of research are predicated on the view that such attempts to eliminate or avoid such pre-understandings are in principle doomed to failure and so prefer instead to have them acknowledged and disclosed explicitly. Sometimes this involves laying out a series of theoretical assumptions and categories guiding the research study. Sometimes it takes the form of a “biographical positioning” of the researcher vis-a-vis the research topic or research subjects. Sometimes it involves comments of a more personal nature, disclosing the investment and commitments a researcher brings to an investigation. Whatever form it takes, an open and honest acknowledgment of the researcher’s interests, commitments, background, and assumptions can enable the reader to take account of such positioning or perspective in their own reading and interpretation of what is presented. On this account, it is the failure to acknowledge the presence of a specific researcher that leads to bias.⁸

Another way in which researchers bring their understandings to educational research has to do with the values inherent within education. Education cannot be understood at all in the absence of values about what is ethically and epistemologically worthwhile for an individual, or for a whole society. Hence, the conduct of

⁸ Griffiths, M. *Educational Research for Social Justice: Getting off the Fence* Buckingham: Open University Press 1998; ‘Research and the Self’ in Biggs, M. and Karlsson, H. (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* Routledge, 2010.

the research will have additional constraints precisely because, as was remarked earlier, the educational research is usually intended to make some kind of difference or improvement to the understandings within and conduct of educational practices and policies. Thus few educational researchers simply choose to investigate what intrigues them, as LeCompte implies for some areas of social science. Instead they focus on what matters to them within education.

What is significant for our current purposes in this handbook is the point that different genres of research acknowledge in different ways that researchers inevitably bring frameworks of understanding to their research. A researcher's stance towards such frameworks will affect the way that research is conducted, affecting not only the collection of data but also how they are analyzed and the conclusions that are drawn from them. We say more about this below in discussing how interpretation enters into the focus, the analysis, and the presentation of the research.

On Interpretations as the Material Which Is the Focus of the Research

Some research explicitly seeks out as its data what it sees as people's understandings, experiences, or, in this sense, interpretations of events. On some views, interpretations of events are the *only* data that the researcher has to work with. There is nothing accessible beyond such interpretations: "what happened" is wholly constituted by such interpretations. Ethnography may use key informants from a particular community to explain or interpret the practices, rituals, and symbols of that community. In their introduction to Part IV, Beach and Lahelma say that researchers in ethnography of education "observe, learn and understand local cultures through their own experiences in the field." In some cases the intention is to gather and represent different stakeholders' experiences of and perspectives on educational programs as a basis for mutual understanding of "what has happened" from different points of view. In their chapter, Holm, Londen, and Mansikka explore the different ways in which Finland–Swedish teenagers position themselves as members of a minority group in Finland. Some participant research takes this further. Sometimes the research is carried out in such a way that the researchers' own practices, rituals, and symbols are in question during the research, as much as those of the other participants. This can be seen across different genres, for instance, in the chapters by Lapping, by Milstein, and by Amalia, Mardones, Johnston-Parsons, Shen, Shin, and Swanson. All parties may then change their understandings during the research process, a change which itself is subject to interpretation. Historical research and scholarship could be said to be concerned with primary sources (like diaries, letters, contemporary accounts of events) which represent one layer of interpretation, and with secondary sources that include other historians' attempts to make sense of the primary sources—on all of which the present researchers then impose a third layer of interpretation, which is their own.

Philosophical approaches are not only interpretations of the world but always also interpretations of other theoretical and philosophical interpretations. Self-study, personal narrative, and autoethnography appear in several of the sections; all of them rely on the researcher's memory for the material of the research. See, for instance, the chapters by Asgedom and Ridley, Mészáros, Mackinlay, and Fimyar.

As noted at the outset, it is sometimes suggested that this is what separates qualitative from quantitative research: crudely, that qualitative research is occupied with this rather soft and elusive data, whereas quantitative research seeks to develop accounts based on measurable, hard facts—and, as far as possible, observable evidence. But such a crude distinction underestimates the extent to which interpretations are embedded in quantitative as well as qualitative data. For example, even if the scored responses to a questionnaire end up as apparently clear numbers, that apparent clarity may conceal the constructions the researcher has carried into the formation of the questionnaire itself. Also easily concealed is the extent to which the respondents had to interpret the questions in order to render them meaningful and intelligible for the purposes of the responses, what assumptions the respondents made about the purposes of the research, and how it would be used (with or without any explanation from the researcher). One of the editors innocently asked a headteacher in Ghana how many children there were in his school. "It depends who wants to know," came the reply. Classroom observation schedules and their outcomes may tell us as much about the interests of the researcher and the framework of understanding he or she brought to the observation as about the events in the classroom itself. Even when a team of researchers try to use exactly the same observation schedule, they need to agree among themselves about how to interpret specific sets of observations before they can assign them to one category or another. The data from such enquiry must already be regarded as an interpretation of events, even before the researcher begins to analyze the data for its wider significance and meaning.

On Interpretation as a Product of Research

Another way in which interpretation enters the research process is in our attempts to analyze, to make sense of, or to give meaning to the data, evidence, argument, scholarly work, and other material that we collect in the process of inquiry. But what does interpretation itself mean and involve in such contexts?

We see the term as arising in a host of contexts, for instance:

- Interpreting numerical data, e.g., how to aggregate subsets of data
- Interpreting text, e.g., in responses to questionnaires, or historical documents
- Interpreting speech, e.g., in interview data, especially if reported in a language other than the interview
- Interpreting visual data, e.g., still photographs or moving images

- Interpreting works of verbal, visual, or performative art, e.g., in children’s poems, role-play, and drawings
- Interpreting body language, e.g., if a student is on task
- Interpreting a gesture, a facial expression, and an intonation, e.g., in a teacher’s whole class teaching
- Interpreting a policy document, e.g., in an internal school report or a government publication
- Interpreting the significance of a historical event, e.g., in oral history
- Interpreting the theory or theories which are the matter of the research
- Interpreting one’s own memories, for instance, as found in a research log or journal
- Interpreting the effect of an intervention on an educational setting, through an assemblage of changes within it
- Interpreting absences, showing what is *not* being seen or talked about
- Even, as in the case of one chapter here, interpreting one’s own dreams

The project of this book assumes that we are not going to make much progress by assuming that all these uses of the term denote exactly the same process, simply being applied to different kinds of evidence, or for different purposes. Any account at such a level of generality would be useless (e.g., “making an inference from some evidence to draw conclusions of meaning”). More likely, we are going to see something like a Wittgensteinian relation of “family resemblances,” with similarities and differences establishing a broad kinship of conceptions, without any specific defining qualities applying to every instance. If there is such a kinship, it will come from a closer scrutiny of what people actually do when they try to interpret something, looking at particulars of practice and activity rather than seeking out root definitions or essential features. Collecting and documenting such particulars is what this handbook is all about.

An interpretation is a kind of argument, but the ways in which evidence is marshaled in support of that argument differ. The idea is to show the significance of something that is not immediately apparent: an interpretation often asks the audience to see things in a particular way, or from a particular vantage point. The interpretation is a kind of case that needs to be made: an effective interpretation helps the audience to see connections or implications that they did not see before. It does so in *how* the case is made as much as through the evidence garnered in support. Usually, an interpretation refers to something important (note that the term “significance” here relates to both the idea of importance and the idea of meaning)—something that is worth attending to. This process of showing things in a particular way is distinct from the idea of getting an answer “right” in the sense of there being one correct—and true—answer. Some interpretations have other uses, revealed by the adjectives attached to them, like “illuminating,” “trustworthy,” “provocative,” “political,” or “insightful.” Other kinds of interpretation may provide a range of possible “right” answers: there may be more than one way to interpret a racist or sexist comment, for example, each one representing a different facet of understanding or point of view. Equally, there is also a range of possible “wrong” answers.

Some interpretations of complex data, such as works of art or personal narratives, may draw upon conceptions of truth different from the kind of conception found in a correspondence theory of truth, or a requirement to “just stick to the facts.” For instance, they may draw upon ideas of “individual truth” (“that is my truth, now tell me yours”) or of the significance of “truthfulness” rather than “truth,” as suggested by Bernard Williams.⁹

As noted, the rhetorics of interpretative argument also differ. Sometimes they take the form of a literal argument, with evidence marshaled in support of a logical inference. Sometimes they are more oblique, amassing and presenting particulars that have a cumulative effect in changing the way one understands something. Sometimes they are more invitational, suggesting “If you look at it *this way*, you will see the thing differently.” Sometimes, an interpretation has qualities in common with the thing being interpreted: explaining the meaning of gestures or expressions by repeating them, or by pantomiming others, explaining a poem through a style of expression that is itself poetic, and casting doubt on a viewpoint using mimesis. This link between rhetorics of interpretation and the rhetorics of the things to be interpreted partly explains why their styles are so varied and irreducible to a single method. An interpretation stands in between an audience and an object, mediating an understanding in the same way that a translator mediates between speakers of two different languages (and, of course, we often call translators “interpreters”). This intermediary role itself entails obligations, because for many audiences the only appreciation of the object will come through the interpreter’s efforts at explaining it. And so a certain honesty or integrity in the interpreter needs to be relied upon.

On Interpretation as Presentation of Educational Research

For educational researchers there is an additional complexity, though not one directly about the process of interpretation in the collection or analysis of data, so much as the interpretation of its purposes. As with any form of social inquiry, educational research is bound by fidelity to the evidence, clear argumentation, respect for other points of view, and so on. Educational research can be conceived as a second-order activity, equivalent to sociological or philosophical research on, for example, political structures or human relationships. But in many people’s minds, educational research (especially when it is funded by government grant money, foundation support, or public subsidies) has the added expectation of being *educational* itself, that is, promoting or advancing the social aim of improving educational processes and institutions. If interpretations are judged partly by whether they are “useful,” then in this context educational import is a criterion for what constitutes “usefulness”: helping us to educate more learners, better (in the

⁹ Williams, Bernard (2004) *Truth and Truthfulness*, Princeton University Press.

same way that the purpose of medical research is ultimately to improve health). While it is not our main focus here, we are acutely aware of the increasingly strong expectation of close links between educational research and educational policies and practices and between the funders of research and a set of expectations of what that research is expected to enable them to do. What constraints does this linkage have for the range of possibilities of interpretation in educational research? These expectations run counter to what is clear to most researchers: that educational research is unlikely to provide simple or straightforward means of raising examination scores or ensuring compliant students. Yet does the power of these expectations implicitly drive conclusions towards the conventional or the more easily heard? Does the expectation of “relevance” or “what works” (in the context of educational institutions and practices as they are) constrain interpretations that are more provocative or “outside the box”? Whose interpretations carry the most weight in a policy-driven (and policy-driving) endeavor? And if interpretations are not right or wrong, but good or bad, it is inevitable that some will ask: Good or bad *for whom?*¹⁰

The concerns about funders’ expectations can be seen as part of a wider, inescapable issue for educational research. In some areas of scholarship, researchers are mainly concerned to address their own community of scholars. Educational research is different. Many, perhaps most, educational researchers want their research to make a difference to education. Most were drawn to a particular focus because it concerns something they see as of practical, political, or ethical significance. Some researchers want to affect those directly engaged in practice, while others want to affect national policy makers, while yet others want to affect the understanding of the community of educators about what is at stake in an educational issue. So researchers are seeking to have an influence on any or all of the students, teachers, parents, community workers, NGOs, local governments, national governments, student teachers, and educational researchers and scholars. The question then must always be how best to do that.

Key to influencing the intended audience is the presentation of the research. This affects decisions about the style of writing up research results, the use of diverse modes of representation, and where the research is published or disseminated. The first step is to interpret the reactions of a specific audience to a mode of presentation. Statistics can be presented graphically in ways that make them clear and persuasive to nonspecialists, or they can be presented in tables with all the caveats clearly marked in a way which will make sense to specialists. Evidence gained through interviews can be represented in sound bites, in poetic form, carefully marked linguistically, or as a performance. Life history research can be presented as individual biography or as indications of social trends. All of these decisions are related to who the audience(s) are thought to be.

¹⁰ See Bridges, D., Smeyers, P. & Smith, R.D. eds. (2009) *Evidence-based education policy: What evidence? What basis? Whose policy?*, London, Wiley-Blackwell.

Most research will have several audiences. For instance, there may be a report to the funders, a press release to newspapers, and notices on social media, all alongside a research article for an academic journal or the publication of a book. This has ethical implications that affect what can be said. For example, in her chapter, Juzwik describes how she tailored her account of the findings in order to behave responsibly to the teacher with whom she had worked. Other ethical considerations are in play in policy research: what can be said in a report to government policy makers is influenced by what the policy makers think the national newspapers will make of it. Philosophers no less than social scientists make interpretations of audience in deciding how to present their work.¹¹

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What, then, makes an interpretation “good”? The criteria, naturally, are themselves subject to different understandings (one reason why people argue over interpretations, multiply them, and overlay “meta-” interpretations upon interpretations). What is the “best” interpretation of Hamlet? What would that mean? There can be no single answer for this and never could be. Or what did you mean by that remark? You and I can go around for hours about that—and the opinions of third parties may only add to the complexity. The idea has been long discredited that data or textual evidence mean something specific and that the role of interpretation is to discover that (fixed) meaning. There are as many legitimate interpretations as there are good cases to be made, given the evidence. And sometimes the mark of a “good” interpretation is that it opens up the possibility of new interpretations.

In many cases, it is easier to talk about the ways in which an interpretation can go wrong: it lacks fidelity to the evidence; it is repetitive, or a cliché, and adds no new understanding to the matter; it fits some particulars, but neglects aspects of the chronology of events, the context, or the whole; similarly, an interpretation can be tendentious and incomplete, driven by a conclusion rather than an attempt to provide a comprehensive view; or it can be useless and irrelevant to the needs of the moment; or it can be uninteresting and boring. Just as an interpretation can be good in many ways, it can be bad in many ways. And so matters of judgment come into the discussion, matters of need and purpose, matters of individual interests, and matters of context and circumstance. Interpretation is not only an “essentially contested concept”—it is at the essence of why there are “essentially contested concepts.”¹²

All these arguments underpin the importance we have attached to examining particulars, and this is the basic approach of this handbook. As we said at the outset,

¹¹ See, for instance, Morwenna Griffiths (2014) Re-thinking the Relevance of Philosophy of Education for Educational Policy Making, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46:5, 546–559.

¹² W. B. Gallie, ‘Essentially Contested Concepts’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 56, 1956, pp. 167–198.

we think it is a mistake to use the term “interpretation” or “interpretive” to mark out a specific kind of research inquiry (or to use it as a synonym for “qualitative” research). Interpretation plays a role in all kinds of research: quantitative and qualitative, causal and textual, realist and constructivist, predictive or explanatory, and conceptual or empirical. Our point is that these entail interpretations of different sorts. We are not saying that there are no significant differences between these approaches; of course there are. But their differences cannot be captured by the dichotomy of “interpretive” versus “non-interpretive” approaches. Particulars of method, sources and types of evidence, and what we have called the rhetorics of interpretive argumentation clearly differ enormously. Theoretical stances further differentiate even work of similar method or discipline. We have endeavored in this handbook to do justice to that eclecticism while maintaining the connecting thread of interpretation to give the text an overall thematic unity.

We have tried to do justice to these considerations in the conception and design of this handbook. We begin, first of all, with case studies of the doing of interpretation, in all its multiplicity. We have asked the authors to provide not just examples of research inquiry (preferably their own), but reflections also on the ways in which interpretation played a role in that inquiry. We have relied on this process of *showing* to provide the particulars of interpretation at work—and the various works that interpretation does in inquiry. We have urged the authors to include reflections on the difficulties and challenges of interpretation and accounts of how they tell if an interpretation is a good one or not. We have tried to represent a broad range of research topics, methods, and theoretical approaches, across a wide range of research genres.

This is, if you will, an exercise in “mid-level” theory: informed by philosophical analysis and the literature on interpretation and its role in social inquiry, but not primarily concerned with elaborating those arguments for their own sake. Rather, the emphasis on case studies and situated reflections is intended to provide more of a “bottom-up,” rather than a “top-down” investigation. At this “mid-level,” philosophical abstractions and generalities encounter practical realities (and constraints), each informing and being informed by the other. For the editors, we have purposely chosen this way of making the case, in part to get past some of the unproductive antinomies of some previous presentations of these issues.

This is not a “how to” book, however, at least not in the sense of providing a prescription or recipe for how to do interpretation in educational research the “right” way. What could that mean, anyway, especially across the spectrum of fields and approaches encompassed here? Nevertheless, we hope that this collection does reveal something important and useful in a different way: that across these “showings” of interpretation at work, and across these reflective understandings of how the “doing” of interpretation and its challenges, emerges a “family resemblance” picture of interpretation that we come to see interpretation, in one form or another, as one of the unifying ideas underlying the practice of research itself.

Interpretation, Social Science, and Educational Research

Deborah Kerdeman

Can it make sense to ask the human sciences to overcome the conditions of our own nature? There is something disturbingly paradoxical about a science that has for its subject the agent that creates the science. How are we to stand back from being human in order to observe what it is to be human? Even to attempt this standing back—and there are many ways in which it has been undertaken in pursuit of scientific truth—is a way of being human that, in turn, some other person will be able to study. Are we then condemned to travel in self-reflecting circles, to create knowledge of human beings only to find that what has been done is to create another mode of life rather than a lasting truth?

Smith 1997, p. 13

Introduction

In response to a request from the US federal government to clarify the norms and practices that make educational research scientific, the American National Research Council released a report in 2002 entitled, *Scientific Research in Education*. The NRC report drew a number of conclusions, three of which are noteworthy for this essay. First, no one method could answer all questions about education. Certain questions are appropriate for quantitative investigation; other questions are better suited to qualitative study. Second, quantitative methods should not be privileged over qualitative methods. On the contrary, quantitative and qualitative researches “are epistemologically quite similar. . . as we recognize that both can be pursued rigorously, we do not distinguish between them as being different forms of inquiry” (Shavelson and Towne 2002, p. 19). Finally, the report concluded that the systematic study of education is shaped by the contexts in which education occurs. This fact “requires close attention to powerful contextual factors in the research process” (Feuer et al. 2002, p. 7).

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Almost immediately, the NRC report sparked controversy. Critics charged that it privileged quantitative research over qualitative research, minimized the scientific nature of qualitative studies, and failed to account for the fact that educational research takes place in diverse dynamic settings that mitigate against a definition of science that presumably applies across contexts. Some critics wondered whether qualitative research should aspire to be a science at all. Perhaps the humanities are a more appropriate model for interpretive inquiry. (See, e.g., the 2005 symposium on scientific research in education published in *Teachers College Record*. Also see Eisenhart 2006.)

The controversy generated by the NRC report echoes debates that raged during the nineteenth century. Prior to that time, systematic studies of the human condition largely fell to scholars in fields such as jurisprudence, religious thought, and moral philosophy. By the nineteenth century, however, science had achieved enormous success in explaining the natural world. Many people began to think that science also could help scholars, policy makers, and ordinary citizens understand, regulate, and improve social life. The institutionalization of the modern social sciences in universities during the nineteenth century signified faith that this hope would imminently be realized.

Then, as now, achieving rigorous knowledge of the social world through social science proved to be challenging. A key challenge for social science concerns the fact that the social world is innately meaningful and must be *interpreted*. Clifford Geertz likens the social world to a “web of significance,” a network of socio-cultural–historical meanings that are expressed and embodied in values, customs, traditions, religious symbols, political practices, etc. (Geertz 1973/2000, p. 5). In the course of their everyday lives, human beings constantly interpret the social worlds in which they live.

The fact that interpretation is a necessary and ineradicable feature of social life raises two important questions for social science: (1) Does interpretation in social science differ from interpretation that transpires in ordinary (nonscientific) circumstances? (2) Can social scientists achieve rational, valid, objective interpretations (i.e., interpretive knowledge) of the social worlds they inhabit? How one answers these questions depends in part on how one defines interpretation.

One definition frames interpretation in terms of epistemology (the philosophy of knowing and knowledge). From this perspective, interpretation is a method or cognitive strategy we employ to clarify or construct meaning. The goal is to produce valid understanding of the meaningful “objects” that comprise the social world, such as texts, artifacts, spoken words, experiences, and intentions. The epistemological view of interpretation posits that interpretation in social science differs from interpretation in everyday life. Whereas ordinary “folk” interpretations tend to be pre-reflective, unexamined, and frequently biased, interpretation in social science must and in principle can become rational, objective, and valid knowledge.

The second definition frames interpretation in terms of ontology (the philosophy of being and existence). On this view, interpretation is not an act of cognition, a

special method, or a theory of knowledge. Interpretation instead characterizes how human beings experience the world. Realized through our moods, concerns, self-understanding, and practical engagements with people and things we encounter in our sociohistorical contexts, interpretation is a mode of lived experience, an unavoidable and uniquely human way of existing in the world. The ontological view of interpretation posits that interpretation in social science does not differ from the sort of interpretations that arise in everyday life. Both forms of interpretation are modes of lived experience. Moreover, the quest to transform ordinary lived interpretation into scientific knowledge is wrong headed. Scientific knowledge remains indebted to the ordinary “lived” interpretations it seeks to clarify and correct. This is true of quantitative as well as qualitative modes of inquiry.

The epistemological and ontological views of interpretation interact as “sibling rivals.” Debates about the aims, norms, and practices of social science reflect and perhaps also perpetuate this hermeneutic rivalry. To appreciate how both epistemological and ontological views of interpretation have influenced the development of social science, it is helpful to examine each view in greater detail and to trace their rivalry over time.

Our examination begins in the nineteenth century with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), a German Protestant theologian who devoted his life to developing the *Geisteswissenschaften* (German for social science, also translated as the human or moral sciences, or sciences of mind or of the human spirit). Dilthey argued that interpretation is both a pre-reflective mode of everyday lived experience and also is the method and theory of knowledge for social science. Ultimately, Dilthey intuited that as a mode of lived experience, interpretation could not easily be transformed into reflective scientific knowledge. Dilthey’s quest to develop social science consequently foundered.

During the twentieth century, the implications of lived understanding for science and social science were examined from two different perspectives. One perspective is known as post-positivist philosophy. Post-positivist philosophers include Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), Hans Reichenbach (1891–1953), Karl Popper (1902–1994), Imre Lakatos (1922–1974), Norwood R. Hanson (1924–1967), and Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996). The second perspective draws on the philosophy of understanding and interpretation known as hermeneutics. The German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), was largely responsible for developing the contemporary hermeneutic view of social science.

Post-positivist philosophers and Gadamer agree that human beings always and necessarily pre-reflectively understand and interpret the social worlds they inhabit. They draw different lessons from this fact, however, and believe that it poses different challenges for social science. These differences stem in part from the fact that post-positivist philosophers regard interpretation in epistemological terms, whereas Gadamer defines interpretation in ontological terms. Nonetheless, post-positivist social science and Gadamerian social science share some interesting similarities.

In the sections that follow, I will sketch how Dilthey sought to ground social science in interpretation. I then will briefly examine post-positivist epistemological

social science and Gadamer's ontological social science, highlighting their similarities and differences. In conclusion, I will consider some practical implications and challenges that post-positivist and Gadamerian social science pose for educational research. (For another analysis of these issues, see Kerdeman 2014.)

Social Science and Interpretation: Dilthey's Dilemma

Dilthey's vision of social science is grounded in the ontological premise that human beings naturally express their understanding of their life experience by creating meaningful objects such as texts, works of art, and various cultural expressions. These meaningful objects must be interpreted to maintain social life, Dilthey argued. Social science thus should not follow the methods of physical science but instead requires a hermeneutic method. Social science also requires an epistemology of interpretive knowledge, not a theory of knowledge concerned with causal explanation. The German word *Verstehen* (interpretation) captures Dilthey's contention that interpretation is central to the social sciences and distinguishes the social sciences from the physical sciences. While the two forms of science are distinct, Dilthey insisted that they are equally rigorous.

Dilthey based his ideas on the "hermeneutic circle," a method of interpretation that had become prominent during the Reformation, when Protestant theologians sought to interpret the Bible without appealing to the Catholic church to determine the meaning of problematic passages or resolve interpretive disputes. As its name suggests, the hermeneutic method assumes that interpretation is circular. Because the meaning of the Bible was thought to be unified and self-consistent, the meaning of any specific passage could be determined by referring to the text as a whole. But since understanding the text as a whole presumes understanding its problematic passages, determining the meaning of a problematic passage depends on a preliminary intuitive grasp of the text's entire meaning. Biblical exegesis thus revolves in a continuous cycle of anticipation and revision. Interpreting the meaning of any part of the Bible depends on having already grasped the meaning of the Bible as a whole, even as one's understanding of the entire Bible will be reshaped as one clarifies the meaning of its constituent parts.

Another Protestant theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), had maintained that the hermeneutic circle could ensure understanding not only of the Bible but also of all written and oral expressions. Using this method correctly, interpreters could understand the meaning of linguistic expressions better than the authors who produced them. Schleiermacher transformed the hermeneutic circle from a method of Biblical exegesis into a general theory of interpretation that explained how understanding could be achieved in ordinary circumstances.

Extending Schleiermacher, Dilthey argued that the hermeneutic circle not only helps people reflectively interpret others' meaningful expressions—it also enables people to understand themselves and their own lived experience. This is because life experiences do not unfold in linear fashion but instead are related to one another as parts are related to wholes. On the one hand, we understand specific life

experiences in terms of how we understand the meaning of our life as a whole. At the same time, the way we understand our life as a whole depends on how we understand specific life experiences. Understanding specific experiences thus both shapes and is shaped by understanding the overall meaning of our lives, even as understanding our life's overall meaning both shapes and is shaped by how we understand specific life experiences.

Applying the hermeneutic circle to life, Dilthey realized that understanding is temporal. Past experiences constitute the "parts" of one's biography. The future makes it possible to fathom one's life in toto. Interpreting the meaning of the future depends on and reshapes one's understanding of the past, even as interpreting the meaning of the past anticipates and revises one's understanding of the future. This is a different kind of "hermeneutic circle."

Interpreting the meaning of time therefore is integral to interpreting the meaning of lived experience. It is important to note that at the pre-reflective level of interpreting lived experience, time is not an *object* for interpretation. It is impossible to freeze or objectify the past in order to interpret it. Neither is the future a stationary target at which interpretation aims. One rather interprets the meaning of time as one moves through time. Where lived experience is concerned, interpreting time and experiencing time arise together.

Dilthey drew two conclusions from this insight. First, the meaning of life experience is fluid. With the passage of time, the meaning of the past and the future shifts. At different points in the future, one's past will mean different things. The meaning of the future also changes, depending on the particular stage of life from which the future is anticipated.

Second, interpreting lived experience does not produce understanding that is abstracted from the experience of living. We cannot escape our situation in order to interpret it. Nor can we interpret our life and *then* experience it. Rather, we are practically engaged in living the life that we interpret. Pre-reflective interpretation, in short, is situated, partial, practical, and personal.

Dilthey believed that pre-reflective understanding of one's own lived experience could evolve into reflective theoretical knowledge of how other people understand their life experience. Theoretical knowledge thereby extends and refines pre-theoretical practical understanding. But Dilthey recognized that because theoretical knowledge is rooted in pre-theoretical understanding, knowledge in the social sciences, particularly in history, differs from knowledge in the physical sciences. The historian who reflectively examines the meaning of historical events himself is a historical being. The meaning of the past therefore cannot be established once and for all but instead varies with the perspective of the historian who studies it. Moreover, theoretical understanding remains rooted in the pre-theoretical understanding it aims to clarify, even as pre-theoretical understanding is changed by the theoretical understanding that it grounds. Interpretation consequently revolves in a never-ending circle, rendering historical knowledge provisional and incomplete.

While Dilthey believed that the interpretive social sciences could be as rigorous as the physical sciences, the character of knowledge in interpretive social science

nonetheless vexed him. What kind of scientific knowledge is possible when the meaning of that which is studied constantly changes? Such knowledge is relative, not general and valid. Moreover, insofar as the historian “belongs” to the history he studies, historical knowledge cannot be objective. Historical knowledge instead is subjective, provisional, and partial. The circularity of interpretation raises the possibility that historical “knowledge” simply proves what it presupposes.

In an effort to reconcile understanding lived experience with scientific knowledge, Dilthey turned to his younger contemporary, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Husserl demonstrated that science grows out of particular “lifeworlds” and necessarily presupposes nonscientific understandings. But while Husserl argued that scientific knowledge depends on pre-reflectively understanding particular lifeworlds, he also subjected the lifeworld to phenomenological analysis in order to discover “essences” in lived experience that make theoretical knowledge of the lifeworld possible. In so doing, Husserl encountered a contradiction.

On the one hand, Husserl concluded that pre-theoretical understandings are relative to particular lifeworlds. On the other hand, he believed that phenomenological analysis could produce knowledge of the lifeworld that is universal and unconditionally valid. It was unclear how phenomenological analysis could both transcend and also remain indebted to pre-theoretical understanding. Phenomenological analysis of the lifeworld thus seemed necessary but impossible. In the end, Husserl did not solve Dilthey’s dilemma; instead he exposed another aspect of it.

Twentieth-Century Science and Social Science: Reconceiving Dilthey’s Dilemma

Arguing that pre-reflective lived understanding is ineradicable, Dilthey believed an impassable gulf separated pre-theoretical lived understanding from rigorous social science. Pre-reflective lived understanding is subjective, practical, situated, partial, and temporal. Scientific interpretation, by contrast, is objective, theoretical, generalizable, stable, and certain.

During the twentieth century, thinkers from a variety of disciplines began to challenge the pessimism surrounding social science. These thinkers did not dispute Dilthey’s insight into the inevitability of lived understanding. On the contrary, they embraced the view that human beings cannot but help interpret the meaningful social worlds in which they live. They also acknowledged that ordinary lived understandings necessarily are situated and typically are unexamined. But these facts about lived understanding do not make social science impossible, as Dilthey thought. They *do* require us to rethink our definition of “science” and to reframe the norms and practices of social science.

Two reconceptualizations of science proved to be especially important for the development of social science. Post-positivist philosophers reconceived social science by showing how epistemology and science could accommodate the

inevitable influence of lived understanding. By contrast, Hans-Georg Gadamer argued that the inevitable presence of lived understanding means that social science is not subject to epistemology but instead must be reconceived in ontological terms. Because readers likely are more familiar with post-positivist philosophy, I will discuss it first. I then will turn to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics.

Post-Positivist Science: Epistemology and Lived Understanding

Post-positivist thinkers developed complex and sometimes competing positions. Taken together, however, their ideas pose deep challenges to nineteenth-century beliefs about science. Many nineteenth-century scholars, including Dilthey, thought that science must be based on a foundation of impartial observation and that conclusions could not be deemed true unless they were indubitable. Post-positivists challenge both of these assumptions.

As a matter of principle, post-positivists maintain observation cannot be impartial or free from the influence of interpretation. (For an account of the developments that led to this position, see Phillips and Burbules 2000.) On the contrary, observation always is theory laden. Denis Phillips explains: "What an observer sees, and also what he or she does not see, is influenced by the background knowledge of the observer—the theories hypotheses, assumptions, or conceptual schemes that the observer harbors" (Phillips and Burbules 2000, p. 15). Stephen J. Gould adds that scientific observations are influenced by a scientist's personal understandings of experience and also by the intersubjective understandings of experience that imbue the scientist's social world. Gould writes: "Facts are not pure and unsullied bits of information; culture also influences what we see and how we see it. Theories, moreover, are not inexorable inductions from facts. The most creative theories are often imaginative visions imposed upon facts; the source of imagination is also strongly cultural" (Gould 1981/1996, pp. 53–54).

Following Phillips and Gould, we can say that when scientists observe the world, they do not see a set of "bare" facts or "brute" data. Observation instead necessarily is filtered through a set of "interpretive lenses" that reflect personal as well as socio-cultural understandings. But if observation cannot be distinguished from interpretation, how can scientists be sure they are seeing what "really is there," not what they *think* or *hope* is the case?

According to post-positivists, the inevitability of interpretation does not doom observation to being biased. The fact that we cannot "remove" our interpretive lenses does not mean that interpretive lenses necessarily circumscribe or dictate ways of seeing. If interpretive lenses influence observation, so interpretive lenses also can be clarified and, if necessary, corrected through critical examination and reflective reason.

Objectivity for post-positivists thus does not signify that one's pre-reflective interpretations have been dissolved. Achieving objectivity remains possible, because observations can be publicly scrutinized and tested. Claude Steele maintains that engaging in science is a compelling way to clarify interpretive lenses and critically examine bias. He writes:

One of the first things one learns as a social psychologist is that everyone is capable of bias. We simply are not, and cannot be, all knowing and completely objective. Our understandings and views of the world are partial, and reflect the circumstances of our particular lives. This is where a discipline like science comes in. It doesn't purge us of bias. This is where I would stake my claim, at any rate. The constant back-and-forth between ideas and research hammers away at bias and, just as important, often reveals aspects of reality that surpass our original ideas and insights. (Steele 2010, pp. 13–14)

Thus for Steele, science will not completely dispel the ordinary unexamined interpretations that researchers necessarily bring to their work. But, Steele insists the process of “hammering away” at assumptions that otherwise would operate behind our backs, beyond the reach of conscious awareness, can help scientists critically examine the interpretive assumptions that influence not only observation but also all phases of research.

Formulating research questions, for example, requires the scientist to reflect on the purpose of his study and to think hard about the type and scope of evidence he must collect. Analyzing data provides another opportunity to anticipate and address alternative or competing interpretations and arguments. Subjecting conclusions to public scrutiny also can surface assumptions that scientists might otherwise miss. Reviewers who are not invested in a study likely will spot interpretive influences that researchers might have overlooked. Reviewers' perspectives also may differ from researchers' perspectives. Considering findings from multiple perspectives can be another effective strategy for revealing bias.

Critically evaluating interpretive assumptions not only helps research become more objective: it also helps scientists evaluate the validity of their claims. Attempting to refute—not prove—a conclusion is key, post-positivists contend. It always is possible to find evidence that proves one's hypotheses and arguments. Recognizing evidence that *refutes* one's conclusions is a stronger test of validity, however. When a claim withstands rigorous attempts to disprove it, we can feel more confident that it is warranted. Of course, eliminating error is not the same as proving truth. Claims that we warrant today can be refuted tomorrow; human judgment is prone to error, and the history of science is replete with examples of claims that have been overturned. Nevertheless, some claims *are* better than others and qualify as being true, at least, for now.

Truth claims for post-positivists thus are not absolute, irrefutable, or certain. Rather, they are provisional, partial, and fallible. This does not mean that evidence is either absolute or unnecessary. It *does* mean that determining whether evidence justifies a claim is a conjectural process that relies on imperfect judgment.

In sum, post-positivists acknowledge the inevitability of lived understanding but argue that science and epistemology can accommodate this fact. Objectivity does not signify that interpretation ceases to influence observation. Objectivity instead means that interpretive influences have been critically examined. Validity is not

ascribed to claims that are certain or self-evidently true. Validity instead must be determined, and this requires scientists to exercise interpretive judgment. Because interpretive judgment is fallible and prone to error, a claim that we deem true may turn out to be false. It does not follow, however, that one claim is as good as another or that truth is captive to social contexts and reducible to cultural meaning. Truth remains a regulative ideal to which scientists can and should aspire. As Gould notes: “Science cannot escape its curious dialectic. Embedded in surrounding culture, it can, nonetheless, be a powerful agent for questioning and even overturning the assumptions that nurture it. . .” (Gould 1981/1996, p. 55).

The centrality of human judgment for science makes science a quintessentially *human* enterprise. Gould writes: “But creative thought in science is exactly this—not mechanical collection of facts and induction of theories, but a complex process involving intuition, bias, and insight from other fields. Science, at its best, interposes human judgment and ingenuity in all its proceedings. It is, after all (though we sometimes forget it), practiced by human beings” (Gould 1977, p. 125). Echoing Steele’s belief about science, Gould suggests that engaging in science both requires and also cultivates certain dispositions, including critical self-awareness, the capacity to live with uncertainty and doubt, and a willingness to accept the possibility that one’s hard-won conclusions could be wrong. In this respect, science not only is an avenue for achieving knowledge. Engaging in science also can be personally transformative.

Post-Positivism and Education Research

Denis Phillips argues that the post-positivist conceptualization of physical science applies to norms and practices in *social* science, including educational research. Of course, social scientists pre-reflectively interpret the social worlds they reflectively study; research thus necessarily is mediated by the researcher’s sociocultural situation. This fact, however, does not negate the possibility of studying the social world scientifically. Nor does it absolve social scientists from trying to achieve valid objective knowledge. Objectivity will not be “pure,” and the truth of research conclusions cannot be guaranteed. But acknowledging the inevitable influence of lived understanding makes it more—not less—possible for fallible human beings to try and achieve rigorous knowledge of the social worlds they inhabit.

According to Phillips, the need to identify and agree upon standards to assess the objectivity and validity of research claims is the paramount task confronting educational researchers. All educational researchers must address this epistemological challenge, Phillips insists. Nevertheless, addressing this challenge poses different practical issues for quantitative and qualitative researchers.

For quantitative researchers, a key problem is to identify which variables are relevant and may need to be controlled. Given the complexity of the contexts in which education occurs, these judgments can be difficult to make. Quantitative researchers also must address the conundrum of how to make generalizations

meaningful for the complex, varied, and dynamic social contexts in which education occurs (Phillips 2014, p. 10).

People who are enamored of quantitative research sometimes forget or ignore these difficulties, Phillips notes, and expect quantitative research to provide fool-proof solutions for educational problems. From a post-positivist perspective, this expectation is immodest and unreasonable. Numbers are not “brute” data; determining statistical significance is probabilistic and conjectural, not definitive. Moreover, quantitative research is not an unassailable formula for success (i.e., randomized field trials). Like all social science, quantitative methods depend on interpretive judgment. Denying this fact confuses science with fantasy and results in a phenomenon that Phillips (following Arthur Kaplan) calls “methodolatry” (Phillips 2006, pp. 25–26).

A different set of practical issues confronts post-positivist qualitative researchers. Qualitative researchers endeavor to interpret how “cultural insiders” interpret the meaning of their own experiences and contexts. Thus for qualitative research, interpretation is both the *focus* of research and also the *method* of research. The “doubly hermeneutic” character of qualitative inquiry raises the following sorts of questions:

- The meaning or purpose of an event, encounter, or experience can be difficult or impossible to construe outside the setting in which it transpires. Meaning, moreover, can vary from context to context. Are interpretations of meaning generalizable beyond the particular local contexts in which they arise? What does generalizability “look like” and require with respect to interpretations of contextual meaning?
- How should qualitative researchers think about objectivity in light of the fact that they are the “instruments” of inquiry (Wolcott 1997, p. 332) who not only observe contexts but also participate in them? How—and how much—can or should a researcher’s own lived understandings be checked or controlled? Are there methods that can help researchers address challenges to self-reflection that arise in the field? If so, which methods should researchers adopt and under which circumstances?
- Do researchers’ interpretive conclusions differ in important ways from interpretations that are articulated or assumed by the people whom researchers study? If so, what is the relationship between ordinary understanding and scholarly interpretive theory? Does scholarly theory illuminate or obscure quotidian understandings?

The plethora of responses to the National Research Council’s 2002 report illustrates the conceptual complexity of these epistemological issues. But while the issues are complex, they must be addressed, Phillips concludes. Qualitative researchers, no less than their quantitative colleagues, must aspire to critically examine their assumptions in order to produce conclusions that are warranted by appropriate evidence.

Gadamer's Ontological Social Science

Embracing lived understanding, post-positivists significantly alter definitions of objectivity and truth. The post-positivist reconceptualization of epistemology and science is not a direct response to Dilthey. Had post-positivists responded to Dilthey, however, they might have said that he was stymied by an extreme view of objectivity (objectivism). They also might have said that he was seduced by the hubris that fallible human beings can definitively grasp truth.

Gadamer believes that Dilthey was stymied by a different set of beliefs. Specifically, two epistemological assumptions led Dilthey astray: (1) reflective interpretation and pre-reflective lived understanding are distinct; and (2) pre-reflective lived understanding is unreliable and therefore cannot be the basis for social science. Gadamer counters that pre-reflective understanding is not necessarily unreliable or erroneous. Rather, pre-reflective understandings (“prejudices,” to use Gadamer’s terminology) “are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us” (Gadamer 1966/1976, p. 9). In other words, before we can explain a phenomenon, we must already have understood it on a pre-theoretical practical level. This does not mean that pre-reflective understanding always is perspicacious and cannot be narrowed or mistaken. On the contrary, Gadamer argues pre-reflective understanding *must* be critically questioned. But critical reflective understanding necessarily remains indebted to the pre-reflective understandings it clarifies and corrects.

Before discussing how Gadamer’s beliefs about understanding shaped his views of social science, it is helpful to clarify what “science” means in the context of his philosophy. Like many continental European thinkers, science for Gadamer does not refer exclusively to the physical sciences or to the systematic observation of the empirical world. Neither does science exclude the humanities. Rather, science connotes reflective study in fields as diverse as theology, archeology, and politics. The term social science (moral science, human science) thus signifies reflective study of the human social world. But what does reflection in social science mean, exactly? Gadamer’s answer to this question was heavily influenced by the work of his teacher, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). To appreciate Gadamer’s vision of social science, it is necessary to briefly explore its roots in Heidegger.

Heidegger

In his book, *Being and Time* (1927/1962), Heidegger probed two of Dilthey’s important insights: (1) we experience the life that we pre-reflectively interpret; and (2) pre-reflective understanding exhibits a circular temporal structure. Dilthey believed that these two conditions are contingent and apply only to pre-reflective

understanding. Heidegger demonstrated that both conditions are necessary and characterize all understanding, including critical reflection.

Heidegger began by considering the question of existence. To exist, Heidegger reasoned, is to live in the present. As Dilthey showed, the present does not arise in a historical vacuum but instead always implicates the future and the past. Living in the present, we cannot help anticipate the future based on where we have been, even as our expectations for future experience color our understanding of the life we have lived. Heidegger used the term “historicity” to underscore the idea that human understanding is an *inescapably* temporal experience.

Insofar as understanding is an inescapably temporal experience, we do not choose to start (or stop) understanding at a particular point in (or out of) time. Rather, understanding is *a way of being* that always is already going on (to use Heidegger’s phrase). It is true that understanding sometimes is mistaken. But breakdowns in understanding signify *mis*understanding, not an *absence* of understanding, according to Heidegger.

As an experience that is always already happening, understanding does not grasp the meaning of objects that are “present at hand,” distinct from our interests and concerns. Understanding instead signifies being intimately involved with people and things. Our world is composed of implements that are “ready to hand,” tied to our purposes, moods, interests, etc. Heidegger described engaged practical ongoing understanding in terms of “fore-having,” “foresight,” and “fore-conception.” The prefix “fore-” signifies that we are able to engage with implements in our world because we pre-reflectively sense how they are implicated with our interests and how they fit within the context of meaningful relations in which we find them.

The fact that we pre-reflectively understand meaning does not imply that understanding is stuck in the past. Pre-reflective understanding can change as human beings move into the future, reconsider prior understandings, and anticipate new possibilities. Heidegger insisted that pre-reflective understanding could become critical and reflective. But critical reflection does not produce understanding where none had previously existed. Critical reflection instead remains indebted to the pre-understandings it clarifies and corrects.

Heidegger coined the term “thrown projection” to describe understanding as an experience of being involved in the world. The term “thrown” indicates that we do not construct the meaningful context(s) in which we live. Rather, we are born into a social world that is inherently meaningful and that already has been interpreted by others. Interpretation is possible, because the world discloses meaning through the medium of language. We inherit this social web of meaning as a linguistic “horizon” within which the construal of meaning for our own lives becomes possible. Heidegger’s “projection” is not synonymous with “planning.” Projection instead indicates that understanding is a dynamic experience of anticipating future possibilities. Because expectations for the future necessarily arise in the present, we cannot see them in their entirety or with absolute clarity. Moreover, while future possibilities are open, they nonetheless are partially circumscribed- by possibilities that already have been fulfilled.

The human being who experiences understanding as a cycle of “thrown projection” is *Dasein*, Heidegger said. *Dasein* means “there being.” Unlike the

autonomous epistemological subject who leverages interpretation in order to grasp the meaning of objects (including objectified experiences), *Dasein* is not an independent agent who confronts discrete objects, the meaning of which he must deliberately choose to discover or construct. *Dasein* rather is “there” in the world, spontaneously involved with things that *Dasein* understands prior to any distinction between subjects and objects. *Dasein* does not initiate understanding and does not regulate the production of meaning. The fact of existing in an inherently meaningful and already interpreted world—not *Dasein*’s own initiative—is the condition that makes both pre-reflective and reflective understanding possible.

Gadamer’s Social Science

Heidegger’s claim that understanding is a temporally conditioned way of experiencing the world carries profound implications for social science, Gadamer concludes. He worked out these implications in his magnum opus, *Truth and Method* (1975/1989). Following Heidegger, Gadamer argues that interpretation in social science is a temporally conditioned experience or “event” we live through, not a kind of knowledge we achieve by methodologically regulating our life experience or by abstracting and justifying critical reflection outside of ordinary understanding. Understanding and interpretation in social science are no different from understanding and interpretation in daily life, Gadamer contends. In both cases, we experience understanding and interpretation as a dialogue or conversation.

The notion that social science is a conversation might seem startling. We typically think that social scientists collect and analyze data. But for Gadamer, people and texts are not data or “objects” in which meaning resides. People and texts instead are conversation partners who embody dynamic linguistic horizons that disclose meaning over time. Gadamer’s social scientist starts to understand a text when she recognizes that it voices a question or issue that comes down through tradition and also concerns her. Similarly, the social scientist starts to understand another person, not because she empathizes with him or is able to leap out of her own body to get inside the other’s head. Understanding instead begins when the social scientist recognizes that the question or issue that concerns the other person concerns her as well.

Of course, neither party in the conversation can escape the situation into which each has been “thrown.” Understanding therefore does not aim to capture *the* meaning of a question. The meaning of a question rather is co-determined by the horizons of the conversation partners who interpret it. Insofar as horizons are temporal and change over time, the “same” question will be understood differently every time it is interpreted.

If we necessarily rely on our own horizon to understand an issue, how can we recognize the horizon of our partner? What prevents us from appropriating our partner’s perspective or conflating it with our own? Gadamer proposes two answers. First, he notes that horizons are porous, not self-enclosed. In principle, therefore, horizons can interpenetrate.

Gadamer's second answer concerns the disposition of conversation partners. In a successful conversation, each party is open to the possibility that the other's perspective is true and may challenge and even refute one's own perspective. Gadamer insists that one's own perspective cannot be clarified or corrected as long as one entertains the other's perspective from afar and continues to maintain the truth of one's own position. Change instead requires one to *risk* one's assumptions and to actually *experience* the negation of one's understanding. Gadamer acknowledges that negative experiences are uncomfortable. But he maintains that negative experiences can be an invitation to critically reflect on one's prior understandings and realize new insights.

Thus, like pre-reflective understanding, critical reflection for Gadamer is an experience we undergo. In successful conversations, both parties are open to risking their assumptions. As a consequence of being challenged, the pre-reflective understandings of both parties can become more encompassing, perspicacious, critical, and reflective. Gadamer calls the reflective dimension of conversation a "fusion of horizons." Neither party can predict in advance how its horizons will be fused. When one party tries to direct the conversation or claims to know what the other is thinking, "talk" becomes something other than conversation (e.g., a lecture or a debate). But when a fusion of horizons genuinely happens, both parties come to understand a truth about life's meaning that neither party could realize outside of actually participating in the conversation.

In sum, Gadamer reframes social science in terms of a conversation that we experience with others. Gadamer's social scientist does not try to empathize with the people and texts that she studies. Neither does she regard them as exotic and distant. Rather the social scientist endeavors to recognize a question or issue that she and her partner share. The meaning of the question cannot be determined "objectively" but instead is co-determined by the horizon of both the social scientist and her partner.

The new insights that both parties realize in the course of their conversation also are co-determined and change with each interpretive event. New insight cannot arise if the social scientist attempts to regulate her self-understanding or keep it out of play. Gadamer's social scientist instead must allow her self-understanding to be affected by her partner, who presents a different and perhaps opposing perspective on the question that concerns them both. The partner's self-understanding is affected as well. Significantly, neither party can direct this experience or predict the new insight that a conversation will disclose. Both parties instead participate in a transformative event, the outcome of which neither can imagine in advance. Framing social science as a conversation that we necessarily experience with others can rehabilitate the moral dimension of the human (moral) sciences, Gadamer concludes.

A number of contemporary scholars are working to develop the philosophical and practical implications of Gadamer's social science. In his influential essay, "Interpretation and the sciences of man" (1971), Charles Taylor (1931–) argues that social scientists are "self-interpreting animals" who always pre-reflectively understand their theoretical conclusions and who inevitably appeal to intuitions and self-understanding to justify their findings. Ruth Behar (1956–) provides a practical

example of ontological social science. Behar's book, *The Vulnerable Observer* (1996), does not explicitly reference hermeneutics or Gadamer. Nonetheless, it argues that anthropological insight necessarily implicates the anthropologist's own self-understanding. The anthropologist's self-understanding, moreover, is vulnerable to (and affected by) the people whom she studies.

Jürgen Habermas (1929–) articulates a second response to Gadamer. Like Taylor and Behar, Habermas appreciates Gadamer's insight into the ontological nature of social science. Critical reflective understanding is irreducibly contextual, historical, and bound up with the interpreter's own self-understanding and presuppositions. The social scientist consequently belongs to the social world he interprets. Social science theories issue from the pre-theoretical practices they strive to explain.

But while Habermas agrees with Gadamer that critical reflection is connected to lived experience and understanding, he questions Gadamer's faith in the power of language and conversation to disclose truth and promote critical examination. Language is not simply a communicative medium for understanding meaning, Habermas argues. Material conditions and power interests can systematically and insidiously distort meaning in ways that language does not make apparent. Hence reflection must do more than simply *clarify* lived understanding by means of conversation. Critical reflection also must help people *distinguish* lived understanding from ideology. Becoming liberated from ideology requires methods and theories that can explain the genesis of distortion by rationally appealing to evident causes.

Gadamer's Ontological Social Science and Education Research

Few educational researchers explicitly reference Gadamer to describe their work. Nonetheless, it is possible to detect two Gadamerian themes in educational research. The first theme imagines research as a collaborative conversation. The second theme concerns whether and how a researcher's self-understanding is or should be implicated in his or her work. I will discuss each theme in turn, including questions and challenges for research that each theme raises.

Research Is a Conversation

Some scholars, including collaborative action researchers and those who engage in design experiments, argue that effective research is a collaborative conversation between researchers, community members, school personnel, and other stakeholders. Researchers and local actors participate as equal partners in conversations about the design, implementation, and evaluation of new understandings and findings. For example, questions must be of mutual concern to both researchers and local actors and must arise in contexts of practice. Questions will change and

evolve as researchers and local actors together arrive at new insights and clarify previously unforeseen problems. Kris Gutiérrez and William Penuel sum up this model of research. Focusing on design experiments, they write: “These models do not require researchers to specify ahead of time all the elements of an intervention, since practitioners participate in the design, and implementation data inform an iterative design process that often transforms interventions. It is important to ask, What is a partnership if the research plan is fully predefined by researchers?” (Gutiérrez and Penuel 2014, p. 21).

Conceiving of research as a collaborative conversation between researchers and local actors suggests new and interesting questions that Gutiérrez and Penuel do not consider. For example, if researchers and local actors are equal partners, what exactly distinguishes the perspective or horizon of researchers from the horizons of local actors with whom they collaborate? Does each researcher bring an individual horizon to the research conversation, or can we identify a perspective that is common to all (or most) researchers? What does developing a “research horizon” require?

Most significantly, Gutiérrez and Penuel make the *epistemological* assumption that specifying or developing specific *methodologies* is necessary in order to bring stakeholders together to deliberate problems that arise during research. Gadamer, by contrast, makes an *ontological* argument: successful research conversations cannot arise unless partners are open to *being affected* and possibly challenged by one another. The understanding that arises during these challenging experiences cannot be specified in advance. Insofar as method regulates understanding, relying on method may not facilitate research conversations, as Gutiérrez and Penuel assume. Relying on method instead may *prevent* mutual understanding from developing.

Some researchers argue that while collaborative conversation may be an ideal to which researchers should aspire, it is unclear how or whether this ideal should be enacted. Most university IRB regulations distinguish researchers from research subjects and stipulate that the rights of research subjects must be protected. This epistemological assumption makes it difficult if not impossible to approach research as a Gadamerian conversation that regards subjects and researchers as equal partners.

Other scholars raise questions about research as conversation, which echo concerns that Habermas voices. These scholars point to a legacy of privilege and marginalization and warn that seemingly openhearted conversations can exploit subjects. Relying exclusively on interpretation to examine social meaning thus is inadequate. The meaning of social practices instead must be interrogated and exposed through political struggle. Whether social science can accommodate political advocacy and remain a science is a compelling question for many educational researchers.

Scholars of color who conduct research in their home communities raise a third concern regarding research as conversation. These scholars discuss how their university status distances them from people with whom they were able to converse easily before they became researchers. For these scholars, the unforeseen insights that arise during research conversations can be experiences of alienation, not Gadamerian solidarity. (See, e.g., Villenas 2000).

Researchers' Self-Understanding

The second Gadamerian theme that is evident in educational research concerns the self-understanding of researchers. Michael Agar, an ethnographer whose work is familiar to many qualitative researchers, explores this issue. Drawing on Gadamer, Agar coins the term “rich point” to describe unexpected breakdowns in understanding. According to Agar, rich points present opportunities for ethnographers to question their *own* understanding and self-understanding. He writes: “The rich point, you assume, isn’t *their* problem; it’s *your* problem. The rich point doesn’t mean that *they’re* irrational or disorganized; it means that *you’re* not yet competent to understand it. There is, you assume, a point of view, a way of thinking and acting, a *context* for the action, in terms of which the rich point makes sense” (Agar 1996, pp. 31–32). Whereas an epistemologically oriented ethnographer might work to *control* or at least reflectively account for his self-understanding so that he can accurately interpret his subject’s understanding of the world, Agar’s ontologically oriented ethnographer *engages* his self-understanding, allowing it to be (hopefully) transformed through the experience of being challenged by research participants.

While Agar argues that ethnographers must engage, not control, their self-understanding, he ultimately conceives of self-understanding in epistemological terms. Agar’s rich point seems to apply only to ethnographers, not to research participants. Additionally, Agar develops a method by which ethnographers can surface, analyze, and address rich points. The epistemological assumption that researchers can and must reflectively account for and regulate their self-understanding continues to exert a strong hold, even on ontologically oriented scholars. It remains to be seen whether or how far educational researchers will take up the Gadamerian premise that research is an experience in which one’s self-understanding is challenged in ways that the researcher cannot control or direct.

Comparing and Contrasting Post-Positivists and Gadamer

Acknowledging that interpretation is an ineradicable feature of social life, post-positivists and Gadamer reach a number of similar conclusions about social science. For both, social science is a human endeavor, undertaken by imperfect beings in cultural contexts, who critically reflect on unexamined assumptions to better understand their situation. Critical reflection both requires and also cultivates certain dispositions, including humility, openness to doubt, and a willingness to accept the possibility that one’s understanding might be wrong. While critical reflective understanding is partial, fallible, and subject to revision, it nonetheless can be more perspicacious and less narrow or distorted than pre-reflective understanding. Engaging in social science for both post-positivists and Gadamer is a way of life that can be personally transformative.

These similarities regarding the practices and aims of social science are significant and tend to be overlooked. They derive from the fact that both post-positivists and Gadamer recognize the centrality of interpretation for human life and hence for social science. But while post-positivists and Gadamer agree that interpretation is central for social science, they nonetheless differ with respect to a central issue. This issue concerns the relationship between critical reflection and method.

Gadamer insists that critical reflection does not arise as a consequence of a social scientist's actions or intentions. Critical reflection rather is a fusion of horizons in which the pre-reflective understandings of both social scientists and those with whom they converse are challenged in ways that neither party can bring about or foresee. The fusion of horizons necessarily varies, depending on the time and place in which a conversation occurs and the particular parties whom it involves. In this respect, critical reflection according to Gadamer remains indebted to the circumstances in which it arises.

Thus for Gadamer, critical reflection does not require a specialized set of practices or methods but instead can and does arise in the course of everyday life. Believing that we need methods to help us reflectively clarify our situation distances us from our lived experience, Gadamer fears. Social science becomes an intellectual exercise, not an experience that *affects* people. In place of honing methodological expertise and skill, Gadamer wants social scientists to focus on their self-understanding, take risks with their conversation partners, and trust that new insight "happens to us over and beyond our wanting and doing" (Gadamer 1975/1989, p. xxvi).

Post-positivists such as Denis Phillips argue, *contra* Gadamer, that method supplies resources for critical reflection, which are not necessarily available to pre-reflective lived understanding. Employing method does not automatically bring about critical reflection or ensure that critical reflection will be correct. This is because method is susceptible to human interpretation and judgment and therefore cannot be reduced to formula or rules that researchers unthinkingly follow. Nevertheless, method can *support* critical reflection by providing guidelines and schema that can extend *beyond* particular research experiences and also across contexts.

In short, Phillips contends that claims about the empirical world must be distinguished from insights into the meaning of lived experience. The latter may implicate self-understanding. The former do not. Openness to being challenged may help social scientists recognize when their conclusions are wrong. But claims about the empirical world can be wrong, *whether or not social scientists acknowledge that their claims are wrong*. Claims about the empirical world can and must be assessed on their own merit, Phillips stresses, irrespective of their origin or the self-awareness of the researcher who produced them.

The difference between Phillips and Gadamer concerning interpretation, method, and critical reflection ultimately may reflect two different worries or fears. Viewing social science through the lens of post-positivist epistemology, Phillips worries about "confirmation bias," the inability to distinguish the conclusions of critical reflection from the pre-reflective beliefs and hopes social scientists

bring to research. Viewing social science through the lens of ontology, Gadamer worries less about the tendency to *conflate* reflective and pre-reflective understanding than about the possibility that social science will *alienate* social scientists from the ordinary life experiences they investigate. Both concerns have merit. It is possible that one concern may be more urgent than the other, depending on the nature of one's research questions, purposes, and circumstances. It also is possible that at any given time, both concerns may be equally salient. Wrestling with both of these possibilities will require educational researchers to continue to think deeply about the questions and challenges that interpretation poses for social science.

Conclusion

Examining the interpretive dimension of social science and educational research illuminates two views of interpretation: epistemological and ontological. While these two views share similarities, they also differ in significant ways and often conflict with each other. Some believe that conflicts between epistemological and ontological interpretation doom educational research to sloppy findings produced by a community in disarray. We take a different view. We argue that appreciating the challenges that interpretation poses for social science can inspire educational researchers to think deeply about profoundly meaningful questions. It also can invite all who are interested in improving education to continually reexamine and reimagine the practices and aims of educational research.

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Ethical Problems of Interpretation in Educational Research

Margaret D. LeCompte

Introduction

Ethics are principles that dictate how people should act so as not to be harmful to others. They are enshrined in cultural norms, religious documents, the common law, and codified legal treatises, and they are informed by philosophies that support a variety of rationales for their existence and implementation (Deyhle et al. 1992). All behavior, even the behavior of researchers in the field, is governed to some degree by the ethical principles extant in people's cultures. Researchers now find their behavior increasingly constrained by the codes of their professional "tribe" or culture, which require investigators to act in ways that do as little harm as possible to both the people and animals that they study.

Consideration of ethics in the purposes and conduct of educational research raises a number of questions. Considering the ethical implications of interpretation in research raises other questions. The first category involves how research is done; the second involves the ethical implications of how and what kind of sense researchers make of the research results. This chapter addresses both ethics in the conduct of research and the less familiar topic of ethics in interpretation.

So What Are Research Ethics?

If ethics are principles that dictate how people should act in ways that are not harmful to others, and if ethics also guide how questions of the "good" are addressed and how the benefits and disadvantages accrued in society are earned

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and distributed, then in research, ethical considerations concern how such everyday and principled concerns about the “good” translate into research practice. Most typically, ethical concerns have primarily addressed *how* research is done, and what will happen to participants during its conduct, rather than what happens to the data after they are collected, what meaning is assigned to them, how they are used, and what consequences those interpretations have for human beings. In this chapter, ethical concerns about how research is done are roughly divided into *procedural* or formal matters and *everyday* or ordinary (Lambek 2010) matters. In the pages that follow, we first address the differences between formal or procedural and informal or everyday ethics. We also consider whether epistemological differences mandate different approaches to ethics. We then examine the less often addressed issues of what interpretation really means and how it provides a fertile arena for the exploration of ethics. Finally, we explore what some standard concerns about ethics mean in the twenty-first century, as they are redefined when researchers must address concerns of groups, not individuals, in their studies.

Procedural Ethical Matters

Procedural or formal ethics are embodied in formal codes that primarily govern *how* research is done, *by whom*, *for what reasons*, and *what happens* to people as a consequence of their being studied in a research project. They are embodied in institutional rules governing the care of human subjects and the procedures that researchers must follow to assure the beneficent, socially just, and non-oppressive treatment of living subjects of research. For example, existing rules preclude researchers from engaging in research on people who have not consented, or who cannot consent, to participation in the investigation. Researchers cannot engage in research involving deception of research subjects, except where the research both has great social and scientific value, and the research cannot be carried without such deception regarding the actual purpose of the research. Further, participants must not agree to participation in research because they are coerced, either directly or indirectly, such that they hope for a reward for participation, even if it is not promised. Teachers who wish to study their own students, for example, must guard against having students agree to be studied because they believe that not doing so might adversely affect their grades (or the contrary, that participating will benefit their grades). Researchers must inform potential participants of the risks of participating in a study, including risks attendant to the public disclosure of an individual’s identity or private behavior. These rules are enforced by governmental requirements governing researcher conduct carried out by anyone affiliated with an institution that receives federal funds, whether for the specific research project or not. As well, formal ethical principles govern contractual relationships in which researchers engage and what happens to data after they are collected. These contractual relationships involve who can use the data for their own purposes and publication, who gets credit for having implemented and written up the results

of the project, and to whom and how research results can be disseminated. As will be described later, conformity with these codes is monitored by agencies at the federal and local level. Formal, procedural ethical considerations also are embodied in codes of disciplinary practice established by professional associations.

Procedural ethics are of critical concern in the initial stages of developing and getting approval for a study. They also affect every single step of a research process, from the choice of research site, design, and methods, through the personal stance of the researcher and the roles played in the field, to the strategies used for the analysis of data and, ultimately, the way analyzed data are interpreted and disseminated. Procedural ethics also can, as we shall argue, affect how data are interpreted and how those interpretations are used.

Do Different Kinds of Research Require Different Ethical Considerations?

Key questions for the conduct of research include whether or not different kinds of ethics or ethical treatments are mandated for different kinds of research or different research subjects, groups, and sites, the extent to which ethics mandated in research conduct differ from those mandated in everyday life and upon whom or to what ethical considerations must be focused. Framing the question of ethics in the conduct of research as above is a departure from practice in past eras, when the sole ethical responsibility of researchers simply was to conduct high-quality research that generated findings that were credible within disciplinary guidelines and to professional peers. Viewed this way, researchers first and foremost owed ethical allegiance to their discipline, or to science in general. Such a concern foregrounds the overall methodological rigor with which studies were conducted and the integrity of the researcher. Unethical research, then, was research that was poorly conducted or falsified; it compromised the truth value not only of that particular investigation but of science in general.

In the twentieth century, however, the focus of ethic considerations began to shift. While disciplinary *integrity* still was the gold standard for good research, adherence to impeccable disciplinary *practice* no longer provided the sole guideline for ethical research. Rather, the prevention of physical harm to human research participants, rather than simply to disciplinary rigor, began to assume greater and greater importance. Concern for human subjects of research focused initially on medical research and the harm it could do to the living beings upon which experimentation was conducted. From the yellow fever studies of Dr. Walter Reed in the 1900s, in which humans first were asked for their consent to participate in medical research (Pierce and Writer 2005) through the infamous Tuskegee syphilis studies (Jones 1981; Rothman 1982) and Nazi medical experiments, in which the prisoners who were used as research subjects not only did not give their consent but were unwitting or unwilling subjects of horrific experimentation

(Baumslag 2005; Annas 1992; Hagstrom et al. 1969; Haney et al. 1973; Krugman and Ward 1961), to more contemporary studies of nutrition and HIV/AIDS (Levine 1998; Lurie and Wolfe 1997), the rules for conduct of medical research have become more and more stringent as the level of harm that could be inflicted upon human and animal subjects of medical experiments was revealed.

Arising from the Nuremberg Tribunal, the Nuremberg Code of 1947 was the first to establish conditions for the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects, with an emphasis on the absolute requirement that participation in research studies be voluntary. The Declaration of Helsinki (DoH) (World Medical Association 1997), promulgated by the United Nations in 1964, provided not only ethical guidelines for physicians engaged in research but also required that there be independent review of research protocols to assure that the proposals were ethical and consent was given by participants themselves or their legal guardians, in the case of participants who were minor children or mentally incompetent. The International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects reinforced these standards. However, none of these declarations provided any enforcement mechanisms.

As a remedy, in the late 1970s, the United States government created the Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, the first public national body to shape bioethics policy in the USA. Popularly called the Belmont Commission, this group produced the *Belmont Report*, a set of guidelines for the ethical conduct of research on humans. It also created the Office of Human Research Protection, a federal governmental agency to guide and enforce the report's provisions. Belmont Report's guidelines have been written into the United States Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as Title 45, Part 46 (United States Code of Federal Regulations 2009).

Most researchers are aware of the ethical guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report (<http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/belmont.html> 1978). The principles detailed in that report provide a foundation for ethical oversight regarding principles of volunteerism, beneficence, and equity. These have been translated roughly into issues of informed consent of participants, avoidance of unnecessary risk to research participants, protection of the privacy and identity of participants, voluntary participation, the humane and just treatment of participants, and a social justice requirement that no single group should alone reap the benefits or bear the risks of participation in research. Like the concerns of the Nuremberg Tribunal and those underpinning the Declaration of Helsinki, the ethical focus in the Belmont Report echoed that of the medical profession; its understanding of research design, which generally was limited to controlled experiments and randomized clinical trials; and its definition of risk as that of physical harm. Its tenets required that researchers seek to do no harm to research participants beyond the risks experienced in everyday life; where risk was necessary, it should, in all cases, be minimized, and consent to any incurred risk at all, including the mere fact of donating time for participation in a project, must be given by research participants prior to the research experience.

No researcher whose institution receives funding from the United States government is exempt from the Belmont Principles or the oversight of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at individual research institutions and universities; these boards approve, oversee, and monitor research practice to assure that human subjects are appropriately and ethically treated, whether the research is carried out in the USA or other countries.

Identifying Risk Issues in Social and Behavioral Research

Because they seldom involved issues of life or death, or even had the potential for causing physical harm, the social sciences and behavioral sciences were not initially defined as involving serious risk. However, and important for educational researchers, many social and behavioral studies ultimately were shown to have great potential for harming their participants. The Milgram experiments (1973) which revealed how subjects could be influenced to engage in harmful treatment to other humans when pressured by an “authority figure” demonstrated that participation in research can be both emotionally and psychologically risky to humans. Humphries’ (1970) study of gay men in public places highlighted the importance of maintaining privacy for research subjects engaged in stigmatized or illegal behavior, and a whole range of other studies made it clear that human beings can incur social, emotional, psychological, financial, legal, or cultural harm from participating in research. Studies of political participation can, for example, reveal which people stand in opposition to dictators and subject participants to punishment; studies of school enrollments can disclose which children are themselves, or have parents who are, undocumented residents subject to deportation. Even studies as apparently benign as those involving children’s activities (Schensul et al. 1996) or teachers’ notions of child development (Deyhle and LeCompte 1994) could stigmatize populations whose exercise patterns or ideas about age-appropriate responsibilities diverge from what is considered mainstream, and therefore acceptable, practice or identify groups engaged in illegal activities such as shoplifting and smoking (Adler and Adler 1998). Thus, the guidelines established by the Belmont Report now are applied to the conduct of social science and behavioral research. Space does not allow full coverage of how the focus for ethics in research practice has expanded and been brought under increasing institutional and governmental surveillance. With IRBs often imposing increasingly stringent requirements for how researchers can obtain consent and interact with participations, including the requirement of very long and often arcane consent forms, researchers have begun to push back against what has been characterized as IRB “mission creep.” Many of the expanded requirements evolved because IRBs are afraid of being audited by the Office of Human Research Protection. Researchers argue, however, that what they are being asked to do unnecessarily complicates the researcher/researched relationship and intimidates potential participants, even those asked to join with benign studies. They also argue that the lengthy descriptions of procedures

and safeguards required use language that is poorly understood by participants. (See http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=902995 and <http://qix.sagepub.com/content/13/5/617.short>)

Readers also are referred to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), LeCompte et al. (1999), LeCompte and Schensul (2010, 2013, 2015), Schensul and LeCompte (2015), and Whiteford and Trotter (2008) for further information.

Everyday Ethical Matters

“Everyday” or ordinary ethics involve those principles that address everyday “doing good” in interactions with research participants, audiences for research, and fellow researchers. They are of particular concern for researchers working in natural field settings who need to understand what norms govern everyday good behavior among people in the culture they are studying and who must employ culturally appropriate good manners, social understanding, and empathy for others in order to be successful in their investigations. Field situations create a somewhat artificial residence for ethnographers and qualitative researchers; they live *in* a community and share its everyday life, but they do not intend to be a part *of* it for the long term. Even if they are true participant researchers and hold membership in the community under study, they still have to hold themselves somewhat apart from everyday behavior, even while they live permanently within the community. The state of being in but not of a community has long posed dilemmas for researchers whose work was still informed by positivistic principles mandating neutrality and detachment from research results.

In earlier eras, researchers were admonished to avoid any interactions that could contaminate the “natural” behavior they wished to study. Anthropologists and researchers who engaged in participatory or ethnographic investigations, in particular, struggled with whether or not their involvement and intimacy with participants in the field constituted a violation of positivistic tenets regarding “objectivity.” They struggled to translate “normal” everyday good behavior into the somewhat artificial relationships obtaining in a study site. Emblematic of these struggles, the *Anthropology Newsletter* of the American Anthropological Association has regularly published columns on what could be called everyday ethical dilemmas. The *Newsletter* covered topics such as how deep a researcher’s friendship with participants could go without compromising the authenticity of behavior observed or the validity of the researcher’s interpretation of that behavior. Questions raised included such issues as: Could researchers date their informants, fall in love with them, or even have sex with them without compromising their work? Could they become public advocates for the community they studied? Or did doing so compromise their “neutrality”? Would their close relationships affect how objective their interpretations and observations would be? Other issues had to do with compensating informants, such as whether or not providing needed medicines to

participants who could otherwise not obtain them was a violation of principles of “objectivity.” At what point did reciprocity—exchange of goods and services for access to information—become fee for service or bribery? Would providing an antibiotic ointment to parents in the field site whose child suffered from trachoma violate the tenet that a certain distance be maintained between participant and researcher? What about paying school fees so that an informant’s child could attend school? Or helping participants pay school fees for their children by organizing friends in the USA to purchase the participants’ handicrafts? Was it ethical to pay for information? If so, how much should be paid? Was it ethical to use information that had in some way been bought? Were data obtained through purchase or bribery less likely to be accurate? Were they less likely to be interpreted accurately?

Because of their long-term residence in the field and the often informal contexts in which they interact with participants, participatory researchers have access to much private information about their informants. As devoted listeners and skillful interlocutors, they often become confidantes of participants and privy to “secrets” that ordinary friends would not have. Does an ethnographer studying school reform really need to know that one of the district principals was suspected of having a mental illness? Or that a particular family used illicit drugs? What if that family were the source of allegations of sexual abuse by a teacher? What should a researcher do upon learning that a trusted informant on linguistic issues was suffering the ill effects of an unsafe abortion or in love with a person with whom contact was taboo in their society? How does such information relate to or affect the outcomes for the study in question?

These are relatively ordinary requests and situations, the kind that occur in everyday life. They acquire their ethical profundity only when they are seen as disturbing a nearly neutral stance of the researcher towards the participants as people—a positivistic stance we hold is impossible to maintain—or when the requests involve commitments that researchers find unable to honor. Such a case arose for Ariana Mangual Figueroa (2014) at the end of her 2-year study of an undocumented Mexican family living illegally in the USA. Fearing deportation and consequent separation from their three children, all of whom were US citizens because they had been born in the USA, the parents asked Ariana if she would sign a *carta de responsabilidad*, a document stating that she would assume care and legal guardianship for the children were the parents deported. Although she recognized that this request was a sign of the deep trust the parents had in her, Ariana reluctantly decided that she could not sign such a document. Several weeks before she left her field site, she explained to the parents that she was about to graduate, had obtained a new job that would require her to move to the other side of the country, and was about to be married and begin her own family. Given those factors, she felt she could not take on the possibility—however remote—of also raising the three children in her host family. The mother and father looked disappointed but did not reproach her, and the subject did not arise again (2014). However, the parents’ request, and her refusal to accede to it, has remained distressing to Mangual Figueroa. It is unlikely that a quantitative researcher, or one who engages in experimental research, would develop relationships with

informants as close as those Manual Figueroa developed with her host family. However, such situations did not infrequently arise in the course of any study involving long-term ethnographic research. Other than a decision *not* to complete, or not to publish the results of, a study because doing so would anger, embarrass, or endanger informants, these are among the most difficult ethical dilemmas faced by investigators.

This author faced just such a dilemma after completing a number of years of fieldwork, investigating attempts at school reform in a school district serving an American Indian reservation. The focus of the study had been why many tribal communities which had developed their own teaching methods and curricula, ones that were responsive to their particular language and culture, so easily abandoned their own efforts when confronted by mainstream and whitestream demands for comprehensive school reform (Aguilera 2003). LeCompte argued that tribal communities were so accustomed to having their own efforts deprecated by whites that they lacked the self-confidence—and funding—to withstand pressure to abandon their native language instruction and instructional content in favor of a Eurocentric, English-only approach. The school district LeCompte was studying had spent 5 years working on a language and culture approach, but then dropped it overnight for an approach called “The Modern Red School House.” Developed by E. D. Hirsch and promoted by the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank, the Modern Red School House is a Comprehensive School Reform Model that emphasizes high achievement and a core curriculum (www.mrsh.org). She had intended to point out that the disparity of esteem between whites and Native Americans impeded effective school reforms more generally, but learned that her research would be taken as highly critical of Native Americans [not at all her intent] after a confrontation with two Native Americans who were visitors at a professional conference where she described the research. While neither of the two individuals came from the community LeCompte had studied [they were, in fact, school bus drivers who worked in an adjacent community and were pursuing college degrees near the conference venue], they felt that LeCompte’s conclusions were racist because they implied that all Native Americans suffered from low self-esteem. They particularly objected to LeCompte’s use of the metaphor, “circling the wagons”—a term which she used to describe how resistant mainstream educators were to indigenous efforts to support their own culture. Aware that other indigenous people might have concluded similarly, LeCompte dropped the metaphor, and she ultimately abandoned the idea of publishing her findings because the topic was too controversial and likely to be viewed as a negative critique of individuals who still worked in the school district under investigation—people who did not deserve such treatment (LeCompte 1993a, b).

Conventionally, all of the above-described concerns have been framed as one-way interactions, in which the researcher has the power to decide how to respond. Thus, power flows *from* the researcher *to* those being studied in ways that perpetuate the asymmetry between researcher and researched, no matter how much researchers might try to articulate the concerns of participants or downplay

the authorial voice of the researcher. While such top-down interaction still characterizes the relationships described in research methods texts and the practices of Institutional Review Boards, they do not fully address the dynamics of current collaborative participatory research, many kinds of action research, or research that is approved and monitored by groups from the participant communities themselves. While the kinds of personal relationships developed through long-term fieldwork—as described above—still can arise, problematic power asymmetries are less likely to exist. However, reducing power asymmetries does not eliminate the difficulties of achieving a coherent [read: single] interpretation of data when different stakeholders view the world differently (Gibson 1985).

Research Quality as an Ethical Consideration

It always has been true that doing ethical research requires, first and foremost, doing competent research, regardless of whether research is informed by disciplines in the physical or socio-behavioral sciences, or in more applied and multidisciplinary fields of study such as education, community studies, and public health and the environment. Leaving aside research whose investigators deliberately falsified data or faked their conclusions, doing sloppy research is unethical because, even seen in the best light, it wastes the time of those investigated. At its worst, sloppy research can lead to false conclusions or baseless interpretations which, if acted upon, could do harm to the populations studied. Further, the conclusions of poorly conducted research do nothing to advance knowledge or solve practical problems. In fact, poorly designed research or research that is conducted by an unskilled investigator can itself be considered a risk factor for human participants if the design proposed will not answer the research question or if the researcher is too unskilled or too little knowledgeable about the topic or culture to carry out the study adequately. In addition, it is not ethical to ask people to participate in research that is unlikely to generate anything useful, and it also is unethical to so overwork a participant population that they may be unwilling to participate in other, more valuable, studies. Thus, it is an ethical imperative that researchers know how to do what they propose to do, that they demonstrate familiarity with literature in the field and previous studies, and that they have a well-reasoned rationale for their study, one that either promises to advance knowledge or provide practical solutions to human problems. This imperative holds, regardless of the type or topic of the research proposed.

It is important to state here that no specific kind of research inherently poses greater or fewer ethical challenges than others. The crucial issue is that whatever the type or topic, research projects should adhere closely to best practices dictated by the discipline that informs them. Notwithstanding, conventional wisdom often posits that some kinds of research lead to more ethical problems than others. We next address and dismiss this concern.

Ethics and Epistemology: Do Some Kinds of Research Face Greater Ethical Challenges than Others?

It is certainly true that qualitative researchers usually have considerably more social contact than quantitative researchers with the people they study and, as a consequence, have more opportunities to run afoul of social situations with ethical valence. These are the types of situations that raise issues of everyday ethics. Qualitative researchers also experience increased face-to-face exposure to the personalities and culture of research participants, exposure that is likely to help them develop greater sensitivity to culture than quantitative researchers and therefore to be more attuned to certain ethical issues. That said, there is no inherent difference between the two kinds of research with regard to difficulties in adhering to ethical standards.

A better way of thinking about the real differences in research types and their designs may be to consider the nature of the data they use. Quantitative research generates “hard” or easily measurable numeric data because it is concerned with directly observable phenomena: how many of what kinds of units do how many things, or how many units possess what degree of a specific characteristic. Qualitative data, by contrast, are considered to be “softer,” in that they are concerned with phenomena that can only be measured indirectly. The presence or absence of such phenomena can only be identified by assessing their *impact* on empirically observable phenomena, which requires defining them in such a way that their manifestations can be observed. Observing its manifestations, rather than a phenomenon itself, can lead to accusations that the investigations lack rigor or that they are “soft.” Do the indicators chosen to represent a phenomenon actually measure them? Does the fact that researchers invent indirect measures for a phenomenon raise questions about researcher subjectivity? What if the researcher simply lacks knowledge of how phenomena might be made manifest? While this hard/soft distinction between types of data is indeed an accurate portrayal of data characteristics and whether they are based on direct or indirect measurement, the hard/soft distinction does not constitute a real dichotomy with regard to fundamental differences in research designs. This is because *all* quantitative research begins with qualitative evidence that has been transformed into numeric information (LeCompte and Schensul 2010; Schensul, J et al. 2013; Schensul and LeCompte 2013) or numbers that do not reflect “real” quantities. For example, Likert scales generate data that resemble numbers, but they actually represent *ranges of qualities*, not real quantities. Similarly, math, science, and language test scores look like the most quantitative of data, but they are based upon qualities and degrees of understanding, not real measurements of a fixed quantity. So-called quantitative measures still are based upon specific understandings and interpretations held by researchers as to what exists, what is worth studying, and how it might be operationalized and rendered observable.

Who Consents? Individuals? Groups? Or Communities?

One area in which a greater sensitivity to culture can make some researchers more attuned to ethical dilemmas is in the area of “consent.” Increasingly, researchers are asked to consider the ethical implications of their work for whole communities. And in some cases, for example, in field-based substance abuse or violence research, the research ethics section of a proposal describes the risks and protections for study staff as well as community residents and the community as a whole. Below we discuss the variety of permissions that might be required for the approval of the procedures to be followed; we then examine how these consent procedures do not match very well with cultures built upon collective will and communal consent.

Conventional Practice for Procedural Ethics

Researchers generally are required to obtain a variety of formal permissions before entering the field. The more stakeholders involved in a study, the more complicated this process can be. Both students and experienced researchers will need the approval of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) or Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs). IRBs are bodies associated with universities and research organizations that review proposals for human subjects and research ethics concerns. *It is usually not the responsibility of IRBs to comment on the scientific merit of the proposal*—unless the project is so poorly designed as to be harmful to potential participants; rather, the task of IRBs is to review all aspects of the study from the perspective of *protecting human subjects from harm*.

IRBs are especially concerned with the parts of proposals related to sampling and recruitment, types and intrusiveness of data collection procedures, how accurately the researcher represents the study to potential participants, and the measures taken to assure the security of data and the privacy of personal information collected from those studied. They also review and approve interview schedules, both open ended and closed ended, and other protocols for collecting elicitation and geographic data, material culture, and local archival data. IRBs always review the written consent forms and oral consent scripts to be used with individual respondents or study participants in order to ensure that participant participation is voluntary, not coerced, and that participants can comprehend the purposes of the study and what researchers plan to do with and to them. In joint or collaborative projects, IRBs in each of the partner institutions will usually want to review the study independently. Some Institutional Review Boards or Institutional Ethics Committees have more rigorous and detailed requirements than others, especially those in medical schools or clinical settings that typically review clinical trial or treatment protocols. These reviews can take time, often weeks and even months, to be completed, especially if more than one review committee is involved. Without IRB or IEC approvals, data collection in the field cannot begin.

Researchers may have to obtain formal permissions other than those granted by their own IRBs or IECs. Most school districts and hospitals have their own IRBs; seeking to carry out research within their facilities will require approval by these bodies. Many Native American or First Nations groups in the USA and Canada have their own procedures for reviewing studies, formal collaboration and cost sharing, and ethical review. Cross-institutional collaborations generally involve contracts or formal documents granting permission to work together, to collect data in the institution, and to comply with institutional requirements. International work may require a substantive review of a study at the national level and permission granted through the applicant country's embassy before a project will be funded. Obtaining these formal permissions requires good contacts and relationships both at the governmental and community level and can take a long time to complete. Researchers should start early to build their relationships, identify and obtain the necessary approvals, and prepare and submit their studies for ethics review by the proper bodies. It is not unheard of that a researcher may have to wait beyond the period for which a study was funded to obtain all approvals required for the initiation of the project—a situation to be avoided at all costs. Discussions with other researchers who have worked in a setting or country as well as project funders while in the development phase of a project can help to avoid such problems.

Consent Beyond the Individual: “Traditional” Versus “Modern” Notions of Consent

Procedures enforced by all of the above-described agencies are built on the idea that the consenting unit whose privacy, safety, and agency must be protected is a single individual—or that individual's guardian, where the potential participant is deemed unable to grant consent by virtue of age, disability, or custodial status. Most of our “ethical” guidelines are “self-centering,” imbued with concerns for the primacy of individual free will, privacy rights, and agency that conform to Western philosophical traditions. Because concerns over ethical treatment of human subjects arose originally from medical and experimental research procedures, these concerns are understandable; such research attends primarily to individual differences among groups with varying degrees of susceptibility, pathology, or response to treatment. The *Belmont Report*, which informs the procedures followed by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), also was modeled on the concept of individual agency and consent. Thus, the definition of consent and how it is granted and acted upon is based on the participation, consent, protection, and treatment of an *individual* subject or participant. However, most social and behavioral scientists study *groups*, and initial consent from and protection of privacy for an individual frequently does not protect the privacy, safety, and agency of groups whom those individuals represent. Though the unit studied in most research is an individual, research *results* are reported in terms of the characteristics of the *groups* from which individual subjects are selected, not merely the individuals themselves. Further, interpretive

research focuses on the culture, behavior, and beliefs of groups, not single individuals, and the consequences of the research could accrue to the entire group under study, not just its individual members. In addition, differences between the above-described Western concepts of individuality and those of other cultures mean that the former concepts often do not have the same power for many cultural groups that they do with Western researchers. Often no single person is empowered to speak for or give consent on behalf of a group. The literature is replete with examples in which government officials, researchers, or social service agencies obtained consent from someone who purported to have the authority to speak on behalf of a group and who in fact represented only certain interests, or even only themselves. Further, the results of research can have profound and stigmatizing impact on whole groups, even though those studied were individuals.

A rather notorious case involved a study of diabetes among the Hualapai tribe of Native Americans, a group living in extreme isolation in the Grand Canyon of Arizona. The Hualapai, whose people had very high rates of diabetes, had developed considerable trust with the researchers and their anthropologist intermediaries and gave them access to a very wide range of sensitive information, including DNA samples and life histories of social, behavioral, and dietary practices as well as measures of social dysfunction and mental illness. Only the issue of diabetes was to be addressed by the researchers. Unfortunately, the laboratory that ran the assays of DNA material sold the data to other researchers outside of the study, without consent of the original researchers or the Hualapai. The Hualapai sued the university sponsoring the research, the researchers, the IRB at the university, and everyone involved over violations of the rules of consent and promises of confidentiality. The original researchers from the University of Northern Arizona ultimately were exonerated when the source of the violations turned out to be the contracted laboratory. But the damage already had been done. An entire people had been stigmatized, since research on a few Hualapai was generalized, whether legitimately or not, to all Hualapai.

The Hualapai case raises issues concerning how, and even if it is possible, to obtain consent, act responsibly, and represent a group accurately and appropriately. At one level, researchers face the issue of gatekeepers and decision makers. Who within the community has the power to grant access to a population, under what conditions, and for what purposes? Is it a single individual? Or do different individuals have responsibilities for different aspects of community life? Have decisions been delegated to a particular body, such as a community ethics board or research access agency? Or are decisions made collectively, by the entire community *en banque*? Can the researchers' own notions of what constitutes a gatekeeper or even consent serve as guides for interacting with cultural groups of which researchers are not a part? To what extent can researchers be sure that other parties involved in a study, however peripherally, will adhere to the same ethical standards as the principal investigator and his or her team? Researchers working with First Nations groups in Canada have been pioneers in exploring and addressing how to conduct research in such circumstances (see Noe et al. 2006; Trimble and Fisher 2006).

These issues become especially relevant when groups are demographically heterogeneous or divided in their opinions about the course of action to take with

regard to participation in a research project. In many cases, divided opinion may, in fact, represent serious cleavages within the community over whether or how to adhere to traditional practice or embrace change. Some groups, especially among indigenous people, increasingly are establishing their own controls over access to their communities, controls based on understandings of their own needs and culture; these include IRB-like bodies of their own from which researchers are required to obtain clearance prior to beginning a study. However, even these bodies may not represent all constituencies in a community. How to proceed in such circumstances raises both practical and ethical considerations.

Some of the practical considerations include whether or not to proceed at all with a project that uses only those members of the group who have given consent—if, indeed, issues of access under such conditions can be overcome. Having a few uncooperative or unwilling community members might not create design or validity problems. However, if those few represent all of a particular sector, or if they are particularly powerful individuals, risks to the study are both practical and methodological. Obviously, the lack of cooperation from a large proportion of a community, or of a powerful segment of whatever size, is problematic. Such a practice runs the risk of generating results that only represent a particular sector of the population and also of having the non-consenting individuals choose to sabotage further actions in the project through persuading others in the community of the evil or non-beneficent intentions of the researcher.

Aside from practical ones, ethical considerations involve whether or not to do the study at all if significant objection to it is expressed by potential participants. In these cases, it is not possible to simply plan a top-down research project and impose it on a community, no matter how worthwhile it might seem to be. In fact, no kind of participatory research at all can be undertaken with and among the unwilling. However, skilled participatory researchers may be able to learn enough about the culture and its dynamics, as well as to devote sufficient time to develop rapport and trust within the community, that a project eventually can be implemented. While this slower but more certain way of proceeding is not how many Western-trained researchers are accustomed to operate, contemporary cultural dynamics now dictate increased parity between researchers and the researched. This means that researchers increasingly are required to privilege the sensibilities of community participants over their own customary practices and scientific or academic needs.

Interpretation of Research

What Is Interpretation?

Interpretation means going beyond “just the facts” of the data, whether quantitative or qualitative. By themselves, data that have been analyzed but left

uninterpreted are mere results. Alone, they have very little meaning. The mere fact that a particular community was divided in how it explained a series of disasters occurring in its school district is not very meaningful. Neither is the fact that different stakeholders' experience of and perspectives regarding "what happened" during particular educational reforms vary widely. This would be expected, given stakeholders' different points of view, ways of articulating with the reforms, and particular vested interests. In a sense, such results often only explicate the obvious. To go beyond the obvious, researchers must respond to the questions: "So what?" and "Why is this important?" and "What do these findings mean for future actions?"

Researchers "go beyond" results by explaining them to a variety of readers using various levels of theory. The process begins with the conceptual framework that initially informed the study and its research questions; it may include additional concepts and theories that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study, but emerge as crucial as data collection and analysis proceed. It then links findings to existing literature and paradigmatic understandings. The first level of interpretation consists of local theory, or concrete explanations of specific events given by local people and participants. Higher-level, middle-range, or substantive theories step away from the local scene and explain events in terms of the wider community and the discipline informing the study. The third, or paradigmatic, level examines the findings in terms of what the social sciences generally say when comparing studies in similar situations that generated similar results. This requires examination of prior literature as well as theory. As the explanations they generate go from the local and concrete to more abstract and generalizable, studies become more and more capable of altering or modifying existing understandings and even generating new theoretical explanations. In this way, knowledge is advanced.

Another way of looking at interpretation involves researcher stance. For positivists, the three levels of theory outlined above are sufficient as a guide to interpretation. Their primary allegiance is to science and their own discipline's notions of rigor and validity and also to ideas of individual rights and the assumed equality between researchers and participants (D'Andrade 1995). As we have discussed, such a position is congruent with Western notions of the primacy of the individual and the "self-centering" of the researcher's perspective on the field. Interpretive and critical researchers, by contrast, owe greater allegiance to solidarity with the community under study, issues of justice, and responsibility for improving the conditions in which research participants live (Scheper-Hughes 1995). Such a stance recognizes the power that having knowledge of other people gives to researchers and argues that researchers have a primary responsibility to those "others" in all aspects of their investigation. These differing stances have profound impact on how interpretation is viewed and used. Before we go beyond the epistemological differences described above, however, we should discuss the degree to which interpretation is recognized as required in all, or only part, of the research process.

Interpretation in Research Design

All of the data researchers collect are themselves essentially interpretations of events, either because they are filtered through the experiences, memories, aspirations, and agendas of informants as they are recounted to investigators or because they are filtered through the experiences, memories, aspirations, and agendas of the researchers themselves. Further, researchers interpret their results by assigning meanings to whatever data are generated by a study, and at their best, they do so for a variety of audiences. Given the foregoing, we hold that *all research is interpretive*, if only because researchers act on interpretations of phenomena to determine what they will find intriguing to study. Nevertheless, some kinds of research rely more on researcher judgment than others. For example, historical research is inherently interpretive, given the nature of the data historians rely upon. These include primary sources (like diaries, letters, newspapers, and other contemporary accounts of events) for which researchers must provide an initial layer of interpretation; to the extent that the research uses secondary sources that already have been analyzed and interpreted by a different researcher, a second level of interpretation is added. Usually, these resources are all historians have to work with as regards data. Historians then impose yet a third layer of interpretation—their own understanding of what makes sense as well as that of their discipline—on the data they do have. In some regards, these layers of interpretation parallel the stages of theory building just enumerated: from local explanations to middle-range or substantive theory and from there to paradigmatic and discipline-based explanations. The story historians tell, then, is a fabric of their weaving, embroidered upon the work of previous investigators and linked to theories extant in their discipline. Reality, or what “really happened,” is no more and no less than the scholar’s interpretation of a documentary composite and his or her account of how it makes sense; except in oral histories, rarely are living participants available to provide a direct “I was there!” account of events.

Other research designs explicitly seek out as data what are seen as the understandings and experiences of contemporary people. Such research, which collects the interpretations of participants in the events, can be characterized as interpretive, depending on the degree to which the research results foreground the interpretations or meaning makings of research participants. Interpretive research designs, including ethnography, clinical psychology, and field sociology, rely on face-to-face interviews, notes of observations in human settings, and other modalities that produce data that are in close temporal proximity to the event being studied. Drawing on Max Weber’s (1949, 1968) concept of *verstehen* or intersubjective understanding (Ryles 1949) and drawing from the hermeneutic tradition of Wilhelm Dilthey, such research has been called “interpretive” because its focus is on eliciting the particular world view and understandings of participants, rather than relying only on what researchers thought they saw and understood. Weber’s notion of *verstehen* required researchers to hold their own sense making, values, and personal reactions in abeyance until they could “stand in the shoes” or “get into

the head” of the particular informants. This is because what the researcher observed had little valid meaning without being connected to what local people thought and did. However, once a portrayal of the participants’ world view had been constructed, researchers could then step back into their own discipline and tell their story. The point of the fieldwork, then, was to elicit information that would bring readers into touch with the lives of strangers and make them familiar to outsiders (Geertz 1973, p. 16).

Unfortunately, what the “story” to be told is not always straightforward or obvious. Ethnographers often struggle with how best to portray a combination of their own or disciplinary understandings—often referred to as *etic* perspectives—and the stories told and understandings held by informants, referred to as an *emic* perspective, when the two sets of understandings and explanations are in conflict. An example of this kind of dilemma was faced by this researcher while studying and working with communities on the Navajo Nation in the southwestern USA.

The Pinnacle school district had experienced a number of disasters: the roof on the brand-new gym leaked and ruined the very expensive basketball floor—a key issue in a community in which basketball was a very important sport. A teacher had tried to commit suicide by jumping off the roof of one of the school buildings. A well-respected and very popular student had died in car accident. And rumors swirled about pedophilia and drug use among teachers. Why these misfortunes occurred was explained differently by two constituencies in the communities. Most of the Anglo administrators and staff members in the school district felt that the explanations—and hence, the solutions to the problems—were issues of contractor incompetence, mental instability on the part of the teachers, inexperience on the part of the teenaged driver, and a group of disaffected and very traditional parents initiating rumors. These explanations were based on rational, scientific, and technical insights such as those which initially were held by this researcher and which constituted an *etic* understanding. By contrast, the Navajo teachers, staff members, and key components in the community felt that all of the seemingly unconnected adverse events could be attributed to an underlying factor: a lack of harmony, or *hozho*, in the community. Balance in the universe had been deranged because taboos had been violated and important cultural norms transgressed—an *emic* explanation rooted in local cultural understandings. Only a traditional Blessing Way ceremony would restore the balance of harmony in the community and end the string of disasters. The two communities resolved the conflict in cultural explanations by implementing two sets of solutions. The technical rational response from the administration included instituting better screening for contractor competence and a program of more closely scrutinizing potential teachers for mental health problems and potential instability. Anti-drinking campaigns for students also were initiated, and discussions were held with parents to better understand what some of their concerns about relationships between teachers and students were. By contrast, the more traditional Navajos in the community organized a week-long Blessing Way ceremony, and the superintendent of schools, a Navajo, represented the district by volunteering to be the “patient” whose disconnection with the universe needed to be restored in the ceremony. The researchers ended up by telling both stories

(LeCompte and McLaughlin 1994) as an illustration of the complexities involved in figuring out “what’s going on” during fieldwork. However, they were not called upon to come up with a single solution to the problems, as often is the case.

The problem which the example above highlights is, “Which story should be foregrounded?” Such a question poses considerable difficulty for positivists, who long held that some kind of underlying truth is present in all phenomena; the task of researchers simply was to uncover that truth and to get the story “right.” This meant transforming the “other” into something that is the “same” as, or at least familiar to, the “self” of the researcher—erasing differences, in a sense. However, interpretive research often involves studying groups, and groups rarely are homogeneous with regard to opinions, values, or perspectives, as the example above demonstrates. Interpretive researchers more and more frequently find that what the field “says” to them consists of a cacophony of stories that disagree with and contest each other, depending upon the vantage points, experiences, and positionality of both participants and researchers. No collective and uniform story from the field exists; thus no one story really is “right.” The task of interpretation is greatly complicated by the fact that all communities subsume multiple truths and multiple realities, including that of the researcher. Which one should be reported? Whose sense of reality is privileged over another?

In the Pinnacle community, the conflict in explanations troubled the researcher more than the community, which implemented two solutions, thus according equal importance to both traditional and bureaucratic rational explanations. Such an approach is increasingly realistic in a world where multiple, powerful, and competing realities require more delicate treatment than a simple declaration of winners and losers.

Epistemological Considerations: Emic and Etic Approaches

Anthropology has long addressed some parts of these questions—as the community in Pinnacle did—by recognizing the legitimacy of insider–outsider, or emic/etic positions. Emic, or insider, perspectives are those embedded in the culture and experiences of the people studied; they constitute what “makes sense” in their local setting. Etic, or outsider, perspectives are those applied to the community being studied by researchers or others external to the community. Insider–outsider or emic/etic positions affect what story is told, to whom, and for which purposes. Given the heterogeneity of groups and communities, and the contested nature of many phenomena in which interpretive researchers are interested, issues of validity arise regarding the fit between what researchers find and understand (the etic) and the research participants’ own experiences and understandings (the emic). Interpretations based on the cultural frames and understandings of the participants only (the emic perspective) can be internally consistent and perfectly logical, but in direct contradiction to the cultural frames and understandings of wider cultural, political, or legal communities (the etic perspective) in which the “little

community” (Redfield 1956) is embedded—and which therefore is externally invalid. Thus, interpretation has come to involve more than simply finding or generating a theory which seems to fit with or explain what happened in the site from the researcher’s perspective; rather, questions now focus on whose story should be foregrounded and how. These problems are particularly acute when the language and/or culture of the researcher differ substantially from that of the researched. This lack of congruity can morph into ethical issues when the political, legal, or cultural consequences of the story or stories told for the participants are considered. Polygamy among Mormons, homeschooling among evangelical Christians, initiation rituals involving scarification and circumcision among African tribes, migration across national boundaries in search of better economic circumstances, wearing of headscarves by Muslim female students, the limited schooling permitted by Amish communities for their children, and the granting of “personhood” to rivers and mountains by indigenous groups (or, for that matter, the granting of personhood to corporations in the USA, as was advocated by one of the candidates in the 2012 US presidential election) all can be explained in terms of their practical and survival value for a specific people, a culture or its beliefs. Most have been declared illegal by the “larger community” for reasons of conflict with the culture, economics, religion, or politics of dominant groups in society. Thus, interpretations always have consequences for the people being studied; the political economics and power asymmetries within a community affect which set of reasons or interpretations should prevail. If communities are isolated, these practices may be able to survive without interference. However, to the extent that they overlap with more powerful communities, such practices can be outlawed in the interests of the “greater good” of the mainstream—as is the case when bodies of water held sacred by indigenous groups are polluted and destroyed by mining corporations because they contain gold. Clearly, those interpretations with the greatest power behind them are more likely to be accepted. However, other interpretations which represent emerging constituencies or power groups can pose a threat to existing power relationships, especially insofar as they threaten the values and structure of privilege in the larger community. In these cases, prevailing regimes can make their adherents into scapegoats to deflect criticism—as is the case when religious or cultural minorities are held responsible for social unrest. Looking at the differences in these interpretations often can help to identify serious cleavages in the society and, as well, areas in which researchers could identify the greatest weakness in the prevailing regime.

Good Interpretation

Contemporary researchers, then, face a serious question: what, then, makes an interpretation “good?” As we have pointed out, in the not-too-distant past, researchers could posit that good interpretation served to discover some single foundational and fixed meaning underpinning data or textual evidence. Such a single and fixed meaning could not be identified in the Pinnacle community.

As is increasingly the case, particularly in the social sciences, interpretation resides in more pragmatic, temporally bounded, polyvocal, and dynamic presentations. What *is* now is conceived of as dynamic, often contextual, and even more frequently multiple. Meaning making is the province of all stakeholders in an investigation, from researchers to participants to users of findings. More common than the search for a single interpretation is the question whether an interpretation is, “Good for whom or good for what?” For funding agencies? For the discipline? For the applied field in question—education, for example? For the people studied? For which sectors among the people studied? For the individual researcher’s career? The criteria for determining the answers to such questions, naturally, are themselves subject to different understandings.

Criteria for Goodness

So far in this work we have suggested that good interpretations involve:

- (a) Being true to the data
- (b) Providing a coherent interpretation
- (c) Remaining true to, or respecting, the subjects’ view of things, at least insofar as member checks are done to assure the validity of the researcher’s interpretation
- (d) Articulating the views of the multiple voices in the field setting and being fair in representing emic, etic, and other versions of what happened
- (e) In action or collaborative research, *privileging* participant perspectives
- (f) In collaborative and participatory action research, empowering participants to become researchers of their own communities and contexts

However, regardless of the researcher’s epistemological stance, at one level, criteria for assessing the quality of interpretation rest with definitions of good research in general. Good interpretation is linked closely to and supported by evidence. It is based on clear and plausible argumentation. It makes sense at the local level (emic) and to external constituencies (the etic level). It is supported by theoretical understandings from the disciplines, or grounded logically in data from the field, or both. It considers all points of view. It advances understanding of the specific phenomenon under study, and in some cases, it “does good” by promoting or improving educational processes and human institutions. It also takes into consideration the different cultural conditions and contexts in which the study was embedded. And, as will be discussed later, it also depends on the degree to which ethical principles are considered in the consequences that could emanate from turning interpretations into policies and applying them in practice.

Handling the Task of Recounting Multiple Realities

Whether they like it or not, and regardless of the ethics involved in arrogating the voice of others, researchers always find themselves in a position of asymmetrical power vis-à-vis the community they study. *They* tell the story. And in so doing, they create a reality for the participants vis-à-vis the outside world that can speak more powerfully and for longer periods than anything participants can articulate. Weber's suggestion that researchers "bracket" their own persona and moral concerns, separating them from an objective consideration of and portrayal of events, is insufficient. It also is insufficient to simply "step in" and then "step out" of participants' lives and perspectives, as Weber's notion of *verstehen* suggests doing. Even if they are "studying up" to elite groups or people with more structural power than their own, the stories, in the end, still are created by the researcher, whose interpretation—however elaborate—stands as the last word. No matter how much research participants contribute to a story, *what* researchers study, and the data they collect always are filtered in such a way as to create at least an implicit narrative, and their recounting of that narrative creates the final portrayal of the community—at least until contradicted or modified by subsequent research.

The Researcher, the Self, and the "Other"

In earlier eras, that the researcher created the story to be told was not problematic; it was, in fact, the researcher's primary task. However, critical and postmodern researchers now ask researchers to take sides. They argue that it is unethical and arrogant to speak for a community that is not one's own, and that doing so silences the voices of true community participants (Said 1979, 1994; Spivak 1988). This raises the problem of the "self" and the "other" and is called the essentially colonizing force that is constituted by defining a research site as a field for study and then imposing on the site and its inhabitants a new structure or a set of definitions deriving from the researchers' disciplinary concepts and logics. Clearly this is a direct assault on the "etic" approach itself. Rather than taking the site as it is named by and exists in the minds and lives of participants, the colonizing aspects of fieldwork remap a territory that ethnographers in large part already have drawn up, based on the frameworks of their discipline (Abu-Lughod 1991, p. 37). It is this redefinition of participant reality that critical researchers find to be an arrogation of control over participants' voice. Citing the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1981) and Benson and Lewis O'Neill (2007) also suggest that the "other," defined as "outside of [normal] being," often is so singular, so apart from mainstream experience that it stands alone. It cannot be synthesized, summarized, and made equivalent to the understandings or world views of outsiders. How to portray the outside-of-normal [Western researchers'] experience? How to explain the unintelligible and the seemingly irrational? These questions frame the struggles

that researchers have over “story” and “legitimacy” in a postmodern intellectual world that remains uneasy with the use of raw power and force to resolve differences in perspective, behavior, belief, and status. These questions require that researchers struggle to engage in an ethical redress of balance in the field by doing more than simply developing intersubjective understanding (Ryles 1949; Weber 1949, 1968) with participants, writing up their results, and then leaving.

Contemporary postmodern researchers call for disciplined and critical self-reflection—at least. They also require incurring a new kind of risk—that of letting the “other” touch researchers in ways that changes them. Rather than mere intersubjective understanding, what is required is engagement, care, and openness to being marked by the other’s knowledge and experience. Scheper-Hughes (1995) suggests that such a stance makes the researcher accountable, responsible for, and answerable to the “other” in ways that are prior to any other allegiance. Further, to adopt a stance of neutrality or so-called objectivity is to mark oneself as sovereign, closed off to what matters to and that, in turn, brings death of the imagination and of the ability to care.

Perhaps most unsettling is that being “marked by the other” involves more than a commitment to help communities solve overwhelming social problems. It also requires researchers to include participants in ways that render incomplete researchers’ control over the direction and conclusions of the research. This can be both irritating and emotionally risky, since it forces researchers into critical reflection on the cultural, moral, ideological, and even methodological assumptions guiding their work and on the consequences of its findings. However, actively maintaining openness to being touched by the “other” can lead to better research, because it permits researchers to entertain competing explanations and models, to take seriously what others might consider to be “folk theories,” and to explore alternative epistemologies.

Who to Foreground

One tactic researchers have used to resolve at least part of the power asymmetry has been to eliminate the researcher’s own story altogether in the write-up. By refusing to provide an interpretation, investigators try to let the data “speak for themselves.” The problem is that no data speak for themselves, if only because they have been collected in selective ways that reflect, however unconsciously, the researchers’ own filters. Further, as simple “results,” unanalyzed data mean very little. They are simply the raw materials with which researchers work, using filters from their discipline, experience, feedback from their field, and cultural notions of common sense (Geertz 1973) to determine what is important and what sense can be made of the data. All researchers base what they produce on what they believe audiences will understand and be able to use; these beliefs are, at their heart, simply interpretations of particular perspectives, presented in and for specific contexts.

Further, eschewing interpretation not only is virtually impossible to achieve in any kind of study—some would even say that it represents an abdication of responsibility (Geertz 1989/1990); it also abandons readers to determine the meaning of the story by themselves, deprives them of insights the researcher might have contributed, and makes it impossible to interrogate researcher biases and omissions that might have influenced the story. While not exactly arguing for the primacy of the researcher’s story, Geertz (1989/1990) holds that omitting a carefully argued interpretation by the investigator simply creates poor scholarship.

Other postmodern investigators have tried to establish parity among the “voices” in the field (Lather and Smithies 1997; Bloom 2003; Foley 1994, 1995; LeCompte and McLaughlin 1994) by creating co-constructed or “bi-vocal” and “multivocal” texts that present everybody’s story. These efforts can be effective in presenting multiple versions or interpretations of a story, and they have resulted in creative, dialogical texts, but they do not always tell a coherent story, or, and perhaps more importantly, provide guidance for problem solving, policy formation, or advances in theoretical understanding.

Since all kinds of policy decisions can be made on the basis of their interpretations, researchers have an ethical imperative to make sure that their interpretations are as fair and humanely put as possible. Only the integrity of the researcher in exposing his or her own biases and those of the data sources can protect research from bias, and hence from running the risk of being unethical because it is of poor quality.

When the Field Talks Back

Ethnographers once could be fairly confident that whatever they wrote about a community would remain primarily within the scholarly community. Most of the people whom they studied never would read what they wrote. However, the individuals and communities ethnographers study increasingly are literate, well-connected and educated. Sometimes, they can even write and publish their own accounts of a project, ones that contradicts that of the researcher (Medicine 2001; Gibson 1985). Community leaders, educational administrators, and target populations—all participants in research ventures—also are increasingly politicized (Brosted et al. 1985; Whyte 1991; Greaves 1994; Manderson et al. 1998, LeCompte et al. 1999; LeCompte and Schensul 2015; Schensul and LeCompte 2015). They have learned that they have the right to question, and that research, if conducted properly, can work to their advantage. They also have something to say about how best to carry out aspects of the research since they know their constituents better than the researchers do. The Internet offers to communities from one end of the globe to the other the power of instant communication and access to information never before available. Further, many local communities have had unfortunate interactions with researchers and their projects and are well aware of the adverse consequences that might ensue from participating in a research project.

This history not only might make participants reluctant to become part of a research study, but it also might make the researcher wary of trying to “speak for” or “as if they were members of” a community being studied.

Consequences of Interpretation

This chapter has summarized some of the issues involved in adhering to ethical principles in the *conduct* of research. Beyond the fieldwork phases of research, however, are further ethical issues involving how the *interpretation* of research results will later affect participants. Interpretations of research can have good consequences for some and not for others. In these cases, one must return to philosophy—does one adhere to the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number? Or to compensatory logics that argue for the greatest good going to those who have suffered most? Or those most capable of wresting it from others? Is there some notion of “fairness” or equity that should apply? Should local notions of how good should be apportioned be paramount? Or do mainstream notions of the good prevail? With the Belmont Principle of beneficence in mind, we call for a great deal of cultural historical sensitivity and a certain degree of clairvoyance among researchers with regard to future impacts of their work on the people they study.

Further, while qualitative researchers might originally have more difficulty working through ethical issues in everyday interaction with participants simply because they *do* interact with them daily and over long periods of time, no researchers, no matter what their particular epistemological bent is, are exempt from considering the ethical consequences of their interpretations. Because all research is a human enterprise, all research effectively is interpretive. We hold, therefore, that ethical considerations regarding interpretation apply equally to every research modality and any purpose for which research is put. Every step of any research project is informed by the interpretations researchers make about what is worth studying, how studies should be carried out, and how their results should be understood and applied. Thus, no meaningful distinction can be made between how ethics are handled in qualitative or interpretive, and quantitative or positivistic, research. Although researchers may approach the resolution of ethical problems differently, the fundamental issues faced are similar, regardless of the approach taken. All researchers formulate guiding questions or hypotheses, collect data, and transform it into evidence in support, or for the development, of propositions. Further, all researchers must first generate sets of meaning for their data at the local level, then seek to explain what consequences the propositions might have for middle-range or substantive theory within a discipline, and finally integrate these understandings and consequences into existing paradigmatic and theoretical understandings within science as a whole. All of these steps involve interpretation of what is important to study, how it might best be studied, what theories are most meaningfully applied, and what significance the results actually have. All of these questions can be answered only through the value system and sets of cultural

and personal meanings informing the researcher's work, whether that work is considered to be "qualitative" and "interpretive" or "quantitative" and "logico-deductive" (Sherman and Webb 1988).

Researchers must be cognizant that their research results can both positively and adversely affect the entire people being studied, far beyond the consequences of a study for any given individual. These consequences require special care by researchers with regard to which story is being told, about whom, to whom, and why. We have noted that important concepts to be considered include researcher positionality, conflicts between insider and outsider perspectives, levels of power within a community and between it and the outside world, and questions about the agendas extant in agencies that support and fund research. Fundamentally, the ethical imperative of all interpretation returns to the Belmont Principle of beneficence. This requires researchers to consider the consequences of their research for all levels of human organization and human beings. As we have argued in this chapter, interpretation of research results is an integral part of the research process, and as such, what the research results *mean*, or their interpretation, therefore is not exempt from the ethical test of consequence.

Reflection

This review has shown that ethics enters into the research process in a number of different ways. Some are more conventional: in the responsible conduct of research, researchers must not falsify data or plagiarize; in the responsible treatment of research subjects, risk no harm to subjects which has not been anticipated and to which participants have not consented; remember to respect privacy and confidentiality of participants; and do not claim as valid interpretations which participants have not first vetted. Also conventional, but more pertaining to everyday interaction with participants, researchers are ethically bound to interact fairly and decently with other human beings, in accordance not only with the values of the researcher but also with the norms and practices of the community under study.

Less conventional are more postmodern concerns, which require researchers to reflect whether, in the processes of interpretation, the obligation laid upon researchers is to try to get their interpretations "right" or, if that isn't possible, to adhere to their responsibility to respect and represent a range of interpretations. And most important in the view of these authors is that researchers have an ethical responsibility to be aware of the effects of research and the uses to which research might be used—particularly within the culture where the study was carried out.

In this review, I have resisted the suggestion that some sorts of research face especially difficult or intrinsic kinds of research problems. But I have tried to highlight examples of how researchers who have a greater sensitivity to cultural issues (as, e.g., ethnographers do) are more likely not only to be attuned to certain ethical issues but also to be more able to come to valid conclusions about what actually happened and, further, to suggest ways in which the multiplicity of

descriptions and explanations can serve not to obfuscate in a polyphony of voices but to aid in a more nuanced presentation of the reality in which participants live.

In this text, I hope to have highlighted a range of cultural considerations that ought to be of concern to all kinds of researchers, especially those concerned with the meaning and processes of interpretation—even those who do not think they actually are studying “culture.” The key point of this work is to argue that all research is interpretive, and in this sense, all researchers must be aware of, and interrogate, what they are doing when they interpret data. Most important is that those interpretations have profound consequences for the people in whose histories, values, norms, and behaviors they are embedded. Those consequences are, in fact, the principal focus for ethical considerations in the interpretation of research results.

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“A Demand for Philosophy”: Interpretation, Educational Research, and Transformative Practice

Michael A. Peters

it is men [sic] who change circumstances, and . . . the educator himself needs educating.

—Karl Marx

Marx and Heidegger

In *Theses on Feuerbach* written in the spring of 1845 and the outline of the first chapter of *The German Ideology*, Marx famously writes: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”¹ He begins by bemoaning the chief defect of all forms of materialism to date: that it is conceived objectively as an idea rather than subjectively, as a sensuous human practice, which is the basis for Marx of practical–critical activity. This is in effect the contemporary basis of what we today might call social practice theory, including such varieties as action research. We can get a clearer idea of what is involved when we read the second thesis where Marx writes:

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth—i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.

I want to highlight the impact on *transformative social change* rather than *revolution*. For Marx, as he indicates throughout *Theses on Feuerbach* and as he says directly in VIII, “All social life is essentially practical,” and from the viewpoint of the new materialism, the standpoint is “social humanity.”

¹ See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>

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The touchstone for Marx is, of course, the concept of labor, broadly considered as the means of self-realization and creative self-development. In Marx's anthropology the concept of labor prefigures the human body as the source of social life. Thus, Marx "does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice" (1947, p. 58). The materialist view of history that Marx embraces holds that "social being" determines consciousness: as he writes "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (1947, p. 47) or "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (1963, p. 182). Yet as he says in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: "Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (1968, p. 97).

Now, the famous Eleventh Thesis, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it," has bedeviled philosophy ever since and caused a rift between philosophy, on the one hand, as those merely involved in "interpretation" and "practice" or "self-transformative" practice as Marx terms it, on the other. In other words, this statement seemingly consigns philosophy to interpretation that has little to do with transformative practice. For educational philosophers and for educational theorists, this is a bad rap because on Marx's view it limits philosophy to works of interpretation. For educational researchers more generally, it poses the challenge of how research influences, and improves, the world of educational policy and practice.

Famously, Heidegger, *the* philosopher of interpretation, argues for two distinct styles of hermeneutics. He went on German television in 1969 to rebut Marx's claim, arguing that philosophy is essential in any "concept" of sociopolitical change, including, of course, Marx's own concept of a classless society.² When asked by Richard Wisser, "Do you think philosophy has a social mission?" Heidegger replied:

No! One can't speak of a social mission in that sense! To answer that question, we must first ask: "What is society?" We have to consider that today's society is only modern subjectivity made absolute. A philosophy that has overcome a position of subjectivity therefore has to say no in the matter.

He continued:

Another question is to what extent we can speak of a change of society at all. The question of the demand for world change leads us back to Karl Marx's frequently quoted statement from his Theses on Feuerbach. I would like to quote it exactly and read out loud: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; what matters is to change it." When this statement is cited and when it is followed, it is overlooked that *changing the world presupposes a change in the conception of the world. A conception of the world can only be won by adequately interpreting the world.* (My italics)

That means: Marx's demand for a "change" is based upon on a very definite interpretation of the world, and therefore this statement is proved to be without foundation. It gives

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQsQQqa0UVc> Uploaded on Jan 26, 2007.

the impression that it speaks decisively against philosophy, whereas the second half of the statement presupposes, unspoken, a demand for philosophy.

In a clear sense *Theses on Feuerbach*, which was written in exile—Marx was deported from France in February 1845 to find sanctuary in Belgium—is the first flowering of Marx’s concept of *historical materialism*, posed as a critique of the *contemplative* materialism of the Young Hegelians, including Feuerbach. It would become the basis of Marx’s new philosophy elaborated in *The German Ideology*, which was published for the first time in 1932, and its Eleventh Thesis is engraved on his epitaph at Highgate Cemetery in London.

In Marx’s broader critique of Hegel, he is often interpreted as instituting a break between theoretical philosophy and political or practice philosophy. Against Hegel’s idealism and his view of world history, Marx, according to Engels, turned “the dialectic of Hegel . . . upside down, or rather it was placed upon its feet instead of on its head,”³ emphasizing again the centrality of material conditions and only ideas, and argued that humankind has the capacity to determine history through their collective actions. The pursuit of Reason is not to be found in the objective unfolding of history and in “the spirit of the age,” as Hegel thought, but in the philosophy of action, practice, and the possibility of change.

This idea is particularly important to strands of education that adopt a Marxist position or are committed to social transformation through collective action. But what does it mean for more ordinary educational research and praxis and for the bases for action-oriented research in education more generally? In what sense can action-oriented philosophy encompass a view of interpretation that does not sublimate the importance of practice and practical reason to the importance of theory, or regard interpretation merely as a theoretical exercise divorced from practical politics?

Marxism is often taken to be a philosophy of *praxis* and understood as “critical theory” in the sense that validity in philosophy is seen in how philosophy is manifested in practice. But the significance of these issues is certainly not limited to Marxists, and the origins of a concern with praxis go long before Marx. In Aristotle there are three kinds of knowledge: *theoria*, directed toward truth; *poiesis*, oriented to production; and *praxis*, to which the end was action. Aristotle also made a distinction between *eupraxia* (good praxis) and *dyspraxia* (bad praxis).

The Turn to Practice

A number of philosophers have criticized the emphasis on contemplation as opposed to action in the Western tradition: Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Paulo Freire all argue for the priority of practice and practical reason over theory or theoretical reason as the

³ Engels, Feuerbach: The Roots of Socialist Philosophy (Chas. H. Kerr & Co., Chicago, 1908) 96.

basis of everyday life; this axiom is also tied more broadly to conceptions of politics, citizenship, and participatory democracy as demonstrations of human freedom.

Praxis is also explicitly appealed to by educators to describe the iterative process of experiential learning and, sometimes, lifelong learning or workplace learning. It also contains, as with Marx, the idea that authentic social practice is also linked with transformation—transformation of the individual, via learning, and transformation of the society toward reform and improvement. Freire, for example, defines praxis in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 33).

The problem is that the notion of *practice* often appears as an unanalyzed “given” in educational research and theory. It is seen as the bedrock of educational activities that are often taken as self-evident. This fetishizes “practice”: the presuppositions of the term are not examined critically or clarified, and rarely is it acknowledged that “theories of practice” not only shape what we accept as “true” and “normal” but also implicitly constitute a set of political and ethical choices. In educational research and theory, the term “practice” threatens to become part of a new orthodoxy, prioritizing the practical over the theoretical in policy, in programs of teacher education, and elsewhere. In short, the emphasis on “the practical” constitutes its own framework for the interpretation and evaluation of educational research.

The concept of *practices* is, perhaps, the neglected underlying concept that signals elements that frame educational research as it has developed the so-called new pedagogy. The notion of educational practices includes an emphasis on cultural construction and postempiricist theory (if I can use this abbreviation) that describes the new constellation of studies in educational research as they have developed over the postwar period and especially since the 1970s. The term first reflects the central importance of “culture”—the importance of “cultures” in the plural (e.g. learning and knowledge cultures, evidence-based cultures, organizational cultures) and of “cultures” in the anthropological and sociological literatures that talk of indigenous cultures or identify elements of “cultures” in relation to youth. The term also implies a central focus on “the practitioner” and practitioner knowledge, for example, as it has been theorized in the “reflective practitioner” dating from the work of Donald Schön (1987, 1995) and Chris Argyris (1999).

This use is carried over to the so-called communities of practice (e.g., Wenger 1998), part of a burgeoning literature together with associated notions like “situated learning” (Lave and Wenger 1991). In relation to both these developments—the “cultural turn” and the reflective practitioner—the term “practice” has been used to signal the priority of the practical over the theoretical in educational research, theory, and institutional activities. This means, among other things, that educational activities are viewed primarily as practical engagements-with-others-in-the-world; and it sometimes is taken to imply that learning and teaching are fundamentally social activities, “doings,” or performances without “inner” processes.

The stress on practices also accords with and partially explains the currency of the now taken-for-granted distinction between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge first proposed by Gibbons et al. (1994) with its emphasis on applied knowledge and

“contexts of use.” Gibbons and his colleague writing on “the new production of knowledge” focus on “context-driven research which is problem focussed and multidisciplinary as opposed to scientific research pursued for its own sake” (Mode 1). By contrast, Mode 2 knowledge is generated by multidisciplinary teams that work on specific problems in the real world, knowledge that is more applied, more practical, more self-consciously contextual.

Less obviously, perhaps, these overlapping tendencies in philosophy and theory that have infiltrated education tend to focus on the increasing importance of an understanding of the *body* to education, not just the emotions or embodied knowledges or rationalities but the body itself as a formation of self and sociopolitical order. Finally, the emphasis on practices also highlights *pragmatics* in general, in both linguistic and cognitive theory (i.e., practices as pragmatically grounded). These theoretical tendencies derive from a largely unexamined shift in philosophy and social theory to focus on *practices* as the underlying concept of cultures and communities, which coordinates sociopolitical order and structures social reality. As a framework for interpretation, it tends to generate a series of questions posed within and against educational research: questions such as, “What difference does this research make?” “Whose interests are advanced by this research?” “How will this research improve the conditions of learning?” and, in the extreme, “What works?”

The practice can also be framed in relation to the combined influence of a group of contemporary theorists such as Bourdieu, Foucault, and Derrida, as well as the American phenomenologically oriented thinkers such as Schön and Argyris and others like Max van Manen. For them, in various ways, theories of practice are embedded in the priority of practical engagement with the world, a view which assumes a materialist social ontology and a view of language as practice based. This broad view has a broad resonance with the account of practical reason in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VI) that talks of *phronesis* as the ability to use the intellect practically. Practical reason is to be distinguished from theoretical reason in that the former is directed to a practical and especially a moral outcome and results in an action rather than a proposition or new belief. Yet all of these proceed from different sources of interpretation or interpretive activity that theorize practice in quite different ways, as the table below summarizes (Fig. 1):

Practice as <i>phronesis</i> or practical judgment (Aristotle)
Practice as <i>praxis</i> (Marx, later Freire)
Practice as <i>problem solving</i> (Dewey)
Practice as <i>lived experience</i> (Heidegger, Berger, & Luckmann)
Practice as <i>lebensformen</i> (forms of life) (Wittgenstein, Winch)
Practice as <i>habitus</i> (Bourdieu)
Practice as <i>reflection in action</i> (Schön & Argyris)

Fig. 1 Theories of practice

In the introduction to a collection entitled *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, it indicates that the adoption of the term *practice* in contemporary theory expresses a desire to move away from dualistic ways of thinking. He characterizes the philosophical work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor (both heavily influenced by Heidegger) as attempting to overcome the object/subject dualism and to “highlight non-propositional knowledge and illuminate the conditions of intelligibility” (p. 1). Talk of practices for sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens and the ethnomethodologists, he had advised us, is a way of avoiding the dualism of action and structure as well as the determinism of objectified social structures and systems. In the hands of “cultural theorists” like Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard, Schatzki maintains that *practices* provide a means for theorizing language as a discursive activity, in contrast to structuralist and semiotic notions of language as a structure or system.

This brings the discussion back to interpretation, language, meaning, and interpretation *as* a practice. Certainly if we view the emergence of meta-textual commentary in relation to the history of Abrahamic religions in the west, then we get an impression of the idea of interpretation as a cultural practice that emerged with the development of writing and the culture of the text, including the interpretation of biblical texts. Social scientific studies of science that picture science also as a meaning-making activity (in the work, for instance, of Andrew Pickering and Joseph Rouse) use the notion of practices to counter representational accounts of science and to challenge “humanist dichotomies between human and nonhuman entities” (p. 1). Here interpretation is highlighted *as* a practice, and the concept and presumed context of practice becomes a framework for the interpretation of data and other concepts.

Interpretation is also practical and historical practices lie at its foundation. In particular, we might hypothesize that the important move here was the move away from the assumptions of literalism, a fundamentalist ideology that insisted on an evangelical hermeneutical approach to scripture based on historical–grammatical analysis that secures the—“revealed”—meaning of the text. This fundamentalist view of interpretation can be contrasted with other hermeneutical approaches that view interpretation as a historical and cultural practice that emerged and grew up with the invention of writing and the development of meta-commentary, including bibliographical conventions. Anthony Garton’s (1999) *The Footnote: A Curious History* provides an excellent example. He demonstrates how the lowly footnote, along with marginalia, took hold during the nineteenth century not simply through the work of the German historian Leopold von Ranke but also through more diverse and ancient origins in speculative treatises by the likes of Athanasius Kircher, Pierre Bayle, and Edward Gibbon, who created philosophical and literary approaches to history.

Clearly, then, there has been a major paradigm shift in contemporary thought linked to theorizations of practice. While there is, as Schatzki (2001) claims, “no unified practice approach” (p. 2), most theorists identify practices as fields of human activity defined as the skills or “tacit knowledges” or presuppositions that underlie activities. And while most theorists focus on *human* activities, there is a

significant posthumanist trend especially in science and technology studies that wants to construe practices as involving an interface with machines and scientific instruments. As Schatzki (2001, p. 2) contends:

most practice theorists would agree that activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artefacts, hybrids and natural objects, disagreements reign about the nature of embodiment, the pertinence of thematizing it when analyzing practices, the sorts of entities that mediate activity, and whether these entities are relevant to practices than mere intermediaries among humans.

Forms of human activity are anchored in accounts of the body, and typically theorists will maintain that “bodies and activities are “constituted” within practices” (p. 2). In so doing practice theorists tend to adopt a materialist social ontology that emphasizes the way human activity depends on shared skills or understandings, which is typically viewed as embodied. The fundamental philosophical claim asserts the priority of practical engagement and understanding of the world over forms of theoretical contemplation, understanding, or speculation. The priority of practical engagement and understanding, in turn, follows from an emphasis on the body and on knowledge, rationality, and understanding, which takes place through the acquisition of shared embodied know-how.

If actions are embedded in practices and individuals are constituted within practices, then practice theory pits itself against contemporary theoretical approaches that privilege the individual, language as a signifying system, the life world, and the role of institutions, structures, or systems in defining the social. In practice theory these phenomena can only be correctly elucidated and analyzed through the field of what Schatzki defines as “the total nexus of interconnected human practices” (p. 2). Schatzki also addresses the problem of social order in terms of practices but raises the question of what orders the field of practices itself.

As Harrison Hall (1993, p. 128) notes, “The practical world is the one that we inhabit first, before philosophizing or engaging in scientific investigation” and “The world in the traditional sense can be understood as derivative from the practical world.” Heidegger’s emphasis on the priority of the relational context of practical activity is also mounted as a critique of traditional Cartesian ontology which pictures the world as comprising subjects as minds whose mental representations (ideas) attempt to capture an independent (material) reality. Philosophy and science on this view are concerned with ways of guaranteeing the accuracy of our representations. We can only avoid the problem of knowledge (skepticism) and the problem of value (how things have value) by avoiding traditional Cartesian metaphysics that wants to privilege the thinking subject (Hall 1993, p. 129). In particular, Heidegger questions the claim made by Plato that moral knowledge must be explicit and disinterested. As Hubert Dreyfus (1993, pp. 293–4) summarizes it:

Heidegger questions both the possibility and the desirability of making our everyday understanding totally explicit. He introduces the idea that the shared everyday skills, concerns, and practices into which we are socialized provide the conditions necessary for people to make sense of the world and of their lives. All intelligibility presupposes something that cannot be fully articulated – a kind of knowing-how rather than a knowing-that. At the deepest level such knowing is embodied in out social skills rather

than our concepts, beliefs, and values. Heidegger argues that our cultural practices can direct our activities and make our lives meaningful only insofar as they are and stay unarticulated background practices. As Heidegger puts it in a later work, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “Every decision . . . bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision.”

Wittgenstein too came to accept in his later work that philosophy, like language, was, as Rorty (1993, p. 344) expresses the point, “just a set of indefinitely expandable social practices.” Rorty (1993, pp. 347–8) goes on to make the comparison between Heidegger and Wittgenstein explicit:

Early Heidegger and late Wittgenstein set aside the assumption (common to their respective predecessors, Husserl and Frege) that social practice – and in particular the use of language – can receive a noncausal, specifically philosophical explanation in terms of conditions of possibility. More generally, both set aside the assumption that philosophy, might explain the unhidden on the basis of the hidden, and might explain availability and relationality on the basis of something intrinsically unavailable and unrelational.

David Bloor (2001) explains that rationalism is the philosophical tradition that accords priority to theory over practice and conservatism is the tradition sometimes referred to that accords practice priority over theory. I prefer Bloor’s alternative descriptions—Enlightenment and Romantic—for the reason that not all accounts of the priority of practice are conservative (witness, for instance, the accounts by Bourdieu and Foucault). As Bloor indicates, rule following would seem to be a paradigm case of rationalism, yet for Wittgenstein rule following is a practice and its normative aspect derives from the consensus between different rule followers which can be understood only in naturalistic terms as facts about our “natural history.”

Returning to the theme of interpretation and the significance of the preceding discussion for practice, we need to address ourselves philosophically to the notion of background social practices against which other things make sense. For example, one argument would be how the demands of “practice” often constitute constraints on the possibilities of interpretation or provide a kind of criterion for “good” interpretations both in educational research and of educational research. These background practices are themselves the basis for competing views *of* practices, as we explore next.

Dreyfus and Five Competing Views of Practices

Following the American phenomenological philosopher Hubert Dreyfus, it is possible to identify five competing views of practice and the extent to which they are unified or dispersed and integrated or disseminatory. The outline of these five approaches sets up a rich set of connections between theories of practice and the ethical and political commitments they embody. Perhaps, what is required in the interpretation of educational research, theory, and practice, above all, is a different account of *practices*.

The following five points are taken from an essay by David Stern, drawing in turn from a lecture given by Dreyfus at the NEH Summer Institute on Practices on July 24, 1997, under the title “Conclusion: How background practices and skills work to ground norms and intelligibility: the ethico-political implications”:

Stability (drawing from Wittgenstein, Bourdieu). Here practices are relatively stable and resist change. Change may be initiated by innovators or be the result of “drift,” but there is no inherent tendency in the practices for this to happen. The consequent is either a conservative acceptance of the status quo or revolutionary prescription of change.

Articulation (drawing from Hegel, Merleau-Ponty). Here the practices have a *telos* of clarity and coherence and become increasingly more refined as our skills develop. This leads to political progressivism and Whiggish history, albeit with the recognition that the path to progress will not always lead in that direction.

Appropriative gathering, Ereignis (drawing from Dreyfus’s own reading of later Heidegger). When practices run into anomalies, we make an originating leap, drawing on marginal or neighboring practices and so revising our cultural style. This supports those who can best bring about such change within a liberal democratic society, such as entrepreneurs, political associations, charismatic leaders, and cultural figures.

Dissemination, difference (drawing from Derrida). Here there are many equally appropriate ways of acting, and each new situation calls for a leap in the dark. The consequence is a sensitivity to difference, to loosen the hold of past norms on present and future action, and to become aware of the leaps we make rather than covering them up with Whiggish history.

Problematization (drawing from Foucault). Here practices develop in such a way that contradictory actions are felt to be appropriate. Attempts to fix these problems lead to further resistance. This leads to a hyperactive pessimism: showing the contingency of what appears to be necessary and engaging in resistance to established order.

Building upon these distinctions, we may, therefore, begin to distinguish between at least seven broad theoretical approaches to the interpretation of educational practices (Fig. 2).

The central question is to determine whether and the extent to which these different accounts necessarily overlap in their definition of practice or share similar assumptions. Each entails ethical, political, and epistemological elements that are based in turn on implicit or explicit philosophical assumptions. These assumptions need to be brought forth and scrutinized: the notion of “practice” is in no way primary or *sui generis*. In education the term “practice” is used in many different contexts that leave these assumptions unquestioned—professional practice, educational practices, and the like. The sense of practice elaborated here, which focuses on preferred ways of acting, tacit knowledge, presuppositions, traditions, and so forth, differs from the traditional meaning of practice as “the practical” or as merely “applied theory” and requires a more active process of interpretation that emphasizes “the demand for philosophy.”

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phenomenological (Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Dreyfus): practices as noncognitive, nonconceptual, and prelinguistic 2. Marxist (Bourdieu and Passeron): practice as telic or praxical 3. Positivist: practice as “practical” or “applied theory” 4. Cognitive: practice as “reflection in action” (Schön) 5. Ethical (Aristotle, Kant): practice as practical judgment or engagement 6. Deweyan pragmatism: practice as problem solving 7. Poststructuralist: practice as problematization (Foucault) or difference (Derrida) |
|---|

Fig. 2 An interpretation of educational practices

To conclude with the theme of interpretation in educational research, each of these seven theoretical approaches would yield distinct views of the nature and role of interpretation in educational research, how it proceeds, *and what it is for*. These differences highlight the ethical and political choices that are evident in the work of various researchers writing in this handbook. These competing views of practice also provide a way of clarifying and distinguishing how different kinds of interpretation enter at every stage of the educational research process: in the practices of problem definition, the literature survey, the choice and treatment of research subjects, the selection of appropriate methods for collecting data, the analysis of results, and the identification of appropriate modes of representing the research (genres of writing, visual representations, and so on)—and even choices about the venues in which that research should be published, presented, and taught.

To paraphrase Richard Rorty, it’s interpretation all the way down.

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Genre 1 Narrative Approaches

Introduction

Marilyn Johnston-Parsons and Michael F. Watts

Both narratives and narrative research engage with the construction of meaning through the organization and interpretation of experience—whether the experience of individuals, communities, or countries. Narratives help us make sense of the world and communicate our understanding of it. Bruner (Bruner 1986; Connelly and Clandinin 1990) suggests that the power of narrative is to render “the exceptional and the unusual into comprehensible form” (p. 47); Connelly and Clandinin (1990) claim that people tell stories because they “lead storied lives” (p. 2). Narrative is the form by which we think of ourselves and others; we generate stories as a way of constructing our lives.

Researchers use narrative methods to address questions where individual experience within particular social and historical contexts is of interest. Ancient in format and importance, narrative inquiry was for a time overwhelmed by positivist requirements for “objectivity” and “reliability.” It has reemerged in the last few decades in the context of what some have called the “narrative turn” (Czarniawska 2004; Polkinghorne 1988), as reflectivity and social phenomena gained researchers’ interest. Goodson and Gill (2011) describe this as “a new wave of philosophical discussion of the relationships between self, others, community, social, political and historical dynamics” (p. 18).

Narrative research is highly interpretive. It may include interviews, published narratives, documents, and other contextually important data, but is always more than just the stories. Gathering narrative data from individuals or groups requires

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more than recounting a story someone tells someone else. It is rather a co-construction of the narrative situated within a particular social dynamic; it is an interpretive task that reveals as much about the researcher as the storyteller. Uninterpreted narratives offer little to our understanding of contexts or issues. Interpreted through contextualized retellings, they gain power; they become stories about social, ethical, and political issues and reveal multiple, and even conflicting, perspectives. They connect the personal to the social and invest it with authority. They “give shape and expression to what would otherwise be untold about ‘our lives’” (Greene 1988, p. x). We learn from this what we could not have known from other research methods; we can address the question of “why” things happen, go wrong, or are oppressive.

The retelling can take different forms. Johnston-Parsons and Wihlborg provide examples of collaborative and dialogic narrative inquiry and Shuman of conversational narrative. They highlight the need to articulate the personal and communal perspectives on the world(s) from which the stories are constructed, if individual experiences are to inform pedagogic processes and learning. Stories are co-constructed in light of a dialogue between storyteller and researcher; sometimes stories are combined and compared, and joint understandings emerge from their interaction, as Wihlborg’s collective biography writing using poststructuralist discourse practices, Johnston-Parsons use of dialogue as inquiry, or Shuman’s conversational narratives. Harnessed as research tools, such methods lend immediacy to the sharing of experience and connect the reader—and even the policy maker—with what is being researched. The intimacy they generate makes them a persuasive and powerful methodology.

Interpretive retelling of stories gives life to them, revealing the variability, complexity, and multi-perspectival nature of social life. It makes answers to the question “why?” accessible and exposes layers of complexity that might otherwise be overwhelmed by the desire for straightforward accounts and simplistic responses.

Ethical Power of Reinterpretation

The power of reinterpreted narratives can be seen in the way they can challenge orthodox interpretations. They often question the ethical assumptions inherent in research methods that claim to be an objective account of someone else’s experience. In these chapters, for instance, they reveal the everyday cultural prejudices that disenfranchise street children in Indonesia (Dewayani) and teachers in Tanzania (Tao). They give voice to faculty members silenced by institutional hierarchies (Asgedom and Ridley), or young people seeking to enter universities in the UK (Watts). The power of such narratives imposes an ethical imperative on their use in research, as Juzwik highlights in her work on the rhetoric employed when teaching students about the Holocaust.

Interpreting narrative accounts requires a relation between researcher and participant that contrasts with the more objective stance of quantitative research methods. Close relations raise complex ethical questions about informed consent, the power to make decisions about interpretations, and the competing objectives researchers and participants may bring to a research project. Josselson (1995) explains it this way:

Narrative research consists of obtaining and then reflecting on people's lived experience and, unlike objectifying and aggregating forms of research, is inherently a relationship endeavour. Every aspect of the work is touched by the ethics of the research relationship. (Quoted in Goodson and Gill 2011, p. 29)

Rules for ethical behavior in narrative research must be co-constructed as the research unfolds, meaning as the relationships develop. Context and power relations between researchers and participants often raise ethical issues. Asgedom and Ridley, Dewayani, and Tao address research in places that, to paraphrase Neville Chamberlain, are far away and about whose people we know little. Our interpretations are likely to be dominated by simplistic conceptions of deficiency and dependence, which may make interventions ineffective (complicated by the fact that all three countries—Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Tanzania—receive significant financial support from the international community). Narratives from far away places, or from the silenced spaces in more local contexts, have the power to expose underlying issues. “Detailed studies of individuals’ lives . . . allow stories to function as political responses, broadcasting ‘voices’ that are excluded from or neglected within dominant political structures and processes” (Goodson and Gill 2011, p. 20), as in Watts’ life history account of social and political structures related to student access to Oxbridge universities. Contextualized and interpreted stories thus have the power to inform, reveal, critique, and/or extend the social discourse, and concurrently they raise complex ethical issues that must be addressed collaboratively, in the midst of doing the research.

Interpretation and Credibility

Narrative is highly interpretive, intensely personal, profoundly ethical, and deeply embedded in a social context. If the power of narrative inquiry is to question and interpretations are to be harnessed for research purposes, it will need to be rigorous enough to withstand the scrutiny of its detractors, including those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Researchers must examine their methods, interpretations, and analytic frameworks to situate the stories that are told. To be rigorous is different from being objective; credibility here is established by careful methods, analytic precision, reflectivity, and theoretical framing of contexts and interpretations.

Narratives have the potential to shape educational policies and practices and to support or critique current practice. The chapters by Juzwik and Watts offer

concrete examples of the difference that narrative research can make to offer a critique: Work by Watts has informed the access policies and practices of some UK universities, and Juzwik's research encourages a more cautious use of rhetoric in US classrooms. If this work has made only small differences (we do not want to overstate them), it points to the potential power of narrative. Perhaps, then, the biggest difference these research projects have made—individually and collectively—is to highlight the significance of narrative research. These projects also demonstrate ways that rich interpretations of narratives can illuminate disenfranchised groups and issues of ethical importance.

Chapter Summaries

Amare Asgedom and Barbara Ridley consider the theme of educational organization and leadership through a study of Addis Ababa University in three distinct phases of Ethiopia's recent history: feudalism, socialism, and democratic federalism. The focus of the study lends itself to the use of historical narratives, and they consider a major interpretative problem for such research: Our understanding of the past is influenced by more recent events. They address this by looking at the significance of contemporary archival materials to examine the uneasy relationship between the university and the state. That uneasiness has been framed by highly charged political environments, and they pay particular attention to the importance of confidentiality when considering personal stories in the construction of historical narratives.

Sophie Dewayani employs counter-narratives to explore nonformal education in Indonesia. Stories collected from street children and their families are used to develop a meta-narrative about their lives and their negotiation of dominant discourses about them. Such discourses typically frame the construction of their identities, allowing them to be written out of what is often taken for granted, including formal education. The counter-narrative approach to this research interprets and reinterprets issues of power and representation in Indonesian society and is examined here as a means of learning to locate the self within in-between spaces of escaping the "here" and "there" that is the dualistic categorization implicitly imposed upon underserved urban communities and commonly reproduced by the media.

Mary Juzwik's chapter focuses on the teaching of a Holocaust unit in a US middle-school classroom. She addresses the theme of curriculum through the rhetorical analysis of narrative. She argues that the rhetorical analysis of everyday classroom narratives can not only reveal the aesthetic and poetic shaping of course subject matter but also the profound moral socialization that may occur as teachers tell stories to their students. Here, the rhetorical analysis enables engagement with the persuasive and the identifying functions of language in use. It is used to illuminate

and address a multidimensional and complex interpretation of the ethical problems raised by teacher narratives about a morally weighty past.

The teacher–student relationship is characterized by dialogue, but because it is such a commonplace practice, it can be easily overlooked as a process meriting close interpretation. In the spirit of dialogue as an iterative process of construction and interpretation between teacher and student, *Marilyn Johnston-Parsons*' chapter is coauthored with four of her doctoral students to explore collaborative narratives that address the theme of evaluation and assessment. Drawing on supervisory dialogues, they focus on the collection and examination of narratives that influence the doctoral students' research and learning. Dialogue is used as a democratic inquiry process in the development of collaborative narrative inquiry in a highly interpretive process; and the collaboration that produced their chapter mirrors the research examples used from their ongoing re-emerged research.

Over a period of 30 years, *Amy Shuman* has conducted an ethnography of the artisan stone carvers of Pietrasanta, Italy. The artisans have a centuries-long tradition of marble carving passed down from one generation to another. Using informal interviewing in a conversational setting, she situates her work methodologically at the intersection of sociolinguistics, literary narratives, folklore, and oral histories. Calling this approach conversational narrative analysis, she has collected communication in this community to address the question of how personal life history narratives become part of the collective memory of a community. From her position as a folklorist, she argues that the personal, ordinary, local narratives that people tell about their experiences are fundamental for understanding the complexity of larger events.

Sharon Tao addresses the theme of teaching through an ethnographic study of primary school teaching in Tanzania. Particular attention is paid to the use of different research methods in the construction of ethnographic narratives and the problems of interpreting those narratives when the primary data is told in a language other than English. Her chapter considers how the conditions framing the professional and personal lives of teachers in Tanzania shape their narratives of well-being (defined through the analytic framework of the capability approach as the substantive freedoms to choose valued ways of being) and how this might lead to different interpretations of their teaching, especially when contrasted with meta-narratives that seek to portray their practices as deficient.

Encouraging and enabling more young people to progress to higher education from historically underrepresented social groups is a major policy concern in the UK and around the world. In the UK, access to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge is a particularly public and politicized matter and so acts as a litmus test of widening participation policies. *Michael Watts* engages with these policy issues through life history research with students who possess relatively low volumes of what Bourdieu refers to as cultural capital. The narratives of such students are used to consider the significance of how the symbolic value of their academic and cultural capital is interpreted within the wider context of sociopolitical narratives.

Monne Wihlborg uses collective biography to explore and unpack the concept of the feminist subject. Her consideration of the processes of subjectification calls attention to the narrative construction of issues of equity, justice, and diversity and to the power of narrative methodologies to deconstruct normalized interpretations. Collective biography can be an intense experience for those involved because it demands the use of one's own body—as a signifier of emotions and experiences—as a text to be read and critiqued. Interpreted through and framed as/by collective biography writing, the researcher is not separated from her data but is emphasized by it.

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1.1 Historical Narratives in Ethiopia

Amare Asgedom and Barbara Ridley

The Research Project

This chapter considers how historical and contemporary narratives can be used to interpret issues of educational organization and leadership. The research on which it is based sought to understand academic freedom and institutional autonomy through a case study of Addis Ababa University (AAU) between 1950 and 2005. This 55-year period saw three markedly different political regimes: feudalism (1950–1974), socialism (1974–1991), and democratic federalism (1991–2005). Historical narratives must make sense of stories told over time. The stories told during this study included contemporaneous archival materials narrating the points of view of the different political regimes in power and the leaderships of AAU and the reflective narratives of academics, including the lead researcher, Amare, who had lived through these periods.

This research was undertaken as Amare’s doctoral thesis, with Barbara acting as his supervisor (along with David Bridges as co-supervisor). Here, though, we adopt the roles of Amare as lead researcher and Barbara as critical friend.

The research asked whether or not academic freedom and autonomy were attainable in a context of mutual support: the university that was responsible to the state that supported and funded it but, at the same time, the university itself that played a central role in national politics. The nature of relationships between university and state is complex. The importance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy was made clear by the UNESCO statement asserting that “higher

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education teaching personnel should have the rights and opportunities, without discrimination of any kind, to take part in the governing bodies and to criticize the functioning of higher education institutions” (1997, p. 9). However, the requirements to be free and accountable at the same time create tensions, especially when viewed from the point of view of the different ideas of the university (Barnett 1997). More pragmatically, if the university depends on the state both for its funding and for defining its value in serving society, then also stating itself to be independent of that same state is unrealistic (Pring 1995).

The heavy dependence of African universities on government funding results in a severe erosion of autonomy due to the attitude that “[He] who pays the piper calls the tune” (Okebukola 1998, p. 310). It is not clear how this tension between academic freedom and accountability can be resolved, especially in the context of “the attitude of African leaders who view the university as part and parcel of a political structure that requires it to be loyal and to promote government policies and, to be an instrument of the political system instead of its critic” (Federici et al. 2000, p. xix).

Examined through the lens of academic freedom and autonomy, the research reported here illustrated how the changing political regimes affected the organization and leadership of the university and, conversely, how that leadership was instrumental in those same regime changes. The tensions between both sides are made worse in the context of the academics’ aspirations to be fully independent like their old colleagues in the west (UNESCO 1994, p. 19); even those ancient universities are slowly changing under pressure from national and transnational regulations such as the Bologna Process and the influence of ideas and methods from the corporate sector (Jansen 2007; Paradeise et al. 2009). Ethiopia typically draws from overseas policies to develop its higher education system, but the symbiotic relationship of AAU and national politics remains pertinent. It is evident from the Ethiopian case study that the state could not tolerate criticism that called into question the legitimacy of state power. It is not, however, clear to what extent the university could be critical of the state and still maintain trust and support from it.

The narratives that are the focus of this chapter suggest a case of fractured state–university relationships with a high demand for academic freedom by the faculty and its denial by the state and also, paradoxically, a case of self-imposed constraints by the academic community. The high aspiration of the academic community for academic freedom and institutional autonomy might originate in the traditional Ethiopian intellectual culture that found expression in the founding principles of AAU, but the actual practice of academic freedom remains something to be desired. Academic freedom at AAU is really a myth, a sustaining religious-like belief of the academy, but the reality is that the academic community has opposed itself to this freedom.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are important features of the higher education discourse. As Finkin and Post point out, academics have a duty to look for truth, honoring “the virtues of reason, fairness, and accuracy” (2009, pp. 42–43). The freedom to search for—and determine—notions of truth is embodied in the founding motto of AAU: to *deliberate freely on all matters and hold onto the best* has always stood as an iconographic representation of academic intellectual life in Ethiopia (Levine 2004; Seyoum 2000), and many Ethiopian scholars use it as a vignette in their scholarly contributions to academic journals.

Three key questions guided this research. What were the forms of expression (or repression) of academic freedom and institutional autonomy under the three political regimes? How did the relationship between the university and the state affect these freedoms in each period? What was the effect of this external relationship on the erosion or expression of academic freedom within the university itself? Academic freedom was studied mainly in terms of the relationship between the university and the state and of how the state erodes the academic freedom of the academic community. The study highlighted the importance of exploring how the faculty and students spoil their own academic environment of free scholarship and free enquiry by resorting to the use of power to deal with political and academic problems. The narratives generated during the research told of the use of power to solve academic and political problems. This was found to deter the development of a critical intellectual culture—something that continues to deprive the country of its ancient values of dialogue, the questioning stance, and deliberativeness.

The literature within Ethiopia itself shows that little research has been conducted on its higher education and none on academic freedom and on state–university relationships. Balsvik (2005) examined student activities in Ethiopian politics and considered how such activities bridged the gap between organized political parties in Ethiopia. She clearly demonstrates the climax of student activism to fight the age-long aristocratic government, which was very slow in introducing reforms regarding social justice and democracy, but this study was limited to the era of feudalism in Ethiopia. Teshome (1990) describes the development process of higher education in Ethiopia and how this process contributed to the provision of trained manpower for modern institutions before the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution. It gives some—though inadequate—coverage of higher education in the context of the revolution but stops short of the democratic period.

While its focus was on Ethiopia, this research has lessons for the international community in that the politicization of the university deters the development of intellectual culture. Although it is focused on one university, the narratives illustrate universal issues about the relationship between higher education and the state and, indeed, about the internal organization and leadership of higher education itself. The study of this relationship in Ethiopia also sheds light on the recent and dramatic political experience of Ethiopia itself as it has passed through the regimes of a feudal emperor, a Stalinist dictator, and a new government struggling with the politics of a liberal economy and democratic polity—all within a single life span. The research is important in understanding the political dimension of education in general and higher education in particular.

The Research Data

In order to explore the evolution of the university as it interacted within its context over more than half a century, including its participation in the political revolutions of the country, the research made extensive use of historical and contemporary

narratives. The research data comprised archival material and formal and informal interviews with academic staff at AAU. Each of these sources represented partial and conflicting views that were interrogated and triangulated. Amare's own experiences necessarily informed his interaction with these other sources and the way in which he interpreted them; and he arranged to be interviewed himself in order to more objectively incorporate his experiences into the data. In a way, this research constituted a rewriting of his own professional history in Addis Ababa University.

Formal interviews were carried out with 41 members of AAU. They all had diverse academic experiences in research, teaching, administration, and public service and had served the university from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 30 years. Their academic profiles varied from the highest academic rank of full professor to the lowest rank of lecturer. Research participants also assisted in identifying other potential participants who might have similar or different opinions regarding issues of university governance and academic freedom. Graduate assistants and assistant lecturers were not included in the sample because it was presumed they had limited experience of and engagement with the main activities of the university. Participants were selected from most academic fields in order to provide balanced evidence from the two major streams in AAU: the natural sciences and the social sciences (or what are sometimes referred to as the cultural sciences) with the latter including languages, the humanities, the arts, and education. The selection process was not arbitrary but proceeded selectively until perspectives were simply repeated and no new insight was to be obtained from new participants. Importantly, this also included actively seeking potential participants who held contrary or dissenting views, identified with help from other interviewees. The number of interviews (41 academic staff members) was determined by reaching saturation (Goodson and Sikes 2001, p. 23).

Although narratives generated by members of AAU were an important source of evidence, storying their personal experiences and memories of the state–university relationship, further evidence was needed from other perspectives if the approach were to be described as historical narrative, not simply life history. Life history centers on the personal stories told and situates them within the social and cultural context; historical narrative sees those stories as one form of data, one of a range of sources which illuminate the period under exploration. Moreover, given the malleability of memory, particularly when recalled through the lens of different political regimes, these additional sources were important sources of evidence themselves (although they, too, had to be interpreted through their historical constructions). Archival sources provided a window upon the narratives told by those in power. At the university, they were found in the form of management information systems, policy guidelines, and presidential annual reports. Unpublished, official documents, memos, senate, and faculty minutes were extremely valuable. Compiled in the form of Presidential Reports, Academic Vice-Presidential Reports, and Administrative Vice-Presidential Reports, they were voluminous and full of annexes. These documents were archived in the president's office as well as in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. As a high-ranking insider, Amare had no problem accessing these documents. Notices displayed

around the university and newsletters were also a source of data. More widely, public proclamations, newspapers, and fliers, as well as the more obvious official sources of information, such as the legal newspaper *Negarit Gazeta*, were also collected. A nationally televised 3-week consultation with the prime minister was another source. Thus the archival documents represented all forms of print media, audio recordings, and audiovisual materials, mainly archived in the Ethiopian Collection Section of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University.

These sources contained not only the contemporary narratives of the public face of the state and its relationship with institution throughout the three periods but also internal records of the purposes and justifications of the decisions made and policies implemented. Policies, procedures, and annual reports of the activities of government and universities were often found in published forms. Unpublished monographs, statistical abstracts, and other reports were rich sources of information on the intentions of managers and governors. The rich description of cases and contexts was made possible with the use of such documents.

These documents—from the Annual Plans and Performance Reports of the university, faculty, and departments to newspaper reports and the publications of the underground press—gave insight into a range of perspectives over the three periods. Importantly, they offered different perspectives of the contemporary matters they addressed. The AAU senate and faculty minutes provided information about routine activities, plans, and evaluation reports, while the publications of teacher and student unions were critical of the three systems (although the publications of the teacher unions tended to endorse the Derg regime). A particularly significant source of data, gathered by the curator of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, was the collection of pamphlets of the political opposition that had been distributed secretly in Ethiopia and found in the libraries of Italy, England, and the Arab countries.

Some pertinent audiovisual records, made available by the IES at AAU, from the earlier periods were available. However, these were especially valuable for the third period (1991–2005) and included 3-week deliberations of all academic staff (including librarians) of AAU with the then prime minister, Meles Zenawi (this discussion with the prime minister is popularly known as the “Summer Discussions”), recordings of panel discussions on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Addis Ababa University, and academic staff discussions with the former Addis Ababa University Management with regard to the review of what was called the “consensus” reached between academic staff of the university and the prime minister during the “Summer Discussions.” Also, the lead research made a series of personal recordings of a 1-week conference of the New Addis Ababa University Management with all academic staff on the issue of the “new mission and vision for strategic planning.”

The audiovisual recordings included debates between the government, university management, and teachers with regard to policy perspectives, procedures, and actions about the country, its development, politics, and education. They were therefore very helpful in providing contemporary accounts of the politics and power sources in Ethiopia (although they contained much more information than what was needed for the purpose of this study). They gave insight into how the leadership

of AAU responded to government perspectives in a public forum which could in turn be related to how—and if—those same perspectives became implemented in practice. The debates on issues related to accountability, transparency, competence, brain drain, campus democracy (fair representation of ethnic groups in university management), granting of the university charter, autonomy, academic freedom, student handling, remuneration, research funding, and sabbatical leave were all very informative. The videocassettes were already made and publicly available through the Ethiopian TV broadcasting. The copies were the property of Institute for Educational Research library and accessible to any researcher. Data relevant to the research was sought from these videocassettes analyzed with other data. Irrelevant sections of these cassettes were ignored.

The formal interviews were carried out in two stages. A prior meeting, or preinterview, introduced the purpose of the research and requested consent for participation. Appointments were then made to carry out the formal interview. As Amare was an insider, access was not an issue. It was free and permission from officials of the university was not needed. These formal interviews usually lasted several hours and took the form of discussions on emerging issues instead of being based on a predetermined set of questions. Their purpose was to obtain narratives concerning the participants' memories of—and reflections on—academic freedom and institutional autonomy at AAU.

The interviews used unstructured open-ended questions. Interview protocols were prepared to direct the discussion and conduct the interview. Discussions were held with the academics on how AAU has operated in its day-to-day activities in teaching, research, public service, and administration. Much time was spent in each interview on questions that emerged from these ideas, and they were probed further to elicit detailed information. Almost all participants were enthusiastic in discussion, and many noted that such issues were of significant concern to them. Field notes were used to record key points raised by participants and to record observations of their tacit knowledge, such as that expressed through tone and gestures. These nonverbal communications were critical to interpreting and therefore understanding what the participants meant by the verbal responses given during the interviews. The field notes also recorded observations of the settings, which provided important data for the context of the study.

All the participants were important actors in the Ethiopian higher education system and so the data that were generated were politically sensitive for them. As Aduugna notes:

In Ethiopia, there is a strong tradition of reservation, reinforced by experience in political regimes under which it was dangerous to express any opinion of your own. There are, in fact, proverbs with contradictory ideas in Amharic [the official working language of Ethiopia]. The proverb that advocates reservation from explaining things in depth is “Zim bale af zinb aygebam” “Flies do not enter into closed mouths”, while the proverb that encourages explanation of things in depth is “Kale menager Dejazmachinet yikeral” which means “he who speaks less misses Dejazmach (lordship)”. It is certainly the first of these proverbs which most people take seriously. (2008, p. 144)

For this reason, ethical issues around anonymity and data security had to be particularly stringent: confidentiality and anonymity are highly regarded

requirements in the Ethiopian culture, particularly as the views people express can easily be abused by distortion, attribution, or even accusation. Thus, care was taken to ensure that potential participants knew that they were protected and that their views were secure. This included both the raw data collected during the interviews and the subsequent reporting when it was necessary to make it impossible for particular opinions to be attributed to specific individuals.

Some of these interviews, particularly those with long-serving academics, covered a time span of up to 50 years. It is important to acknowledge that the powers of observation and recall of these individuals were limited. Moreover, although the lead researcher had been part of the university throughout the three distinct periods covered by the study—something that could be seen as an advantage for evaluating the accuracy of recorded or memorized data from other research participants—his own memory was no less fallible nor less prone to constructing and reconstructing the meaning of past experiences than anyone else's. However, Amare's own memories provided another narrative, another source of data. In order to create a written text for analysis, he asked a colleague to interview him. This allowed the representation of his own experience in a more objective form, and it was read and analysed alongside data gathered from other sources.

Ethiopia has a long tradition as an oral culture; and educated and less educated people depend mainly on opinion leaders for news and political opinion. The Ethiopian academy is no different and spends a lot of time discussing controversial issues informally during socialization in lunch and tea breaks, with the morning and afternoon tea breaks being important elements of the daily academic ritual. Amare drew on this oral tradition to initiate discussions related to the study during periods of socialization, particularly at tea breaks. These informal interviews were extensively used as sources of data alongside the formal interviews and were excellent opportunities to triangulate and cross-check the narratives obtained through those formal interviews.

Other informally collected data came from colleagues spontaneously arriving wanting to talk more about these issues, initiating discussions regarding the fate of Addis Ababa University as part of their general concerns. This added additional depth to the narrative and further legitimated the use of informally collected data. It also highlighted how the situatedness in a research setting obliterates the field-home distinction: sometimes data flows in when the researcher is not actively and formally engaged in data collection processes. Other colleagues left personal notes or new official letters (e.g., a letter written by a senior officer of the university instructing a department head to change the grade of a student who had complained was slipped under the door of Amare's office). New evidence continued to flow even after the formal data collection period seemed to have finished. This served as a reminder that such work needs more effort to achieve a peak of quality, posing the kind of dilemma expressed in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book *The First Circle* about the moment of *the realm of the last inch*, "not to leave it undone in the moment of temptation to stop" (Solzhenitsyn 1968, p. 173).

Constructing the Historical Narrative

The interviews ranged over the three regimes and sought to uncover historical and contemporary perspectives and the relationships between them. The analysis of this data aimed to locate tensions that might accrue as a result of multiple responsibilities—responsibilities which might or might not conflict with their beliefs in and aspirations to academic freedom. The interviews encouraged them to describe possible sources of satisfaction or frustrations in their careers as university teachers, to understand the ways in which they lacked or enjoyed academic freedom and autonomy in determining their teaching and research. Issues of authority and power regarding academic decision-making processes were also covered, together with the more recent higher education expansion reforms and how this influenced their freedoms in terms of whom and what they taught.

Authenticating the recorded data, memory-generated data and archival integrity were a challenge in this research and were addressed through careful cross-checking. Triangulation and interpretation were crucial to this process. The case data consisted of research notes collected from different types of documents and transcripts obtained from interview and archival records. The research notes were originally filed into 110 folders, using the filing criterion of sources (usually authors or institutions). Sometimes, the same author or institution could have several folders depending on the year of publication. Transcript folders were arranged on the basis of authors or events and totalled nearly 60 folders. Thus, the case data for the whole of the empirical research constituted almost 170 folders.

After the data collection stage and the organization of the empirical data, the analysis proceeded by creating a new filing system based on general themes, such as infringement of academic freedom, stress, conflicts, curriculum, teaching learning, brain drain, and power. These categories were derived from reading and rereading the different files and focusing on the most salient themes to emerge from the data. To generate the case records, a new filing system was created on the basis of different data sources (including Amare's personal reflections) that supported the coded themes. This served the purpose of bringing together the different sources of data for a given general theme (such as freedom, power, curriculum, and so on). Understanding the patterns (in terms of answering the research questions) in the data, and of the relationships between themes, constituted the historical case study report in this research.

The final stage of the analysis was to combine the classical historical analytical strategy of narrative sequence of events and analysis—in the sense of comparing and interrelating events and facts for actually testing a hypothesis, the possibility of maintaining a status of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, in the context of critical university–state relationships. Historical reasoning consists neither in deductive reasoning (from the general to the particular) nor in inductive reasoning (from the particular to the general). “Instead it is a process of *adductive* reasoning in the simple sense of adducing answers to specific questions, so that a satisfactory explanatory fit is obtained” (Smith 1981, p. 315). Adduction permits the researcher

to respond to the research questions. The process was thus to explore patterns in each historical epoch (1950–1974, 1974–1991, and 1991–2005) and then make an inter-epoch analysis of the three temporal cases in an attempt to provide provisional answers to the research questions. This led to a generalization about what constitutes the idea of higher education in Ethiopia in the context of academic freedom and autonomy.

Two key areas of theory guided the construction of the overall narrative. The first was employed to understand, in general terms, the notions of academic freedom and accountability. Academic freedom as a general theory (Bligh 1982, p. 119) refers to general civil liberties (or what are called intellectual freedoms) such as freedom of speech or freedom of expression and freedom of conscience of citizens as human rights applicable to any citizen. Academic freedom as a special theory (Bligh 1982, p. 119), on the other hand, is the “autonomy of the scholar to enjoy teaching the higher learning and expanding its frontiers” (Brubacher 1977, p. 39). It involves the freedom to teach and undertake research as the academic sees fit (O’Hear 1988, p. 7). Both definitions have impact on the organization and leadership of an institution: accountability measures implemented by the management (or implicit within the organizational ethos) must take into consideration the needs, interests, and preferences of individual academics to pursue their scholarly endeavors.

The principle of academic freedom is deeply embedded in the Ethiopian culture (Abebe 1991; Bridges et al. 2004; Getachew 1994). But institutional autonomy can be seen as distinct from academic freedom. Goedegebuure and his colleagues (1994) defined academic freedom as:

that freedom of the individual scholar in his/her teaching and research to pursue truth wherever it seems to lead without fear of punishment or termination of employment for having offended some political, religious or social orthodoxy. (p. 8)

These issues and their importance in higher education are, however, inseparable from different ideas about what a university *is* and what it is *for* and, therefore, what is its proper relationship with the society in which it is located. In turn, these different conceptions will impact on how the leadership of an institution sees its role and how the university should be organized to enact it. So the second key theoretical framework was drawn from Barnett’s three constructs of the relationship between the university and society: a university *in* society, a university *of* society, and a university *for* society (1997b, pp. 37–38).

In this study, it was necessary to make a distinction between the state and society, because the power of the state does not always emerge from delegation of authority by the grass-root communities (such as ordinary citizens, civil societies, professional associations.). In the Western literature, the two concepts, the state and society, might be interchangeably used. In Africa, and particularly in Ethiopia, the two concepts are distinct. In Ethiopian society, the state is often viewed as distinct from the society, and government bureaucracy constitutes the former. The three constructs differ in their claims to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and accountability. The competing ideas about the relationship between the university

and society (and the university and the state) have featured very strongly in the recent history of higher education in Ethiopia—and so have their implications for academic freedom and accountability and for leadership.

The analysis of the data went on to explore how they have been expressed in the different ideologies, practices, and experiences of the three contrasting regimes across the 55-year period. In summary, threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy (both internal and external) were rampant in all political histories of the Ethiopian University. Erosion of academic freedom took the form of abridgement of the faculty's right for self-rule and the perpetuation of different types of threats (ideological, financial, and administrative) invariably in all regimes. However, the intensity of the problem differed across the three periods with the Marxist regime experiencing the most tyrannical type of governance and absence of any trace of academic freedom.

Presenting the Research

The data and its analysis were presented as three separate narratives, one for each period. The first covered the history of modern higher education in feudal Ethiopia (1950–1974) and its implications for academic freedom and accountability. The narrative situated the origins of the modern system within the context of traditional higher education which can be traced back to the time of the Axumite kingdom after the introduction of Christianity from the Middle East in the fourth century (Teshome 1990, p. 31). Both faculty and students enjoyed academic freedom and institutional autonomy, indicating a benevolent leadership during the period from 1950 to the early 1960s. These freedoms were eroded during the crisis years of the feudal system when mistrust and conflict replaced the old values, trust, service, cooperation, and, above all, deliberative democracy (Enslin and Kissak 2005).

This first narrative also traces the beginnings of state-university conflict in the student publications of the 1950s. Traditional Amharic poetry had, in the face of autocratic suppression, developed a technique through which the message was wrapped in a language rich in ambiguities (*Kene* and *Wuste Weira*)—a rhetoric that had considerable significance for the interpretation of the data generated during this research. *Kene* means a message with double meaning where one of the meanings is hidden by the second meaning to shelter the speaker or the writer from risks of political repercussion. *Wuste Weira* means a hidden meaning. These techniques started challenging the government authorities through the publication of long poems in Amharic. The poems, which were not only part of a university contest but also printed and sold to the public, were very critical of the monarchy and sympathetic of the Ethiopian poor farmer, who was portrayed as patriotic, a taxpayer but always exploited by the rulers. Readers were therefore eager to seek the hidden meanings (Balsvik 2003, p. 4; Kiflu 1993, p. 36). These stories and contributions reflected their sympathy with the poor (AAU 2002; Alula 2002) and are consistent with the idea of a university *for* society. These and other student

activities also had to be seen in relation to the wider contexts such as growing nationalist movements, African liberation fronts, and the post-war (World War II) radical ideas from Marxist and Socialist movements in Asia and the Soviet Union.

The second case narrated changes that took place in academic autonomy and the traditional professional accountability as a result of the new political power systems and ideology of the revolutionary government established after 1974. The narrative started with brief coverage of the revolution and its causes to contextualize the changes addressed in the case. Using memories of AAU professors (who were very enthusiastic to discuss these issues), consulting legal documents (such as proclamations), reading related reports, and using Amare's own experience, the narrative showed how the university lost its traditional autonomy and how its faculty became fragmented along lines of ideology between those who readily accepted the implementation of the new policy and those who resisted inwardly but complied outwardly in a kind of dramaturgical compliance (Barrow 1999). Organizational and leadership issues—including measures taken to restructure the university, curricular changes, administrative and academic controls, and indoctrination efforts, including the effect of the Red Terror project—were discussed to show how the traditional self-government of the academy was replaced by stiff political controls from within and from without the university. It described how such controls constrained the creation, expounding, and dissemination of knowledge to which the Ethiopian modern higher education system had been professionally accountable since its creation in the 1950s.

The third case described the period from 1991 to 2005, the transition to democratic Ethiopia and the various political—and university—crises that followed. As with the second case, it drew heavily on empirical data from members of the university as well as a range of contemporary documents. Understanding the new role of the university with a changed paradigm, that is, its operation in the context of knowledge partnership with the government, seemed to be difficult for AAU. Its history had shown that it had pioneered intellectual, political, and technical knowledge in modern Ethiopia. It had resisted and fought dictators, both in action and in its dissenting position during the monarchy and the Derg period. In spite of these pressures, however, the university was generally less violent with the new administration—until the 2005 Third National Elections. When the opposition contested the polling results that favored the ruling EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) party, university students were the first to take action in protest at the results. During the rule of the EPRDF, AAU was fraught with tension and conflicts that often resulted in closures of the university, faculty and student dismissals, and the short life span of university administrators. This hostile external relationship was accompanied by deteriorating internal relationships within the academic community, with collegial fragmentation causing different types of threats to the academic freedom of individual members and groups. Reflecting on the political and violent nature of AAU which, in turn, contributed to self-imposed constraints to academic freedom, one professor taking part in this research, saddened by the political tragedy, said "I wish there were no elections in Ethiopia at all."

The final section of this third case focused on contemporary perceptions of the academic freedom in AAU. It explored different types of threats to academic

freedom which were closely related to their day-to-day duties as perceived by the lecturers and professors. The analysis was presented as three units which drew on the fourth, fifth, and sixth of Bligh's classification framework (1982, pp. 118–137) of six types of specific freedoms of the academy: (a) freedom of inquiry—freedom to pursue the truth unhindered, by methods including doubt, criticism, discussion, and testing of any belief, (b) freedom to disseminate the truth as one sees it, (c) freedom to express doubts and criticisms of any belief, (d) freedom to decide who should be members of one's own academic institutions, (e) freedom to decide the content of academic courses, and (f) freedom to decide upon the competence and certification of others.

The next stage in the analytical process, and that which steered the study towards a comprehensive historical narrative framed by the research questions, examined threats to institutional autonomy and academic freedom (both as a general and special theory) across the three case histories of AAU (i.e., the cases of AAU under feudalism, socialism, and federalism). It examined how the diverse agents—the state, managers, the faculty, and students—contributed to the erosion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom and how these erosions illustrated pertinent issues of educational leadership. Three major perspectives were used in the analysis of these threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy: governance threats, external threats, and internal threats.

Finally, while the main research and analysis were primarily backward looking, examining 55 years of turbulent history in the complex relations between AAU and the Ethiopian State under these three distinctive political regimes, the last section looked forward. It drew on the insights from the research to look to the future development of those relationships in the hope of achieving the conditions under which a flourishing university intellectual culture might better serve a flourishing and democratic Ethiopian society.

The Reasons for Choosing Historical Narrative

A stranger is lost and asks for directions. The local he turns to replies “Well, I wouldn't start from here.” It is an old joke, but it is also a rationale for the use of historical narratives. Tobias addresses the question of why construct a historical narrative more succinctly when she observes that to “access the current scholarship . . . it is important for us to note the past historical narrative” (cited in Mattingly 2004, p. 582). If the influence of the past on the present is complex, it is more complex still in Ethiopia where different political regimes have sought to shape the understanding of recent history. But what is the “past historical narrative” and how is it constituted? As Barthes notes, narrative “is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind [sic]; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative” (1975, p. 237). There is a long tradition of historical narratives, both secular and sacred, that, sanctified by repetition through retold histories, can lead to the establishment of a

canon—such as the presumption of a golden age from which more recent events deviate or earlier chaos from which there has been an escape. Moreover, narratives emerging from the Global South (which, ironically, may have longer historical pedigrees) may also be distorted by their otherness (Bhabha 1991; Said 1998).

The desire to understand the history of AAU and its relationship with the state, particularly here in order to understand issues of educational organization and leadership, demanded a historical perspective. Munslow suggests that “narrative is central to historical explanation as the vehicle for the creation and representation of historical knowledge and historical explanation,” (2000, p. 169). To understand the process of higher education in Ethiopia and, in particular, the attitudes towards academic freedom and institutional autonomy, it is necessary to understand the political experiences the country has undergone. The corollary is that the history of AAU itself provides an important window onto these political experiences. For Polkinghorne, “narrative meaning is created by noting that something is a ‘part’ of a whole, and that something is a ‘cause’ of something else” (1988, p. 6). There are significant links between past and present, no matter how much habituation to our own understandings of history transforms that significance into little more than the commonplace. This research, with its concern to map the history of AAU through the three distinct phases of recent Ethiopian history, disrupts the commonplace acceptance of history and emphasizes its significance. The purpose of the study was to generate an understanding of the history of AAU—and so, here, illuminate issues of educational organization and leadership—through the experiences and memories of those who worked there through those historical phases. It can therefore be seen to be shaped by Lyotard’s argument that the grand narratives that previously served to legitimate ideological and institutional forms of knowledge have given way to the *petit récits* of little personal narratives (1984).

Hannah Arendt (1958) argues that we need to know a person’s biography if we are to know who he or she is. But such biographies are shaped by context: to understand the world in which that person fits requires an understanding of the stories told about that world (Bruner 1996). However, Mattingly, discussing the renegotiation of historical narratives with fellow historians, and perhaps being deliberately provocative, suggests that the extreme tolerance of the canon presiding over higher educational history in the USA, which incorporates little personal narratives, can lead to the omission of connections with wider discourses and that the “cumulative effect of this scholarship ‘from below’ tends to erode any general consensus on central problems” (2004, p. 577). Gadamer’s (1989) notion of historicity—that history is not an objective past that is external to us but a dynamic force that ineluctably permeates our understanding—offers a bridge over the dynamic tension between the meta- and the personal narratives that iteratively shape our understanding of the relationship between the individual and the history which both shapes and is shaped by her. Here, then, the use of a historical narrative offers a means of understanding where we come from in order to develop a greater understanding of how we may get to where we are going.

That understanding was generated, in part, through the remembered histories of those academics living through those historical phases. MacIntyre suggested that:

I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?” We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted – and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. (1981, p. 216)

For Foucault (1977), educational narratives are generated by and through power issues, about what can be said and done and thought. Foucault focused on the outcasts of society—the insane and the imprisoned—and the power issues he identified are not always obviously evident in educational studies. In Ethiopia’s recent history, though such power—the meaning and the discourse about education that imparted knowledge about education—has been an ever-present and obvious concern, an ever-present threat to academic freedom manifests in the organization and leadership of AAU. However, this generates particular problems that needed careful negotiation through the historical narrative approach taken in this study. What the participants—including Amare—had to say, what they remembered, was shaped by the fallible and contingent nature of memories.

There is, in these accounts told in the present, an ongoing and inevitable relationship with the past. Ricoeur (2004) argues that there can be no definitive historical knowledge. The individual has her own memory and also a collective memory; but the individual memory may be shaped by popular narratives of collective memory. A recent study of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s wartime speeches (Toye 2013) suggests that many people “remember” hearing him deliver his famous “We shall fight them on the beaches” speech from the House of Commons in June, 1940, but although it was reported by a news announcer and widely reported in the press, it was not broadcasted. That is, they “remembered” hearing something they could not have heard. Collective memory is a social process and so subject to social processes: it can be interconnected with what society and the state define and officially sanction as correct. Historiographical operation—that is, the conduct of historical research—is to engage with collective memory and, by offering a framework for engaging with the fallible and contingent nature of memory, leads to an understanding predicated on credibility rather than certainty.

The three distinct phases marking recent history in Ethiopia, and their influence on individual narratives, highlight the significance of contemporaneous accounts and address the filters through which the past is seen. It is important to know what individuals remember, but memory alone is not enough. Different events can be perceived differently, and because perceptions can be influenced through historical distortion, the archival material used to create this historical narrative was important. The research sought to tell the story of academic freedom and institutional autonomy through a study of AAU from 1950 to 2005 and, as Stone notes, “historians have always told stories” (1979, p. 3). But, asks Munslow, “Do historian’s re-tell *the* narrative of past events, or do historians invent *a* narrative in order

to impose a conceptual sense of order on the sublime character of what once was and is now irrevocably gone?" (2000, p. 14, original emphases). The position taken by the historian determines the approach to the evidence; and it also determines the perceived level of interpretation required.

This research took a case study approach based on three cases distributed over historical time in the same socio-spatial setting instead of the conventional approach examining cases in different socio-spatial settings at roughly the same time. It might be argued that the research could have been constructed around a time series analysis of a single case rather than a comparison of three cases. Both options, it could be argued, would have taken historical and narrative approaches to the development of AAU. However, the political changes taking place in the period studied were, quite literally, revolutionary ones and resulted in dramatic political transformations. These transformations created distinct cases of higher education systems with each case representing a unique type of higher education that had a clear implication for a different type of expression or erosion of academic freedom. The contrast between the three political regimes under which the issues of autonomy and accountability were redefined was sufficiently stark and clearly bounded to make it possible to treat them as three cases. There was, however, unavoidably a temporal dynamism between and within these three cases (in spite of the drastic ruptures) that necessitated a consideration of the historical method of inquiry. The inquiry in this project, therefore, necessarily demanded a combination of case study and historical research. The latter relies on the use of documentary and other records and the memories of individuals who lived in and through those historical epochs rather than relying on the sources appropriate to contemporary case study designs. That is, the research design foregrounded contemporary events rather than the memory of those events.

Lloyd (2003) suggests that "the present has to be understood as contingent and transformative. Present and past are organically connected so that in fact there is no real distinction between them" (2003, p. 85). Narratives derived from across the periods considered in this study contribute to understanding these connections. But, according to Lynd, contemporary accounts are particularly valuable. By way of example, he asserts that "anyone wanting to write the history of the post-world war II civil rights movement could undoubtedly write it better now than 5 years from now and better 5 years from now than a quarter a century hence" (1968, p. 102). Stenhouse also asserts that the study of contemporary history appears to offer the best opportunity to enhance our understanding of the past "in the sense that it is an account of a past as close to our present – or perhaps better said to our future – as we can make it" (1980, p. 4). In telling their own stories, in sharing their memories and reflections, participants were creating contemporary historical accounts.

Nonetheless, the nature of historical enquiry is in itself a contested field. Stone defines the main differences between narrative and structural history as the difference between the emphasis of the former on description, on humans, and the specific rather than the essentially analytical approach of the latter which is concerned with circumstances, the general, and the statistical. The nature and role of narrative has, according to Roberts (2001), been central to arguments around the philosophy of

history since the 1960s. Kiser (1996) explains that in structural history, narrative is used in two “limited” ways: to provide descriptions of initial conditions that can then be used to “set the stage” for causal arguments and, secondly, to describe details to amplify causal arguments (1996, p. 252). Narrativists, he argues, stress temporality and making temporal order “leads many narrativists to emphasise the path-dependent nature of social processes” (1996, p. 255). Marwick (2001) also draws attention to what he terms the “battle of basic assumptions” that lies beneath any discussion of the nature of history. The “battle” can be seen in Munslow’s (2000) three main approaches to historical enquiry: reconstructionist, constructionist, and deconstructionist. The first of these approaches seeks to find *the* past as it was through the disinterested historian who can impartially evaluate and compare the evidence. A constructionist approach assumes history as a conceptualization of the evidence formed through a “dialogue between the historian and the past” (Munslow 2000, p. 53). Finally, deconstructionist history seeks to interrogate discourses on the premise that history is based in the power of language in representation. The research described in this chapter sought to tread a middle path while acknowledging the inherent problems in pursuing historical enquiry.

The Role of Interpretation in This Research

Three key issues framed the interpretation of this data. The first was the personal role of the lead researcher, Amare, who lived through the events described in the research and was caught up in them. The second was the significance of the archival data—itself partial and politicized—as a means of contextualizing and understanding the remembered accounts of the research participants. When set within a context where repeated violent revolutionary action has discouraged open talking and, furthermore, a culture that prizes ambiguity, interpretation is complex. Third, and permeating these other issues, is the oral tradition of telling stories, including historical stories, that is framed by the concept of *sam-enna warq* or “wax and gold.”

“All thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted” (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003, p. 452). As the lead researcher of, and a participant in, many of the events described, Amare’s own memories of his experiences inevitably colored the interpretations of the data. Nor could he claim neutrality in the shift from old to current Ethiopian politics—which many call ethnic politics. The establishment calls it federalism grounded in the idea of “nation-nationalities” or what Huntington (1996) calls the demand for cultural sovereignty. Whatever the semantics, it is a kind of governance based on the philosophy of power sharing among the ethnic groups—the antithesis of the Ethiopian nation state that had survived for several millennia. These fundamental issues were mitigated to some extent by the collaboration of the authors, but they could not fully escape the influence of the politics and ethnicity that are core aspects of Ethiopian life and that therefore inevitably affect research in and of the Ethiopian higher education sector.

Amare belongs to an ethnic minority, the Tigrians. The prime minister at the time the research was conducted, Meles Zenawi, belonged to that same ethnic group, and this raises the question of whether, in a highly charged political situation, the non-Tigrian professors interviewed felt able to speak freely and openly. Might there have been some restraint on their part to involve themselves in such sensitive political issues? How far did political allegiances influence the narratives they told? Although no self-restraint was observed on the part of these participants (irrespective of their ethnic identities), this might have been because of their personal relationship with the lead researcher. This was, as he understood it, positive and grounded in a collegiality based on relationships that predated the research. However, it might also have been connected with the freedom of speech attained after 1991 and the uninhibited inclination of the public to speak whatever it wants. Had the research been conducted after the 2005 election, which precipitated ethnic tension, presumably the cooperation demonstrated by colleagues would not have been the same.

This issue of politicized ethnicity could have also influenced the research through the selection of participants and the significance attached to the narratives they shared. In terms of professional experience, political allegiance, and living through revolutionary change, the lead researcher was caught up in what Adler and Adler call the “ultimate existential dual role” (1987, p. 73). This had the potential to generate role conflict for Amare as researcher and as insider and so to influence the interpretation of the data. Acknowledging this potential problem, he turned to Barbara who, as an outsider, was in a position to act as a critical friend and so mitigate this possible bias. Moreover, the report specifically identified the political allegiance of Amare, as lead researcher, to enable the reader to take this into account in assessing the evidence and the ideas that were advanced.

The use of memories is another way in which interpretation plays a role: the data was drawing on the recollections of life at AAU under the different political regimes. Tosh and Lang note the difference between memory and what they term the “more disciplined awareness of the past that characterizes an awareness of history” (2006, p. 1). They argue that while memories are a source of data, they are also a way of making sense of one’s own life story and that any society has its own collective memory that acts in a similar way. Just as personal memories are fallible, subject to change through the overlaying of current events, collective memories share the same distortions, since “our current priorities lead us to highlight some aspects of the past and exclude others” (p. 1). When it comes to political issues, they assert that “memory is highly selective and sometimes downright erroneous” (p. 2). In spite of the triangulation between accounts and against other sources, the interpretation—and reinterpretation—of the raw data, the interpretative bias resulting from the lead researcher’s own political affiliations cannot be ignored. It was accepted that “all interpretations are culturally situated” (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003, p. 447), and again, this was mitigated to some extent by the involvement of the second researcher who, despite her long-standing association with Ethiopia, was outside its sociopolitical milieu. Moreover, Amare strove for quality and verification in the research process while trying to understand the problem by personally engaging with research participants and spending extensive time in the research setting (Creswell 1998, p. 193). The evidence was rigorously

scrutinized through comparisons of the different sources and counterchecks by subjecting it to public critical scrutiny (Stenhouse 1978, p. 5) and by returning the case record to the research participants for their feedback.

The research on which this chapter is based tried to avoid the excesses of the scientific tradition which views historical enquiry as what Carroll (1998) calls *narrativising*—the attempt to create an exact representation of reality. Narrativizing historians castigate historical narratives as being mere products of the historians' imagination and which derive their meaning not just from the so-called facts they describe but from the narrative form into which they fit those facts (White 1998, p. 16). It also sought to avoid the extreme standpoint of the rhetorical attitude (Fay 1998) which views historical narratives as mere constructions of a social reality contingent upon power and social class and which reflects the epistemic view of a multiplicity of constructed social realities, thus rendering historical narrations as mere reproductions of the ideology of the dominant groups (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003, pp. 436–438).

The extreme form of the rhetoric attitude undermines the value of objective historical evidence, which can be established through exposure to public criticism and triangulation. “Not only is all research an act of interpretation but. . . perception is itself an act of interpretation” (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003, p. 443). However, Lawrence Stenhouse writes of research as “systematic and sustained enquiry made public” (1980, p. 5), and for philosophers in the liberal tradition like Karl Popper, the exposure to public scrutiny of one's ideas provides a testing ground. Popper argued that:

truth is not manifest, and it is not easy to come by. The search for truth demands at least: (a) imagination; (b) trial and error; and (c) the gradual discovery of our prejudices by way of (a) and (b) and of *critical discussion*. (1963, p. 352, emphasis added)

The credibility of Amare's ideas—that is, his interpretation of the data—was tested through ongoing discussions with the research participants (particularly the more informal talks held during the tea breaks) and with Barbara who acted as a critical friend throughout.

The use of archival material presented a particular interpretive problem. Smith (1984) notes that an event becomes part of an official record through a bureaucratic recording process. The process confers apparent authenticity of the event by giving it an officially approved status, making the event apparently “fact.” However, that process is itself open to negotiation and the use of approximation if necessary (Garfinkel and Bittner 1967). There are always questions such as which events were recorded, which were not, why, and through what process did that recording take place? So a key challenge in using such material was the requirement to evaluate authenticity because, as Lloyd observes, “History should no more be a discipline resting on *common sense* than are biochemistry, neurophysiology, astrophysics or any other empirical science” (2003, p. 85). Merriam (1988, p. 107) has produced a long list of questions for validating documents, including completeness, history, accuracy, and authenticity (such as whether or not documents were tampered with), and they all need to be considered. Their interpretation needs to take into

account that documents do not exist in a vacuum; they were created by someone with a particular purpose in mind. Further questions that were asked of these archival materials and that were particularly important given the changing politics were as follows: What was the context of their production? What were the motivations of their sources? Who were the intended readers and why? Such questions were addressed through a dialectic of interpreting the past through the present (the thoughts and reflections of the participants on events previously recorded and archived) and of the present through the past (comparing those reflections with the recordings).

These problems, though, were further compounded by the word play at the heart of the Ethiopian oral culture and its influence upon the telling of stories. The Amharic language is ideal for word play: the notion of—and skill in—the use of ambiguity is a deeply embedded cultural feature of Ethiopian society and its literary traditions. The Amharic poetic tradition had, in the face of political suppression, developed a tradition for wrapping the message in a language rich in ambiguities such as *Kene* and *Wuste Weira* (inside the olive tree), and people were eager to seek the hidden messages (Balsvik 2003, p. 4; Kiflu 1993, p. 36). This is known as the tradition of wax and gold and permeates the oral culture of Ethiopia:

Sam-enna warq ('wax and gold') is the formula used by the Amhara to symbolise their favourite form of verse. It is a form built on two semantic layers. The apparent, figurative meaning of the words is called 'wax'; their more or less hidden actual significance is the 'gold.' (Levine 1965, p. 5)

The practice of wax and gold served a number of functions. It could add humor, deliver insults, be used as a way of sending information privately, and also function as a safety valve when open speech could be very dangerous (Levine 1965, p. 9). Yet, as Levine asserts, wax and gold is not just a method of communicating; it is a way of life: ambiguity is the core of traditional Amhara life with words routinely having double meanings and utterances constantly interrogated for underlying secrets.

Any interpretation of data must be aware of potential double meanings within the use of language. Levine goes on to argue that wax and gold might be considered as both an opposition to the modernization of Ethiopia and yet, at the same time, a vital part of that modernization. However, by 2007, Levine's position was much more negative: that the habitual use of ambiguity through wax and gold serves as a source of deep distrust in the society, the "endemic suspiciousness" that he saw as the root of Ethiopia's inability to make peaceful, democratic change (Levine 2007). Messay Kebede (1999) criticizes Levine, suggesting he does not emphasize the notion of wax and gold, but rather stresses the importance of authority in Amhara society. He complains that Levine's analysis only raises ambiguity and duplicity, being used to support James Bruce's (1964) claim that "dissimulation, in all ranks of these people, is as natural as breathing" and that he fails to identify any positive qualities (p. 181). This, he argues, does not articulate with other aspects of Amhara culture such as their complete lack of dissimulation in the area of authority which is displayed "ostentatiously" and "without courtesy" and their deep adherence to

religion, especially Christianity. Rather, he suggests that wax and gold might have its roots in religion itself, in trying to find the deeper meanings and spiritual mysteries beyond the religious text itself. He links the tradition to Western ways of thinking by reference to the allegory of Plato's cave in which the chained prisoners who can see only shadows, once released and shown their source from the fire, would in time increase their knowledge and concludes that the wax and gold process is quite near to this principle (p. 182).

Whatever their differences, Levine and Messay both agree on the profound impact wax and gold has had on Ethiopian culture. Within this context, correctly interpreting meaning from data required the insider's understanding of the tradition, that what is said may well contain far more hidden meanings than might normally be expected by people (including critical friends) from outside the country. As an experienced insider, Amare was able to lead us through this difficult terrain, explaining the workings of *Kene* and *Wuste Weira*, illustrating the ambiguities in practice through the data.

Conclusion

Leadership and organization in the Ethiopian case study suggest the absence of distance between the state and the university. By claiming a responsibility for political change, the revolutionary university had extended itself to the state. Not only through its criticisms but also through its violent actions, it represented a threat to the freedom of the state to govern. In this way, the university had prepared the ground for its destruction by the state. As the university denied the freedom of the state to rule, the state had also denied the university independence (of the state), institutional autonomy, and academic freedom.

It is believed that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are necessary conditions for the practice of higher education—teaching, research, learning, and public service (Bligh 1982; Goedegebuure et al. 1994; Finkin and Post 2009). Realizing these qualities, however, demands a common vision between the state and university and about the definition and validation of knowledge. In this connection, Mazrui (1978) said:

What a university owes to government is neither defiance nor subservience. It is intelligent cooperation, respecting the academic's right to be skeptical without being subversive, sympathetic without being subservient. (p. 275)

It demands a deliberative culture where everyone has the right to participate freely in debates and conversations using reasoned argument supported by evidence and respecting the freedom of others (for free conversations) without resort to the use of power. This Ethiopian case study demonstrated an excessive use of power to resolve political and epistemological problems. A serious problem observed with the academic community and, of course, with the state is adherence to the belief in and commitment to a single truth as if this truth were a certainty. A culture of tolerance that emerges from the recognition of the existence of multiple truths (or at least multiple

(continued)

perspectives on truth) appeared to be alien in the Ethiopian academic culture. The epistemology of a single authoritative truth or a strong commitment to one's own truth was the single most important epistemological constraint in Ethiopia that sustained a poor intellectual culture over the years. This problem still continues to destabilize and de-intellectualize the university.

The historical study explored in this chapter recognized the power of narratives to not merely describe the world but to construct it (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003, p. 441). It rejected the possibility of a single authoritative truth and sought, instead, to recognize the multiplicity and complexity of the different narratives constituting the overall narrative. The irony of this can, perhaps, be seen as an instance, recognized through academic study, of the Amharic notion of *sam-enna warq*—the “wax and the gold” of surface meaning and hidden intent that shaped the narrative interpretation of the histories that were told.

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1.2 Interpreting Street Narratives of Children and Parents in Indonesia

Sophie Dewayani

This chapter provides a methodological reflection on the researcher's role in narrative inquiry when approaching marginalized, stereotyped, and underrepresented communities. Particularly, my inquiry focused on two questions:

1. In what ways do the participants construct their identity in relation to the researcher's approach?
2. What is the role of interpretation in understanding participants' narrative construction within the power relations in Indonesian society?

The Research Project

The context of the study includes an overview of the issue of street children in Indonesia, the societal narrative about street children constructed by the government and the media, and the theoretical framework of the study. I present the street narratives and describe the data collection process. Further I justify the discourse analysis approach that I employed as well as discuss its contribution to critiquing the wider meta-narrative constructed about the street culture in Bandung, Indonesia, by the dominant culture. While my participants rarely provided me with extended narratives about their lives on the street or their short periods in the public schools, their discourse overtime provided a cumulative narrative, what I am here calling an evolving meta-narrative, about their lives and perspectives related to the dominant discourse about them. This narrative contrasts with the dominant discourse about them. Their counter voices represent Bakhtin's "carnival" (Bakhtin 1981)

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in which the dominant values and truth are being contested by normally suppressed voices and energies. The street family narratives in this chapter are understood using a framework of Bakhtinian dialogic (Bakhtin 1981) in which participants respond in ways that reflect their social positions (Wortham 2001):

“What do you think? You like it?” The lady, one of the orphanage committee members, asks an eight-year old girl from Pasundan. “You will like it here. Lots of nice friends, books, toys, and you will go to a nice school.”

The girl smiles shyly. We walk back to the living room, but instead of sitting on an empty couch or rugs, the parents prefer to sit down on the cold ceramic floor. The lady asks them to move to the couch, but they decline, arguing that they like the cold floor better.

“So what do you think?” the lady asks a father. “Sending one of your daughters here will make things easier for you. You do not have to worry about one more mouth to feed. Look at this girl [she points to one of the orphanage girls]. She came here dirty, shabby, and skinny. But look at how chubby and clean she is now. Don’t you want your daughter to be like that?”

The father nods and smiles politely, “I guess I want to but [.] I’ll think about it,” he says.

The lady replies, “You have time to think but please consider what’s best for your children.”

“Will we be allowed to visit our kids?” a mother from Pasundan asks.

“Of course, but after some times. Please consider that your kids also need time to adjust. After a few months, then you can come for a visit Oh, kids are just like that, don’t worry. They have a hard time when they come, but if you endure [not to visit them while they’re still adjusting], they will get over it. They’ll like it here. This one [mentioning a name of a girl] even didn’t want to go back home during the *Eid* break. Even when she’s at her family’s home, she couldn’t wait to go back here,” the lady laughs. But none of the parents laugh.

“What if she forgets about us then?” the mother asks again.

Oh, of course not. We always teach the children to obey and respect their parents. That’s the way it is in Islam, right?

The vignette above occurred on a hot afternoon in an orphanage in a middle-class neighborhood in Bandung. It took place when the orphanage committee invited some “street families” in Pasundan. The purpose was to see if the children would be interested in living in the orphanage, which was described by the committee lady as “a much better home.” A day following the families’ visit, I asked a social worker, who happened to join the visit, whether any of the parents accepted the offer to have their children taken care of at the orphanage, to which she replied that the father (in the quote above) was worried that his daughter would not recognize him as her parent. “[After living there] What if she’s embarrassed having me as her dad. Will she ever want to live in this house, in this slum, again?” the father told the social worker as he declined the offer.

In what follows, I present street narratives in an evolving dialogic context that involves me, the researcher, the street families, the NGO working with the street families, and the dominant Indonesian society, as represented by the government and in the media. These interactions reflected a dominant discourse that situated the street community, my narrators, on the margins of society. I define street narratives as stories constructed over time in and about the street, by families working in the street intersections. The Indonesian government labels the families, living in Pasundan, Bandung, as “street communities.”

The narratives in this study are focused on the children's schooling, constituted of conversations from the children's, parents', and tutors' perspectives. During 6 months of intensive fieldwork, I spent time with the street families and was involved in the communities' conversations. I also approached the orphanage committee members in the neighborhood where I live, who conducted charity activities such as distributing food and other basic needs to the Pasundan street community as well as inviting the children to stay in the orphanage. I listened to their opinions regarding the street families. This ethnographic approach involving various groups, situated within the government's policy toward street children, provided me with a complicated picture of a meta-narrative bringing together their opinions about schooling within a larger sociopolitical and discursive context of Indonesian society.

From the perspective of the dominant group, families were enacting abusive parenting by allowing their children to drop out of school and work in the streets; in contrast, the parents valued education strongly even as their children worked in the streets. In my research I show how the street children and their parents responded to the dominant narrative by deliberately distancing and dissociating themselves from this stereotyped portrayal.

About the Study

This chapter uses narrative inquiry to capture the diverse perspectives surrounding the issue of child-rearing practices, particularly related to how Indonesian street families allow their children to work in the street. The backdrop for the study is the government's policies as well as the dominant society's perception of them. This chapter documents narratives constructed by children and their families, mostly in street settings. Unlike the conversation in an orphanage above, the street settings allowed parents and children to offer an alternative meaning to the dominant society belief that the street children were abandoned and exploited.

I came to realize the discursive nature of this particular context when I asked the Pasundan resident participants in my fieldwork: "What do you do for living?" I asked this question because they and their children rely on street work such as begging, dusting stopped vehicles, selling knick-knacks, and playing music as the traffic lights turned red at intersections to support their daily living expenses. To my surprise, I did not receive descriptions of the aforementioned jobs, but instead the common answer was *serabutan* or "miscellaneous." "Miscellaneous jobs" entail temporary low-paid, on-demand jobs, which may include temporary security jobs, street cleaning, lawn trimming, or housekeeping. The basic notion that characterizes these jobs is temporality. I initially understood the street family responses as a way of obscuring their identification with the "street community" constructed by the government and the nongovernmental organization (NGO) that assisted them. My participants interpreted what I assumed to be a neutral question soliciting demographic information as a judgment of their situation. This complicated my

initial participant selection method. If they did not want to be identified as members of the street community, would they be willing to participate in my research?

Even though the term *serabutan* can include street jobs, it is commonly associated with off-street jobs by the street community. Thus, I eventually came to the conclusion that the self-identified *serabutan* jobs referred to the participants' wish for job positions. However, such opportunities were rare, so in order to make ends meet, the parents and the children spent most of their time working in the street.

This study involved the narratives of seven children, as well as their parents, who worked as street dusters and musicians in the street intersection near where they lived in Pasundan, Bandung. The Rainbow Foundation, an NGO that assisted the families in literacy learning, facilitated my access to the families. The literacy learning was part of the Indonesian government's campaign to reduce the number of children working in the street. The government, in the 2010 Social Ministry's Children Social Welfare Program, asserted that sending children to school, rather than allowing them to work in the street, was their attempts to fulfill the children's basic needs.

Tujuan program bagi anak terlantar dan anak jalanan adalah bahwa orang tua/keluarga tidak menelantarkan anak (memberikan perawatan, pengasuhan dan perlindungan bagi anak) sehingga hak-hak dasarnya semakin terpenuhi, serta anak tidak dieksploitasi untuk tujuan mengemis/meminta-minta. Selain itu, bagi anak jalanan tidak lagi melakukan aktivitas ekonomi di jalanan, anak kembali sekolah. [Translation: The purpose of this program is that parents/families do not abandon their children. This can be done by taking care of, nurturing, and giving them protection so that their basic needs can be fulfilled. In addition, children should not be allowed to beg and work in the street, and parents should make sure that children return to school].

Children who work in the street comprised 2.8 % of the child population nationwide in 2009. Of this, there are as many as 8,000 such children living in Bandung, the capital of West Java province, with a population of 2.4 million. The Indonesian Social Ministry reported that poverty is the major factor causing children to work in the streets. Data released by the Rainbow Foundation confirmed that urban slum residents living near the main street intersections contributed the majority of the street children population in West Java.

The existence of families as the basic unit of the children's street activities thus differentiates the participants in this study from those in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (Berman 2000; Beazley 2002a, b), who live separated from their families. In Bandung, street children not only live with their families, but the data also reveal that children as young as 6–15 years old often functioned as the economic backbone of the families due to the parents' unemployment.

Children's participation in working for their families can be traced back to the history of child labor in Indonesia. Studies showed that Javanese children were considered economically valuable as they worked with adults in agricultural activities in rural areas (Nag et al. 1978). Children participated voluntarily in both paid jobs and domestic work. This was confirmed by Koentjaraningrat's (1989) findings that children were viewed as beneficial in Javanese families. Societal perception concerning child work, however, has shifted. While child work in the past had been valued and considered to improve children's sense of responsibility, child

labor—including work in the streets—is currently viewed as exploitive as evidenced in the government’s policy and the dominant societal view. However, as my interviews revealed, the street families themselves did not see it the same way.

In an attempt to assure child protection, Indonesia, along with many other developing countries, has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Fink 2004) and the International Convention of Child Labor. This convention prohibits children from working in hazardous workplaces, such as streets. In addition, the government, as reported by the media, circulated a notion that children have been forced to work in the street by their parents. According to the media, parents do this with the purpose of evoking people’s sympathy. Following this claim, the government intervened in parental decisions by distributing educational funding to some families with the condition that parents would prohibit their children from working in the street. In the following section I present some social stigmas concerning street children and their parents, which serve as the context for the construction of the street narratives in this chapter.

Societal Narratives Concerning Street Life

Are they [the children’s activities in the streets] organized by adults?

This question was often asked by my neighbors, residents in a middle-class housing complex in Bandung, when commenting on my research participants. Being “organized” referred to the possibility that adults forced the children to work. The prejudice that children are organized to work in the streets has obscured the issues of poverty that these children’s families are experiencing. Working in the street has been viewed by the dominant society as a sign of apathy and laziness, often associated with the “culture” of poor people. It was commonly believed that instead of competing in the job market, poor parents would rather take advantage of their children’s innocent looks to earn money in the streets. Furthermore, it had also become a popular assumption that giving money to children in the street perpetuates a “begging habit,” a mental state attributed to poor families.

“Come home my dear children, the street is not your place to work and play,” the government called out to the “street children” through street billboards. Even though many children in the street were living with and being taken care of by their families, the government considered them “lost” and living in an “inappropriate” space. “Street” reflected the contesting discourse of childhood and thus served as a domain in which the government and the dominant society dictated to poor parents how they should properly raise their children in order to better develop the future nation state.

One of the ways the government responded to the suspected “child exploitation” was by conducting “street people” roundups. The authorities usually targeted women carrying babies with a suspicion that the babies were rented—with some money paid to the biological mothers—for begging purposes. It is also assumed that

the street children's "bosses" supervised these children's activities from a distance (Winarno Detik Online News July 8, 2010, para. 8). The media also reported that the syndicate transported the street people from their village in the outskirts of big cities such as Jakarta and Bandung in trucks (Haryanto, Detik Online News, para. 6). Further, the Social Minister warned that charity would perpetuate a "poverty culture." He argued that it would be better to give charity to orphanages rather than to the street communities (Widhi Detik Online News, August 10, 2010, para. 1–2).

Having shaped societal perceptions toward the poor families' attitudes and behaviors, the Indonesian media perpetuated Ruby Payne's stereotype of "the culture of poverty." The use of vocabulary such as exploitation, crime syndicate, deceitful, and laziness has developed dominant society stereotypes that negatively judge the mental state, work performance, and parenting approach of families living in poverty (Bomer et al. 2008).

The same stigma was further embedded in government policy documents. For example, the Presidential Instructions (number, 3 and 10, 2010) regarding children's welfare and social development indicated that parents who involved children in the family's income-generating activities were violating the law. This policy implies that caregiving practices in low-income families are situated in a public domain, and therefore open to be evaluated and examined by the government through the use of legal instruments. The childcare practices, and further the conception of childhood, were assumed to be singular (Jenks 2004), as children from low-income families were prohibited from participating in a family's economic activities. Yet throughout the nation, children did participate in society but in ways defined by the dominant groups.

The community's parenting practice became a space where society should intervene. Street children were to be "cared for" as if they were the society's children. The "rights" and "child care needs" of these children were appropriated by state agencies and the society through the enactment of laws, policies, and practices in ways that subjected children to state control.

State institutional control further embodied the international pressure and universally accepted conception of childhood formulated through, to name a few, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, see, e.g., Fink 2004) and the International Convention of Child Labor. White (1994) points out that pressures exist in economic sanctions and boycotts that are used to "bully" developing countries into ratifying international conventions on child labor and rights. Hence, the so-called street children in developing countries are under the gaze of the international society through discursive practices that Foucault (Rabinow 1984) would consider "disciplinary techniques." These include institutionalized regulations, administrative measures, scientific statements, as well as societal perceptions embedded in the interactions with street children and their parents. The street families are thus marginalized by state policies as well as the global discourse on childhood. Thus, international forces may have played a bigger role in national policy formulation than the seemingly political will to educate street children or eradicate poverty.

Framework of the Study

Narratives range from life histories and stories of selves to solicited interview responses. Along with these options, there has been a shift from *content* to *context* analysis (Riessman 1993) using narrative to understand particular cultures and social structures. The study of the narratives of marginalized groups focuses on the power relations embodied in issues of inequalities, oppression, and social injustice, which are often silenced and/or taken for granted by dominant groups in a society. The street narratives revealed the situated cultural practices, the nature of interactions between the street community and the researcher, as well as the power relations in the society that have situated the “street” as a marginalized space.

The street narratives I gathered were not given in the form of life histories or interview responses. Children and adults in the street community did not tell elaborated stories about their lives, at least not to me. There was only one adult participant who told me extensive narratives. Positioning of herself as the storyteller, however, was not typical and tended to be enacted only by “respected” figures in the community. My data were more snippets of discourse collected over 6 months while in the midst of the street families activities, particularly within the context of the work of the NGO working with the street children.

I employed Fairclough’s (1989) discourse analysis framework to examine the discourse reflected in the language switching, vocabulary, and rhetorical strategies used by the participants. Fairclough’s approach to analysis reflects the idea that language and discourses embody ideologies and therefore constitute social identities, social relations, and worldviews. The researcher seeks to understand how discourse is enacted and organized as practices that reflect class structures within a society, in this case those who have and do not have access to economic resources and power. My research investigated my participants’ embodiment of societal structures, related to what Foucault (1984) deemed the production of power and knowledge, which in this case allowed for the confinement and objectification of street children in particular ways through policies and dominant Indonesian society discourses.

Participants’ attitudes in constructing their narratives thus set the research in a different light than was evident in the narrative research with homeless participants conducted by Snow and Anderson (1987). The homeless participants in this research provided elaborated narrative responses reflecting distancing, embracement of selves, and fictive storytelling. Although some features of identity constructions were similar in my study, the participants in the Pasundan street community situated themselves primarily within the moral landscape of parenting practices.

There has been growing attention in educational research to the narratives of underrepresented populations (Corsaro and Rosier 1992; Dyson 1993; Goodwin 2006; Heath 1983; Hicks 2005; Labov 1973; Michaels 1981; Miller 1994; Newkirk 2002; Yosso 2006). These studies define “underrepresented narrators” as those whose narratives have been devalued, especially by school systems and the dominant culture. The researchers call for more attention to the diverse modes of children’s language diversity and for schools to provide a nurturing space for children to develop their communicative competence.

My research is also related to studies of children's narratives investigating how children are socialized into narratives at home, school, and other social settings where adults play various roles (Howard 2008; Miller et al. 2002; Sandel 2003). Miller et al. (2002) studied how adults organize their narratives around the cultivation of self-esteem or shame in a moral landscape. Through documenting adults' narratives of parents, teachers, and NGO social workers, I was able to describe a framework of moral values into which the children were socialized. Moral values were reflected in their narrative discourse about schooling and working.

Some studies have investigated the voices of street children in Indonesia as counter-narratives. Berman's ethnography (2000) of street children in Indonesia revealed that the street children construct a discourse of violence as a strategy of survival. Berman studied the written narratives of 10–17-year-old street children that were published in a bulletin. Their writings reflected their evaluations of power enforced by authoritative adults in which they initially portrayed themselves as victims. Berman argued that the street children's stories provided a means of sharing survival strategies. She demonstrates how they transformed their conceptions of self, moving from victim to author. Here, narrative served as a means to portray a new agency in a situation where their access to power was limited.

A study by Beazley (2002a) revealed how another group of Indonesian street children used narratives to mark and identify the spatial boundaries in relation to their comfort zones. Having lived with peers on the street, the street children emphasized in their drawings and maps places such as traffic lights, bus terminals, railroad, and other public spaces that served as their territories or hangout sites. They excluded certain spaces where they had experienced verbal abuse, evictions, arrests, beatings, and tortures by the police officers. The fact that street children used narratives and mappings to conceptualize their territories demonstrated the interweaving of cognitive and narrative competence in constructing their identities.

Studies of counter-narratives that challenge dominant narratives bring previously devalued narratives of minority children to academic attention. They shine a light on the issue of those who are marginalized. Counter-narratives reveal how marginalization is unconsciously pervasive and maintained in a society and the impact it has on the construction of minority and nonminority children's identities. Marginalization emerges in different forms across cultures. For example, while schoolchildren's narratives in the USA reflect how they negotiate the power structures inherent in school curricula and peer relationships (Corsaro 2003; Dyson 1994, 2009), Indonesian street children's narratives in these studies revealed their struggles with government officials' violent treatment in everyday life (Berman 2000; Beazley 2002a, b).

In a Bakhtinian (1981) perspective, the counter-narratives are responding to the "unitary language"; counter-narratives decentralize dominant ideologies. The unification of language creates a "social heteroglossia" (p. 271) within which diversity is built, reflecting dynamic and even conflicting linguistic forces. Taking a metaphor of a novel as a "mundane reality," Bakhtin's dialogical notion represents the complexity of narratives as a means of understanding self, the relationship of self

and others, and the connections of self and the world. Within this complexity, the self is constructed dialogically by acquiring internalized cultural norms or producing agency, by receiving or resisting. Self is a site where dialogic forces occur through the use of language. The parents and street children created a “social heteroglossia” within which I conducted this research.

One part of the wider heteroglossia is “the societal narrative,” that is, the dominant circulating narratives concerning street children that served as a context for the street community’s narrative. The dominant discourses, which are embedded in the Indonesian media and the narratives of a middle-class group of society, were analyzed to describe the larger discursive contexts (Gee 1989; Riessman 1993). My focus of situating the children’s perspectives within the societal narrative extends studies of Indonesian street children’s narratives conducted by Berman (2000) and Beazley (2002a, b) that focused on the discourse embedded in the children’s narratives alone. By framing the street narratives in the wider social context, it is possible to illustrate how narratives respond to and resist the dominant narrative concerning children working in the street.

Informal Literacy Learning

The informal learning activities organized by the NGO foundation were intended for children who had dropped out of formal elementary schools. In addition, the foundation helped children return to formal schooling by enrolling them in schools, providing school supplies, and helping them with their homework. The narratives from the children and their parents thus were situated in a context where most child participants had experienced some formal schooling and were attending informal literacy learning organized by the Rainbow Foundation. There were only two of the children, however, who attended an elementary school in the mornings before they worked in the street.

The informal learning was conducted on the street median, sidewalk, parking lot, or any space in or near the street intersection where the children wished. Assisted by tutors, literacy assistance included math, copying writing, and learning to read. The nature of learning reading, writing, and math was mechanical; children were given textbooks or problems corresponding to their competence levels. As these competence levels varied depending on how long they had been out from schools, almost all instruction was conducted one on one. In addition to the mechanical literacy instruction, writing composition was included once in a while. Rainbow tutors regarded writing composition as significant for facilitating children’s organization of thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, writing helped to maintain penmanship, vocabulary, and reading skills.

Despite being valued by tutors, writing composition was considered difficult by most children. The writing assignments tended to produce children’s groans, “Oh, that’s difficult!” to which the tutor replied by providing encouragement: “Of course you can do it. It doesn’t have to be long. Just tell a story.” Even though the children

were asked to “just tell a story,” most children did not start to write until the tutor modeled what they could write on certain topic.

Despite the reluctance in the beginning, the writing process itself occurred in a permeable, relaxed environment. Children were free to move from one spot to another on the sidewalk, and they were allowed to chat and ask or teach their friends. One day, I caught Santi (a seventh grader) dictating sentences for Ellis (a 10-year old) to write. Ellis seemed to be confused when listening to Santi’s sentences. And noticing this, Santi grabbed Ellis’ notebook and wrote for her.

The topic for composing writing ranged from daily experience to specific topics, such as “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The following is Idang’s (a 14-year-old boy) writing in response to the latter topic.

In the future I want to become an artist because I like to paint I want to be admired by
people I hope when I grow up I will be a successful artist, amen
May God grant this [wish]
Pray for me please. . .

Despite dropping out of fourth grade 4 years ago, Idang wrote that he wanted to become an artist. The direct communicative strategy that he used to conclude his writing signposted an oral communicative style, which was sometimes used in writings intended for others, demonstrating that he wanted to reach the readers. As they were writing that day, for example, Ima, the tutor, explained to the children. “For instance, you want to be a doctor [then you write] why you want to be a doctor. So you can help people. You can cure people. Like that.” Thus, although guided in writing their compositions, the children did compose their texts. However, there were aspects of copying in the children’s writing, which dominated both formal and informal literacy learning in elementary grades. This was evident in children imitating the tutor’s example as well as following the style of more capable friends. This is also typical of emerging writers where they use the writing and skills of others to scaffold the development of their own text.

Selecting the Participants: Moral Landscape and Identity Construction

Fini, a 15-year-old street musician, preferred to work in the street at night because, she said, “It feels cooler at night, and it’s less dusty too.” Responding to this, a social worker from the NGO, Yuma, commented, “She’s embarrassed to be seen on the street at daytime. She can’t stand people’s stares and everything.” Most of street girls I observed generally quit working in the street by the time they turned 15. The social workers testified that shame figured into personal decisions about working in the street. Street activities were considered “appropriate” only for little children. When girls reached 15, they were expected to work for a regular income, such as working in factories.

Another street norm was the moral boundaries separating working and begging activities. Dusting cars or *ngelap*, even though it consisted only of some light strokes on the cars, was considered “working.” Similarly, *ngamen*, which was singing while clapping hands or playing simple music instruments, was considered “working.” Working was regarded as respectable. Begging, by contrast, was associated with sluggishness and thus embarrassing. The justification for this contrast comes from Islamic belief. Working is viewed as part of spiritual deeds that God will reward in the hereafter. A prophet saying even equates hard work with fighting in a battle; a death while doing hard work would grant one paradise in the hereafter.

The street norm contrasting working and begging figured into how participants wanted to be framed in my research. Participants did not want to be caught begging in the street. Begging was usually an activity participants did far away from the Pasundan area where they lived. For example, I saw some participants begging when I was in the Bandung downtown 10 km from Pasundan. Social workers gave me additional information about my participants’ begging activities.

Hildred Geertz (1959) discusses the complexity of the conception of “shame” in Javanese culture as reflected in vocabularies describing its intensity; *sungkan*, *isin*, and *saru* all represent embarrassment at different degrees, from the mildest to the most intense. In my research, the concept of shame was a silent voice undergirding practices and collective choices. Begging for money was embarrassing (*isin*, or even *saru*), particularly for parents because it showed they were not able to meet their children’s basic needs. In addition, allowing children to work in the street was viewed by the dominant society as the parents’ failure (at the same level of *isin* or *saru*). The feeling of embarrassment of the parents was apparent as they interacted with me.

As my fieldwork unfolded, I found “shame” an invisible thread woven in the “webs of significance” (Geertz 1977) of street cultural practices. It was embedded in one of Yuma’s comments on Fini’s decision to work at night as I noted above. “That’s the thing you can’t get from just asking. She may answer one thing, but then at another time she tells you something different. I just knew that. She used to tell me everything,” Yuma, from the NGO, told me. Regarding why other children older than 15-year old generally stopped working in the street, especially in daytime, was related to shame. Many Rainbow facilitators who have been working with these children for years confirmed this.

Yuma was a street girl herself when she was a child. Thus, the notion of “things we can’t get just from asking” may resemble her insight of having experienced a feeling of being marginalized. In addition, it represents the depth of cultural patterns in which “moods, motivation, affects, and activities constitute symbolic interrelation in the cultural system” (Sewell 1999).

Wikan (1984) claims that “shame” applies to an act and that it is ascribed through social interactions. I found that shame was situated within a particular context of interactions. Participating in casual conversations, attendance community events, and listening to participants’ opinions about others helped me to understand the depth of shame embedded in their decisions and behaviors. As a qualitative researcher, I also understand that shame reflects the larger dimension of societal moral landscape, which generally devalues the practices of the marginalized community (Ortner 1999).

Negotiating the Membership of the Street Community

I asked one of the mothers how she would feel about having her children described as “street children.” “*Nyeri* [It hurts inside],” she answered while tapping her chest. The term “street children” is a common term used by outsiders, including the media, government, most street users, and academic scholars. Despite the fact that a majority of children in Pasundan work in the street, the local people and the NGO staff members rarely addressed them as “street children.” Rather, “children who work in the street” was the term used to distinguish them from those who did not. The West Java governor defines “street children” as “children who constantly wander around in the streets or other public places for at least 4 h in a day, each day, for at least a month” (retrieved from the official governor’s website, May 2010). This definition would apply to children who spent their time playing in the street or young children who had to follow their parents who work in the street. All purposes of going to the street, for economy and leisure, fell under the NGO’s definition of children who “have been in and potentially go to the street and therefore are in need of assistance.” Within what the society considered “the street community,” I found membership was negotiated; members constructed boundaries by drawing distinction and similarities.

Mari: I never care for [how much] money my children get. . . I’m here because there’s a lot of bad influence in the street. . . Kids over there are much older, they *ngelem* [sniff glue] and everything.

Mari, whose four out of eight children worked in the street, countered the common notion that parents were present in the street in order to ensure that children would obtain a certain amount of minimum income. Mari explained that it was her parental responsibility to be in the street. In addition to distancing herself from the stereotypical notion of a parental role attached to the street community, she also separated herself from the children occupying the other side of street intersection who worked beyond the “supervision” of their parents.

The social stigma also affected the Pasundan residents who were economically vulnerable—those who met the government’s criteria of “street community”—but never actually worked in the street. One day, one of the children, who was in grade ten of high school, was asked to represent the Pasundan community in a Bandung government-funded Children’s Forum meeting. The foundation had complained that the forum had been “an exclusive gathering only involving chosen mainstream kids from public school and gave only limited space for poor and street children.” After several attempts to negotiate, the foundation was allowed to send a “street child” to attend the forum. The decision then fell to a schoolgirl, a member of Pasundan community, who never worked in the streets.

The next day, the mother told me that after returning from the forum, her daughter was annoyed. She reported, “My daughter doesn’t like the way they questioned her. It’s like they have their thoughts about street children first and they expect my daughter to fit into that. My daughter doesn’t know much about street children’s life, she’s not one of them.” The mother was countering the

generalized social and media-constructed assumptions and making distinctions about who should be identified as street children.

It was challenging in my research to decide who would be categorized as members of this “street community.” I found the boundary of the street community to be fluid. Some community members distinguished themselves from the community in pointing out the negative practices of others. For example, one mother said, “You may want to talk to so and so whose children go to the street because my children do not,” while in fact I happened to see the narrator’s children working in the street. Some parents revealed that they worked in the street whenever donations, intended for those “working in the street,” were distributed in Pasundan.

At first, I relied on the demographic information provided by Eje, the head of the community. There were about 116 families listed in the Pasundan community database. Eje anticipated that this was less than the actual number due to high mobility and migration. Seventy percent of the families were suspected of working in the street. Eje, the head of community, admitted that the occupation information was gained through personal observation. He explained that he went to the Pasundan intersection to see who was working once every 2 or 3 months because the data changed frequently.

In the research I used the term “Pasundan community” to include, but not be limited to, families living in the Pasundan neighborhood who worked in the street, either on a daily basis or seasonally, based on the information I received from Pak Eje as well as my own observations. My definition of the “Pasundan community,” therefore, was not informed by an administrative or geographical conception but by a sociocultural one. I also included information that I obtained from the social workers to understand the community demographic information. In interactions and interviews, however, only those who seemed to be interested in participating were invited. I was aware that my role as a scholar could serve as coercion. Therefore, I looked for participants’ gesture and unspoken messages while we were talking to reflect their potential willingness rather than asking for verbal approval. I do not intend to say that those willing to participate were receptive to the societal notion of the “street community.” As my research revealed, they employed constructed meanings of street norms that contradicted the dominant society’s beliefs about their street behavior.

Data Collection

I came to the field bringing a genuine curiosity about the participants’ experiences and perceptions of children’s schooling. While I was aware that the theme of schooling might marginalize my participants in some ways, I was equipped with a list of questions that guided the way I observe the street activities and how I would interact in the street community. I was cautious about the possible roles I could enact. Should I imitate the didactic, directive roles of the social worker, or should I enact the permissive role of a “friend”? I did not assume that the social workers

were judgmental toward the street community they were assisting. Having served as literacy tutors, the social workers carried their own institutional agenda; I brought a certain “agenda” too, i.e., my research questions. My dilemma was how to make this agenda fit an appropriate approach, given the character of the community and their cultural beliefs.

The choices for my roles, however, were confined by procedures of research ethics. For example, the human subject protection’s protocol required me to introduce myself as a researcher on the first visit. The initial approach to research participants then entailed explanations of research procedure and how I would position myself within the street activities. The most distancing part of this was revealing my identity. As I had expected, my participants looked amazed and anxious at the same time. I felt a distance grow between us. Finding this reaction, I decided to stop telling them about my education, specifically, the US university where I was a doctoral student.

The spirit of a literacy campaign was apparent when I visited participants in the intersection and in their houses along with the social workers. The social workers would remind children that they should study and that it was important that they return to school. Parents asked the social workers about short courses and the schedules for equivalency exams. Trying not to be intrusive, I just listened to the conversations and wrote them down. The following is an example of a conversation between a social worker, Sri, and Emi, a 15-year-old girl.

Sri: When did you start *ngamen*? [*translation: street work, particularly singing*]

Emi: I started *ngamen* when I was about 3 or 4 years old. It’s on my own will. My parents didn’t know that I went. I remember my mom asked me where I got my money. She got mad when she knew it’s from *ngamen*. I was only four. I didn’t care. I just wanted to make them happy.

Sri: Who took you to the street back then?

Emi: I was just by myself.

As I was negotiating my role during the first visits, my preconceived notions about the community’s perception toward education were challenged. Parents and children regarded education seriously, and children often expressed their wish to return back to school. This contradicted the dominant notion that the street families had little interest in education. While social workers kept reminding parents and children of the importance of formal schooling, the issue of *why* schooling had failed these children remained untouched. Participants’ limited access to schooling was seen as a problem, and yet the root of the problem, the fact that they are living in poverty, was left unsolved.

Conversations addressing education entailed discursive contexts that situated participants as failures. I found that the participants felt marginalized when it came to the topic of schooling. For example, when responding to a social worker’s question of why her son had missed school, Udin’s mother provided an extensive answer that sounded defensive.

He [Udin] keeps wanting to go to the street. . . I told him that his teacher would be looking for him [if he misses classes, but he insists on skipping school]. I don't know. He got a lot of friends [in the street]. Maybe because he feels sorry for me too. His dad is unemployed. He is the one who wants to [work in the street]. "Now [I have to admit] that the whole family depends on him [Udin]. I don't like [the fact that it happens that way] but what can I do?"

Children were encouraged to enroll in schooling, and yet the school curriculum and the social stigma embedded in school interactions, which partially figured into children's detachment from school, were never taken into narrative. This is evidenced in a mother's explanation of why her daughter, who was 15 at that time, quitted school 7 years previously.

Rika quit school at third grade . . . She's embarrassed. Her friends kept teasing her. Telling her like, ooh, you're in the street. So she told me, "I'm embarrassed, friends keep teasing me." I told her nothing to be ashamed of. But she can't stand it. I don't know why only she was being teased while there were a few other friends who went to the street too. I don't know . . . But the teachers were nice. I never heard that they told her that thing. Even in school break she was invited to one of teachers' home and was advised to return to school. But she insists on not going.

Parents' defensive responses shown by, for example, demonstrating their attempts in preventing their children's dropout appeared to me as anxiety toward the topic of schooling. My research aimed at documenting this anxiety, and yet, being a qualitative researcher, I was committed to conduct my research so as not to marginalize my participants (Wolcott 2005).

This was when I was struggling to determine how I should interact with my participants. I did not want to use an authoritative voice because I was still an outsider. A researcher, however, can never be neutral; neither can her relationship with underrepresented participants be equal. I was conscious that my background might encourage them to try to conform to what they thought was my personal opinion regarding education. This justified the naturalistic inquiry I chose. I sat down among mothers, listened to their stories, and showed support and approval of their opinions. I shifted the conversations into my interview protocol carefully, only if they provided me with elaborative and enthusiastic responses.

On the first visits in the street, I observed and documented conversations involving the participants and the social workers. Since the relationships built among the participants and the social workers were based on education issues, conversations about schooling were common. In the first weeks, I came to the intersection two to three times a week for the observations. Additionally, I selected some parents who were willing to share their stories.

Most of the time, the conversations were conducted in a group. I found that the participants were more relaxed when being interviewed in a group. There were some participants, though, whom I visited at their homes. These were the parents and children with whom I developed a closer acquaintance. With these participants, I asked them to elaborate their stories related to their children's experiences at school. Sometimes, the children were present and added their stories too.

All participants were aware that all conversations were recorded. In personal interviews at home, I asked permission to record their stories. In the intersection,

I noted in the first meeting that I would have my recorder on every time I met them. Due to the noise level in the street, the audio quality was not always good, so I wrote notes once I got back home from the field.

I believe that there is no such thing as objective observations. My educational background and my perceptions framed how I interpreted the cultural practices in the street. My subjectivity as a researcher was also partially enabled by reflections and analytical comments I added in the margin of my field notes. In order to control the authoritative voice of my perception, I discussed my theoretical comments with the social workers and key informants to see how their experiences and insights might challenge or confirm them. In so doing, I saw the analytical process as naturally emergent from a dialectical process between occurrences in the street, my theoretical frameworks, feedback from the social workers, and the participants' perspectives. Here, I found interpretive work a co-constructive process, enabled by my subjectivity, the social workers' experiences and perceptions, as well as the participants' subjective understanding of what they are and what they do.

In trying to offer a context with which to understand the street community's narratives deeper, I also provided the narratives of Rainbow staff members as well as those of a middle-class community, an orphanage's committee, I happened to know. I was aware that these narratives constituted the ways in which Indonesian society constructed their perception toward the street children, in addition to government's policy and news article I had collected. I obtained the Rainbow facilitators' narratives through casual interviews and journals I collected with their consent. In the meantime, the orphanage committee's narratives were documented in observation notes during their interactions with the street community.

The Role of Interpretation

One element that constitutes the "art" of doing the fieldwork is a "tolerance of ambiguity" (Wolcott 2005, p. 86). Participants' narratives are taken as truths within the situated context. They are treated as one source of data, along with researcher's interpretations of the observed cultural practices, as well as information provided by other participants and key informants. In this research, the participants' "ambiguity" in providing information about their membership in the street community is located in discursive contexts where their practices are marginalized.

Parents generally expressed a negative stance toward begging and forcing children to work in the street. Despite the evidences that they themselves begged in disguised appearance or begged in faraway places, they regarded begging as sinful, embarrassing, and irresponsible. For example, one of the parents convinced me that she never thought of begging in the street, "For the sake of God, I would never embarrass myself like that. It's a sin." Yet a few days before, I had seen her begging with almost her whole face covered in a scarf and a hat. Some other parents also told me the same thing, and yet I met them begging at a downtown area in Bandung, far away from their homes.

In addition, parents complained that it was difficult to ask children to leave the street activities. Children were said to insist on working on their own. Parents admitted that they preferred children to attend school, and yet they could not help with children's nagging to work in the street. The parents' narratives described the ways they tried to make sure that children participated in school as expected; this included taking them and picking them up, helping with homework, and communicating with teachers.

I have to take and pick up Udin and his brother everyday from school otherwise they wouldn't go. The school is across the big street and I'm worried if they have to cross the street by themselves. But if I'm sick and my husband offers to take them, they would rather not go to school. Especially Udin. He would have run to the street. (Interview with Bu Nina, October 29, 2010)

Teachers, on the other hand, narrated a different story where children missed school frequently. In responding to this, children complained that sometimes school materials were too difficult to learn. "I do not fit in school. It's too difficult," Fini, a 15-year-old girl, explained why she quit school at fifth grade of elementary school. Siti, a 10-year old who just returned to second grade, described that some subjects such as Indonesian and science were too difficult to follow.

Parents whose children dropped out of school wished that their children would return. They also complained that the children had lost interest in schooling, and I was convinced that they tried to persuade them.

Of course as a parent my wish is to see my children graduate from school. I myself am a school dropout, and I do not want to see my children become one. But Emi dropped out of school when she was at fifth grade. That time school was not free like right now. But now that she's been off from school for three years, she's no longer interested in it. (Interview with Emi's mother)

In the meantime, some social workers believe that parents in Pasundan could have pushed their children more. "They have to say that in the interview with you but for me, they are not trying hard enough to push their children," Anang, a social worker, told me. Ima, a social worker, wrote in her journal, "Most of Pasundan parents do not try enough to motivate their children to go to school. If children begged not to go to school, then parents just say okay. Children wouldn't have motivation [for school] that way."

The children seemed to lack confidence in adjusting to formal schooling. Some children who did return quit after a few months because they felt inferior and embarrassed. Additionally, children admitted that they worried about who would work if they went to school. Children, as parents also acknowledged, demonstrated their sense of caring for the family. What was not articulated was that this is family's responsibility. Adding this to the decontextualized classroom curriculum and negative discursive interactions when they were in school seemed to explain the children's detachment from schooling. The parent participants argued that the children's work in the street did not detract from their enrollment in schooling. However, what they may not have realized was that there was a discursive system, embedded in the national curriculum and learning organization of the classroom, that was alienating and influenced their children's perceptions of schooling.

I considered the divergent narratives of parents, children, teachers, and social workers as data. I sought to interpret how these narratives were enabled and limited by the complex pattern of discursive practices in which the participants were marginalized. For example, observations in classrooms in which some children participated informed my interpretations of the interactions they experienced in schools. Additionally, a record of middle-class parents' conversations provided me with insights into the stereotypical stigmas about the street children's parents.

I developed themes and categories emerging from the observational field notes, interview transcripts, writing and drawing products, as well as the work produced by the children. Even though the discourse of schooling and working in the street was embedded throughout the data, I separated conceptions of learning, the importance of formal schooling, moral values, and motivations for working in the street. I organized all the "perception" data in a way to develop theoretically rich themes. For instance, for the theme "participation," I looked for how the government officer viewed participation in the street as articulated in his speech, and I juxtaposed it with the parents' stance regarding the similar issue. These theoretically based themes emerged from the initial coding, and I broke down each theme with further coding to uncover more topics hidden in the larger subcategory. In doing the coding, I looked for recurrent vocabularies and topics addressed by the participants and analyzed whether others approached these topics differently.

The final stage of analysis was to look for patterns of relationships among discourses undergirding the participants' constructions of childhood, schooling, and working in the street in order to construct interpretations. I revisited the contesting discourses, for instance, the discourse of "working," as it was differently conceptualized by participants, and then constructed how they might figure into certain social phenomena, such as children's attitudes toward schooling. I drew ideas from my theoretical frame to my interpretations of these patterns within a particular sociocultural context.

The role of interpretation here depends on the extent to which theory informs my data interpretations. I entered the field not with an empty mind, but rather was equipped with a set of conceptual frame, as I had talked to social workers previously, as well as theoretical understanding of, for example, the power issues usually embedded within the relationship between the marginalized communities and the dominant ones. Further, as the fieldwork unfolded, the social phenomenon and participants' perceptions emerged not as something anew, but rather as patterns and organization to confirm, expand, or challenge my preconceived theory-based inquiries. Interpretation thus allowed me to draw together patterns built upon dialogues between theoretical understandings and social practices so that one informed the other.

The Reasons for a Narrative Approach

On my first visit I had to tell community members that what I did basically was to sit somewhere, listen to conversations, and take notes. One of them then commented that a researcher would usually ask them questions while referring to a sheet of

paper, which later I learned was a questionnaire. An NGO staff then told me that demographic questions in a survey format were a type of inquiry that researcher collected from street community members in Pasundan. The participants and the NGO related my study to their previous experiences with surveys and structured interviews. One of the NGO staff members worried that such an approach would be uncomfortable for the child participants.

Research on street children in Indonesia is typically focused on hygienic and medical topics. In Bandung, researchers asked the street children and their families to respond to demographic questions as well as their cleanliness habits. “They [the children] looked exhausted and bored,” the staff member testified. I managed to observe some questionnaire-based research and also thought the children and parents showed disinterest demonstrated by their facial expression and body gestures. Detachment toward the research was never expressed verbally. It seemed that even though they were told about their rights to decline or withdraw their participation, their bargaining positions within the power relation with the researcher obliged them to participate.

Medical and hygiene research about children in the street seemed to be an urgent priority for the Indonesian government. Children in the street are exposed to ambient air pollution. The NGO also noted that respiratory-, dental-, and skin-related infections were common diseases of these children. There were also a few cases of traffic accidents. Research intended to improve the quality of life for abandoned children, as noted by the Indonesian government, was undeniably necessary. It appeared that the government had to take over because they considered parents incapable of providing food, education, fresh air, and a safe environment for their children.

One could ask what narrative research can contribute to the everyday life of the street community, particularly what narrative research can do to inform policy makers regarding how to better approach the issue of street children in Indonesia. First, I argue that narratives can be used to deconstruct the deficit stigma concerning the street children and their families. Stories of resistance are important to counter what has been constructed as their “basic needs.” Employing narrative research that is respectful of the street community’s perspectives provides a fuller understanding upon which to build government policies.

The second reason to use narrative research with underserved children is to articulate the children’s subjectivities and allow them space to grow. Underserved children in Indonesia are situated within a public space where society claims the right to educate and teach them. Children are novice members of society, and the general intent is to provide the “protection” that adults in the dominant society think the children deserve. In teaching these children, however, adults often do not recognize the messages conveyed through language that marginalizes them. For example, using the label of “street children” in face-to-face communications is a way to use language to marginalize them. The label situates them in a vulnerable space, i.e., the street, thus justifying management by the dominant society.

In this respect, the definition of “street children” in Indonesia is somewhat murky. While the Indonesian government and the NGOs extend the definition to include all children who are raised by poor families and are exposed to street

activities and address them in their policies, popular notion is that “street children” applies only to those who live in the street separate from their biological families and are involved in criminal conduct and unaccepted behaviors (i.e., *ngelem*, free sex, pick pocketing, lying in order to earn money, wandering around dirty, and rarely taking a bath). The hesitance of some children and their parents in accepting such a label can be viewed as a denial of this stereotype. In so doing, the parents constructed counter-narratives by reproducing the dominant cultural expectation of what it means to be good parents. Narrative research has the potential to bring these counter-narratives into the view of policy makers as well as the general public.

A Critical Lens in an Interpretive Framework

In a Bakhtinian (1981) perspective, the dialogical notion represents the complexity of narratives as a means of understanding self, relationship of self and others, and the connections of self with the world. Within this complexity, self is constructed dialogically by internalizing cultural norms or producing agency, by receiving or resisting. In a social landscape, self is a site where dialogic forces occur through the use of language.

The identity construction of the street community thus took place amidst such a discursive context where interpretation is required. When asking the street community members to participate in research, a researcher invites them to evaluate and to situate themselves within their relationships with the researcher and, further, within what they perceive as their role and place in the society at large. Thus narrative research is a discursive practice and highly interpretive.

Our intellectual understandings are informed by the paradigms we use to capture and interpret a social phenomenon. My choice of a critical lens, represented by the use of discourse analysis in examining participants’ narratives, thus entails a discursive and interpretive purpose. By selecting, organizing, and framing the narratives of these “unheard” children and their families, I wanted to challenge the dominant narratives of childhood enacted in government policies and society’s approach to dealing with children who work in the street.

Using a discourse analysis framework, I investigated how societal narratives used language to represent the “street children” as a “problem.” By doing so, I adopted the idea that discourses embody ideologies and therefore constitute social identities, social relations, and worldviews (Fairclough 1989). Further, my intent was to understand how discourse was enacted as a practice involving the issue of social class in society, in this case, those who do not have privileged access to economic resources and power. I also used this lens to understand the embodiment of societal structure, in terms of what Foucault (1984) deems the production of power and knowledge, which in this case allows the confinement and objectification of “street children” in particular ways.

The Role of Interpretive in the Construction of Street Culture

My initial curiosity with the issue of street children in Indonesia was embodied in one naïve question: why the implementation of many government policies for street children did not seem to work. For example, the number of street children that drop out of school remains high despite the funding the government has distributed to the street communities. The interpretation of my narrative data suggests that the answer did not rest with addressing issues of poverty alone, but more fundamentally on the failure to understand the discursive systems that supported the street community's beliefs and the social construction of them.

By sharing their narratives, participants make their values and understandings available to others to interpret. Access to such insights not only enables interpretations of how identity is constructed but also the contextual discourses that sustained the embodiment of such responses. Further, counter-narratives can lead to a reflective evaluation, what we, as a society, have contributed to the reproduction of discursive notion conceptualizing the street children and their families. This brings me back to my theory framework.

I argue that interpretation is always contextual and the dominant societal understandings of the street community will figure into the street families' interpretations; it will be embedded in their narratives. In addition, how the dominant society interprets the stories of the street families may not be what the families intended. This is where the researcher has to contextualize, analyze, and interpret the narratives in ways that will challenge the taken-for-granted ideas dominant narratives. Still, a researcher's interpretation may still not be read the same by all readers.

Ethnographic studies of "street children" have acknowledged the children's agency in producing cultural practices countering the idealized childhood the dominant society has conceptualized. The cultural practices, as some studies have noted, include, for instance, the collaborative use of language that marks the group norms, ways of behaving, style of clothing, music taste, and the use of drugs or glue sniffing to establish a communal identity (Beazley 2002b; Davies 2008; Naterer and Godina 2011). Scholars define these cultural features as a "subcultural identity," within which children negotiate their resistance to the dominant culture that views childhood in certain ways.

When particular subcultural practices are used by the dominant society to homogenize all "street children," the subculture resists in order to differentiate self from the stereotyped others. "I'm not a street kid," a remark by Amir, strongly suggests a sense of subjectivity, which demonstrates his attempt to resist the collective identity. Scholars have described ways that "street children" have established stable social groups in order to survive the challenges of street life (Davies 2008). While confirming children's agency, this notion may disregard the idea that culture is not a communal feature that can be associated with a static group, but rather a site where agencies and subjectivities are negotiated and contested. In this regard, the "street children's" social groups are not stable, but are stratified as the members construct fluid boundaries while negotiating their subjectivities.

Children's responses toward the dominant societal discourse in this study were interpreted within the notion that cultures are active and constitutive (Briggs 1992; Gaskins et al. 1992). For instance, children's attempts to conform to literacy expectations can be seen as a response to the societal view that street children are "slow" and "uninterested in schooling." As my observations revealed, the few children who were attending school got criticized by their teachers for not being able to complete worksheets. Teachers' critiques usually were followed by advice that children should reduce their time in the street and pay attention more seriously to learning. Such advice negated the realities of their lives and the ways they were marginalized within schools and in society.

Additionally, children and their families constructed moral boundaries that can be seen as attempts to differentiate themselves from the established stereotypes that "street children" are "wild" and "immoral." Their narratives revealed the complexity inherent in the "street children's subculture," at the same time acknowledging their roles and perspectives within their social group, the wider street family community, and the stereotypes of them by the dominant society. The interpretation of these street narratives offers the children's subjectivity/positionalities in responding to the dominant stereotypes and social practices meant to "help" and/or manage them. A narrative interpretive approach can offer counter-narratives as a way to raise a society's consciousness about its disenfranchised groups.

To conclude, the street narratives highlight the ways in which the societal term of "street children" should not be taken for granted. Any societal term is discursive, and instead of co-constructively created by each members of society, it is produced by the dominant groups to situate the marginalized ones in such a way. The narrative approach can provide a space for the underrepresented communities to reflect on their own selves, organize their understanding toward the world around them, and, further, join in the "carnavalesque" in which their voices are heard and interact with the voices of others. As other studies portraying marginalized communities, this study hopes for a moment where this community's voice is not only expressed but also shape the formulation of the dominant voice reflected in the government's policy and the society's attitude toward them.

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1.3 A Rhetorical Approach to Classroom Narrative Study: Interpreting Narration as an Ethical Resource for Teaching in the USA

Mary M. Juzwik

In this chapter, I discuss a narrative methodology that falls within the broader category of “discourse analysis” or the study of “language in use”—a substantially developed and widely used methodology in educational scholarship.¹ More narrowly, it falls within *narrative* discourse analysis, the study of narrative language in use. Another influence on my work is rhetoric, defined for my purposes as the study of the available means of persuasion in a given situation (Aristotle 1991). Discourse analysis is a broad term signifying the study of “language in use.” Rhetoric is a more focused interpretive framework that concerns itself with the persuasive and, as Burke (1969) insists, the identifying functions of language in use. Here I focus specifically on how a rhetorical approach to narrative interpretation can enrich understandings of *teaching in formal educational settings*.

The Research Project

To present a model for interpreting narrative language in use from a rhetorical perspective, I draw from one classroom example of teacher storytelling in unit on the Holocaust in a Midwestern US middle school literacy classroom. This approach entails multifunctional interpretation of narrative discourse, meaning interpretation of the different ways narrative language is functioning—what narrative language is doing—in classroom events (e.g., Jakobson 1971). More specifically, I focus on how narrative language works (a) to represent the world (referential), (b) to enact interpersonal relationships and positions in interaction (performative),

¹ I use the terms “method” and “methodology” interchangeably here.

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(c) to craft expressively stylistic language for students' enjoyment (poetic), and (d) to socialize students into the teachers' (and broader societal) views on what is good and proper—the moral order (ethical). While interpreting teachers' narrative talk as multilayered rhetorical action may be a new idea for educational research, the idea of teaching as persuasion has an ancient lineage in the history of pedagogy. Teaching as persuasion dates at least to the traveling sophists in Greece during the fourth and fifth century BC, who taught rhetoric for pay to striving pupils who lacked access to rhetorical education (deRomilly 1998).²

If rhetoric is so ancient, why introduce rhetoric now into the work of narrative inquiry in education? A rhetorical interpretive approach illuminates how narratives can be mobilized as dynamic resources that teachers put to use for a variety of purposes in their classrooms. While each of the four narrative functions matters for the overall interpretive model presented here, illuminating the moral uses of narrative is the most important insight, a culmination of what the model offers. Some may believe that interpreting teaching from an ethical perspective is antiquated in an era when local and national standards work to obscure how values shape teaching. In response I contend that it is impossible to “empty” teaching of its moral nature and, indeed, that studying the moral nature of teaching is *especially* critical in an era of standardization.

What do I mean when I say that teacher narratives take moral stances? Or that teachers use narratives to take moral stances? Or that teacher narratives do moral work? I assume that narrative practices in classrooms have an inherently ethical valence or value.³ They involve persons staking claims about what is right and what is wrong, what persons ought to do or not do in the world. Sometimes the moral stances taken up in narratives are tentative and exploratory, other times they are more certain and fixed (Ochs and Capps 2001). One of the profound powers of both written and oral narrative discourse is that moral claims and ethical stances can be implicitly embedded in a story world, without direct didactic stances being taken or “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” being decreed. Perhaps nowhere is this power more evident than in storybooks written for children. Such stories can serve a powerful moral socialization function in childhood (Applebee 1978). These moral stances are themselves interpretations advanced about worlds, persons, and events—rather than simple recounts of “what happened.”

The moral stances in classroom narrative practices are not necessarily *intentional* on the part of the teacher or other speakers (Bakhtin 1990, 1993). Nor do teachers and students deploy their “morals” as a static entity. I am making the assumption that moral stances dynamically develop and respond to particular, socially situated others—an orientation captured in Bakhtin's (1990, 1993) notion of answerability. Answerability focuses on the agentive, morally weighty work of

²The Sophists were also despised and disdained by Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers for a lack of commitment to philosophical truth and for pandering to the illiterate masses.

³I follow the general practice in analytic moral philosophy of using the terms “moral” and “ethical” interchangeably. See Margalit (1998), who distinguishes between “moral” and “ethical” obligations, for one exception in this general usage.

linguistic appropriation, a once-occurrent responsive and responsible event in which a particular self-within-the-dialogic-world acts. In Bakhtin's framework, all utterances (not just grand moral pronouncements) are taken on ethical weight. But the material of moral stance-taking is appropriated from others; at the same time, moral stances are also addressed towards, or *performed for*, others. Thus I view moral stance-taking as an active, interactional accomplishment.

In keeping with my guiding rhetorical framework and with previous work on moral stance-taking processes in narrative interactions, I place the social interactional dimensions of narrative at the center of ethical interpretation (see also Juzwik 2004b; Ochs and Capps 2001). On this view, narrative performances can sometimes spawn unintended consequences, and any given narrative performance may simultaneously do curricular and ethical work in a classroom situation.

Methodological Decisions

With the overall framework and rationale for the chapter introduced, let me now introduce the study to which I will refer in the remainder of the chapter.

Data Sources

The data sources included video- and audiotapes of classroom interactions, curricular documents, and student work and writing during a 6-week Holocaust unit in a mixed-age (grade 7 and 8) public middle school classroom in the Midwestern USA. I also included teacher and student interviews as data, although they are not discussed here because they were not a focus of sustained rhetorical narrative analysis. Note that interview data might, if desired, be used as evidence for claims about teacher intentionality in the sort of interpretive approach to teacher narrative advanced here. Earlier reports of the research include amplified discussions of data generation methods and practices (i.e., Juzwik 2004a, 2006, 2009).

Participants and Researcher

Participants in the research included Jane Connor (a pseudonym), a 25-year-old white woman in her third year of English teaching. Jane's students were white seventh and eighth graders in a socio-economically diverse school. As a researcher, I positioned myself as an interested colleague, curious about how students and teachers make sense of sensitive and disturbing topics, such as the Holocaust or workplace harassment, together. I set up the video camera and lurked in the back of the classroom taking copious field notes on most days.

Data Analysis

In my view, the interpretive process begins with data generation, a term used in contrast with data “collection” to acknowledge the active process of selecting what to count as data (place in the foreground) and what to ignore (place in the background). Ochs (1979) describes the significance of this understanding in her seminal piece on transcription: While video may provide the illusion that discourse data generation is unmediated reality, in fact many selection decisions must be made, such as camera angle, what to video record, and so on.

My next step was transcription, conceptualized as a critical point of interpretive decision making in narrative scholarship (see Juzwik 2006 for more detail). I transcribed all narrative talk and focused my analysis on a corpus of narratives identified in the classroom talk during the unit. One key interpretive move in the transcription process was to define what counted as narrative data, as opposed to non-narrative data. Literary scholar James Phelan (1996) offers one useful rhetorical definition of narrative: “the act of somebody telling somebody else on a particular occasion for some purpose that something happened” (p. 218). However, I found it necessary to refine that definition further for my interpretive purposes. I took a cue from Labov (1972) to define as narrative any temporally sequenced series of clauses that included evaluation or an evaluative stance taken on events and/or persons. This broad definition includes, however, types of stories that Labov did not study, what Georgakopoulou (2007) and Bamberg (2006) call “small stories,” narratives told in passing everyday conversations, often about the present or a hypothetical past or future time, often vicarious, i.e., not about events that happened to the speaker. Small stories are often quite short in duration; they are often told to make something happen in the future, as opposed to only referencing the past or present. Looking at “small stories” broadens the purview for narrative analysis far beyond the standard of past tense personal experience narratives generated in typical research interviews (e.g., Labov 1972).

I then subjected my narrative data to multilayered rhetorical analysis, examining the available means of persuasion in the “given situation” of teacher narrative language in the focal Holocaust unit (Aristotle 1991; Burke 1969). My rhetorical study of these data employed four levels of language function, already introduced, each accompanied by a distinct set of interpretive moves and accompanying transcriptions and (re)transcriptions.

- **Referential.** The first level is referential, in which I examine the representational content of the narratives. Some inquiries into teacher narratives within curriculum studies focus exclusively on this level. My initial interpretation entailed documenting and describing the topics and themes of the stories, as well as coding themes and interpreting patterns across the narrative data. For this level of interpretation, prose transcription capturing just the words sufficed.
- **Performative.** The next level, performative interactional interpretation, looks at how narratives do interactional positioning work, in keeping with Bakhtin’s (1981) sense of the “dialogic” nature of written and spoken texts being shot

through with conflicting social languages and voices. For this interpretive layer, I found it useful to transcribe in lines and stanzas, so as to capture—by using white space on the page—how the narrative talk emerged.

- **Poetic.** The third layer, poetic interpretation, examines the expressive stylistic resources used in telling narratives, building upon transcription conventions established in the field of ethnopoetics (e.g., Gee 1985; Hymes 1981; Quasha and Rothenberg 1973; Tedlock 1983; Poveda 2002). This level used a more detailed and thematically driven set of line and stanza divisions.
- **Ethical.** While a concern for how moral stance-taking is constructed and contested runs through the referential, poetic, and performative analyses, the final interpretive layer is ethical. I ask such questions as, “Who is harmed and who benefits from such narrative construals? What might be the virtues and harms of such forms of talk?” At this level, the transcription choices draw upon those in the previous three layers. As mentioned, earlier, the ethical layer is a culmination of the interpretive model, made possible by and building upon the previous layers. It involves asking moral questions about what has been found in the prior interpretive work.

Research Findings

The findings section is organized around the above four layers. In presenting findings, I am necessarily selective, encapsulating an approach developed elsewhere into a short amount of space to illustrate what a narrative rhetorical approach can entail.

Referential Analysis: Referencing Storylines About the Holocaust to Fulfill Curricular Goals

I conducted open coding to locate themes across the body of narratives told in Jane’s Holocaust unit. This interpretive work led me to see how, in her teaching narratives, Jane responded to widely circulating, morally acceptable storylines—that is, to broader cultural narratives—about the Holocaust. Those storylines, in turn, sought to fulfill three curricular subtexts or goals of Holocaust study in that classroom: (a) commemoration of the Holocaust, (b) identification with the Holocaust, and (c) moral response to the Holocaust. Open coding across all narrative texts, both students and teachers, led me to the theme of commemoration, a common purpose for teaching about the Holocaust in US schools. During the time Jane taught the unit in question (1999–2000), that goal was especially visible because of a set of widely publicized cases of Holocaust denial in the news. One of Jane’s stated goals for the unit was to prepare her students to respond to

Holocaust deniers. For example, in a discussion of Ruth Minsky Sender's book, *The Cage*, Jane narrated the importance of remembering in the face of denial: "This actually happened, ladies and gentlemen, and don't let anyone tell you it didn't. There are some who say it didn't. That's why we have this class. So you can remember this happened, so you can tell your kids and grandkids" (1/7/00).

On my interpretation, Holocaust commemoration in Jane's classroom also seemed aimed at a politically liberal goal of constructing a "shared memory" of the Holocaust in the face of what moral philosopher Avishai Margalit (2002) calls "radical evil." That intention of creating a globally shared memory of the Holocaust was implicit in the narrative quote above. Jane was even more explicit about commemoration in the course syllabus than she was in the stories she told to students: "Our examinations of autobiographies, biographies, oral narratives, diaries, and letters will no doubt bring the Holocaust down to *the most basic level of humanity*: the lives of individual human beings, *the you and me of generations past*" (12/2/99, p. 1, emphasis added). The commemorative work of narratives in the class struck me as especially poignant against the backdrop of a common theme in the student talk that the elder generation in families, especially those who fought in the Second World War, rarely spoke of their experiences in the war.

The syllabus excerpt also illustrates a second curricular goal that emerged in my open coding of narrative content: identification. Through telling stories to students, and through inviting students to tell stories of their own, Jane sought to help students identify themselves with events and persons in the past, a pervasive aim of US history teaching (Barton and Levstik 2004). Through oral narratives, Jane and her students identified with their family members. For example, Annie shared a story about her great-uncle as she showed her classmates a collection of medals, newspaper articles, maps, and photographs:

The purple heart is because he was injured. He went deaf in one ear when he was in the war. He got shot. . .The bronze star. . .he got when they were in Germany, their tanks were too big to fit through some of the trees. And he led all of his men. He got out with just a pistol and led 'em through an entire army of Germans. (1/18/00)

But student and teacher narratives also identified with the nation and with distant others. For example, in narrating how the USA refused asylum to European Jewish refugees aboard the Saint Louis, Jane used the first person plural "we" to cue a constructed dialogue signaling her identification with the USA: "*We* [the U.S.] also said, No, *we're* not going to take you, *we* don't want you in the United States, either" (12/8/99). Not only did Jane identify with a national collective, then, she also temporally transplanted herself for a spell in what amounted to a conflation of past and present. In making this rhetorical move, she further implicates herself (and possibly also students) as part of a collective "we" that reprehensibly denied asylum to the Jews who were aboard the Saint Louis and who were likely later killed in Europe. The most frequent identification in Jane's narratives, however, was with non-American figures or groups from the past (including Jews, Nazis, Hitler, political leaders, and so on). In Jane's narratives, the second-person "you" especially seemed to invite students to identify with, or imagine themselves as part

of, past events. One key interpretive strategy in looking at identification involved my paying attention to shifting pronouns and the shifting meanings of pronouns. This is a strategy to which we will also return in subsequent interpretive layers.

I next turned my interpretive attention to moral stances on the past. In studying Jane's narrative rhetoric, I located six storylines, or moral stances on the past that seemed to pervade the narrative discourse as a whole. I then articulated these storylines as moral commands (i.e., "you shall. . ."), borrowing the language of historian Yehuda Bauer (2001) to make those stances vivid, and parallel, for readers:

1. "You, your children, and your children's children shall affirm that tolerance and diversity are good; that hate and racism are wrong" (Novick 1999; see also Short and Reed 2004; Spector 2007).
2. "You, your children, and your children's children shall never be passive onlookers to mass murder, genocide, or. . .a Holocaust-like tragedy" (Bauer 2001; see also, Novick 1999).
3. "You, your children, and your children's children shall never become perpetrators who blindly obey authority to commit atrocity" (Bauer 2001; Fermaglich 2006).
4. "You, your children, and your children's children shall remember the presence of evil in the world" (Margalit 2004; Novick 1999).
5. "You, your children, and your children's children shall vigilantly wipe out anti-Semitic ideology" (Bauer 2001; Novick 1999; Short and Reed 2004; Spector 2007).
6. "You, your children, and your children's children shall be sensitive to other Holocaust-like atrocities (including hate crimes, mass murder, and genocide) in the present and future" (Novick 1999).

As I interpreted the Holocaust narratives in Jane's classroom, I discovered an unstated goal, which Jane confirmed in our interview conversations. She believed that listening to her narratives, as well as reading written narratives and viewing films, would result in substantive ethical changes to students' future life trajectories. I return to this strong ethical claim about the impact of narrative rhetoric below.

Performative Analysis: Constructing Dialogues About the Holocaust

How did teacher narrative discourse position the teacher, students, and curricular content in relation to one another? To answer that question, I called upon Goffman's (1974, 1981) notion of framing. This perspective led me to conceptualize narrative events as "frame spaces" offering a set of interpretive frameworks in which the roles of speakers and listeners are typically enacted. As Goffman (1981) puts it, "When the individual speaks, he [sic] avails himself of certain options and forgoes others" (p. 23). Goffman's perspective further suggests a distinction between (a) the interactional "here and now" in which a narrative is told, or the *narrative event*,

and (b) the *narrated events* (e.g., Bauman 1986; Jakobson 1971). The latter are the events within a story world, for example, Red Riding Hood walking through the deep dark forest to visit her grandmother. The performative interpretive level draws particular attention to the interactional “here and now” (the narrative event) and, potentially, to the parallelism between the narrative event and the narrated events (Wortham 2006).

More specifically, examining what Tannen (1989) calls “constructed dialogues” in teacher narrative discourse allowed me to see how narratives were functioning to position the teacher, the students, and the curricular content. Constructed dialogue is one “frame” within narratives where speakers obviously move from reporting or recounting events of the past to enacting those events, such as Jane as teacher narrator fully shifted into a dramatic role, embodying and animating the words of others. The term “constructed dialogue” emphasizes how narratives do more than simply represent events of the past; they also do interpersonal work in a social “here and now.”

Jane frequently performed voices for her students through narrative discourse. Consider, for example, the difference between the following two bits of discourse:

1. “1936. The Gestapo becomes the supreme police agency in Nazi German. They have exclusive rights to make arrests.” (field notes, 12/15/99)
2. Narrative: “The Rights of the Gestapo”
 - (1) Courts?
 - (2) What courts?
 - (3) Judge?
 - (4) What judge?
 - (5) Jury of your peers?
 - (6) What jury of your peers?
 - (7) I’m just going in there
 - (8) And I’m going to arrest you
 - (9) And I’m going to throw you in a concentration camp somewhere.
 - (10) What are you going to do about it?
 - (11) There’s nothing you CAN do about it.
 - (12) I don’t like the way you looked at me the other day.
 - (13) I’m going to come into your house at night,
 - (14) And arrest you
 - (15) AND your brother,
 - (16) Just because I want to.
 - (17) What are you going to do about it? (12/15/99)

Jane read the first example (1.) aloud from a Timeline she was presenting to students during a note-taking activity. The following moment, in what I interpret as a frameshift to “narrative performance,” Jane temporarily transformed herself into a member of the Gestapo in example (2.).

We return again to an interest in pronouns, introduced in the referential layer of interpretation. Note the shifting meaning of the pronouns “I” and “you.” No longer

is “I” the referent for Jane the teacher; now it refers to a cruel Gestapo agent in Nazi Germany. No longer does “you” refer to students; it now refers to vulnerable persons in Nazi Germany. The interpretive frame of the teacher talk shifts here into an *aesthetic* rather than purely referential or didactic frame. Reading, listening to, and viewing the narrative as a shift in framing led me to infer an implicit assumption at work: Jane expected students to shift into a role of experiencing the discourse as an aesthetic event (Rosenblatt 1938), more so than as a communication with the referential content at the center. In “The Rights of the Gestapo,” a “constructed monologue” is the whole of the narrative; however, Jane more typically embedded constructed dialogue in a longer narrative, as in the following account of how the Second World War began:

“This is how World War II basically started. We have Germany. Germany goes into the Sudetenland, gets the Sudetenland. They get the Rhineland province. So they’re growing this – Let me do this, this one’s a little better.” Jane places a different overhead transparency map on the overhead projector.

So they’re growing in this direction,” she reports, pointing to the map. “You see France right here, France doesn’t like it. France doesn’t like how close Germany’s getting, scares them. But then they don’t do anything about it. Now after [Hitler] gets the Rhineland, and he gets the – , he goes into Austria. Austria believes in Hitler, agrees with his theory, says ‘You don’t even need to fight us, you can come into our country.’”

“Austria is right down here.” Jane points to the map again, “Sorry.”

They go into Austria. ‘Yes, come on in, we welcome you with open arms.’

Then, goes into Czechoslovakia. Has a bit of a fight in Czechoslovakia, but is able to take over Czechoslovakia as well. So far, no one’s doing anything in opposition to him. All right.

So, then, they invade Poland. Bad! Bad move! Here you invade Poland. Poland does not want to be invaded. Poland puts up quite a fight.

Also, Great Britain finally says, ‘Okay, I’m sick of this, Hitler, You cannot keep doing this. You’ve gotten Austria, you’ve gotten all these other countries. We haven’t gotten involved. If you try and go into Poland, if you attack Poland in any way, you will start World War II.’

‘Ah, Let’s really see if he means it.’ Goes into Poland. Huge battle ensues. . . .

I made constructed dialogues visible for the performative layer of interpretation through re-transcription of the discourse as a dramatic script. First, I transcribed narratives into lines, showing where pauses occurred in the story performance (Scollon and Scollon 1981). I also used ALL CAPS to show emphasized words (e.g., Wortham 2001). Finally, to show the dramatic properties of constructed dialogues, I removed narrative lines that were not constructed dialogues, to make the dramatic dimensions of the narrative look like a dramatic script, as follows:

Austria: You don’t even need to fight us,
 You can come into our country.
 Yes,
 Come on in,
 We welcome you with open arms.

Great Britain: Okay
 I’m SICK of this
 Hitler,

You can NOT
 Keep doing this.
 You've gotten Austria,
 You've gotten all these other countries.
 We haven't gotten involved.
 If you try and go into Poland,
 If you attack Poland in any way
 You will start World War Two.

Hitler:

Ah
 Let's really see if he [Great Britain] means it.
 [the story and the dialogue continue for a few more minutes]

In the analysis, I first coded all constructed dialogues (N = 122) in the set of all teacher narratives (N = 65). I next examined how Jane mobilized semantic, formal, and performative resources to shift the frame into constructed dialogue (here it was necessary to look at the entire narrative events, not just constructed dialogues). The resources I identified included:

- Intonation shifts (e.g., to signify the differences between the voices of Britain and Hitler)
- Changes in tempo (e.g., short words like “Ah,” above, can speed up the tempo)
- Direct address (e.g., “You will start World War Two,” above)
- Shifting meanings of pronouns, discussed already

I also coded types of constructed dialogue, including:

- Indirect discourse
- Quasi-direct discourse
- Direct discourse

In all 122 constructed dialogues identified in the data set, I coded 2 instances of indirect discourse, 5 instances of quasi-direct discourse, and 115 instances of direct discourse. I discuss each in turn.

I coded indirect discourse when constructed dialogue was introduced by a mitigating word such as “that” signaling a paraphrase rather than direct quote—even though, as already discussed, none of these constructed dialogues can be accurately called “direct quotes.” For example, in the story about the USA turning away the *Saint Louis* (the ship with Jewish refugees seeking asylum from Nazi Germany), Jane narrated:

21. Well, the *Saint Louis*
22. Didn't give up
23. QUITE that easily.
24. It sailed past Florida,
25. Asking the United States
26. To take them in.

Indirect discourse was signaled by the gerund “asking” in line 25 (“ask” or “asked” is a typical quotative verb used to introduce constructed dialogue that takes the form

of a question) and by the auxiliary “to” in line 26. In this narrative, the ship becomes an agent asking, or advocating, on behalf of its Jewish passengers. This example reveals Jews being positioned in subordinate, rather than subject, positions, a trend I found throughout the data set. I return to this issue in the ethical interpretive layer, as I critically examine potentially harmful representations of Jews in the narratives.

Quasi-direct discourse blends indirect and direct discourse, as in

23. Well, NOW
24. We’re going to make it
25. A LITTLE harder for you.
26. Now you also can’t hold
27. Certain jobs,
28. And you can’t buy certain things
29. And those kind –
30. And
31. Those types (clears throat)
32. Of restrictions (12.9.99)

While Jane articulates lines 23–28 in Hitler’s voice and from Hitler’s perspective, that voice became considerably weakened—if not dissolved altogether—in lines 30–32. This change seems accentuated by the *repair* in lines 29–32, where Jane broke off and then started again to repeat and reword her utterances, signaled by a dash in the transcription. In these lines, Jane seemed almost to stumble in enacting Hitler’s voice. The now-ness of the narrated event, with Hitler as a speaking subject dictating acts of restricting employment and shopping rights to Jews [“you” in lines 25 and 26], begins to dissolve in these lines. As I read them from a framing perspective, Jane signals the dissolution of the narrated event frame by the generality of both the pronoun “those” (line 31) and the phrase “types of restrictions” (lines 31–32). The final four lines blend the narrative frame of the past and the historical knowledge of the present, when such actions are termed “restrictions” and can be categorized as “types” in broad patterns of historical activity.

In the direct discourse that pervaded the data set, Jane separated the constructed dialogues from prior and subsequent discourse through quotatives and the other resources detailed above (intonation shifts, tempo change, direct address, and shifting meanings of indexicals). In the story about how World War Two began, above, we saw several examples of such direct discourse.

Finally, I examined the constructed dialogues to identify the speaking subjects. Hitler ($n = 35$) was by far the most prominent speaking subject, with Jewish persons or Jews ($n = 15$), Nazis ($n = 13$), individual students in Jane’s class ($n = 11$), the United States ($n = 6$), German civilians ($n = 4$), and no one ($n = 4$) following behind. All other speaking subjects occurred three times or less in the collection of 122 constructed dialogues I examined.

Looking closely at constructed dialogue in Jane’s teaching reveals one key framing strategy through which narratives become *performative* resources for her teaching. Through the constructed dialogues among European countries, Jane figuratively lifted the map off the page and dramatically breathed it to life for her

students. Through the theatrical capacities of dialogue, Jane brought students into an imagined figurative world, much like the that worlds novel readers or theatergoers would expect to enter. Indeed, the performative frame of dialogue put the very act of speaking—and the speaker, Jane—on display. It seems that this kind of performative dialogue within narrative was especially intended to heighten experience for the student audience, to involve them in the telling (cf. Bauman 1986; Hymes 1981; Tannen 1989). While Jane would soon return to the main frame of the narrated event or the lesson, perhaps “in the performative moment” she could deepen or change students’ understandings through the aesthetic experience she created.

Looking closely at the constructed dialogues in her narrative discourse, Jane used narrative as a hybridized improvisational arena where the “free-wheeling, self referential. . . essential fancifulness” of language could be put on display (Goffman 1981). Jane’s dramatic styling of constructed dialogue contributed to a fluid, flexible *ethos* that emerged across her narrative discourse in the unit.

Poetic Analysis: Expressive Styling of Teacher Narrative

How did teacher narratives function to *stylistically express* moral stances on the past? A third poetic layer of analysis takes a cue from performance artist Anna Deavere Smith:

From time to time we are betrayed by language, if not in the words themselves, in the rhythm with which we deliver our words. Over time, I would learn to listen for those wonderful moments when people spoke a kind of personal music, which left a rhythmic architecture of who they were. I would be much more interested in those rhythmic architectures than in the information they might or might not reveal. (Smith 2001, p. 36)

In examining the expressive style and rhythm of teacher narrative, I turned to the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and to ancient and contemporary rhetorical theorists, especially those who developed the rhetorical canon of style (e.g., Anonymous 1954; Corbett and Connors 1999). This scholarship provided a descriptive vocabulary to study the poetics of teacher narrative. I focus here on how a single narrative works as a parallel poetic system. In the rhetorical and functional linguistic tradition, parallelism is “repetition with systematic variation, the comingling of variant and invariant elements in the construction of a poetic work” (Bauman 1986, p. 96).

To begin interpretation, I transcribed using ethnopoetic conventions to construe the narrative telling in the following form (for more details on transcription method, see Juzwik 2009, pp. 108–109):

Narrative: “Violence Was the Way to Go”

FRAME

All right, let’s see. He [Hitler] realizes now that the German people will not resist him. Possibly more important, the church won’t resist him either.

BEGINNING

1. I mean, a lot of horrible things have happened before 1938, to be sure.
2. But this was a government policy,
3. Where, not that we're just going to call you noncivilians
4. not that we're just going to say
5. You're Jews
6. Where you're going to have to wear badges.
7. But now, we're going to destroy everything you own
8. We're going to beat you up,
9. We're going to burn your synagogues.

MIDDLE

10. This was a violent act to the extreme
11. And no one stepped up and said,
12. All right, we've had enough
13. You've done all this,
14. We can't let you do any more.
15. This kind of showed him that violence is the way to go,
16. or can be the way to go.
17. Because no one's going to stand up and say
18. It's wrong

END

19. They haven't to this point, and they're not going to,
20. Even when violence is incorporated.
21. They're just going to walk on their merry way, and ignore the whole thing
22. As much as they can.

Parallelism in the narrative works at the levels of sound, word, syntax, stanza, and theme to fashion a moral stance about the Holocaust. Specifically, the narrative communicated two of the moral lessons or storylines discussed in the referential analysis: (a) We should not become perpetrators who blindly obey authority to commit atrocity. (b) We should not become passive onlookers to mass murder, genocide, or a Holocaust-like tragedy. I began interpretation with small-scale poetic features and radiated outward to considerations of theme and pedagogy. Here I am going to focus on the levels of word, syntax, stanza, and theme.

I analyzed parallelism at the level of the *word*, noticing relationships of opposition and contiguity, as well as verbal similarity or repetition. In the interest of space, I'll restrict observations to the first stanza. The repetition of "where" (lines 3 and 6) functions to cluster lines 3–5 together and make the cluster parallel to line 6. Lines 3 and 4 feature the *anaphoric* (repetition of same word or group of words at beginnings of successive clauses) "not that we're just going to." Moreover, "we're" is a homonym of "where," deepening the lexical relations within the stanza. Jane also recruits relationships of contiguity as a resource in narrative stylization. For example, lines 7–9 are bound together not only through the anaphora, "we're going to," but also through three verbs that construct semantic relationships among their objects: "destroy," "beat," and "burn." The final phrases of each line include:

destroy everything you own (7)
 beat you up (8)
 burn your synagogues (9)

Each verb has as its object either “you” (i.e., the Jews of Germany) or extensions of personhood and identity, including material possessions (everything you [Jews] own) and places of worship (your [Jewish] synagogues). On this reading, line 8 functions as the anchor of violent acts, for this pronouncement represents the most direct assault on Jewish personhood; it is designed to strip away physical health and lead, perhaps, to death. The verse and object phrases in lines 7 and 9 are parallels to that physical attack, reaching beyond an affront on physical well-being to assault material and spiritual well-being: “Everything you own” functions as the direct object of “destroy,” while “your synagogues” is the object of “burn.” Repetitions of pronouns “you” and “your” in each object phrase—alongside the related meanings of those phrases—weaves the three contiguous lines into a densely parallel relationship. The lines are parallel due to semantic and lexical relationship as well as to a relationship of similarity created by the anaphoric links.

At the *syntactic* level, I examined how various juxtapositions or equivalences of contrasting or similar grammatical patterns may suggest Jane’s tacit “way of thinking” about the Holocaust. Such patterns are morally consequential because they define parameters for students’ interpretations of the Holocaust narrative that “constituent sequences by themselves [did] not carry” (Jakobson 1968, p. 604). I made a chart (see Table 1) to render the narrative into subject–predicate structures that became the basis for syntactic interpretation.

The syntactic structures of lines 2 and 10 are equivalent, with the same words repeated, except that the morally loaded phrase “a violent act to the extreme” (stanza 2) replaces the morally neutral “government policy” (stanza 1). Lines 5 and 18 likewise show syntactic parallelism with present tenses of the verb “to be” parallel, with variation in the subject and object:

You are (Jews) (line 5)
 It is (wrong) (line 18)

The parallelism is deepened because the lines follow quotative words “says” and “say” and are followed by constructed dialogues. Within Jane’s narrative performance, the speech acts were enacted as commands leading to actions by others. The accusation “you are Jews” brought horrific consequences to those upon whom it was cast in Nazi-controlled Europe. Jane suggested that, if uttered, the speech act, “It is wrong,” might have intervened in the Nazi terror regime. As Nazis (stanza 1) are made syntactically equivalent to “no one” (stanza 2), equivalence is suggested between the wrong done by Nazi violence and the wrong done through silence and inaction. That is, the storylines commanding not to be perpetrator and not to be a bystander to genocide are juxtaposed.

At the level of *stanza*, an examination of pronouns reveals shifting psychological subjects, those vantage points or subject positions from which each line or stanza is uttered. The first stanza presents the predominant point of view of the Nazi

Table 1 Line-by-line subject–predicate conjugation

Line#	Subject	Predicate
1	Things	Have happened
2	This	Was
3	We	Are not going to call
4	We	Are not going to say
5	You	Are
6	You	Are going to have to wear
7	We	Are going to destroy
8	We	Are going to beat up
9	We	Are going to burn
10	This	Was
11	No one	Stepped (up) and said
12	We	Have had
13	You	Have done
14	We	Cannot let
	You	do
15	This	Showed
	Violence	Is
16	[Violence] ^a	Can be
17	No one	Is going to stand (up) and say
18	It	Is
19	They	Have not [stood (up) and said] Are not going to [stand (up) and say] ^a
20	Violence	Is incorporated
21	They	Are going to walk and ignore
22	They	Can [ignore] ^a

^aBrackets [] indicate an elliptical subject or verb that has been included

government in Germany during November 1938. In lines 1 and 2, “I” refers to Jane herself in the classroom here and now. In line 3, she shifted away from the psychological stance of the orienting couplet: “We” in line 3 refers to those already carrying out “horrible things” (line 1) and those just committing a “violent act to the extreme” (line 10) in the “government policy” (line 2) of Kristallnacht. Lines 3–9 include five sets of contrasts between “we” and “you,” where “we” refers to the “government policy” of Kristallnacht and “you” to Jews (line 5).

In the second stanza, however, Jane shifted point of view to critically rename “this” government policy “a violent act to the extreme,” a phrase establishing that she was no longer discussing the event from the moral perspective of perpetrators. The negative pronoun “no one” is repeated in the already-discussed parallel lines 11 and 17 and emerges as the chief psychological subject of the stanza.

The framing discourse suggests that “no one” refers to the “German people” (bystanders) and “the church.” Again, a contrast between “we” and “you” appears, only here “we” refers to German people/church, whereas “you” seems to refer to

Table 2 Enthymematic argument structure

Premise 1	Stanza 1
Premise 2	Stanzas 2 and 3
Implied conclusion	

Hitler. Despite the contrasts, the two stanzas are knitted together stylistically through the parallel structures of quotation and constructed dialogue (lines 2 and 7–9; lines 12–14 and 18). Jane construes temporal movement and causal relationship through the dialogue between the two stanzas. Stanza 3 further critiques the constructed dialogue of “no one” (stanza 2), as the psychological subject shifts to the teacher/critic with a historical perspective. That psychological subject indicts the German people and church (“them”) for a sin of omission, in comparison with the sin of commission enacted in stanza 1.

At the level of *theme*, we begin to see how the previously discussed patterning may contribute to thematic “coherence” (Ochs and Capps 2001), a well-documented property of narrative discourse. In light of the stance in stanza 3, I conclude that the antihero of the narrative is the “no one” of stanza 2, who fails to “step up and say the violence is wrong.” Jane suggests an implicit moral lesson through the micro-linguistic patterning of narrative structure, not unlike a fairy tale or parable. Through such narrative form, Jane encouraged students—perhaps through “poetic delight in verbal structures” (Jakobson 1968, p. 608)—to identify themselves with the situation of Kristallnacht. In so doing, she invites them to imagine becoming the kinds of citizens who, in a future parallel situation to Kristallnacht, might stand up and say what “no one” dared to say. Through possible future action, then, students may be implied moral heroes standing in contrast with the antiheroes of the story. Grounded in the poetic interpretation, as well as in the curricular background (see Juzwik 2009, ch. 2), I interpret the narrative as an argument in the shape of an enthymeme, known as a “rhetorical syllogism,” defined here as a syllogism with one part (one of the premises or the conclusion) missing. Jane’s enthymeme includes two propositions and a missing conclusion (see Table 2).

My reading thus proposes that Jane shaped an implicit moral lesson from the two explicit premises presented through stylized narrative poetics. On this reading, the narrative invokes potential value-laden parallels between the evildoers and bystanders of the Holocaust (the psychological subjects of the narrative) and students in the classroom (the audience of the narrative performance). The narrative subjects were “no ones,” saying and doing “nothing”; however, through her narrative rhetoric, Jane seemed to suggest that students might one day become “someones” in future situations paralleling Kristallnacht.

The Ethics of Holocaust Narratives

Finally, I pose a set of ethical questions to the data and to the findings of previous interpretive layers: In any given situation, how is a narrative event harmful or

virtuous? To whom might the narrative be beneficial? To whom might the narrative do harm? How might such virtues or harms be enacted, either intentionally or unwittingly? In this level of analysis, my interpretation takes up a concern not only with benefits and harms to students or teachers in classrooms but also to individuals and groups of people far beyond a given classroom. Given that my research did not exhaustively probe participant perspectives through ethnographic interviews, I cannot claim access to individual participants' assessments of any benefits and harms of narrative as a resource for teaching about the Holocaust. Therefore, my claims deal with potential benefits and harms, based on my interpretations of the oral narrative texts, classroom activities, and other artifacts.

As already suggested, this final interpretive level is of a different order than the previous three, because it is made possible by the previous interpretations. In putting my ethical questions to the previous interpretive levels—in interpreting my interpretations—I first ask what the virtues of teachers telling Holocaust narratives might be. I then ask what harm might be done.

Regarding the virtues, or benefits, of telling Holocaust narratives, several seem possible. First, narrative rhetoric can contribute to teacher authority (see also Juzwik 2006). Towards that end, Jane's narrative practices demonstrated a verbal virtuosity that can be conceptualized within traditions of oratory and the arts of discourse as a kind of "vernacular eloquence" (Howard 2005). Such eloquence is well known to be a tool for positive social change, as, for example, in the work of pastors in US pulpits (e.g., the speeches and sermons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.). Second, teacher narrative discourse may cultivate the development of coherent and meaningful connections among past, present, and future. Through oral narrative, Jane "revivified" the past (to borrow a wonderful verb from moral philosopher Avishai Margalit (2002)). She recruited the capacity of narrative to evoke identification with persons in distant times and places, with family members, and with national figures. Jane made the past come alive in the present, collapsing the distance between us and them, now and then, and here and there. While this collapse is problematic, it can engage students who too often find learning about the past to be difficult or irrelevant (Barton and Levstik 2004).

Third, narrative forms of talk may provide a safe space for exploring difficult topics and perplexities such as the Holocaust. Narratives such as Jane's may be instances of verbal "poetry. . . produced for purposes of comfort . . . undertaken as equipment for living, as a ritualistic way of arming [young people] to confront perplexities and risks . . . it would protect us" (Burke 1941/1973, p. 61). That protective capacity, I believe, depends on the evaluative moral stance and "lesson" asserted through narrative talk. Certainly dominant storylines were presented in single narrative utterances. However, unlike the overarching moral storylines in religious classrooms studied by Simone Schweber (e.g., Schweber and Irwin 2003), no single storyline was presented in Jane's classroom across the unit. In fact, conflicting storylines sometimes circulated. Yet Jane did consistently evoke six widely available cultural storylines about the Holocaust across the narratives, as established in the referential interpretation. Rather than a single storyline about the Holocaust, i.e., an authoritative interpretation, multiple and competing

possibilities circulated. Students therefore needed to critically navigate among conflicting accounts. This seems to be an appropriate challenge for middle school students attending public school within a pluralistic society.

A final pedagogical virtue of narrative was the kind of curricular permeability it seemed to invite. By “curricular permeability,” I refer to curriculum that is open to students’ voices and life experiences, such as writing curriculum that flexibly invites primary-aged urban writers to bring their own life worlds and discourses into the classroom forum (Dyson 1993). Jane’s narrative rhetoric modeled a way for students to potentially participate in classroom talk. Indeed, during the final 2 weeks of the unit, the number of student narratives about the Holocaust and related events sharply increased, while the number of teacher narratives decreased (Juzwik 2009). Narrative events thus became a potential curricular resource for students to integrate their out-of-school lives with the happenings and curriculum within the classroom. More generally, teacher narratives have potential to create opportunities for teachers to recognize and build upon the funds of knowledge that populate students’ life worlds beyond school (Gonzalez and Moll 1995) even while fulfilling curricular goals. Despite these potential virtues, using narratives has the potential to do harm, especially about a past as difficult as the Holocaust. A narrative exchange among Jane and two of her students brings that potential into sharp relief:

Narrative: Hitler Did Not Intentionally Set Out to Kill Six Million Jews (1/6/00)

Jane: When Hitler invaded Poland, that’s when the war started.

Nathan: Wasn’t it also like, you couldn’t adopt the Holocaust, you couldn’t just like kill two million Jewish people and then say, Oh now they’re fine. They’ve like learned their lesson? You have to do this, you have to kill every single one?

Jane: Right, right, I mean, there’s no—Hitler did NOT intentionally set out to kill six million Jews. He just wanted ‘em gone, folks, And I can’t stress that enough. He just wanted them to leave. He just didn’t want them, in, basically in Europe, because he was to try and take over all of Europe, that living space policy he had. But he didn’t necessarily want ‘em dead, that was never his intention. The camps and all those things were never his intention. He didn’t set out to DO that. He just didn’t WANT them there. But when no one else would take them. He had to find other methods of getting rid of them. And the ghettos only worked for so long too. It was very slow (said slowly). It was a very slow process. He was kind a forced into getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. And at a certain point, Nathan’s right, you can’t just all of a sudden shut down all the, shut down all the camps and say, “We’re not doing it any more. It’s over.” It was impossible. In fact, they kept it up until 45, even though it probably meant—that was probably one of the big reasons why they lost the war. They had a LOT of trains that could have been used for the war purposes used for Jews being sent to camps. It was, it became somewhat impractical, what was going on. But by that point, there’s question over Hitler’s mental state at a certain point too. And how much it was all in his

control, how much he lost control, how much sanity remained at the end when he killed himself. And we're never going to know those things. We're NEVER going to know. And that's all just fictionalized and I can't really tell you about that stuff. I don't know. But it was NEVER his intent to do that. And that's proven, Nathan. He NEVER intended just to kill all these, especially like that. Winona?

Winona: If he didn't intend to kill all those people, why did he write a book how he was going to be a mass

Jane: (laughing). Okay Winona, I've never read *Mein Kampf*.

Although not highlighted by my transcription choice here, the narrative is artful in many of the ways discussed already, in the poetic and performative layers of analysis. Yet, its central claim is false: Credible historians are generally agreed that, by the time of the Wannsee Conference, Hitler's intentions had coalesced around the Final Solution, the systematic, state-sponsored murder of the Jews. While it might be tempting to interpret the narrative as an instance of Holocaust denial, other data in the unit—including Jane's explicitly stated goal of preparing students to debunk Holocaust denial, discussed already—discourage that interpretation. Jane made an error here, not surprisingly given her lack of historical training.

Yet this example points out a central problem with narratives as resources, at least for teaching about a past as complex and morally distressing as the Holocaust. As narratives, they hold potential to falsify, oversimplify, and essentialize events of the past. Rather than exploring multiple explanations, narratives as typified utterances often tend to present clear, coherent storylines (Mink 1978). Here, for example, a crystal-clear evaluation of Hitler's intentions is tightly woven into an unwavering false storyline. However, Winona and the other students had prior and conflicting information available: They had viewed a video titled *Hitler: The Criminal*, which made an opposite claim about Hitler's intentions. That conflicting information led her to confidently question the veracity of the storyline. Clearly enough, Jane made a vivid mistake and a student called her on that mistake. This may seem to some like "just a mistake." However, I would argue that the mistake has much to do with the *narrative resources* Jane is recruiting to teach about the Holocaust. The same coherence-producing devices that can make narratives rhetorically powerful may also lead to inadvertent falsification, at least in the case of an early-career English teacher without training in modern European history. I see such mistakes as carrying ethical weight in classroom curriculum, whatever the teacher intentions (Juzwik 2004a, b). Even when inadvertent, such mistakes can lead to falsification of the past, a moral problem when teaching about the Holocaust, especially given the insidious persistence of Holocaust denial.

This example further illustrates a problem noted with the interpretive layers discussed above: it places Jews and Jewish persons as objects being acted upon, rather than as subjects who themselves actively experienced and interpreted the horrors of the Holocaust. This objectification has potential to harm Jews as a collective group in the USA and globally. To explore the extent of such representations, I tallied the identity and frequency of various collectives represented in teacher and student narratives. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently referenced group was Jews (mentioned 349 times throughout the 75 narratives). Other groups

referenced included Germany (147 mentions), participants' families (130 mentions), and Nazis (121 mentions). Hitler was mentioned 297 times. Taken together, Hitler, Germany, and Nazis (perpetrators) were mentioned 573 across the narrative corpus. A dominant narrative perspective seemed to be that of "what Hitler did" rather than, for example, "what Jews experienced." Across the narrative data, Nazis/Germans/Hitler and Jews were protagonists.

I sought to deepen this interpretation by looking more closely at the acting of social groups and individuals and who were acted upon in the narrative rhetoric. In the problematic narrative above, for example, Hitler was the superordinate agent (the one doing the acting) in fifteen instances (e.g., "Hitler did NOT/intentionally set out to kill 6 million Jews"). Hitler is the subject of the sentence. By contrast, Jews were subordinate (acted upon) in ten different instances, for example, "He just didn't want them in, basically in Europe." In this example, the designation for Jews, "them," occupies the object, rather than subject, position of the sentence. While denying Hitler's intentionality, Jane somewhat ironically endowed Hitler with agency through such construals. Indeed, some might feel that, through getting "inside the head" of Hitler and the Nazi logic, Jane might have invited students to identify with Hitler, rather than with Jewish victims.

In systematic coding of teacher and student narratives across the full data set (see Juzwik 2009, p. 138), an analysis not detailed here, I discovered a more general pattern of Nazis or Hitler or Germans acting (in the subject positions of clauses) and Jews being acted upon (in the object positions of clauses). Such representations of Jews and Jewish persons are troubling and should cause us to be careful about joyfully celebrating teacher narratives as only virtuous. Rather than critiquing Jane, taking a closer look at her use of narrative invites a deeper consideration of what the (unintended) consequences of oral narratives about the Holocaust might be for American Jews and also Jews beyond the USA. Given that many in public school classrooms are not Jewish and given that non-Jewish students may not encounter representations of Jews elsewhere in the language arts or history curriculum, these representations may have potential to do harm. Not only can they diminish Jewish memory or experiences, they can also figure contemporary Jews inaccurately, for example, as perpetual victims (Novick 1999). This is especially a problem for non-Jewish students who may have little exposure to contemporary Jewish culture and life.

Why Rhetoric?

Rhetoric has not, to my knowledge, been heretofore considered a viable approach to the study of narrative in educational scholarship.⁴ I believe, however, that the case study presented here, considered alongside the fuller report (Juzwik 2009), can

⁴ See Varenne (1978) for a rhetorical analysis of interactions between high school teachers and administrators in the USA.

reveal the interpretive power of rhetoric for studying classroom narratives. I specifically show how teacher narrative discourse enacts, counteracts, and otherwise interacts with curricular goals. In focusing on the rhetoric of teaching, however, I found it necessary to background issues of student learning and “outcomes,” which may be seen as a weakness of the overall approach in an outcome-driven era. While not prepared to claim that a rhetorical approach to narrative study was the “best” approach to these data, my hope is that the findings and the method might prove generative to narrative inquiry.

Because of the steady stream of concerns in rhetorical studies with the ethical dimensions of persuasive language (e.g., Aristotle 1991; Isocrates 1961; Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca 1991; Quintilian 1958), taking a rhetorical approach to these data pushed me to consider the ethical dimensions of teacher narratives told about a morally weighty past. If Jane’s Holocaust narratives simultaneously did referential, interpersonal, poetic, and moral work in her classroom, as I argue, the findings suggest a more general hypothesis for further consideration: Moral talk in classrooms is more pervasive and under the radar than people assume. Jane made strong claims for students’ ethical learning through Holocaust study; she truly believed that the unit would impact their future life trajectories. And the moral stances advanced in her narrative rhetoric seemed, with some exceptions, to support those stated aims. Confirming what moral learning happened in Jane’s classroom as a result of Holocaust study is beyond the scope of the study; nonetheless, narrative discourse offers a rich site for examining the ethical dimensions of teaching and curriculum.

The Role of Interpretation in the Study

Four key interpretive issues shaped the research just presented: (a) deciding what counted and what did not count as “narrative” in my data set, (b) transcribing and therefore “seeing” the narrative data for different layers of rhetorical analysis, (c) establishing my *ethos* in conducting and writing up the research, and perhaps most significantly, (d) responsibly presenting the teacher, Jane, so that she did not appear morally reprehensible, which I believe she was not.

First, to frame the discussion, I conceptualized my research as a cultural and interpretive process in which I was constantly making decisions about what to place in the foreground as “text,” what to place in the background as relevant “context,” and what to relegate as irrelevant context “beyond the scope of the study” (see also Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996). I see such decisions as critical interpretive questions in rhetorical and discourse analytic research. Making the responses to those questions explicit can build credibility of interpretation. It also creates potential for an interpretation to travel beyond disciplinary or sub-disciplinary confines and impact subsequent scholarship.

I needed to decide, then, what counted as a “narrative” in my data set. In most narrative scholarship in literacy studies, the term “narrative” often gets invoked, but

is rarely defined, in methodologies (Spector et al. 2007). Therefore, it was not straightforward to decide how to define narrative for my purposes. While Phelan's definition offered a general rhetorical orientation to narrative discourse, it didn't offer criteria for de-contextualizing narrative discourse from the swirling sea of classroom language. Sociolinguistic narrative research, especially Labov's (1972) seminal study, provided an interpretive pathway through the data set: to quote above, "any temporally sequenced series of clauses that included evaluation or an evaluative stance taken on events and/or persons."

A second interpretive concern in my work involved decisions about how to transcribe narratives for various analytic and interpretive purposes. While some argued that there is one correct approach, I have been guided by a rhetorical perspective. This view holds that transcriptions do analytic and rhetorical work and should be driven by the purpose of an analysis, by the current state of scholarship in the field, and by the intended audience (Mishler 1991; Ochs 1979). I have therefore attempted to show how my transcription choices became significant interpretive decisions. For example, in my poetic analysis, the decision to transcribe into lines and stanzas allowed me, and the readers of my entextualization, to see the poetic and parallel qualities of the narrative in the way that a prose transcription would not. In the process of the research, I did all the transcription work myself to develop an intimate relationship with the narrative data, in preparation for the "real" interpretive work of coding. Discourse-oriented work with narrative, as I have described here, is enormously time-consuming for the researcher and often results in deep reports of small amounts of data or data generated over a relatively short period of time.

A third issue relates to my construal of researcher *ethos* throughout the project. *Ethos* is a concept from rhetoric that is useful for considering issues of researcher reflexivity in the process of interpretation. I define *ethos*, following Aristotle (1991), as the discursive construction and performance of identity. So in this particular project, I had to ask myself, what *ethos* would be relevant and persuasive, given the nature of the project? How would I present myself at different phases of the project? How might my *ethos* shape my interpretation of data in intended and unintended ways? Like the teacher I was studying, I had an *ethos* problem in studying and writing about the Holocaust: I was not Jewish and I was not an expert in modern European history. My studies of Holocaust representation and history, however, had led me to see interpreting Holocaust discourse as a rhetorical and ethical minefield (e.g., Bernard-Donals and Glejzer 2001; Spiegelman 2011). And so, I did the best I could. While generating data for the project, I was in my first semester of graduate study and a short time away from being a middle school English teacher myself. It was therefore easy to position myself with Jane as a colleague. I had a bit more experience than Jane (6 years, as opposed to Jane's 2.5 years). In writing about the study (e.g., Juzwik 2009), I also tended to emphasize my *ethos* as a former English teacher who had struggled to lead students into responsible transactions with Holocaust texts. In this handbook chapter, given the audience and purpose of the volume, I have chosen to emphasize my *ethos* as a narrative researcher and scholar.

A final interpretive challenge of my rhetorical approach was presenting the focal teacher, Jane Connor, in a responsible manner. I wanted to discourage readers from jumping to the conclusion that she was a morally reprehensible person or a terrible teacher, as some have done upon seeing the narrative about Hitler's intentions. That challenge, in turn, led me to consider the importance of her status as a relatively early-career teacher in interpreting the data set. It prompted me to carefully consider how I should frame excerpts of her talk, so that readers might have sufficient contextual information. For example, I included the information that Jane had shown students a movie *Hitler: The Criminal* that argued for Hitler's intention in designing the Final Solution previous to telling the narrative about Hitler not intending to kill the Jews. It pushed me to *qualify* my interpretations (e.g., to use language such as "On my reading. . ."). Presenting Jane in an engaging and sympathetic manner required an imaginative leap, an effort to put myself in the shoes of various potential reviewers. It involved constantly imagining the critical reader lurking over my shoulder. Of course, hearing and reading responses from living and breathing real-life readers made this imaginative work much easier. In the process, my research imagination was enlivened by the voices, social languages, and ideologies of others.

Conclusion

In an era of standardization, when questions of value in education tend to be obscured by talk about outcomes, rhetorical inquiry into the value-laden nature of teaching is needed more than ever. Towards this end, I have worked within the broader framework of narrative discourse analysis to present a rhetorical approach to studying classroom narratives and particularly narratives told by teachers as part of instruction. The approach included a multi-functional, layered interpretation of the referential, performative, poetic, and ethical work that narratives talk can do in classrooms. The first three interpretive layers make possible the final and most important layer, focused on the ethical dimensions.

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1.4 Dialogue in Narrative Inquiry: Collaboration in Doctoral Study in the USA

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*Where consciousness began, there dialogue began. (p. 40)
When dialogue ends, everything ends (p. 252).*

(Bakhtin 1981)

In this chapter we describe a process of using dialogue to construct interpretations in narrative inquiry. We see narrative and dialogue as partners in the pursuit of learning, what Bakhtin called “consciousness.” This is an approach to inquiry that is collaborative and well suited to research that is multivocal and socially critical.

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Here we focus on dialogue and its centrality to narrative inquiry. Dialogue requires interpretation throughout as we try to listen and learn from others. Dialogue can be eminently useful regardless of the other methods used in the research. It has its own benefits and burdens as an approach to inquiry and we acknowledge both here. We give research examples from educational contexts but the method is applicable in any research context that involves narrative.

The literature is replete with acknowledgements that conversation, interviews, and discourse are a natural part of narrative inquiry and that reciprocal learning is often the result. Collecting stories, life histories, or other forms of narrative data requires talking. Reciprocity and joint efforts are often described. Some researchers advocate collaboration throughout the process of telling stories and constructing interpretations; others collect data and then do the analysis and interpretive work on their own, including their own perspectives, to make clear their interpretive role. Our main example will demonstrate the former—long-term collaborative work. We also provide other examples from dissertation projects.

Dialogue, for the purpose of our research method, is not just ordinary talk. Its focus is learning and learning leads to new understandings about the stories of individuals and groups, which in turn can lead to re-storying and multivocal interpretations. Dialogue is best sustained in democratic contexts where different perspectives are encouraged, trust is nurtured, and norms of social justice are maintained. Benjamin Barber (1984) claims: “At the heart of strong democracy is talk” (and by “talk” he means what we call “dialogue”) (p. 173). We often run into multiple terms for similar meanings and different meanings for similar terms. Dialogue is a common term but users don’t always mean what we intend here, whereas Barber uses the term “talk” and his association of talk and democracy closely parallels what we mean by dialogue. Democracy is closely aligned with our concept of dialogue because it benefits from the expression of different points of view, talking through issues, and learning from this process.

However, as many suggest (Burbules and Bruce 2001; Habermas 1984; Houston 2004), the differences that emerge in dialogue offer as many opportunities for misunderstanding as for learning:

... dialogue creates an opportunity for some to learn from and with others. Such diversity, however, does not only create a set of possibilities and opportunities; it also constitutes a potential barrier – for it is these very same differences that can lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, or speaking at cross-purposes. (Burbules and Bruce 2001, p. 1112)

We use *dialogue* to identify a particular kind of talking and learning. For us, dialogue is more than comfortable talk or questions on an interview protocol; it requires a willingness to ask hard questions and learn from differences and a willingness to change one’s mind. It is nurtured by trust and openness. Dialogue carries ethical considerations and is burdened by the acknowledgement that learning involves taking risks and will likely call one’s assumptions and meanings into question. In dialogue, with Freire, we learn to “read the world” in ways that can enhance our humanity, including being critical of oppression and injustice in our lives and our research. We understand interpretation to be an integral and

concurrent aspect of dialogue. Dialogue requires that we listen intently, deal with differences, and examine our assumptions and these are highly interpretative tasks.

We use *narrative* to reference the initial telling of stories within a dialogue. Narratives offer accounts of the lived experiences of individuals and these are considered within the dialogue. The dialogue usually begins with “stories” initially constructed by individuals, and these evolve through the dialogue into life histories and other literary forms (poetry, drama, readers’ theater, songs). Throughout this process, interpretations are made; connections are made with both personal issues and larger ones in the social context and beyond.

We understand *inquiry* to include all forms of questions and searching related to individuals in social contexts. We see *narrative inquiry* as a natural process of asking questions and making interpretations and as a set of research methods reflecting research epistemologies and controversies. The former occurs through the telling of stories, the latter through more systematic procedures and the building of more general interpretations.

We, the authors, are a professor (Marilyn) and five doctoral students from many different places in the world. Jason is a student in educational leadership, while the other students are in the department of curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Marilyn is the adviser of the students. We self-consciously used dialogue as a process of doing inquiry while writing this chapter. It supported our thinking in a way that is reflected in the content and the narrative structure of this chapter.

In one of our weekly narrative study group meetings, we were trying to summarize the characteristics of dialogue, to identify the qualities by which one knows when dialogue is happening. Following the initial offering of “participatory,” we began, partly in play, to list adjectives that started with “p.” It is challenging to define something that is so fluid and changeable—dialogue is influenced by context, participants, and purposes—but we’ve found these descriptors useful. Any particular dialogue might have more of one quality than another, but it is not “dialogue,” in the sense we are discussing it here, without many of these qualities being present.

Provocative: Dialogue is provocative in that it leaves you wondering and hungering for more. It seldom feels finished; it often leads to further issues and questions. It leaves one hungry in the way that Dewey speaks of inquiry leading one to new aims. “The quality of any experience has two aspects. There is an immediate aspect of agreeableness or disagreeableness, and there is its influence upon later experiences . . . they promote having desirable future experiences (Dewey 1938, p. 27). Experiences provoke responses and lead to future aims, a continuous cycle that at its best is provocative.

Purposes: Dialogue requires shared purposes—at least initially it is about something. Yet it is the differences that emerge in dialogue that push us to re-examine both individual and group purposes. Dialogue can be instrumentally oriented but it is not usually so. It has a more fluid sense of purposes that arrive, shift, and are moderated by the dialogue. Purposes are challenged and often

rearranged or reinterpreted through dialogue. Participants often leave dialogue still thinking and wondering about their purposes.

Place-based: Dialogue is situated within a specific location, and this placement provides references and experiences that matter to the dialogue, especially in long-term collaborative projects. Place-based education has been connected with ecological education, education in rural, urban, and indigenous communities, and the purpose is often to learning within this place in order to give back to it. Place grounds *what* is studied and discussed, but also *who* is doing the studying. It matters what this place is like and the cultural and political practices within it. “Place . . . foregrounds a narrative of local and regional politics that is attuned to the particularities of where people actually live, and that is connected to global development trends that impact local places ” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3). Yet place, like other concepts, is a leaky idea and will reflect the multiple interpretations of those in a particular place. Dialogue as a place-based process brings forth situated and multiple interpretive viewpoints. Its will reflect diverse issues and critiques than are both drawn from and influence the place and persons in the dialogue.

[Un]Predictable: The results of dialogue are *not* predictable. As ideas are shared and new perspectives or challenges are offered, the understandings that emerge from the dialogue cannot be determined ahead of time. It is a creative and open-ended process. Understandings between persons or within persons cannot be predicted or contained, and misunderstandings are always possible. In a critique of the often-idealized discussions of “community,” I. M. Young asserts:

... sharing however, is never complete mutual understanding and reciprocity. Sharing, moreover, is fragile. The other person may at the next moment understand my words differently from the way I meant them, or carry my actions to consequences I do not intend. The same difference that makes sharing between us possible also makes misunderstanding, rejection, withdrawal, and conflict always possible conditions of social being. (Young 1986, pp. 10–11)

The potential for misunderstandings requires further dialogue and whether this will bring understanding is not predictable.

The potential for misunderstanding is related to the very nature of language. Bakhtin argues that all understanding is dialogical and that our understandings only evolve as our utterances are juxtaposed with the utterances of others. We need others and their utterances in order to comprehend and construct our own understandings. Understandings happen in the space between persons, in the dialogue. For Bakhtin, discourse and understandings are interindividual and cannot be attributed to the speaker alone. As he famously has said, “the word in language is half someone else’s.” If language is shaped in social spaces, we have less control over our utterances and what they will become.

Feminist poststructuralist theories also see language as constructed within social contexts. They focus on the relation of language, subjectivity, social organization,

and power. Weedon (1987) describes the connection of language and power relations:

The plurality of language and the impossibility of fixing meaning once and for all are basic principles of post-structuralism. This does not mean that meaning disappears altogether but that any interpretation is at best temporary, specific to the discourse within which it is produced, and open to challenge. The degree to which meanings are vulnerable at a particular moment will depend on the discursive power relations within which they are located. To subscribe to the provisional nature of meaning is not to imply that it does not have real effects. (pp. 85–86)

On this view, words develop meaning through language use within particular contexts, and meaning is constructed within language rather than reflected by it. Language is no longer transparent or stable but is dependent on contexts of use. An important part of those contexts are the relations of power between participants. In dialogue, we can confront those power relations and this is one reason why dialogue is democratic and also can be uncomfortable (Lugones and Rosezelle 1995; Nicholson 1990; Weedon 1987). It requires acknowledging the power relations between participants.

A post-structural account also asserts that language constructs subjectivities in context-specific ways, rather than being just their expression (Richardson 1994). Subjectivity is constructed as speakers adopt positionalities in particular discourses and discourse communities. This is also an effect that can be confronted in dialogue, as attention is called to the way particular uses of language have influenced participants. And again, it is a reason why dialogue may be uncomfortable and also can challenge our deeper beliefs. It calls into question the idea of one's unified, rational, and conscious subjectivity and requires a critical kind of listening, interrogating ourselves, accepting differences, and working to understand each other, however difficult all this may be.

Participatory: One can sit quietly and still be involved in the dialogue, but dialogue requires mindfulness. Engagement and focus happen because the issues matter, and their importance keeps participants processing, sharing, and critiquing the words and ideas.

Praxis: The interplay of practice and theory is typical of dialogue. Dialogue is not just a theoretical enterprise; the learning that takes place is tied to one's feelings, thinking, and practices. It moves between practice and theory in ways that demonstrate their interaction. The stories we tell are eminently practical in that they are about our lives; at the same time they reflect our deepest desires, identities, and questions, i.e., our theories. Bakhtin (1984) writes:

To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life; with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (p. 293)

Positional: Participants in a dialogue often feel themselves shifting positions. Dialogue is not about a debate where one side convinces another wins, or about

convincing someone else that you are right; yet, as Swindler (1990) claims, “Clear strong positions are the stuff of dialogue” (p. 32). Dialogue is about sharing differences and finding them provocative of learning. Because of the dialogue, we often play with new ideas, change our minds, and find ourselves changed.

Perspective-taking: Peter Senge argues that “each person’s view (a way of looking at reality) is a unique perspective on a larger reality. If I can ‘look out’ through your view and you through mine, we will each see something we might not have seen alone” (p. 248). In dialogue, viewpoints are examined as if they belong to the group, not just to the individual. And each perspective is a window into the possibilities for interpretation within the group; it is food for thought and holds the potential for new insights.

Precarious: Dialogue can feel precarious. When our deepest assumptions get questioned in a public space, it can feel disquieting and disruptive. Cobb (1990) argues that “confrontation can contribute reliably to real gains only when it leads to dialogue . . . We confront with the conviction that others have something to say to us—that we need to listen as well as speak” (p. 1–2). To balance the precariousness that comes from confrontation and change, there is the *interest* generated by new ideas that attracts us and provides opportunities for new insights. This is not always easy, but it often rewarding. Dialogue needs to balance a safe space with risk-taking, and this requires both support and challenge within the dialogic space.

Political: Dialogue about schooling is always political (Bruner 1996). Stories about pedagogy and schooling inevitably lead to ethical issues, the influence of power, and the willingness or unwillingness of others to collaborate. Narrative inquiry itself raises political issues. Elbaz-Luwisch (1997) suggests: “The conduct of narrative research gives rise to a range of political issues which include the validation of narrative knowledge, the relationships of power and authority among research participants, and the distinction between the public and private domains” (p. 75).

Power: There is the inevitable challenge of the power relations that influence the dialogue space and can cause intimidation and injury. These need not be obvious and can influence participants in a group differently. Not everyone may feel injured or ignored, but those with power can dominate the group. On the other hand, participants with different roles or institutional status can have a dialogue as long as the differences are seen as assets and a means to learn from each other. Freire (1970) writes eloquently about how dialogue requires certain attitudes, which result in more horizontal relationships: “Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence” (pp. 79–80). While it is never possible to remove power ascribed by our institutional roles and contexts, it is possible to critique it and work towards equitable relations within the dialogue.

On the other hand, narrative inquiry may be used for colonizing purposes, rather than for critique and liberation. Colonizers can use discourses to construct an “inferior other” to justify colonization (Said 1979). Narratives can be collected in order to inform and justify surveillance of the “other” (Foucault 1979) and to justify

exclusion (Jones 1999). Group stories can bind communities together and justify unjust purposes and practices as, for example, in a band of thieves or Nazi sympathizers, especially when they are isolated and bar critique (Wenger 1998). A critique of power must be sustained in order for dialogue to be possible.

Theme: Assessment and Evaluation

The theme for our chapter is assessment and evaluation, topics that are not typically seen as the purview of narrative. Tests and evaluation reports are usually done to us, not with us; they usually tell us about ourselves, rather than ask us to narrate our own stories. Assessment and evaluation reports are typically expressed in paradigmatic modes such as mathematics, logic, and science, which Bruner contrasts with narrative modes (1986, pp. 11–43). Using narrative modes of assessment and evaluation in education would allow researchers to bring forth what Bruner calls “the vicissitudes of human intentions” (p. 16) because narrative digs into the experiences of people and can capture complexity and context that is often missing in paradigmatic modes. Narratives have the power to engage readers in empathetic ways; story and metaphor are powerful means by which to influence human feeling and action. Dialogue in narrative inquiry would influence assessment and evaluation in profound ways.

When we add dialogue and narrative to assessment and evaluation, we create a negotiated process rather than an externally described outcome. More democratic assessments are likely to depend on dialogue and narrative. In response to quantitative approaches to evaluation, scholars have long proposed more democratic approaches (Greene 2006). Dialogue and narratives in evaluation invite stories and questions; everyone is expected to learn from an analysis of the issues and processes.

Dialogue can accommodate insider and outsider voices and it benefits from differences in perspective and opinion. Assessment and evaluation within a dialogic narrative inquiry takes time and a willingness to uncover complexities hidden by generalized test scores and program evaluations. Compared to more traditional outcomes of assessments dependent on statistical analyses, democratic and dialogic approaches reflect pervasive interpretation and will likely produce diverse as well as shared evaluation outcomes.

In the following research example of Marilyn’s, teachers narrate their encounters in their school with assessment practices that were bureaucratic and autocratic. Their stories reflect their frustration with mandated curriculum and evaluation from a school-district-level program, which in turn, reflect national and global trends of authoritarian assessment and evaluation. The teachers’ narrative assessments of practices and policies give voice to their points of view, and their evaluation is strengthened by the power of narrative to create empathy. *Dialogue in narrative inquiry* provides insider views that are often absent from assessment and policy-making.

The Research Project

When Marilyn began thinking about writing this chapter, she invited us (the doctoral students) to meet and talk about what she was intending to write. She intended some gentle mentoring about writing and publishing, but it eventually moved into a more collaborative project. She first shared with us one of her inquiry projects, as an example of a collaborative, narrative project grounded in dialogue. The explicit focus on dialogue was different than how most of us had thought about narrative inquiry, and it stimulated a lot of thinking as we compared our own research projects to hers and each other's.

As our weekly meetings progressed, we found ourselves immersed in trying to define the process Marilyn had used in her collaborative research. She had done a lot of collaborative inquiry and had written about *dialogue as inquiry* (Johnston-Parsons and PDS Colleagues 2012). The more we talked about the application of this type of dialogue to narrative, the more complications arose. We were changing our minds about various aspects of this process and our own research projects, a good sign that dialogue was taking place among us too. We eventually decided that the phrase *dialogue in narrative inquiry* best represented the method we are proposing here. It is a method—a dialogic approach to narrative inquiry—that we arrived at by discussing Marilyn's previous research and by applying it to our own research projects.

As burgeoning researchers we (the doctoral students) have collected data in different locations around the world, using different methods, theoretical frameworks, and approaches to interpretation. What ties us together in writing this chapter is our focus on dialogue and interpretation within narrative inquiry and the learning that ensues for researchers and participants. As we describe our varied research projects, you will see dialogue used in different ways and at different stages of the research, narrative as more or less at the center of the research, and collaboration more or less present.

We start with Marilyn's project; it was the beginning of our dialogues together. Later we will each describe what we learned about our own research through this dialogue and the ways we have redesigned, designed, or imagined our research in line with using a *dialogue in narrative inquiry* framework.

Marilyn's Project

In the first of our narrative study group meeting, I (Marilyn) shared with the doctoral student group a project I did over a 2-year period (Johnston-Parsons et al. 2007), and we discussed it at length. My own interest was to better understand how to bring a particular kind of *dialogue* into narrative inquiry and have it play an explicit and central role in the inquiry process. Using it as a contextualized narrative example, we focused on different stages of the research process and the ways in

which dialogue and interpretation were integral to the research. I could describe the outcome of our dialogue as re-storying my research narrative in light of this new framework—*dialogue in narrative inquiry*.

Marilyn's Collaborative and Narrative Interests

Throughout my teaching and research life, I have been drawn to collaborative contexts. I was hired as the teacher when a free school, parent cooperative was started in the 1960s in Salt Lake City. The Open Classroom is still a wonderful program, and a collaboratively written book was organized by Barbara Rogoff and two of the teachers includes narrative accounts describing program goals and history (Rogoff et al. 2001). After teaching there for 8 years and earning a PhD, I took a position at the University of Utah where I organized a collaborative venture with the local school district to do a “cooperative masters program.” Groups of teachers from three schools went through a 2-year program together. During this time, my research on professional development moved from doing research *on* teachers to doing it *with* them. When I moved to Ohio State some years later, I co-coordinated a school/university collaborative teacher education program, a Professional Development School, for 10 years and we collaboratively wrote narrative accounts of our work together (Johnston-Parsons and PDS Colleagues 2012; Johnston-Parsons et al. 2007).

I am drawn to collaborative inquiry because I am fascinated by what happens in democratic and dialogic contexts. I find both the process and outcomes fascinating for their complexity. After all these years, collaborative projects still keep me on a steep learning curve. I am continually intrigued with the relation of democracy and dialogue and more recently by the implications of the narrative structure of much of this dialogue. This was my beginning interest when we began our narrative study group. At the first meeting, I told them about my last collaborative project, which follows.

Marilyn's Research Example

In 2002, I was asked to provide an action research course for the teachers in a densely urban school close to my university. One of the teachers had been in a previous course and had convinced the teachers that a course would be a good use of their professional development time. The first night in this “class” with about 18 teachers sitting around a large table in their staff room proceeded in a typical way describing the syllabus and the broad outlines of action research. Then I asked them to each talk about some potential issues and interests they had related to their classrooms. For the next 2 h, I listened to a wide variety of rich stories about their classrooms. Soon they were talking to each other, not to me. It was clear that they were used to talking with

each other about important topics. As their narratives unfolded, other teachers jumped in to extend and connect their stories. They knew each other's students and there were complex family and community connections. The narratives moved back and forth between their classrooms, the school, and the larger conflicts in the school district reflecting pressures from national testing policies.

I drove home from this "class" speculating about how to change the syllabus to accommodate these rich narratives. I made significant changes but even these melted away as the narratives continued making course requirements seem superfluous. Whenever we met, there were more stories, both compelling and developing. Individual stories were told and everyone learned from them. Sometimes there were proposals about how to solve a problem with a particular child, but more often there were lots of issues to discuss. I saw my role as asking questions, suggesting potential data collection to seek answers to the questions, and probing for themes and bigger issues. The teachers interviewed others in the school to get their perspectives, collected surveys, and conducted interviews with students to better understand their perspectives, but mostly there was continued dialogue about teaching and about policy impositions on the school. This process required the ongoing construction of interpretations as we tried to make sense of the data we were collecting as well as our continuing individual and group narratives.

This school had a strong sense of community. Teachers talked to each other in the hallway, in the teachers' room, and after school. Their talk was often in narrative form as they described their students and ways to better help them and their families. There was no deficit thinking here; they were focused on creating successful learners and sustaining a strong sense of community in the school and with families.

Many of the teachers' stories focused on a recent policy developed by the school district, which was intended to produce higher reading test results in the district. The program was scripted and rigid. A couple of the teachers had been invited to help create this curriculum during the previous summer. After they found out about the constraints of what they were to develop, they resigned. Nevertheless, other teachers and district personnel put a curriculum together that appeared in the fall in large notebooks and contained disjointed lessons. There was a schedule indicating lessons to be taught at particular times at each grade level. Timers sat on teachers' desks and there were unscheduled observations by district officials, whom the teachers nicknamed the "police." Quick messages circulated across the school whenever they were sighted in the building.

The stories slowly became more complex and varied as our dialogue continued. Interpretations differed and stimulated more dialogue. We started looking for common themes as well as unique aspects in the narratives. Each week the teachers came with more stories to share, which now were written and then shared. Stories were rewritten to reflect what was learned from the dialogue. While we used more analytic systematic approaches to code our interview data and catalogue the narratives, *dialogue* and *interpretations* permeated every step of the way. We inquired into teaching practices and the influence of oppressive policies that crept into classrooms like an invisible wet blanket. Policies were subverting the very

practices teachers had worked for years to perfect. They felt that they had honed effective pedagogies to teach children to read, to integrate the arts into their curriculum, and to build culturally relevant curriculum in their classrooms; much of this was smothered by the new mandates and timers.

In the process of this extended dialogue, newer teachers were apprenticed into the school culture and given narratives from which to begin to construct their professional lives. In the beginning they mostly listened and asked questions. Their stories came eventually as they gained confidence and trusted that it was safe to describe both successes and failures within the group. The seasoned teachers were describing ways they felt de-professionalized, policed, and restricted by policies outside their classrooms; they were both angry and quietly subversive. Some of the newer teachers did not object to the structure and requirements in the same way, as it provided guidance and security for them. The differences in perspectives were critical to dialogue and learning within the group.

As the stories developed in richness and diversity, I broached the subject of writing a book. They were initially quite incredulous but the idea sat waiting as we continued developing our stories. By the end of the official course period, we had accumulated many pieces of narrative with various analyses and data to support them. A majority of the group decided to continue to meet, without course credit. We were now talking explicitly about a book and that increased a sense of focus. What would this book be about? Did our narratives hold together? What were they about as a whole?

Many of the issues we discussed had political implications. One was the political implication of publishing these stories. Would the teachers get in trouble in the school district? Did anyone else know that we were writing this book? Could they get fired? Would it matter if they did? Would the teachers' union support them? The dialogue around these personal and political issues was rich and diverse. We were aware that different audiences could interpret our narratives in different ways. We proceeded with the book-writing project while the political threats swam below the surface. Only occasionally was there serious consideration about abandoning the project.

I had known from the first week's meeting that the teachers were attentive to the larger issues of schooling. The school was labeled a "failing school," as measured by standardized test scores; from the teachers' point of view, this label did not reflect the difficulties of their students' lives, their successful learning, nor what they considered important in their teaching. They were cognizant of the pressures put on the principal by the school district, a principal they greatly admired. They also recognized the pressures of national policies that were bearing down on district administrators. In this hierarchy, they felt voiceless and disempowered.

One result of the dialogue within this narrative inquiry was determination and focus; it did not vanquish the fears or the differences, but I saw clear evidence that they were learning from their experiences, becoming more sharply critical as they worked together, and they were creating a strong sense of identity related to producing this book.

My role within the group shifted as the dialogue took different directions. Sometimes I felt like an insider and other times excluded. I tried to ask questions, to provoke critical thinking, and to encourage those who were more reticent to

share. I was a resource for their questions about research methods, I offered them ways to justify narrative as “real research,” and I suggested new issues to consider. They doubted that they had anything to say that would be of any interest to others. As an outsider, and situated as an “expert from the university,” I assured them they did. Many were skeptical.

In the end we gathered the narrative accounts together in a book. We called it *Success Stories from a Failing School*. But the *successes* were short lived. The principal, who had nurtured the collegial spirit among the teachers and the school’s close ties with the community, was transferred to a new school just as the book was about to be completed. Families and teachers were devastated by the news, which arrived 5 days before the end of school. Was he transferred because the teachers didn’t implement the curriculum as prescribed? Probably not, but they wondered. Was he transferred because he did a good job and his skills were needed in a less “successful” school? No one knew.

A year later, the school itself was closed, part of a series of school closings as student numbers dwindled in the city. The teachers, rather than being transferred to the nearby school where most of the children would be attending, were obliged to apply for new jobs across the district. Only a few were interviewed for the transfer school. This completed the breakup of the community; relationships between school and families were lost in the shuffle.

We still get together when I am in town. I now teach at a different university. We’ve all moved to new places and we talk about how our lives have changed as we’ve moved. Around dinner and glasses of wine we slide easily into a continuing dialogue about schools and politics. Many issues continue, as others things change. In a recent email, one of the teacher authors wrote:

Things are different, yet the same in [the school district]; now we’re being encouraged, at least in my [special education] feeder patten, to teach through projects—even better, service projects! How the pendulum swings! It seems to me however that we’re still treated as though teachers don’t know anything, and we’re not given the resources we need to accomplish the desired results (email, 1/22/12).

The narratives continue, as do our storied lives (Clandinin and Connelly 2004).

The Doctoral Student Research Projects

As our narrative study group continued to dialogue about *dialogue in narrative inquiry*, we examined each of the doctoral students’ research projects. Some had been designed as narrative inquiry and others had used interviews to collect their data. The latter studies led to discussions of when interviews turned into dialogue and when not. We had a rich dialogue about how each of these projects might become more fully dialogic and how that would change them.

This dialogue included issues of interpretation. We wondered whether dialogue in narrative inquiry required more interpretation than a more formal interview study

where questions are set ahead of time and the interviewer does not interject his/her own experiences. We were aware of the continual interpretive demands of our own dialogue; we were thinking hard about each other's perspectives and both agreeing and disagreeing with them. This was more than passive participation or listening to Marilyn. We've concluded that democratic and dialogic modes carry heavy demands for continual interpretation. Of course, interpretation takes place whenever we are talking, reading, or thinking, but our understanding of dialogue in narrative inquiry required attention to interpretation in a pervasive way.

Initially we had a tendency to think "the more dialogue and collaboration the better." But we now want to dispel this expectation. Dialogue throughout a project is not always possible, especially as we begin a research project or when we choose to step away from a dissertation project to do data analysis and writing. Likewise, collaboration throughout the entire inquiry project is not always possible. Our participants may not sustain an interest in our research questions, they may tire of the demands of continued collaboration, or they may not have the institutional rewards that propel those of us at universities to continue our research. In addition, doctoral students must demonstrate that they can do research, which may be questioned if everything they do is collaborative. This may limit what is learned but we cannot always control institutional expectations for degree-bearing work. Our dialogue around the writing of this chapter included discussions of these issues.

Wendi's Research Story

It was a usual weekend for me. Two of my good friends and I were sitting comfortably in a restaurant with dim lights and soft music. Although the restaurant was about to close, we did not feel like leaving. We had started the meal with random chatting but ended up in an intense dialogue about whether to return to China after we completed our studies. The husband and the wife held different positions and I was undecided. We discussed the pros and cons and different factors to consider. During the conversation we stated our opinions, challenged each other, compared, paused, and rephrased. I learned through this dialogue that it is not only concrete factors that influence people's decisions, but also one's values and sense of worth. We left feeling we had a more complex understanding of each other and the issues.

At that time, I had just finished collecting data for my pilot project on expatriate faculty's experience on returning to China, which included one question about motivations for returning. The interviews were conducted in a traditional way, with the interviewees doing most of the talking and me trying not to intervene. My conversations with my friends and our narrative study group have led inspired me to consider using dialogue and narrative for my dissertation.

My research will explore the living experiences of Chinese junior faculty in their cross-cultural journeys home after studying in the USA. In a dialogue, the researcher and participants together identify the issues, tell their separate stories,

challenge each other, and negotiate meanings. The research creates a space for open discourse where learning for both the researcher and participants takes place. For example, if reverse culture shock comes up as an issue for one of the expatriate junior faculty, we would continue a dialogue to explore this issue more deeply. My participants and I would compare our experiences from multiple perspectives, challenge our assumptions, and construct individual and collaborative interpretations, and new issues would surface. This process creates an ecological cycle where collaborative and reciprocal learning takes place in a social learning environment. It would be similar to the dinner dialogue I had with my friends discussed earlier.

Yun-Sun's Research Narrative

From my field notes, February 15th:

It was a cold late afternoon in mid-February. I arrived at a local coffee shop early to reserve a table for us. As I finished ordering a cup of coffee, a middle-aged Asian woman and two young children came into the coffee shop. I assumed they were the ones, so I approached them and we introduced each other in Korean. We sat at the table and started a conversation about my study. I gave the children a piece of paper and pencils so they could occupy themselves.

After we finished the conversation, I saw what Alice had written on her paper. She had scribbled alphabet letters, and interestingly, she copied what I had written on my paper. Although she did not spell all the words correctly, the letters looked very similar to my handwriting. It was an unexpected and delightful moment for me. I felt like the 8-week journey I was about to take with this lovely bilingual family would be a pleasant one.

My study was on the language development of two Korean emergent bilingual children, focusing on their home literacy environment. Andy, age 10, and Alice, age 7, were native South Koreans who spoke Korean (L1) primarily at home. Alice especially showed a high level of writing ability. They had had formal English (L2) instruction in Korea before they started public education in the USA. The children's mother, the key participant in my study, had a doctoral degree in crop sciences and was working as a university research fellow.

I did observations three times a week. I wrote field notes, audio-recorded data, and collected the children's written materials. I conducted the interviews in Korean with both the mother and children, to establish rapport (Patton 1990).

I used typical semi-structured interview questions about the mother's support for L2 learning and the children's linguistic and academic background. Her responses were typically told as stories about her family and children but I did not reciprocate with my own stories.

Our first two interviews went as planned. The mother answered the questions willingly. Her answers were focused yet not elaborated. During our third interview, the mother was more engaged, especially when we talked about topics such as "early study abroad" and English education policies in Korea. Unlike the previous interviews, she asked me many questions about US English as a second language (ESL) programs and how to promote her children's L2 learning. We enjoyed sharing both our stories and compared our perspectives. Although it was not my

intention, the interview became a dialogue where we were working to understand our different perspectives. The remaining interviews followed in this “dialogic” way. When I analyzed my data, I saw mutual learning taking place.

In talking about dialogue in narrative inquiry in our study group, we discussed different cultural perspectives related to dialogue. East Asian countries are typically hierarchical societies. When I began my research, I was concerned about issues of age, gender, and social class. I was much younger than the children’s mother and the mother was a coworker with my fiancé. I worried that I would not be able to talk openly about certain matters because it would be considered impolite based on Korean cultural norms. However, there was a significant range of topics we could talk about when we moved from an interview to a dialogue.

As a doctoral student, this home literacy project and the experience of using dialogue in narrative inquiry pushed me to think deeply about the type of research methodology I will use to frame my future dissertation. I am also wondering about how dialogue can be nurtured within rather hierarchical Korean norms.

Daniel’s Research Story

Perhaps we can say one other thing: any story one may tell about anything is better understood by considering other possible ways in which it can be told.

(Bruner 1987/2004, p. 709)

As Clandinin and Connelly have pointed out, “as researchers, we come to each new field living our stories” (2004, pp. 63–64). In the midst of my academic worries, carrying my own stories, I met some beginning history teachers and asked them for their life stories. We shared our stories while studying at a public university in Santiago, Chile. I had come there 2 years before to get my master’s degree in curriculum studies. The stories would form part of my master’s thesis, which focused on the process of becoming a teacher and which I titled *Beginning Teachers’ Identity and Teacher Education: A Biographical-Narrative Approach*.

I wanted to look at the process of learning to be a teacher as a “complicated conversation” about our educational experience, a *currere* (Pinar 2009). I used biographical narratives to gain access to their experiences. However, it was not until we talked about dialogue in our narrative study group that the relationship between dialogue as a method of inquiry and the concept of teacher education curriculum as a “complicated conversation” became evident.

In our conversations I heard things like: “I never thought of that before, but now as we are talking . . .” This showed me how our dialogue involved self-discovery and meaning production for both of us. The storytelling was creating new meanings for the teller and the listener. Our dialogue was more than a “field text” to be interpreted later on; it became a moment of interpretation for both of us. The story told to me was also a story retold for them. Our dialogue became a stop in the participant’s life, a moment in which self-reflection took place by asking and being

asked. It was not just a one-way road; “life history . . . involves conversation and narrative exchanges between two people engaging in a collaborative process of reflexivity and meaning making” (Goodson and Gill 2011, p. 44).

In the midst of those dialogues, I became aware of how important listening to stories had always been in my life. Other people’s narratives were a way of learning to understand my life and the world. These beginning teachers’ stories had become part of my research. We “shared, discussed and tested” (Goodson and Gill 2011, p. 44) our life stories together. My own beginning teacher story was reflected in these beginning teachers’ stories and this led me to question my own understandings about becoming a teacher. I was thinking in the midst of these encounters, in the midst of my story, and in the midst of their stories. In this in-between land, our dialogue became an epistemological place where lived experience came back to life, transforming both the teller and the listener, and being transformed in the exercise of its telling.

To complete my thesis, I analyzed the data by coding it, building categories, and articulating the relations between them, in short, by reducing the data. This missed an important part, the *narrative* of each teacher’s story. So I included a second analysis that I called “narrative.” To justify this, I followed Bruner’s distinction between paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought that I had found in a paper by Bolivar (2002). The result was a reconstructed text that combined the narratives and my interpretations of them. I kept in mind Goodson and Gill’s idea of contextualizing the story in wider social issues, which is the difference between life story and life history. However, I felt uncomfortable taking the teachers’ narratives and putting them in my voice as the interpreter. Certainly, the narratives were there; but the dialogue between us was missing. A decision to frame my research as *dialogue in narrative inquiry* would have required that our dialogue be part of the final text.

Sari’s Research Narrative

What’s your story? We asked.

She told. He told. We retold.

Mine? Yours? We are all in the sea of storied lives.

I am from Indonesia, a doctoral student specializing in teacher education. In 2009, I did my master’s research on Indonesian teachers’ perceptions of the Indonesian government’s mandate for a decentralized and competence-based curriculum. I surveyed 62 Indonesian teachers of English from private and public schools and interviewed 8 of them.

Teachers’ responses to the survey and interviews were all supportive of the reform. This puzzled me. As an Indonesian and a teacher, I suspected that politics and culture were influencing these responses. Our Indonesian educational system had been heavily centralized for 59 years prior to the decentralization shift in 2004.

In this centralized system, teachers, as civil servants, were expected to support the government's agenda. Perhaps teachers still felt that they "must" agree with a reform initiated by the government. They seemed cautious. Many of them asked me if I was an evaluator or teacher assessor. I talked to Marilyn about these issues and we decided that I should talk more with some of the teachers. To begin, I called several times just to say hello and to learn about their personal lives. Soon the teachers began to open up with me and trust me with their stories. The result was that almost all were critical of some parts of the reform, especially of the policies about standardized testing. For example, one teacher said:

The government initiates decentralization, but why is the evaluation of the students centralized? We cannot generalize the abilities of students from Sabang to Merauke! They need to reform this unfair standardized testing. Many teachers have requested the reform of the exam policy, but nothing changes if the people in power do not want to change it. (Interview with Prima)

Dialogue with my research participants made my interpretations more complex. The more I learned from the teachers' narratives, the more questions I had. This puzzlement, however, increased my criticality and helped me to better read the teachers' world (Freire 1970). In doing the initial interviews, I'd often bit my tongue trying not to influence the teachers with my opinions. I wanted them to tell me their own, "uninfluenced" stories. My follow-up conversations and of the discussions of the narrative study group have given me new possibilities to consider. For my dissertation research, I am now convinced that if I use dialogue as a medium to learn from the teachers' narratives, I will have a deeper learning experience. Perhaps it would increase the teachers' criticality as well.

In talking with the teachers, I will position myself as a dialogue partner. I will be an equal counterpart in reinventing their stories and mine. Having a more reciprocal dialogue will provide a conduit to increase our critical consciousness. Dialogue is the space where the teachers' voices are respected and valued, where *their narratives matter*.

My aim as a researcher is to grow from someone who only whispered thoughts quietly inside my head to someone, now in the USA, who is encouraged to state my thoughts openly. I want my research participants to believe that their voices—their struggles, puzzlement, and stories—matter. I want our dialogue about their narratives to become our shared story, a process in which we both learn to speak loudly and critically about our lives as educators.

Jason's Research Narrative

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy, Organization and Leadership and in the middle of doing my dissertation research. My colleagues in the student cohort are principals, associate superintendents, directors of curriculum and instruction, and other types of administrators. I maintain an insider/outsider

perspective in this research as a full-time doctoral student aspiring to work in the public schools as an administrator. As part of the program, I completed two internships in the same school district where I am doing my research, one as a principal and another as a superintendent. Both internships were enriching experiences; it was another opportunity to work closely with my classmates to better understand their role and contexts.

I chose to do a case study of one principal in this same school district for my dissertation research because I admire his passion and commitment to issues of social justice. Here I will call him “Robert.” He is supported by the goals of all levels of administration. The goal of the district is to provide more equitable outcomes for students of poverty and students of color. This level of support is unusual.

Our doctoral program promotes leadership for social justice and this influences many students. For example, Robert, a high school principal, said that his mission is to help his school community become more inclusive in light of the changing demographics. My own experience as a young child living in poverty and my critical orientation as a researcher have drawn me to study the complex nexus of sociopolitical forces, dialogue, and leadership for social justice in my case study.

Dialogue between Robert and myself is supported by our history of taking courses together and frequent social outings. He is a professional colleague and a good friend. There is undoubtedly trust and mutual respect that makes me comfortable raising sensitive issues of race and social class.

The primary focus of my research is to study how principals engage in dialogues with parents, students, and staff members to deconstruct assumptions about issues of race and social class.

To begin my research, I selected five complex cases found in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*. Each case describes an amalgam of sociopolitical forces, the marginalization of children of poverty and children of color, and the challenging decisions required of the principal. I asked Robert to respond in writing to the scenarios. I analyzed his written responses to develop a series of topics for dialogue in order to reconstruct my analysis and to capture his voice in my interpretations. Our dialogue flourished. We discussed stories about his leadership and school culture, the dialogue flowing comfortably because of our friendship. After an ample period of dialogue, I gathered the data and represented the complex vision of this principal to the best of my ability.

I close with a coda on my research. As in a musical composition, it is often the silence that speaks volumes; silence can be as important as the melody, harmony, and form. However, silence is often overlooked in dialogue. But in my experience the periods of silence in between our dialogue sessions were points of incubation and reflection, in which I deconstructed and reconstructed ideas and thought of more follow-up questions. One of my discoveries is that dialogue is not the process of one 45-min session. Rather, it is the whole process of analyzing texts, continuing to build richer interpretations together through dialogue, and taking time to reflect, reassess findings, and continuing to question.

The Reasons for Choosing Our Approach

We chose to focus on *dialogue in narrative inquiry* because we found it to be a powerful way to learn and do research. The dialogue to construct this chapter nurtured our own learning and research.

Narratives are a frequent format for talking to others. We structure our lives as teachers and researchers within educational contexts in narrative modes. There are many ways to use narrative in research, but there is not much explicit analysis of the role of dialogue in narrative research contexts. Dialogue is a strong focus in other areas of inquiry, for example, in discussions of pedagogy (Burbules 1993; Goodson and Gill 2011), in theology, (Barnes 2002; Buber 2000; Swindler and Cobb 1990), and in psychotherapy (Bohm 1992; White 2007). The argument here is that we can learn much from promoting dialogue that pushes us to think more deeply about the stories we tell individually and collectively.

One characteristic of dialogue is that it is *not* dominated by the need to solve practical problems. Of course, there are plenty of “practical problems” related to teaching and learning and what is learned through dialogue may have implications for actions. In dialogue, however, the process looks more like inquiry than problem solving, a search for learning rather than solutions. The questions are usually more complex and there is a sense that important issues are at hand. There is less focus on the needs of practice and more on voicing doubts, probing issues, examining assumptions, reflecting on learning, and periodically, studying the group’s interactions. Narratives are often a part of dialogue and discussing the issues that arise from the narratives can push the group in many directions and offer different possibilities.

Peter Senge (1990) claims that dialogue and discussion are quite different. The purpose of discussion is to have one’s views accepted by the group, while “the purpose of dialogue is to go beyond any one individual’s understanding ... In dialogue, individuals gain insights that simply could not be achieved individually” (p. 241). In a dialogue, according to Senge, we become observers of our own thinking. Participants must “suspend” their assumptions, literally to hold them “as if suspended before us” (quoted in Senge 1990, p. 243). Senge argues that in order to suspend our assumptions, we must not only be aware of our assumptions, but we must also be aware that “our views are based on assumptions, rather than incontrovertible fact” (p. 243). Dialogue helps participants to see their assumptions as different from others and malleable; both of these help build an awareness of how we all construct, and can change, the implicit ideas we have assimilated from social contexts.

The Role of Interpretation

In this final section on the role of interpretation in our method, we make three claims that are evident in our approach. First, that narrative is inseparable from interpretation. Second, that the interaction between storyteller and researcher requires interpretation. And, third, that dialogue, as we have defined it, leads to

the reconstruction and reconceptualization of our methods and interpretations. The first is a broad understanding that applies to narrative in general, the second describes some aspects of interpretation related to our particular approach to using dialogue in narrative inquiry, and the third is the claim that this kind of dialogue in narrative inquiry is a learning process that leads to change, and thus a process steeped in interpretation.

Narrative as Interpretation

First, we see narrative as inseparable from interpretation. At the deepest level, narratives are told in words. If narratives are told in pictures, dance, or mime, the interpretive need is even more obvious, but the construction of meanings, requiring language, proceeds in the same way. We think and speak through language and that itself is an interpretive act. Postmodern views speak of how meanings constructed through language are continually in flux and must be continually interrogated. Interpretations evolve within a fluid process where individuals interact to create shared meanings and differences emerge that requires further interpretation. In this dialogic process, meanings are constantly adjusted and assumptions (what Gadamer calls “fore-projections”) are challenged. Gadamer (1989) writes:

Every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the universe of meaning is; interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the moment of understanding and interpretation. (Quoted in Goodson and Gill 2011, p. 75)

But language can also distort and mislead, often without intent to mislead. In a post-structuralist world, we cannot assume that language is transparent, a carrier of direct reference and clear meanings. There are issues of power, gender, culture, and norms that influence the use and interpretation of language (Weedon 1987; Butler 1990). Our interpretations are directed by these influences and in ways we may not always recognize. As we reflect on these, we come to see the cultural and personal shaping of our perspectives. Interpreting these influences on our storytelling often raise issues of social justice. Whose rights are to be considered, who is being disenfranchised by our inquiry, who is silenced in the dialogue, and what are the most socially justice ways to proceed with our research (Griffiths 1998)? Debates about these issues are highly interpretive and challenging to negotiate.

Teller and Listener as Interpreters

Second, as interpretation is inseparable from narrative, so is the interaction between teller and listener, or storyteller and researcher, a thoroughly dialogic and interpretive task. As we tell our stories, others listen. As we listen, we try to understand.

Using dialogue means that both the narrative telling and listening are negotiated; these are interpretive tasks throughout.

We initially talked a lot about dialogue within a group of storytellers (Marilyn's research example). Our engagement in the power of stories and the ease with which we seem to understand what is being said can mask the complexities of interpretation in a postmodern world. These cautions require us to be vigilant, to keep the dialogue open and fluid; they suggest we probe deeply and listen carefully, critique our interpretations, and acknowledge the uncertainty of what we seem to know. It also required a certain degree of trust in the group to accept our stories as gifts to be shared even when our interpretations of them differ. It also requires that we acknowledge the cultural influences on our storytelling and listening, watching that these differences are not used to silence some in favor of more comfortable stories and easier interpretations.

An important aspect of dialogue is difference and contradiction. Sorting these out is food for interpretation. Bakhtin (1981) asserts that a kind of enduring internal dialogized learning develops from contradictions. "A dialogized word can never be *zaverseno* (completed). The resonance or oscillation of possible meanings within it is not only not resolved (*nezaversenno*), but must increase in complexity as it continues to live" (Bakhtin, p. 426). This "continuing to live" is the interpretive process of dialogue within narrative contexts.

Often participants in this kind of dialogue feel more confused than they do comforted. It is not easy to have your ideas challenged and basic assumptions called into questions as we make decisions about how to tell our stories to others. Added to this is the postmodern suggestion that confusion, complexity, contradiction, and fluidity are inherent aspects of language and interpretation. This leads to the further claim that all stories are partial and re-tellable. As we create our identities in storytelling, we could as easily tell a story about other possible identities.

Not everything that is said is clear; not everyone agrees. Interpreting ourselves through these confusions can be either frustrating or compelling, or both, but overall we are constructing meanings and learning. Ideas and positions constructed within the group dialogue are not necessarily reflective of any one person's thinking but a melding of ideas, interpreted by individuals. Gadamer (1984) calls this the "fusion of horizon." Yet, the main characteristic of the dialogue is learning. When dialogue occurs, there is a sense that we have learned something important, even as we hold to postmodern cautions about fluidity, difference, and caution.

Proceeding with caution is not the same as despair. It would be easy to slide into relativistic hopelessness within postmodern theorizing, but this is too easy. We continue to experience life, make choices, and construct meanings, however dire the postmodern musings. Dewey (1938) long ago argued for the importance of experience. He focused on experience over outcomes and aims over answers. Dialogue and interpretation are tools for sorting out our experiences. It is in the experience that we construct meanings and learn. We are thus locked in a paradox where we must proceed as if we can truthfully tell each other stories and interpret them as listeners, even as we acknowledge the "partial" truths in narrative (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and the slipperiness of meanings within a post-structural world (Britzman 1991; Lather 1996).

Dialogue Leads to Reconstruction and Reconceptualization

Third, the dialogic process we have described aims to use narrative inquiry as a process to reconstruct and reconceptualize our methods and our interpretations. As a group talking about our individual research projects, we had a shared interest in narrative inquiry, and, over several months of regular meetings, we used dialogue both to re-story the way we thought about a particular methodological approach and to reconstruct our individual research projects. This was both a theoretical and methodological project that involved a particular approach to *dialogue in narrative inquiry* that was necessarily highly interpretation throughout.

The process of reconstructing and re-storying narratives through inquiry is frequently described in the literature (Clandinin and Connelly 2004; Goodson and Gill 2011). Our focus was on what it was like in the process of this re-storying and what might facilitate learning during this process. Dialogue, as we describe here, is a process that promotes learning—it is a process that challenges, examines, critiques, and compares our narratives in ways that surfaces new perspectives. It involves more than asking questions and listening well. It is meant to be interruptive and designed to promote reconstruction of ideas and methods. These purposes make it a highly interpretive process.

What we individually learned about our narrative aims and research methodologies was reconstructed through dialogue within our group; this led to new ways to think about the process of dialogue in narrative inquiry as well as new methods to make our research more thoroughly narrative. We reconstructed what dialogue was like in this kind of narrative, investigative framework. The claims we make about this approach to dialogue in narrative inquiry acknowledge both our genuine desire to understand this method and the complexity and fluidity of our interpretations. In the process we became clearer about a particular slant on dialogue, the central role of interpretation in narrative inquiry, and ways that dialogue in narrative inquiry as a method might enrich the process of learning.

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1.5 Narrative and the Transmission of Traditions: Informal Learning Among Italian Artisan Stone Carvers

Amy Shuman

Narratives are one of the ways people pass on knowledge and express their understandings of the meaning and value of their experiences; narrative is always more than information, always more than an account of what happened. To understand narrative as a process of performance and transmission, this chapter focuses on both the poetics of how a story is put together and on the social conventions for telling and listening.

Narrative Inquiry

Many of the assumptions made about narrative are best understood as questions, for example: Is it the case that the moment is remembered more easily in narrative form? Does telling the experience as a narrative provide more impact and call attention to the significance of what happened? Or do narratives provide an available form for us to make sense out of our experiences? These questions are difficult to answer, but we can begin to address them by observing how narrative works in social interaction.

Studying narrative interaction means studying narrative as part of communication, not only between tellers and listeners in a particular social context but also as one of many available resources for communication. People have a variety of forms (or genres) of communication, including, arguing, making lists, telling jokes, providing instructions, and singing; narrative is one among many genres. Narrative most often occurs in occasions that also include other genres, so, for

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example, a narrative might be part of a speech, a ceremony, a meeting with a friend, or part of learning situations. Conversational narrative is one form of narrative interaction. Not all conversational narrative research considers the questions of memory and larger historical events relevant to oral history. Similarly, not all oral history research considers the interactional settings in which the narratives are collected. My work, utilizing informal interviewing in a conversational setting, addresses narrative interaction by attending to how the narrators position themselves with regard to both the immediate context and the larger historical context. I combine the approaches developed in narrative interaction and oral history. This combined approach affords the possibility of considering how people remember and relate events from the past not only by identifying *what* they talk about, the themes and topics, but also *how* they narrate, including the cultural conventions for reporting on events, for displaying certainty and uncertainty, and for appealing to various authorities for credibility (Norrick 2005; Cashman 2012, pp. 181–185).

My methodology begins with two fundamental endeavors. First, I collect narratives as part of social interactions, and even when I use interview techniques, I attempt to ask questions as part of the flow of conversation. I always record the conversations and then transcribe the recordings. When possible I also do video recording; when not, I supplement the audio recordings with notes about nonverbal communication. Second, I undertake an ethnography of communication in the community to better understand the varieties, resources, registers, norms, and genres of interaction. In this chapter about a community of artisan stone carvers in Italy, I describe methods for studying personal narratives told by artisans and foreign sculptors about particular experiences, community narratives told by the artisans about historical changes, and explanatory/historical narratives told by local historians. I suggest that these narratives work dialogically, producing intersecting and different understandings. Rather than mine narratives for information, I explore how narratives can contribute to a more complex understanding of how knowledge circulates and how narrators position themselves and the community within ongoing negotiated understandings of their experiences and practices. Thus, my goal is not to identify a narrative and then determine the relevant context for understanding it. Instead, I attempt to understand the conditions in which narratives are produced as part of interactions. I will first review some of the history of this approach to narrative research and then turn to my study of the artisans' narratives.

Conversational Narrative Research

Conversational narrative study grew out of conversational analysis, an approach to the study of everyday life initiated by sociolinguists Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson in the 1960s (Silverman 1998). Sacks and Schegloff were students of Erving Goffman, who observed how people manage ordinary social encounters (Goffman 1959). The key factor in this approach is the study of

interaction rather than the analysis of texts.¹ The goal of studying conversation, or related informal modes of communication, was to understand how social relationships are negotiated. In contrast to how sociologists study and categorize behavior, often as deviant, conversational analysts have been interested in more microanalyses of, for example, how people manage social hierarchies in a particular social interaction. Whenever possible, conversational analysts take into consideration not just the audible features of talk but also the visual and other sensory dimensions of gesture and the uses of spaces, technologies, and other environmental aspects of interaction. People involved in an interaction are often not consciously aware of the features that conversational analysts observe, and at the same time, in interaction, people demonstrate extraordinary competence of both the ability to use and understand others' use of these features. For example, people know how to take the floor for a longer turn at talk, necessary for telling a story, and listeners know that a speaker has done this. Over the past decades, conversational analysts have established a large body of scholarship that identifies some of the most familiar features of interaction (Schiffrin 1990).

Like conversational analysis, conversational narrative research focuses on interaction and attempts to identify some of the fundamental features, usually culturally specific, that speakers and listeners use in interaction (Ochs and Capps 2001). Some of these are (a) the development of a story by combining a series of events with evaluative comments that orient the listener by providing background information and that tell the listener what the narrator considers to be important or meaningful about the events (Labov 1972); (b) the use of reported speech to refer to multiple voices (Tannen 1989; Shuman 1986, 2005); (c) the negotiation of the positions of the narrator, listeners, and people in the story in relation to each other and to the events (Bamberg 1997; De Fina 2000; Mishler 1999); and (d) understanding the narrative within the larger framework of an ethnography of communication, including the repertoires, genres, norms of interaction, and registers that play a role in interaction (Gumperz and Hymes 1972).

Conversational narrative analysis is a method for studying narrative in interaction. By attending to the structural dimensions of the narrative itself and to the structural features of interaction, this method can be helpful for understanding how people use narrative to make meaning out of the situations they confront in their everyday lives. At the same time, this method can help to identify where narrative breaks down, that is, where narrative is sometimes insufficient to account for events, especially traumatic and horrifying events.

Oral History and Life History Narrative Research

Conversational narrative overlaps with other areas of narrative study, especially narratives told informally, for example, oral history and life history narrative. As oral historian Ronald Grele (1985) wrote, "People have always told their histories

¹ Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman discuss the process researchers use to create texts out of the flow of interaction as "entextualization," "decontextualization," and recontextualization" (1990).

in conversation” (p. xv). Oral history began with an interest in establishing archives and augmenting historical records with the testimonies of people who experienced or witnessed events. In the past few decades, oral history scholars have become increasingly interested in how people narrate and in the relationship between narrative and memory. Alessandro Portelli (2009) defines oral history as

a work of relationships; in the first place, a relationship between the past and the present, an effort to establish, through memory and narrative, what the past means to the present; then a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and between the oral form of the narrative and the written or audiovisual form of the historian’s product. (p. 21)

Dialogic Narrative

Narrative scholarship today occurs in somewhat segregated disciplinary fields, each with its own history. In my work, I attempt to work at the intersection of the (a) sociolinguistic approach, which combines conversational analysis and the ethnography of communication; (b) the literary narrative approach built on the work of the Russian formalists who were, like the sociolinguists, interested in the structure of narrative; (c) folkloristic approaches that combine structural and ethnographic studies of narrative; and (d) studies of oral history, which have for the most part been more interested in how ordinary people describe their experiences than in either interaction or narrative form. The concept of dialogic narrative is one way to bring these approaches together. Dialogic narrative considers how people position themselves in relation to events and to each other by observing how stories (especially versions of accounts of a particular event) are in dialogue with each other.

Edward Bruner and Phyllis Gorfain (1984) describe dialogic narration as the process in which various tellings and interpretations either attempt to “fix meanings and stabilize order” or offer “challenging voices [that] question established meanings and tend to be deconstructive” resulting in “ongoing discourse that emerges from the exchange of authoritative tellings and, in turn, supports a historically situated debate over the interpretation and uses of the story” (p. 58).

To illustrate how this works, in this essay, I focus on the concept of tellability, which works at all levels of analysis. At the level of interaction, a narrator establishes tellability by framing the narrative as, for example, relevant to the conversation, newsworthy, or as a personal experience. Structurally, claims for tellability can be identified throughout the narrative. Using ethnographic observation, in a comparison of different people’s accounts of events, we can observe which accounts are available, which are dismissed, which are tellable in some circumstances but not others, which are dominant, and which ones critique the dominant understandings. I return to illustrations of tellability in the final section of the chapter.

The Research Project

I have studied conversational narratives in a variety of settings, from informal dinner table conversations to schools to a large-scale ethnography. For this chapter, I focus on my research among Italian artisans, a project that both integrates conversational narrative, oral history, and dialogic narration and that demonstrates how narrative research can be used to understand pedagogical practices.

Over a period of 30 years, I have documented the artisan stonemasons of Pietrasanta, Italy. The artisans have a centuries-long tradition of marble carving passed down from one generation to another. Pietrasanta, located at the base of the Carrara Mountains in Northwest Tuscany, became a center for marble carving in the eighteenth century when studios employing hundreds of artisans produced marble and bronze sculpture, marble altars, and other architectural features for the cathedrals of the New World. By the time I arrived in Pietrasanta, in 1982, there had been several significant changes. Foreign artists were engaging the artisans to produce abstract monumental marble sculptures, and although figurative carving continued, new clients in the Far East and Middle East had replaced the Catholic Church as a central patron.

I conducted all of my research in Italian, almost always with the assistance of a young artisan; I return to questions of methodology below, but by having an artisan present, I was able to reduce my outsider status. As a folklorist, I was interested in documenting how traditions change and how a community accounts for and documents collective memories. I observed artisans at work and did extensive background research on the community, but my primary means of research was the collection of narratives in open-ended informal interviews and conversations. My questions included: (1) how does a personal life history narrative become part of the collective memory of a community? (2) In other words, how does the personal, individual, story become an allegory for the community's past? (3) If the skills described are no longer practiced, how does the story transmit values about ways of acquiring knowledge? (4) What can these stories tell us about the relationships between form and value, that is, between narrative as a form and the meanings or significance they convey? (5) How can these examples be generalized to better understand the connections between form and value in life history narrative research?

Artisan educational practices, often involving face-to-face, generational transmission of information and requiring imitation and practice as primary methods of learning, are a significant but less frequently studied domain of educational ethnographic research (Glassie 1999; Mishler 1999). The pedagogical documents I collected include interviews about learning practices, stories about learning experiences, written manuals, and descriptions based on my ethnographic observation of tools, technologies, the circulation of knowledge, and differentiations in competency.

One dimension of my research on artisan educational practices focused on the interface between technology and pedagogy. Combining observation of artisans carving with conversations about how they learned to carve helped me to understand these complex connections. The interface is historically deep, including, Renaissance

artisan and writer Giorgio Vasari's accounts and centuries of descriptions of the technologies used to produce marble sculpture. Some of the interfaces between technologies and pedagogy are codified and others are less explicit. Pedagogies can direct practices and also can respond to innovations in technology. An example of pedagogy driving practice is the choice of particular foundational tasks in instruction. An example of pedagogy responding to technology is engaging young apprentices in menial tasks necessary for the operation of a tool and incorporating their labor as a way of introducing them to the workplace. Interfaces between technology and pedagogy also contribute to and are inextricably connected to how knowledge circulates and how competency is assessed in the artisan workplace. Conversational narratives and life stories are part of that circulation.

Identifying a Dialogic Narrative

In addition to collecting the life stories of the artisans, I collected the many published and oral narratives about the history of the artisan community. Each of these narratives had a purpose and an audience, sometimes explicitly stated. For example, the artisan school published a history on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. Although the different narratives don't necessarily contradict each other, by highlighting particular historical moments, they posit different understandings of significant change in the community. Using the framework of dialogic narrative, my attempt has been to sustain the multiple voices of these different narratives rather than to collapse them into a summary. Importantly, a dialogic narrative can include individual life histories as one of the sustained voices in contrast to a model that might view the published historical narratives as bearing more weight or as serving as background or context. As I will discuss, this framework has consequences for considering what counts as knowledge and facts.

Narratives about artisan experiences intersect with many other narratives, both large historical narratives and other narratives of work and life. Identifying those narratives and understanding their intersections has been an ongoing part of my research. Part of my interpretive task was to decide where to begin my account and how to avoid telling a singular story that would undercut the multiple, dialogic voices that constitute the community's narratives. Not all of the narratives told in the community were conversational. For example, some were recorded in local history books, included in websites for tourists, told in ceremonies to honor or remember a community member, or included in my written ethnographic record, which includes conversational narrative but is itself not conversational.

In the written, non-conversational narratives, the most common starting point was the monumental geography of the region. This was literally the most imposing place to start given the location of the artisan workshops, at the base of the Carrara Mountains, the source of what is arguably the finest white marble, as well as other marbles, for carving sculpture. Visually, the mountains, white with marble that makes them look snow-covered in the summer, are an obvious place to start.

Starting with place, or location, has been a mainstay of ethnographic research, but it belies the reality of how people, things, and ideas move, how the status of “insider” or local changes over time, and how places are not islands independent of interaction beyond their sometimes changing borders.

Pietrasanta is currently and always has been a place for the export of marble sculpture; it is not an isolated artisan town. Alternatively, my account could begin with how the livelihood of Pietrasanta’s artisans has depended on changing historical, political, and economic interactions. Indeed the community’s own story about itself, another very legitimate starting point, is the fact that Michelangelo went to Pietrasanta in 1515 where he opened up a road to one of the quarries to procure stone for the façade of the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Everyone in Pietrasanta knows this story; the road was built, but Michelangelo was called away by the Pope, and to this day, the Church of San Lorenzo does not have a façade. The politics driving that story, in particular rivalry between the Pope and the Florentine Medici family, are also part of the story of Pietrasanta, as are many other narratives about sovereignty, politics, landownership, and even (or perhaps especially), Roman Catholic policies about sculptures, altars, and the furnishing of churches and cathedrals.

In other words, Pietrasanta has many narratives that, for the most part, do not contradict each other, but not surprisingly, the artisans’ narrative life story narratives, told in conversation rather than in history books, have been obscured by the grand historical political narratives. Folklorists and oral historians long have argued that understanding the personal, ordinary, local narratives that people tell about their experiences is fundamental for understanding the complexity of larger events. More recently, postmodernists have critiqued the legitimacy of the “grand narratives,” which are, of necessity, produced and constrained by the discourses of particular cultural, political contexts, for example, Jean-François Lyotard’s (1984) attention to the *petit recits*, or local narratives told by ordinary people.

Discussions of the relationship between grand narratives and local narratives, or between the histories written by historians and the local histories documented by lay historians or collected by oral historians and folklorists, raise questions about the truth of narratives based on experience. The oral historian and folklorist Jan Vansina (1985) addressed these questions in his study of the veracity of histories recounted by African tribes that did not have written forms of documentation. Vansina observed that histories recounted in ceremonial moments, such as in the transfer of power from one leader to another, were shaped to legitimate the ascendancy of the new leader. This may not be so different than the written histories produced in literate communities in which, as many have observed, the victor controls the representation of what happened.

Walter Benjamin (1968) takes this point further in his argument, “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. . . . The state of exception in which we live is not the exception but the rule” (p. 278). Applying this argument to the ordinary stories told by artisans as part of their collective memories, deeply implicated in the larger historical narratives of wars, recessions, and politics, we could at the very least observe that people rarely see

their lives as exceptions; if we examine the conversational narratives told by people about their experiences, we find a very different configuration of the relationship between exception and rule. For example, for the artisans today, the earlier period extending from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries when dozens of studios made saints and sculptures for the cathedrals of the New World serves as a golden age, a “rule” with which to measure the departure or exception of today, when there is still plentiful work but few apprentices entering the trade. Benjamin is more particularly cautioning us against seeing Fascism as an exception, and his work provides a useful critique to the nostalgic narratives of a golden age.

These discussions create an awareness of the symbolic value of narrative or the ways that any narrative, personal or historical, can become an allegory for expressing a particular moral viewpoint (Shuman 2005). Hayden White (1987) points out that the moral dimension of narrative compromises claims to objectivity and makes it difficult if not impossible to determine what we mean by objective historical truth (p. 23).

As Roland Barthes (1970) argues, historical discourse is always about interpretation. “Historical discourse is essentially a product of ideology, or rather of imagination” (p. 153). Efforts to point to the “reality” of documented events point to what he calls “the *reality effect* . . . historical discourse does not follow reality, it only signifies it; it asserts at every moment: *this happened*, but the meaning conveyed is only that someone is making that assertion” (p. 154). Narratives about personal experience are also and in today’s climate perhaps even more open to uncritically claiming what Barthes refers to as “the prestige of *this happened*” (p. 154). Joan Scott (1991) has commented on how reports of personal experience can become taken-for-granted knowledge:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it) becomes the bedrock of evidence on which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one’s vision is structured—about language (or discourse and history)—are left aside. The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. (p. 777)

Different versions of an experience do not necessarily point to a lack of veracity in the narrator’s account. The idea that subjects are constituted does not mean that they are mere constructions, not based in reality, not suitable for providing evidence. To the contrary, Scott is suggesting that narrative provides more information, more evidence, accessible if we attend to the position of the narrator (and other subjects). In a sense, by offering more complex subjectivity, through understanding the position that the narrators and others occupy, narrative offers a more complex and more adequate kind of evidence. In the following discussion, I will consider how narrators position themselves in telling a familiar story about learning to be an artisan.

Positioning in the Artisans' Narratives

Each of the following three narratives positions the artisans slightly differently. In the first narrative, an elderly artisan describes his experiences as a not-so-responsible student. The second narrative, told by a foreign artist, describes similar experiences from the position of admiration for the patience required of the apprentices. The third narrative, told by a local historian, describes the historical apprenticeship experience as part of a rhythm of work belonging to an earlier epoch.

One of the core narratives told by artisans describes young artisans new to working in a studio who are assigned menial tasks such as sweeping up marble dust or sharpening tools before they were given any carving tasks. I heard these stories often, in response to different questions. In answer to my questions about how marble carving artisans learned their craft, I heard many narratives about experiences at the artisan school, about how the school was insufficient for giving one the proficiency necessary for working competently enough to earn a salary, and about learning as part of growing up in a studio.

Many foreign artists go to Pietrasanta, either to learn how to carve marble, to have their sculptures carved by the artisans, or a combination of both, in which they work alongside an artisan in the production of their work also tell a version of this story doing menial tasks before being given marble to carve. Fred X. Brownstein, an American sculptor who lived in Pietrasanta for more than a decade, told the following story. Fred embeds his own story, of his apprenticeship to a master carver, within the familiar narrative. He first noted that although the artisans completed many years of study at school, they still needed to start over and learn to carve when they went to work at a studio. Fred's narrative, describing the master artisan who taught him, is represented using conventional transcription methods that attempt to preserve some of the dimensions of oral communication. Capitalization indicates emphasis; question marks indicate rising intonation; each line break indicates a pause. Such transcription can be enormously useful for close examination of narrative. For example, sociolinguists have done extensive study of the use of "you know," as a discourse marker.

Fred: He had to start all over again.
 He said that
 Well he didn't know ANYthing.
 That the guys who worked in the studio
 The REAL Craftsmen?
 They didn't do it the way they did it in the school
 And they started from scratch
 And then he started talking about his experience in the laboratory
 In the Studio
 I had very similar experiences
 Except I wasn't quite
 But the same kind of thing where they made the guys
 They treated them really badly

You know
 Made them sweep up around
 You know
 The
 You Know
 They would say like
 “Boy!
 Chips!
 Sweep them up”
 You know.

Amy: Don't they do it to you too?

Fred: Well, no
 They didn't do that to me
 But I got other treatments
 And then they would take their tools
 And they would say
 You know
 “Sharpen the chisel
 They better be sharp
 And they better be done right
 Otherwise you're going to do them all over again”
 You know
 It's like we're fifteen years old
 And he has to sharpen
 I mean you know
 You do them on a stone by hand
 That's the way to do them
 And they just treated these guys that had been all through school
 And they were supposed to know how to do it
 You know

In this narrative, Brownstein positions himself as someone who is familiar with the experiences of the artisans; although his own experience was not exactly like that of the apprentice: “They didn't do that to me”, he “got other treatments.” Fred positions himself as learning the hard way, which is the only way, through years of practice. Things one might have learned in school are not helpful, and the apprentice has to be willing to “start over.”

It is important to point out that narratives about this form of apprenticeship refer to an earlier period. The apprentices were paid very little for their menial tasks, and today labor laws prevent a studio from continuing such practices. Narratives about how the artisans worked for very little money doing very menial tasks are intertwined with both narratives about the consequences of changes in labor law and narratives about the emerging middle class and its preference for white-collar jobs, rather than the labor-intensive artisan work.

The narratives about menial labor continue to be told and not only nostalgically, recalling earlier times. A local historian, Constantino Paolicchi (1981), perhaps the most knowledgeable historian of the area, told a version of the story that helped me to understand its greater significance. For the most part, the narratives I heard about performing menial tasks were told about working in marble carving studios. Paolicchi told his narrative as part of our conversation about the fact that in the 1980s when we spoke, there were many highly skilled already pensioned artisans who were not only still available to work but whose skill was prized and coveted, in comparison to very few apprentices. Paolicchi was talking generally about some of the complexities of transmitting the skills from one generation to the next, or, more precisely, the factors that contribute to the lack of transmission of skills to the next generation when he described how a young boy would first be introduced to the quarry. As in Brownstein's narrative, above, Paolicchi's narrative refers to doing menial skills such as carrying water, transporting wood, and monitoring the machine with the cutting wires, before working with marble. Paolicchi's narrative additionally describes this introduction into the workplace as a means of introducing a young worker to the flow of the workplace, the synergy of relations between workers with different skills, and the patience required to meet the demands of doing a job right.

Like Brownstein, Paolicchi is describing an earlier time. Before the advent of diamond-encrusted wires to cut blocks of stone in the quarries, there was a barrel filled with massive quantities of sand, and the wire would pass through the barrel and become coated with the sand. A young apprentice would monitor the barrel to be sure that the wire emerged sufficiently coated. (The following narrative is translated from the Italian, so the line breaks approximate those in the original language.)

The young people, but this is not only in the artistic arena.

Also the young people used to come [to work] in the quarries

Also one can say they were introduced/entrusted to the flow of the system of production

Also with modest roles

There was a type of synergy that was created between the skilled workers and the less skilled workers, the professional workers, the owner who, imagine, also worked a bit.

And the young person was introduced, maybe, began by bringing water, my father-in-law told me. He was a quarrier.

When he first stepped foot in the quarry, his task was to bring water from the fountain and bring it to the quarriers. As soon as he finished, the water needed to be replenished, so he went to the fountain, and that's how it went.

He did "il boccia insomma"[he passed] as we say in dialect.

Then slowly, slowly, he was inserted in the cycle.

The second stage was to bring wood to the men working the saws.

The third stage was to stay near the barrel of sand to monitor the helical cord.

And then he gradually became a quarrier.

This required patience on the part of the young people, a rhythm more than patience.

A rhythm that was part of the system that consented that the youth be included, slowly.

Also in the artistic realm, this rhythm of productivity doesn't exist now.

Paolicchi's larger point is to observe that the loss of the practice of having young people perform menial tasks has had consequences for what he calls "the rhythm of productivity." As in the stone carving studio, in the quarries, a young boy began with modest tasks. Importantly, the young boy not only learned some of the skills, he also became part of the rhythm of work. Needing to constantly replenish water has a rhythm, the same rhythm of more complex but constantly repeated tasks. The patience Paolicchi refers to is first of all the patience of doing menial tasks before being taught to do anything more interesting and second the patience that is part of artisan work. He observes that acquiring this patience was essential for the young boy's acceptance into the workplace. He is accepted into the rhythm of the work. The concluding coda, "this rhythm of productivity doesn't exist now," returns us to the present day. As William Labov (1972) and others, building on his work, have pointed out, the coda reveals or reinforces the meaning of the story. Its position serves as a link between the time of the story and the time of the storytelling event (p. 365).

Brownstein and Paolicchi both describe the menial tasks assigned to young artisans new to the studio or quarry, but the codas of the two narratives point to different, though not necessarily contradictory, meanings. Paolicchi's coda was: "This required patience on the part of the young people, a rhythm more than patience." This points to how the young apprentice learned patience and to his (Paolicchi's) larger concern about how the rhythm of the studio is changed without that process. Brownstein probably would not disagree with this, but his coda was:

And they just treated these guys that had been all through school
And they were supposed to know how to do it

This was about how an apprentice is treated as knowing nothing, even though he has completed the artisan school training. Further, Brownstein positions himself as someone who was similarly treated that way. Brownstein came to Pietrasanta as a young man and worked for years with one of the most skilled artisans of the area. He earned the respect of the artisans by being willing to accept this treatment, by being patient, observant, and hardworking. Very few foreign artists take this route, but Brownstein, a figurative sculptor, was invested in becoming as proficient as the artisans, using their methods, and following their traditions of learning.²

According to Paolicchi, the menial tasks were a small part of the larger goal of introducing the artisan to the workplace so that they became accustomed to the rhythms of the studio, learned to practice patience, and acquired skills of observation. In my interviews, many artisans described being given tasks such as sweeping the studio or other non-carving jobs. For example, before the introduction of electric drills, the artisans who worked on bas-relief used manually driven drills

² See also Peter Rockwell's extensive exploration of the artisan stonemasonry practices of the region (1993).

that required the assistance of one or two small boys who pulled the ropes that spun the gears. Ledo Tartarelli, one of the artisans who described this practice, pointed out that it had several advantages. The young apprentices had to watch the work closely to be able to moderate the speed of their pulling accurately, and through observation, they learned many of the techniques of bas-relief. Also, although Tartarelli long had become accustomed to the electric drill by the time I interviewed him, he noted that the electric drill had only three speeds, but the young apprentices could be trained to manage at least 12 different speeds, contributing to the precision of his work.

Narrative and the Transmission of Artisan Knowledge

Narratives about how young apprentices are assigned menial tasks intersect with other narratives, whether the larger political economic narratives of changes in labor law or the more localized narratives about the sensibilities that are particular to the artisan workshop. Thus, artists who have not engaged, as Brownstein has, in a form of apprenticeship, nonetheless position themselves in relation to the more general story of how one earns the respect of the artisans. In a conversation with Keara McMartin, the Dutch artist, Eppe de Haan recounts his many years of working in Studio Sem, one of the leading studios for abstract art:

I have built my relationships with Studio Sem artisans over more than a decade, and now we have developed a special communication that needs no words. We watch each other work and when they see that I can benefit from a new technique, they simply step up, suggest it could be done better and show me how. I think I have earned their ultimate respect because I am privileged to be loaned the special tools that the young artisans had inherited from their revered masters; that to me is a true badge of honor and respect that I am very proud of.

De Haan positions himself as an artist who not only benefits from but is respected by the artisans. He is not in the position of the young artisan waiting to deserve to be given a tool and a marble carving task but rather excerpts a part of the larger narrative about what artisans impart and, in this case, lend, and applies it to his situation.

In each of the narratives I have discussed above, the narrator positions himself in relation to the tradition of artisan stonemasonry. Narratives about artisans are, in turn, positioned in relation to several other narratives. For example, artisan narratives are, in part, about how knowledge circulates and is transmitted from one person or group to another. As part of my research I explored how artisan narratives intersect with narratives about cultural circulation more generally, including how knowledge circulates, how the things people make circulate, and how economies, politics, cultural practices, and social relations afford or constrain circulation.

Many scholars have studied how people learn and pass on their knowledge about making things. In a comparative study of potters in Bangladesh, Sweden, Georgia, Acoma, Turkey, Japan, and Hagi, Henry Glassie (1999) begins by describing the study of art as “the process of discovering through objects the values of their makers

and users” (p. 18). In other words, in our research on how people learn to make things, we cannot separate the how-to knowledge of how to make things from the values that are also part of an artist/artisan’s knowledge. He describes the goal of his comparative study of potters “to illustrate how common clay is made to carry value” (p. 19). Glassie’s book is about potters and the pots they make. It doesn’t tell us how potters learn what they know, but it does provide clues to understanding what we need to know before we ask questions about that knowledge. The book is a collection of narratives, mostly detailed profiles about the potters and how they think about and talk about their work. For example, the potter Hirohisa Tatebayashi says, “Among the potters, most pass their days in dull labor, but a few dedicate themselves to greatness and climb to the summit of their realm of endeavor, becoming equal to the greatest professor or noodle shop man or political leader.” Here the potter as laborer is positioned in relation to other workers, all capable of greatness.

The Pietrasanta artisans’ narratives do not address these questions of the status of the work. Instead, the stonecarvers describe an embodied knowledge, acquired from years of practice and requiring years of practice to continue. They describe particular dispositions towards patience, observation, and excellence.

The Pietrasanta artisans’ narratives contradict some of the widely held views about artisans. For example, Richard Sennett (2008) writes, “The greatest dilemma faced by the modern artisan-craftsman is the machine. Is it a friendly tool or an enemy replacing the work of the human hand?” (p. 81). The machine is not at all a dilemma for the artisans of Pietrasanta. Sennett’s excellent discussion of many dimensions of craftsmanship historically and in contemporary life does not include any narratives by craftsmen or craftswomen.

One goal of ethnographic narrative research is to identify the significant differentiations that operate in communities. Communities are not isolated entities with homogeneous worldviews, so part of the task is to understand the multiple overlapping, intersecting, sometimes conflicting differentiations, at multiple levels, conveyed through narrative. Conversational and life history narratives provide a useful tool for identifying these differentiations, especially if we understand narrative as itself part of a repertoire of ways of communicating ideas and performing relationships.

In Pietrasanta, any differentiation made between craft and art is not made in isolation from other differentiations, for example, between craft and kitsch. Until Vatican II, in 1962, the Catholic Church was the primary client for Pietrasanta’s flourishing studios producing copies of Renaissance, Classical, and Romantic art and images of saints. One of the decrees in Vatican II stated (to oversimplify) that churches should no longer spend money on purchasing marble and bronze sculptures of saints, and overnight, Pietrasanta lost its major client. Many studios went out of business; some were able to retain the business of making sculptures for cemeteries; others found new foreign clients. Some marble artisans applied their skills to the production of small onyx objects such as fruit, telephones, or ashtrays, a trade that still has remnants in the town today. The onyx objects, mostly referred to as trinkets or kitsch, were considered a waste of the artisans’ talents and a travesty compared to the revered trade of marble carving.

I found it useful to ask artisans to tell me about the onyx production because, by contrast, the discussion articulated the value of marble carving. Onyx does not come from the area and does not have the strong connection to the region that marble does. Onyx did not lead to stories about Michelangelo and the quarries, apprenticeship, or technical accomplishment, except by comparison. Onyx production was, in the eyes of the artisan, only about the marketplace and the conspicuous consumption of goods. The artisans of Pietrasanta are well known for their reproductions of Renaissance work, especially Michelangelo's *David*, and they regard the reproduction, in marble, of monumental works, to be entirely different than the mass production of copies. This was, for them a crucial differentiation that challenges some and complements other conceptualizations of art and craft.

The artisan narratives of Pietrasanta provide a counter-narrative to the idea that technology has displaced artisan work. The artisan's counter-narrative to Sennet's argument is that the technology or machine narrative is over-simplified. The machine does not present a "dilemma" but instead represents an ongoing and changing relationship, part of the symbiosis at the heart of the artisan studio, rather than an intervening outside force. Not all of the artisans' local, experiential narratives are counter-narratives. Instead, many support dominant narratives. The personal can serve as a counter-narrative by insisting on the validity of experience against overgeneralized claims. However, as I suggested above, claims to experiential knowledge are not necessarily more valid.

My research on the narratives told by the artisan stonemasons challenged me to rethink several other frameworks that I can only briefly reference here. Although my research was local and ethnographic, the community I studied has a global reach. Their enterprise is based on export, first in the export of sculpture and architectural marble to the New World and in the last few decades on export to the Far East, Middle East, and elsewhere. The community is composed of people who have lived there for generations as well as artists from many parts of the world. In other words, the categories of local and global collapse. Artisan technologies are both traditional and contemporary, another collapse of categories. Discussions of art, technology, material, skill, politics, natural resources, and economies are interwoven at all levels, from personal narratives to historical discourses.

Selecting a Research Approach: Researching Learning as Practice and the Narrative of Stealth Learning

One of my goals was to understand how artisans learned their trade, how their knowledge circulated, what were the obstacles to circulation, and how the craft managed the balance of adherence to tradition and innovative creativity. The first thing I learned, an important but also difficult lesson, was that the artisans did not impart their knowledge directly. They did not learn their practice by listening to someone explain how to do something. Instead, learning was about practice. I was

interested not in becoming a stone carver myself but instead in learning how they learned, how their learning practices had changed, and what they learned in the largest sense, the values as well as the skills.

The central advantage of a longitudinal study such as mine is the possibility of observing change. When I first arrived in Pietrasanta, in 1982, the central part of the city had dozens of stone carving studios. Walking around the town, I constantly heard the sound of chisels and air hammers. Today, stone carving has moved outside the historical district, and only a few studios, located at the edges of the town with a fragile hold on their centuries-old location, still operate. I have been able to observe the success and failure of programs designed to promote apprenticeship as well as municipal obstacles (from the perspective of the artisans), and the transformation of the town from a working-class artisan community to a chic area of restaurants, galleries, and shops catering to tourists who, in the 1980s, stayed mostly on the seaside, 3 km away.

My research on the narratives told by artisans was enabled by the fact that they are extremely articulate and thoughtful about their practice as well as about the politics and history of the area. To some extent, my interviews afforded conversations that might not otherwise occur in everyday life (Shuman and Modan 2011), but for the most part, my research on local pedagogies was a matter of prompting and listening to familiar discourses. As an example, I will briefly discuss how narrative was useful to my understanding of the informal pedagogical practices in the community, or what might be called “stealth learning.” By definition, informal learning practices are not codified or assembled into educational manuals; instead, skills are acquired through observation and practice.

One of the central pedagogical discourses among the artisans uses the metaphor of “stealth” to describe acquiring a skill. They do not mean stealing in the sense of deception or of taking something that belongs to someone else but instead refer to carefully observing a master artisan at work without disturbing him, though he would undoubtedly be aware he was watched. Stealth learning requires acute attention, the kind of attention necessary for doing excellent work. As Keara McMartin, an American artist who now directs one of the major abstract marble carving studios observes, “can’t just put a chisel in your hand and put my hand over your hand; I can’t teach you how to hit the stone that way. Stone is a natural material. You have to discover the bedding plane [the lay of the stone] on your own.”

Other scholars have similarly observed stealth learning among artisans. Marjorie Hunt (1999), who studied the artisans who carved the ornamental work on the Washington Cathedral, writes:

The skills of the trade were conveyed not by formal instruction but by ‘precept and example’ in the workshop. “You don’t teach anybody to carve,” stated Roger. “You give them the fundamentals of carving, like you take a hammer and a point and you hit, you take a chisel and cut. But the main thing in carving, you *steal* carving. When I say steal, you see, like you’re in the shop and there are seven or eight apprentice boys. One would be a little better than the other, and you have two or three carvers working in the same place, so you watch one, you watch the other; you steal a little bit from one, you steal a little bit from the other. Then you put it all together yourself. You develop your own technique.” (p. 40)

Michael Herzfeld (2004) collected narratives about the idea of stealing a craft, though the clothiers he studied had a different point to make:

But learning was the apprentice's problem, not the master's, and this is another important lesson: "It is difficult for someone to show how a craft is done. You have to steal it on your own; they didn't show you, except when [the master] really liked you enough to show you the craft. So you are at it for many years . . . they didn't let you into the work at all . . . they would have you as their apprentice forever. (p. 117)

Jean Lave (2011) points out the inadequacy of the "binary politics of formal and informal education with its polarized assumptions about 'situations,' and penchant for treating contexts as forms or containers of knowledge" (p. 143). She describes the "situated learning" of artisan tailors (p. 88), which similarly included observation. "Apprentices told me that the way to learn was to watch until you know how to make all of a garment" (p. 72).

Unlike the clothiers and tailors, the stonecarving artisans' narratives describe the many years it takes to acquire the skills necessary to be deserving of pay. Each specialization in the stone carving studio requires a different kind and length of apprenticeship, and it can take as many as 10 years to become a "sculptor" the specialist who carves faces, breasts, and hands on a figurative sculpture.

Together, these and other narratives about stealth learning offer pedagogical resources that are possibly useful not only in the artisan workplace but also, as Lave argues, in the contemporary classroom. In the Pietrasanta narratives, stealth learning is described in *contrast* to school learning. Learning in the artisan studio is corporeal learning, what we sometimes understand as muscle memory, though it includes not only acquiring the skill to become a successful carver but also learning the subtleties and sensibilities particular to the Pietrasanta artisan workplace. Becoming a carver is, in the end, an individual skill acquired through a shared tradition of learning. Keara McMartin says, "When you pick up the subbia in your hand, everyone has a unique rhythm; the hammer hitting the chisel is a different piece of music that each person creates."

Interestingly, this corporeal, experiential way of learning is also a part of scientific learning. Essentially, the idea is that some forms of learning require practice. The physicist Karen Barad (2007) uses the familiar word "know-how" to describe scientific practice: "The separation of fact from artifact deepens on the proper execution of each of these steps and requires skill and know-how achieved through experience" (53).

I view my research on the artisans within a larger conversation on "know-how," that encompasses not only work in occupational folklore about traditional ways of learning but also explorations of contemporary learning, such as Barad's. Interestingly, Barad conveys her point through narratives, anecdotes about physicists' discoveries. Here, conversational narrative provides one means for identifying and understanding know-how as a pedagogical and methodological practice.

Expanding on Barad's observations, I suggest that we can learn about know-how on several levels. In addition to examples about how people acquire know-how, we can observe how narratives about know-how transmit not only the information

about how to do something but also understandings about the value of particular ways of doing things. Stealth knowledge is one example of such a value, attributing significance to the learner's need to demonstrate his worthiness and his ability to learn through arduous practice. Additionally, in the historical narratives about the artisan community, know-how is narrated nostalgically as a lost art. I describe these different levels of narration in terms of narrative positioning.

In the discussion that follows, I turn to the connection between tellability and the circulation of knowledge as an additional means for studying and understanding the artisans' narratives.

The Role of Interpretation from Research Design to Analysis of Data

Narrative is always interpretive. Interpretations of conversational narrative take account of how narrators interpret the events they recount, how listeners interpret the narrative told, and how researchers interpret the process. In addition, in both conversational narrative and oral history researches, methods for collecting narrative are integrally related questions of interaction and interpretation. Interpretation is not only an end product to be applied to texts after they are collected but rather part of every process of narrative study, including the methods of collection. My interpretive framework for this project considers (1) the larger discursive context that includes an ethnography of communication of the community, (2) intersections between oral history and conversational narratives, and (3) narrative as part of the circulation of knowledge and relationships, with particular attention to dialogic narration. I will demonstrate how this interpretive framework works through an examination of questions of tellability, including what is said, what is not, to whom, and in what contexts (including the context of my research).

The concept of tellability destabilizes the relationship between experience and narrative and addresses incoherencies and fragmentations (rather than idealized coherent subjects). Tellability has often been discussed in terms of the relationships among co-participants in an occasion (Shuman 1986; Ochs and Capps 2001), but for the artisans, the primary considerations for tellability were the larger cultural historical contexts, and the immediate occasion was of secondary relevance.

Tellability and the Ethnography of Communication

The first thing I considered in approaching my study of the artisans was how they talk about their practice. How would my research complement already existing conversations, or discourses, about the artisan world? What were the larger contexts, from *their* perspective about their practice? Narrative itself is an

interpretive practice, so a conversational narrative researcher's interpretive practices are designed to identify the interpretive strategies used by narrators. The decision to focus on narrative as a means of communication has important implications for interpretation. In my interpretation of the data, I pay attention not only to the information given or not given but also to how the information was conveyed. This means that I work not only at the macro level of explanation but also at the micro level of poetics and form, to better understand not just what happened but also how people talk or don't talk about what happened.

In the first few interviews, I began by asking, "How did you become an artisan?" It wasn't until I received the same answer from several artisans that I realized that I was asking the wrong question. Each of the artisans had answered by beginning with their grandfather's great grandfather's or other relative's story. Even the artisan who was the first of his family to become an artisan began by saying, "Well, my grandfather wasn't an artisan." I learned that the artisans understood my question in terms of their larger family history. It wasn't possible to understand an individual's choice outside of the story of generations. This discovery had interpretive consequences: I learned that describing individuals' life histories would contain a fundamental inaccuracy since the artisans do not conceptualize their choices, their motivations, and their cultural practices apart from a larger family or community story.

As part of preparing for my research, I learned as much as I could about the history of the area and the artisans. The artisan history had not been recorded as a subject in itself; instead the history was embedded in accounts of the economy of the region. Instead of regarding the large historical events of the past century (wars, depression, etc.) as *the* significant events, I made history a topic of inquiry and endeavored to learn what the artisans regarded as the most significant moments, or turning points, of their enterprise. Although I brought assumptions into the project about the role of politics, economic events, and technological changes as possible influences on artisan practices, and I asked questions about those influences, I was also interested in understanding different timelines and assessments of how and whether or not things had changed. In other words, throughout my work, I have resisted providing a definitive history that would tell the story of the artisans from my point of view. Instead, borrowing from oral history methodology (Portelli 1991), my goal has been to demonstrate history on the ground, which inevitably leads to an interpretive mode in which multiple, sometimes competing, historical narratives coexist. Oral history interpretation is often focused on the multiple versions told about events; conversational narrative analysis in addition attends to form, for example, my above discussion of the coda (Johnstone 2001).

Tellability and the Circulation of Knowledge

Narrative interpretation also attends to silences, things not said. Margaret Mills (1991) provides an elaborate account of "silential relations, the relations of the said to the unsaid and the unsayable." She describes the

... obvious or consensual unsaid, the things any competent member of the social group is expected to know...the unsaid of privileged or private knowledge...the unsaid which is omitted because it is not central to the speaker's goals in this particular performance... the unsaid which is repressed, unsayable because unthinkable in the sense of inhibition, ... and the unsaid which is culturally irrelevant. (p. 20)³

In Pietrasanta, some elements of history were not frequently disclosed or discussed. In particular the history of Fascism in the region was a fraught topic. Everyone knew who had been a Fascist, but when I arrived, more than 30 years after the war had ended, the public history of the region was its contribution to the partisan opposition. People proudly told me about their or their family's partisan activities; the mountain communities around Pietrasanta were well known for partisan efforts, and the area had paid a high price. On August 12, 1944, as the war was ending, the Nazis rounded up everyone they could find in one of the villages, herded them into a church, and burned it down. Hundreds of people, mostly women, the elderly, and more than 100 children, died, and a memorial, Sant'Anna di Stazzema, stands as a reminder.

The prominent historical events did not have equal bearing on my research, but they were nonetheless important for me to understand, especially so that I could be aware of stories not told. As Gabriella Modan and I argue (2011), sometimes interview methods afford people the possibility of talking about things ordinarily *outside* their discourse. It is a commonly held tenet of ethnographic research to avoid interfering in the discourse, or, to put it in positive terms, to attempt to gather the kind of data that represents what people say and do without the influence of the researcher. However, Modan and I found that the presence of the researcher gave individuals a warrant to talk about topics that were more easily addressed to a presumably unknowledgeable outsider. This was the case in conversations about Fascism. One of the artisans I interviewed took the opportunity to explain to me the consequences of Fascism on the stonemasonry enterprise. Although others were present, they already knew his stories, and, moreover, it was an unpleasant topic that was, for the most part, avoided.

My method for attempting to limit my influence on my interviews was my decision to be accompanied by a young artisan, Massimo Pasquini, who I hired as my assistant. Massimo had enough artisan skills to work in his grandfather's studio, but he was hoping to pursue a career in children's theater rather than as an artisan. During the interviews, I introduced my project and asked the first few questions, but the conversation inevitably turned to a dialogue between Massimo and the artisan we were interviewing both because the artisans recognized Massimo's familiarity with the topic and, perhaps more importantly, because the artisans wanted to impart their knowledge and opinions to Massimo, who they saw as the next generation of artisans. I also relied on Massimo and others for interpretive analysis. As I have mentioned, the artisans are incredibly articulate about their practices and about the

³ See also Neal Norrick's discussion of "interactional remembering" in which co-participants in a narrative occasion make references to forgotten details (2005, p. 1822).

consequences of historical, economic, political, and technological events; insofar as it was possible, I attempted to describe *their* interpretations rather than to impose outside explanations. At the same time, I do bring my interpretations to the work. The researcher's interpretation of the interpretation made by the people studied creates a dialogue governed by ethics and obligations to the people (Borland 1991; Mullen 2000).

This is not to say that artisan knowledge and interpretation is free flowing and available at face value. As I discussed above and as other scholars of artisan practice have noted (Herzfeld 2004, p. 117), artisans are often reluctant to part with knowledge about their craft. Part of the methodology of ethnographic research, whether participant observation or interviewing, is to understand how knowledge is passed down, under what conditions and under what constraints. The reluctance to impart knowledge sometimes requires a fieldworker to prove her worthiness (Shuman 1986).

In my artisan research, I was worried that as a person who does not carve stone, I would be perceived as an outsider unentitled to be collecting the artisans' stories. Pietrasanta is an international community comprised of the local artisans, hundreds of international artists, some of whom live permanently in the area and others who are residents for part of the year, and other residents. I addressed my concern to several of the artisans I interviewed and was surprised when several explained that they saw me as an artisan of another kind: they carved stone and I wrote. I was the only ethnographer of the artisans, though other ethnographers had documented the cultural practices of the quarriers (Leitch 2009), many journalists had documented the quarries, and several local historians had written about the area (Paolicchi 1981).

Interpretation also depends on how an ethnographer defines the parameters of the research. A first step is to compile the other forms of documentation of the area and to understand the networks of documentation and collection, both public and private. In my study of the artisans, I called on the expertise of others to help me to interpret the larger context of the work. The local historian, Paolicchi (1981), explained some of the controversial politics behind the activity and inactivity of the local and national government regarding laws for the export of raw marble. An Italian labor political scientist, Professor Adele Maiello from the University of Genoa, accompanied me on interviews with the local labor union representatives so that I could better understand the lack of protection of the apprenticeship system. The region was self-conscious of its heritage and especially marked significant anniversaries with publications; for example, the local artisan school celebrated its 150th anniversary with a book documenting its history. Individual artisans had their own photographic collections of work they had done, and most artists produced catalogues of their work. In addition, the stonecarving studios had their own form of documentation. Most prominently, most marble sculptures are copies, often enlarged, of plaster models, and the studios had plaster archives, or "gypsoteccas," with hundreds of plasters. Documentation sometimes crosses over into commercial or marketplace endeavors. A local tool-making family, located high in the mountains at the end of a village, next to the waterfall that had served as the power for their workshop, had an elaborate, glossy, catalogue of their wares, produced by the New York City art supply store that was one of the retailers of their handmade

chisels. The contrast between the deeply local knowledge of generations of a family-owned business that continues to play an important role in the context-near lives of the artisans and the glossy marketing brochure is evidence of the complexity of the circulation of knowledge. Of course my work, also, is part of that circulation. Interpretation is not separate from documentation in this regard. I recognize that any interpretations I offer are part of the circulation of knowledge about the community, and this, too, plays a role in my reluctance to offer outside explanations or interpretations (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

The existing forms of documentation did not contain the information I sought, and yet they were an important part of understanding the community and its circulation of knowledge. They did not explain how artisans learned their skills, how the work was organized into specializations, and how they viewed their knowledge and expertise. Yet the existing forms of documentation were useful not only for providing background information but also for understanding how the community understood itself and presented itself to others.

I defined my research project as the study of the artisans (rather than, for example, the quarriers or the artists). Most specifically, my research did not encompass the work of the marble quarries, the phenomenon that, because of its (literal) magnitude, drew the fascination of both locals and outsiders and was the topic of most of the documentation of the area. I was interested in the contrast between the fascination about the quarries and quarriers and the relative lack of fascination about the artisans. Here, working at the level of discourse, I engage in another form of narrative interpretation in my examination of both the discourses of the artisans and the discourses of the journalists, local historians, and others who have documented the artisans.

Interpretation is a necessarily subjective practice; rather than consider the researcher's subjectivity to be an obstacle, we can view the researcher's lens of observation as a tool, like other tools, requiring attention to its limits and usefulness. Physicist Karen Barad points out that scientific research takes into account the role that the observer's tools play in constraining and affording particular kinds of observations. Research is always an interaction, and we need to understand the conditions of the interaction. Ethnographers have always described their methodologies, or what Barad refers to as the "apparatus" of research. New generations of researchers expose different dimensions of the apparatus and understand different conditions for intelligibility and interpretation.

The different agendas of the researcher, the people studied, and the ways the research can be used produce gaps, examples of what Slavoj Žižek (2006) calls a "parallax view, constantly shifting perspectives between two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible" (p. 4). This gap is part of our research; it's part of the dynamics of the circulation of knowledge and possibly the strongest rationale for doing ethnographic research. Ethnography is designed to attend to the interactive, performative, dynamic dimensions of the circulation of knowledge, including, or especially, the contradictions and inconsistencies that are part of cultural experience.

In my work on the artisan narratives, one of the biggest challenges was to account for the circulations, gaps, and possible contradictions among the many narratives that artisans tell about their practice. Each of these narratives is shaped differently; I have asked how the narrators position themselves and their audience to create these different configurations. For example, narrators who position themselves in relationship to a tradition traced to Michelangelo often shape a nostalgic narrative that frames the present in terms of a lost past. In addition to exploring positioning, I asked how different narrative configurations circulated, in what conditions, and when. Included in those conditions are the ways that, in some cases, my interviews provided the warrant for particular tellings. Some of the narratives I collected have relatively scant circulation in the community; in some cases I was entrusted to circulate them, and in others, I realized that I was receiving information that was not meant to circulate. The task of the narrative scholar/collector is to understand the conditions in which the narratives circulate, including consideration of how the scholar's retellings bring the narratives into different realms of circulation. Questions about circulation are, I would argue, some of the most important questions educators can address about narrative. The stone carvers of Pietrasanta make their sculptures for export and are therefore more aware than some other cultural practitioners of the significance of what circulates and what does not. In this essay, I've explored the relationship between narratives about the circulation of artisan knowledge through pedagogies of stealth learning and larger questions about both how narrators position themselves and the conditions in which their narratives circulate.

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1.6 Ethnography of Primary School Teaching in Tanzania

Sharon Tao

The Research Project

In 2004/2005 I had worked as a volunteer teacher in a primary school near to Arusha, Tanzania. This experience gave me some insight into the difficulties faced by Tanzanian teachers and of the efforts they made to overcome them. However, too much research on teaching in the Global South positions teachers as a major cause of poor quality education while failing to consider the circumstances under which they teach. I felt that the meta-narratives framing such research were too simplistic. When I returned to Tanzania to conduct this ethnographic study, it was with the intent of generating other narratives that addressed the lives, experiences, and aspirations of individual teachers and that would allow the reinterpretation of their actions.

In Tanzania, the central role of teachers in the provision of quality education has been explicitly recognized by the Ministry of Education and Vocational training, but commentators within government, the international development community, and academia frequently voice concerns about the teaching force. Different types of teacher practice and behavior that have been criticized include absenteeism (Benavot and Gad 2004; Carr-Hill and Ndalichako 2005), rote-teaching methods (Sumra 2001), inadequate subject knowledge (Mrutu et al. 2005), and withholding content to support private tuition (Kironde 2001). These criticisms can also be found in the literature regarding teacher quality in other low- to middle-income countries, including concerns about rote teaching in Nigeria (Hardman et al. 2008), lack of teacher commitment in Indonesia (Suryadarma et al. 2006), and teacher absenteeism in India (Kremer et al. 2005).

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Such concerns have led to what might be referred to as the Third World Teacher Discourse (Tao 2013) with its implicit assumptions of poor quality teachers with “deficient” behaviors typically explained as acts predominantly governed by “culture” or “opportunism.” Alongside this, a discourse of Technical Assistance has developed with many international development agencies and consultants introducing technicist interventions to reduce or alter these “deficient” practices by, for example, providing training in learner-centered pedagogies (Cooper and Alvarado 2006) or using curricular calendars to ensure time on task (Abadzi 2007). However, a number of Tanzanian researchers believe that “technocratic fixes of this kind rarely work since they fail to take into account the very difficult working and living conditions that teachers have to endure” (Bennell and Mukyanuzi 2005, p. 48). Sumra expands on this:

Increased resources and training are not necessarily the sole areas that need to be addressed. Teachers’ social environment, attitudes, and working conditions are inter-related in a complex way that needs to be understood better if efforts to improve education in the country are to succeed. (2005, p. 2)

Yet these meta-narratives of poor quality teaching and deficiency continue to dominate the literature on teachers and teaching in the Global South, and this literature often seeps into educational policies. More recently though, the importance of incorporating teachers’ voices in the research process has been recognized. This Teacher Advocacy Discourse goes some way to addressing the oversimplification of the Third World Teacher Discourse as it begins to look at teacher practice and behavior from the teachers’ perspectives. It has also started to dispel certain assumptions that teachers in different contexts abide by a universal set of educational goals and philosophies. For example, Barrett (2007) and Vavrus (2009) investigate the acute environmental and social conditions that contribute to and often justify the various forms of teacher-centered pedagogies in Tanzania; while others address the material deprivations in Tanzanian teachers’ personal and professional lives, including substandard classrooms and housing, lack of teaching materials, and excessive workloads (Cooksey et al. 1991; Sumra 2005).

It seemed to me that these meta-narratives of deficiency were too simple – they were not entirely untrue but they were incomplete. Much of the Third World Teacher and the Technical Assistance Discourses focuses on poor teaching practice and fails to take into account the many challenges that teachers face inside and outside of school. However, it could also be argued that the Teacher Advocacy Discourse is too simplistic as well in that it fails to acknowledge the significance of wider contextual issues. Although some authors attempt to relate the deprivations they deal with to low levels of teacher motivation (Fry 2002; Bennell and Mukyanuzi 2005; Davidson 2007) Fry is quick to note, this still does not demonstrate “a direct causal link between teacher motivation, performance and quality education” (2002, p. 22).

From my time as a volunteer, I had a feeling that there were a number of complex reasons behind the classroom actions of teachers but that these more complex stories were not being told. Returning to Tanzania as a researcher, my intent was to challenge the Third World Teacher Discourse I had identified in the

literature by providing fuller understandings of and alternatives to the simplistic stereotypes it produced (something, I felt, weakened measures to improve teacher practice). I wanted to locate their teaching in the wider context of the policies and practices, as well as the sociocultural conditions framing the opportunities available to them and the constraints acting upon them. To develop this more complete understanding of why these teachers did what they did, I had to look beyond the stories they told and construct a culturally embedded narrative of their teaching.

I chose an ethnographic approach because the “thick description” (Geertz 1973, 2000) it uses to generate detailed accounts of the cultural settings gives a vivid sense of what life is like for those who are the focus of the research. Instead of simply looking at the poor practices identified in the Third World Teacher Discourse or the absence of support framing the Technical Assistance Discourse, this ethnographic approach allowed me to focus on the experience of teaching and to gain insight into how and why these teachers went about it. In particular, it gave me the chance to investigate the teachers’ personal and professional values and the ways in which contextual factors influenced them. By seeking to understand what it is like being a primary schoolteacher in Tanzania, the research provided insight into the significance of institutional and social practices on the agency of individual teachers. This thickly descriptive narrative allowed a more nuanced understanding of their practices, for example, whether their deficient actions were the result of not caring or of succumbing to too many pressures.

The teachers often referred to their professional development and promotion as “upgrading” and the research revealed a greater desire for this than was suggested in the wider literature. It also revealed gendered narratives in attitudes to and perceptions of this upgrading. The female teachers typically focused on the constraints that limited their opportunities to upgrade, but the male teachers usually looked beyond those limitations. The formal process of upgrading depended on school- and district-level policies and practices, but these were embedded in the day-to-day practice of teaching. However, the female teachers had to negotiate domestic barriers that limited their opportunities to upgrade and also tended to shape the perceptions others, such as the district-level officers responsible for allocating professional development courses. In order to understand the narratives of constraint (told by the female teachers) and of aspiration (told by their male colleagues) generated by the research, it was necessary to locate them in the wider sociocultural context of teaching in Tanzania.

Collecting and Organizing the Data

I was interested in the stories the teachers told about their professional practice and their aspirations, but these were only one strand of the research narrative. Just as I felt the meta-narratives, particularly those of the Third World Teacher and Technical Assistance Discourses were incomplete because they paid insufficient

attention to such individual stories, I felt these individual stories were incomplete because they offered a limited view of the wider contextual narrative. The ethnographic approach of this research enabled me to bring together the individual stories and the wider sociocultural story.

The thick descriptions of educational ethnographies typically draw on a range of sources from observations of classroom behavior to policy documents as well as individual informants. In this sense, the main source of data was the field itself—that is, the context in which the teachers worked and lived—their schools, communities, and wider social contexts. However, the focal point of this ethnographic narrative was the stories these teachers told, and they were therefore my principal sources of information. As I wanted to obtain an understanding of how different environments influenced their practice and the choices they made (or were unable to make), I decided to work with teachers in three settings: urban, periurban, and rural government primary schools. The rationale for constructing case studies around these three different schools was that it would potentially highlight differences and/or similarities in the teachers' narratives during cross-case comparisons (Yin 1981).

Although I viewed teachers as the primary research participants whose narratives could provide the most thorough data, I also conducted interviews with 15 secondary participants who managed and worked with the teachers on a daily basis. Many of these secondary participants were in the position to significantly affect teachers' experiences at the school level and included District Education Officers, inspectors, and headteachers. I also interviewed people at regional and national levels whose research and advocacy work could affect their experiences, such as representatives of the Tanzanian Teachers' Union and Civil Society Organisations as well as academics. Their accounts provided additional information on the teachers' practices as well as insight into the more subtle factors influencing them.

The research was intended to engage with and understand the actions of these teachers. It was recognized from the outset that these actions—which were generally considered to be somehow deficient in the meta-narratives of the Third World Teacher and Technical Assistance Discourses—were grounded in complex sociocultural situations and that the research would therefore need to apprehend that complexity. I used a range of qualitative methods in order to generate the data that constituted the ethnographic narratives. There were three broad strands within these wider narratives: the narratives of the teachers (constructed from focus groups, one-to-one interviews, and observations), the wider contextual narratives (constructed from interviews with other research participants, observations of the sociocultural context of the teachers, and other data including documentary analysis), and my own reflective narrative (constructed from my field notes and research diary) which required me to constantly question the interpretations I was making.

The stories the teachers told of their professional and personal lives were central to the study as they provided a narrative thread linking their experiences to the

opportunities and constraints framing them. However, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) explain:

it is necessary to recognise that [individual] narratives should be studied within the context of an overall ethnographic strategy. Narratives should not be treated as if they occupied a different, special and privileged analytic space. (p. 171)

The data from the teachers gave considerable insight to their perspectives but could only provide a limited account of the wider contexts in which they lived and worked. To only focus on their stories would have led to the simplification of the more complex story of primary school teaching in Tanzania. So although their individual narratives and the perspectives they offered were important, it was necessary to embed them in contextual data. The main research methods used in ethnography are participant observation and interviewing, but other methods include (but are not limited to) tests, surveys, audiovisual techniques, and network research (Holloway 1997). I used multiple methods to elicit data that would inform the narrative of teaching and so allow an in-depth understanding of the teachers' values, the constraints and opportunities acting upon them, and the relationship between these. The range of methods drew upon theoretical and empirical examples used in the literature on the capability approach (Sen 1992, 1999; Nussbaum 2000), which was the main theoretical framework of this research. It included the following: focus groups, which have proven successful in enabling groups to consider, debate, and scrutinize shared values (Alkire 2002; Biggeri 2007); semi-structured interviews, which have also been used to elicit values, as well as constraints and opportunities, through narrative accounts (Nussbaum 2000; Raynor 2007); and participant observation, which has been used to add to the thick descriptions needed for capability assessments (Takayanagi 2010). Each of the data sets generated by these different methods added to the thickness of the description that allowed the construction of the ethnographic narrative of teaching.

My own participant observations added another layer of data as they allowed me to get some sense of what it felt like to be a primary schoolteacher (although this was always limited by the knowledge that I was a volunteer who would be returning home at the conclusion of the study) and facilitated my understanding and interpretation of the teaching narrative, making me sensitive to nuances I might otherwise have missed. I kept a detailed research diary that included descriptive accounts of and reflections on my own teaching. These reflections had another purpose though – they caused me to reflect on my position as a researcher embedded in the local community. There is a risk that in trying to obtain the feel for the subjects of their study, ethnographers can lose sight of the wider context. This was a particular concern for me as this study had been prompted by my sympathy for the teachers and the ways in which they were represented in the meta-narratives. Constant reflection on my role as a participant observer helped to mitigate this concern and ensure the data I collected would facilitate a better understanding of the conditions in which these teachers taught rather than simply advocating their positions.

My previous experience as a volunteer had made me familiar with some of the problems encountered by Tanzanian teachers such as teaching with a lack of materials and having 80–120 students in a class. I had attempted to immerse myself

in my school's community by establishing relationships with teachers, students, and parents and in the surrounding village community through becoming proficient in Kiswahili and living in an orphanage and a *boma* (a family compound). The time I spent teaching at this school was not related to or intended for research, but it provided insights for my subsequent ethnographic study and made it easier to gain access to the research sites and the participants.

Teaching English to up to 120 students in years 3–6 for four to six periods a day provided insights into the daily conditions, pressures, and politics that these teachers faced. Living as part of the community—which involved, among other activities, attending municipality meetings, weddings, and even a funeral—also helped establish my position as a participant observer. The positioning was helped by my working knowledge of Kiswahili, but, before returning to do the research, I took a course in London to improve my language skills. This made the teaching and the research easier, but it also made it easier for me to be accepted as a participant observer. I had made the practical decision to conduct all discussions in Kiswahili, without the aid of a translator, while planning the data collection. This decision was based on my language abilities, but there was also the practical consideration that my limited resources precluded extensive translator assistance. Although having a translator might have been helpful during formal discussions, my proficiency in Kiswahili enabled me to engage in formal and informal conversations, pre-translate the interview and focus group questions, clarify questions put forward by participants, and follow most responses during discussions. Language fluency was important for my participant observations as activities such as relationship building, informal conversations, and direct/indirect observations could not have been executed as smoothly if it had been necessary to use a translator.

My previous teaching experiences facilitated the specific identification of the particular schools I wanted to involve in the research. Having obtained permission to conduct my research from the relevant District Education Officers, I was able to make use of the contacts I had previously made to get permission from the head teachers. Having gained permission from headteachers, I then proceeded to recruit teachers at each of the three schools. Again, my previous experience and language skills made this easier. As a teacher, I was able to access the teachers and other informants and to observe the conditions under which they worked in these schools. I used in-school and nonschool participant observations to further contextualize and triangulate the stories they told in formal and nonformal research situations.

The more formal research with the teachers began with focus groups which have been used for fostering group reflection and discussion by participants (Kreuger 1994) and as a platform for including traditionally excluded and marginalized individuals to voice their opinions and values (Cambridge and McCarthy 2001). One limitation of focus groups, however, is the omission of information in discussions either because certain topics are not included or because the nature of certain topics is too personal to share with others (Smithson 2000, p. 103). To mitigate these problems, I conducted follow-up semi-structured interviews with participants in order to glean information that might have been missed during the group discussions and to explore individual issues and experiences in greater detail. In addition, I used

questionnaires to triangulate data obtained from the interviews and focus groups and to provide a space for topics that might not have otherwise been discussed:

... either because people forget about [them] in the heat of discussion or because they presume that the facilitator is not interested (as in matters of faith or family), or because they are not used to talking about these issues in a group (such as culture or inner peace). (Alkire 2006, p. 144)

Another limitation of focus groups and interviews is that the power relations between participants and the researcher can also affect participants' responses and narratives. Woods (1985, p. 4) describes how participants can put up false "fronts," such as speaking in voices that are not entirely their own as a result of nerves, poor memory, or power differences. In an attempt to overcome the silences or failings that interfere with the achievement of "full" voice, MacLure (2009, p. 101) suggests putting participants at ease, making the discussion feel like a conversation and triangulating accounts to check for validity. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) note that interviews are contextually based, mutually accomplished stories produced by both the researcher and the respondent, and so they caution that "to tell what happened (the what) is not enough because the what depends greatly on the ways, negotiations, and other interactive elements that take place between the researcher and the respondent" (p. 141). Being part of the community helped the mutual accomplishment of the stories that made up the narrative. For this study, I used a facilitating style and informal spaces (such as empty classrooms) to conduct the group and individual interviews. In addition to this, I carried out activities that Alkire (2002, p. 225) suggests diffuse power dynamics, such as wearing simple clothing, adapting the methodology flexibly to the situation, respecting traditional and religious customs, organizing the meeting at a convenient time and place, having an informal and open attitude, and using the local language.

I collected questionnaires in written form and recorded observations through field notes written in the form of brief thoughts or observations while at school or after a conversation. As well as being a record of the conditions under which the teachers taught, these field notes allowed me to record smaller insights that were not necessarily revealed through the greater formality of the interviews. They also allowed me to note responses to everyday actions, such as what it is like to teach large classes of students on a daily basis. I also wrote longer, journal-like reflections (regarding observations, initial analyses, or tensions I was feeling) while on my own. As a full-time member of staff (which involved team teaching and covering other teachers' classes), I was able to contextualize my interpretations of teachers' experiences and narratives and provided reciprocity for the staff's contribution to this study. Participant observation also helped to minimize the effects of my positioning as a researcher on participants' responses.

Focusing the Narratives

The research generated a data set apprehending the complex narrative of teaching through the thick description that ethnography enables. The main narrative threads running through the study were the stories the teachers told about their professional

and personal lives. These stories were told through interviews, and they typically followed a clear narrative line. However, the construction of their narratives drew on more than what they said. Data from individual teachers was gathered over time and through a range of methods, and this was incorporated into the narratives structured around the interview data. Moreover, the ethnographic approach to the research, which was facilitated by being a participant observer, meant they were embedded in the wider contextual narrative. This incorporated significant detail—such as what it is like teaching large classes with limited resources and how the wider communities view teachers—that might otherwise be missed, but this data often lacked the clear direction of the interviews. This data was important as it meant the conclusions of the Third World Teacher and the Technical Assistance Discourses could be explored more carefully. It was necessary to organize the raw data into a cogent narrative that gave insight into primary school teaching in Tanzania, but, at the same time, it had to avoid replicating what I considered to be the oversimplification of these meta-narratives.

I wanted to illustrate the difficulties these teachers experienced in their day-to-day teaching and in realizing their professional and personal values. The data from the questionnaires and focus groups, supported by the interview data, allowed me to identify key issues, including their values and the opportunities (and the lack of opportunities) to realize them. These key issues provided a means of selecting and organizing the data, particularly that from the interviews, that generated descriptive accounts of how they experienced their teaching and the opportunities available to them for professional development and advancement. I was then able to draw on other data sets to contextualize their aspirations and the opportunities (and lack of opportunities) available to them. It was not possible to incorporate all the data so I focused on that which illustrated the most significant issues to emerge from the analyses, such as the gendered approaches to professional advancement or upgrading.

When addressing the issues identified from earlier stages of research (i.e., the focus groups and questionnaires), the female teachers often articulated their values and aspirations from a deficit perspective, addressing what was absent in their lives as well as what would continue to be absent because of the many obstacles surrounding them. For example, Aisha,¹ one of the teachers from the periurban school, explained:

I would love to upgrade and have a better qualification, to get more education. But I can't because my salary is low and is not enough to pay for my education and to give my children education as well. Also, in each school there are only two spots for teachers to take study leave each year. And these spots do not open again for three years. By then you have children and you are too old to go to school. So we remain [and] for those who are married, that is an obstacle. When you have children, the moment you bring an idea to your husband that you want to go to school, he will ask 'Who will take care of the children?' In the next discussion with your husband, you might agree to find a house girl, but in the midst of looking for a house girl, you are pregnant.

¹ All names have been changed in order to protect research participants' privacy.

In contrast, Elias, a male periurban colleague of hers, answered the same question this way:

I would like to upgrade as others have said. The education that I have is not enough. I don't have enough academics for teaching children. And the things I'd like to fulfil, according to my career, I should be able to do other things, outside of teaching in school. For example, I would like to open a school and employ other teachers so we could work together. Another career is to open a stationary shop or a bookshop from this career, it will support me to do other things.

It is clear from these two interview excerpts that the professional aspirations of the teachers were influenced by more than just school-based issues. Their individual narratives generated an understanding of their professional lives that included the experiences, hopes, and frustrations of dealing with students and bureaucracy as well as significant aspects of their personal day-to-day lives. Such accounts formed the main thread of the individual narratives, but, while they provided insight into the experiences of the teachers, they lacked the richer ethnographic detail. Aisha's account, for example, indicates the weariness caused by the teaching conditions and exacerbated by the lack of opportunities for promotion but does not incorporate the attitudes of the District Education Officers to upgrading female teachers which were steeped in hierarchical and sexist—yet widely accepted—cultural beliefs. This process of embedding the teachers' narratives in thick contextual descriptions allowed me to apprehend the complexity of their practices and experiences and so negotiate the oversimplification of the dominant meta-narratives. That is, it allowed me to construct a more complete narrative not just of the experiences and aspirations of individual teachers but of primary school teaching in Tanzania.

Interpreting and Presenting the Data

While exploring the literature surrounding international development and development theory, I was instinctively drawn to the capability approach as a theoretical framework to understand teachers' well-being.² The capability approach does not view well-being as constitutive of traditional components such as income and resources, but as a product of people's opportunities for realizing the "beings and doings" that they value (Sen 1999, p. 73). It suggests that instead of focusing on the means that might facilitate a good life, such as more income or resources, we should instead consider the actual standard of living that people manage to achieve and, more importantly, the freedom they have to achieve the types of lives they want to lead. This view uses the information base of functionings (which are the "beings and doings" that people have reason to value) and capabilities (which are the opportunities or substantive freedoms they have for realizing these functionings). The

²For an interpretation and application of the capability approach in a non-developing country context, see Watts' chapter in this volume.

capability approach also scrutinizes the enhancement and constraints of these opportunities by acknowledging environmental conversion factors (such as geographical location and logistics), social conversion factors (such as social norms and power relations), and personal conversion factors (such as intelligence, physical ability, and skills) (Robeyns 2005). If the conversion factors that block capability freedom can be reconciled, a person would then be judged to have an expanded capability, and her well-being would be evaluated either based on the opportunities reflected in her capability set or on the functionings that she chose to realize from this set (Sen 1999, p. 76). Given my personal experiences as a teacher in Tanzania, I felt that this type of analysis could be helpful in elucidating which working/living conditions constrained the “beings and doings” that teachers valued. However, I was also aware that further explanatory theory was needed to link this type of restricted well-being to their criticized behaviors.

In this instance, my reading and interpretations of the literature surrounding the philosophy of social science brought me to the work of critical realism, which has its foundations a philosophical critique of positivism’s assertion that knowledge of reality can be “value-free” as well as gained through empirical means (Bhaskar 1978, 1979). Critical realists caution against the epistemological assumption that reality can be reduced to what can be apprehended, but they also caution against the converse assumption that reality is solely a product of our construction of knowledge. As Sayer (2000) posits, if either were the case, then surely we would never be mistaken about how we suppose phenomena to be. Instead, critical realism begins with an ontological positioning that reality is structured, changing, and not readily observable. Within these non-observable dimensions of reality, particular causal mechanisms, structures, and tendencies interact, conflict, and generate empirical events. These empirical events are phenomena that we see in the world every day (such as a teacher being absent from class), and any explanation of what caused a phenomenon to occur would entail an account of these underlying generative mechanisms as opposed to positivism’s identification of highly correlated empirical variables (Sayer 1992). Thus, looking for repeating causal factors (such as personal characteristics associated with teachers who are absent) is helpful only in establishing conditions related to a phenomenon’s existence and activation; but to conflate these with causation by virtue of their repetition overlooks the processes that explain the deeper, causal mechanisms related to the phenomenon.

Drawing on these two frameworks, I aimed to generate narrative and observational data about teachers’ values, experiences, and beliefs; and, by interpreting these data through the lenses of the capability approach and critical realism, I hoped to reframe teachers’ criticized practices as a product of their constrained capabilities which could potentially offer a more nuanced understanding of their practice.

The research had been initiated by a concern that the meta-narratives of teaching in Tanzania ascribed deficient behaviors to the teachers without taking account of the complex issues influencing their practice. Phenomena such as absenteeism and lack of motivation could not be overlooked when interpreting the data, but this was not the point of the study – I wanted to develop a better understanding of why these teachers acted as they did and the ethnographic narrative, which placed the

teachers' narratives in a wider sociocultural context, enabled a more nuanced interpretation of their behaviors that took into account a range of factors overlooked by the meta-narratives.

The integrity of the interpretation rested upon the rigorous analysis of the teachers' narratives. They were thematically analyzed using deductive codes (originating from prior concepts and theorization) and inductive codes (developed from the actual data) (Strauss 1987; Hennink et al. 2011) in order not to fragment the narratives or take snippets of quotes out of context. I ascribed importance to codes based on intensity (Boyatzis 1998) with depth in discussion, assessed through the amount of time and detail given to a topic, providing the greatest indication of salience. I ascribed more importance to depth of discussion, such as Aisha's concerns about upgrading, because I found focusing solely on frequency to be misleading as many teachers in focus groups did not speak as readily as others and instead tacitly agreed through physical gestures and acknowledgements with the topics under discussion. The ethnographic approach, with its concern for thick description, facilitated this process. Although I placed greater significance on the data gleaned from focus groups and interviews, as these data came most directly from teachers themselves, the data collected from the other methods were used to confirm or contradict my understanding of the salience of the issues.

The key issues, from both the literature and the research, were then considered from the perspectives of the teachers. Behaviors that were identified in the wider literature as deficient were acknowledged, but they were approached through detailed descriptions of the conditions that framed them as told by the teachers' narratives. These narratives comprised more than the spoken accounts they had given, but they were not simply taken at face value. They were considered in the wider contexts of their teaching, such as the social factors delimiting opportunities for female teachers to be upgraded and the partisan views of the District Education Officers that further limited them. This enabled me to address issues that were not necessarily obvious from either the snapshots of deficient behaviors informing the meta-narratives or the accounts given by the teachers themselves—issues such as the weariness engendered by teaching large classes that they may have become conditioned to and so not recognized as problematic contributors to their actions. That is, the interpretation located their behavior in the thick descriptions generated by the rich ethnographic data.

The narratives allowed a clearer understanding of the conditions under which teaching in Tanzania takes place. It meant that particular behaviors could be seen not as discrete practices but as taking place in, and as part of, complex socio-cultural situations that all too often were skimmed over in the wider literature. Interpreting their teaching in terms of their capabilities—that is, of what they valued and had reason to value and the substantive opportunities they had to achieve them—was an important part of this process. The Third World Teacher Discourse typically focused on what they did without giving proper consideration to the opportunities they had to do anything else; and this is not something that can be addressed through the interventions proposed in the Technical Assistance Discourse. The use of ethnographic narratives offers a more holistic view and

subverts the oversimplification of the meta-narratives, allowing interpretations that look beyond the poor practice so often ascribed to these teachers.

The general aim of this study was to draw attention to the many conditions that constrain teachers and produce “deficient” practices. I wanted my research results to contribute to policy and practice to improve teachers’ well-being and affect some of these practices as a result. I am also aware that there is a danger in trying to advocate for or represent the needs and voices of a marginalized group, as it involves issues of authority. Why should I have the “right” or ability to represent Tanzanian teachers? This position is very powerful as it also involves choosing what to present (and occluding certain views) as well as affecting what is being said. This privileged position also poses the danger of exoticizing or “othering” Tanzanian teachers (which I was highly critical of within the Third World Teacher research) because representations are filtered through my own world view and values. This is where the use of reflexivity is imperative, which is when researchers make explicit

... their historical and geographical situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they bring to the work, their surprises and ‘undoings’ in the process of the research endeavour, the ways in which their choices of literary tropes lend rhetorical force to the research report, and/or the ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view. (Gergen and Gergen 2000, p. 1027)

By being transparent about these issues (to their audience as well as themselves), researchers enhance their ability to recognize that their interpretations and representations of the social objects they study are a product of their investments and positionings; and by recognizing their default position for interpretation, a researcher might be able to challenge herself to view a situation beyond such a position. This is not to say that a researcher can purge herself of her biases, or necessarily be able to better understand a situation by “challenging herself”; however, by being conscious of how her subjectivity has shaped her interpretations, the researcher and audience are alerted to the complex relationship between knowledge production, the knowledge producer, and how knowledge is presented; and this helps to shed light on partialities, exclusions, and agendas that were previously opaque.

I am aware that reflexivity alone does not provide a clear-cut solution or way to absolve the problems involved in representing Tanzanian teachers, but, if I can problematize the process of interpretation and representation of an “other,” and be conscious of the act of exoticizing, my hope is to at least reduce some of the power asymmetry and misrepresentation that is inevitable.

Reasons for Choosing This Approach

My reasons for using ethnography in this research were closely linked to what I had seen during my time as a volunteer teacher in Tanzania. In the transition from volunteer to researcher, I aligned myself with what I identified as the Teacher Advocacy literature. However, I felt that it typically positioned teachers as victims

of a flawed system and, in failing to acknowledge the reality of their lives, it undermined their agency. I wanted to investigate the relationship between their conditions of service, their lives beyond the classroom, and the behaviors for which they were criticized. The central focus of my research was therefore to develop a closer understanding of the values, beliefs, and lived experiences of Tanzanian teachers in order to generate nuanced explanations of why they do what they do. People act differently in different situations, and it can be difficult to address the significance of their everyday behavior through other research methodologies. I felt that the context-based subtleties framing such opportunities had been lost in much of the literature on teaching and teacher education in the Global South, but the ethnographic approach offered a way to address this problem. It allowed me to construct a broad social narrative within which I could present the personal narratives that simultaneously represented how individuals make sense of their lives, the resources they use to tell their stories and the auspices under which their stories are told (Gubrium and Holstein 1998).

Actions, as well as the norms and values guiding them, are typically context dependent, and people within the same general setting (such as a school) may act differently in different contexts within it (such as the classroom and the staffroom) (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). However, more than what happens in the school setting influenced the choices and opportunities that were the focus of this study. The research included the wider contexts because the failure to take them into account may have led to distorted interpretations of the teachers' professional lives. For example, the criticism that teachers may sometimes adapt their teaching in order to generate private tuition needs to be situated in the context of the wider socioeconomic situation to be fully understood.

This leads to a further point: What do people talk about in a research situation? It may be that the everyday issues that shape action are not recognized as significant and may therefore not be addressed through other research methods such as interviews. It is not unreasonable to ask how far such research methods can apprehend the often subtle complexities that make up the day-to-day lives of those we work with in our research. Beyond this, though, is the influence of power structures that may inhibit the sharing of experiences. Ebbutt (1998) paints a vivid picture of the bemused reluctance of subjects from the Global South to criticize the apparent experts from the Global North, and Clark (2009) provides a more insidious interpretation of those experts riding roughly over local knowledge.

The experiences these Tanzanian teachers shared were filtered through social structures, and their effect was clearly demonstrated in the differences between what was shared in the focus groups and in the one-to-one interviews. Such partial data can generate partial understandings that may reinforce interpretations that paint the teachers in a poor light, such as focusing simply on the notion of limited teaching intended to encourage private tuition. It was important to consider the wider context and how the participants related to it. These power structures also have the potential to diminish the agency of teachers struggling to be professional under highly demanding and enervating circumstances.

However, these same social structures extend beyond the immediacy of the research context to the relationship between participants and researcher. It is necessary to move beyond an understanding of what these subjects do to understanding why they do it. That is, it is necessary to develop an understanding of their world view. This concern with how people make sense of the world and act within it is especially important in capability-based studies that consider what individuals value and have reason to value. This cannot always be understood through other methodologies (as was evidenced by the differences between what the teachers said in the focus groups and individual interviews as well as the differences between this interview data and what they were observed doing outside the formal immediacy of such data collection). Taking teachers out of their everyday contexts—even if only through inviting them to participate in focus groups and interviews—may undermine the apprehension of that complexity. We may lose sight of the links between their self-reported behavior and the social milieu that frames it.

Action typically has greater meaning and significance than can be grasped through what is reported. To begin to understand action, it is necessary to consider its manifest significance (which may be reported) and its latent significance (which may remain unreported because of the failure to understand its significance). People lead contextualized lives that give meaning to their actions, but that context is not always expressed through spoken narratives (e.g., through interviews) as assumptions about it often remain unquestioned. Human action is imbued with more than what can be seen or reported to an outside researcher. Ethnography seeks to uncover those meanings through the participant observation that enables understanding of the subjects' values and circumstances rather than those of the outsider, the nonparticipant observer.

I chose to use ethnography for two reasons. First, it involves the use of multiple research methods to generate rich data that allows the collection and construction of narratives for the group under study. Second, it entails extended researcher presence in the field, which not only enables the identification, analysis, and interpretation of complex—and often subtle—issues in context but can also minimize the influence of the researcher on participants. Cohen et al. (2007) elaborate on these points when explaining:

The researcher stays with the participants for a substantial period of time to reduce reactivity effects (the effects of the researcher on the researched, changing the behaviour of the latter), recording what is happening, while taking a role in that situation . . . by staying in a situation over a long period the researcher is also able to see how events evolve over time, catching the dynamics of situations, the people, personalities, contexts, resources, roles, etc. (pp. 404–405)

Becoming a temporary member of staff who taught and socialized in Kiswahili meant that I could be viewed by teachers as a participant who observed; but my positioning as a non-Tanzanian researcher always placed me in the default position as an “outsider” or observer who actively participated. Nonetheless, the participant observation that I engaged in enabled me to develop close relationships with the teachers, and this helped to reduce the effect I had on their everyday behavior, as well as on the narratives they provided through the focus groups and interviews.

Participant observer activities such as these can only be had through engaging in an ethnographic approach (although it should be noted that the use of participant observation is not mandatory in ethnographies), and the extent to which it allowed me to minimize my researcher/outsider effects, as well as triangulate and contextualize the teachers' narratives, was extremely helpful in identifying the teachers' valued functionings and constraints, as well as interpreting the gendered nature of their narratives and the meta-narratives surrounding them.

The capability approach is concerned with the range of opportunities available to people and so requires consideration of aspects of well-being that individuals do not necessarily recognize as important to them. The distinction between what an individual values and has reason to value, and how these are linked to their freedom to choose a preferred way of living, is particularly important in capability studies. As Sen (1992) explains, capability assessments:

... must take note of the real freedoms that people in *fact* (not just 'in principle') enjoy. If social conditioning makes a person lack the courage to choose (perhaps even to 'desire' what is denied but what would be valued *if* chosen), then it would be unfair to undertake the ethical assessment *assuming* that she does have that effective choice. It is a matter of concentrating on the real freedoms actually enjoyed, taking note of *all* the barriers – including those from 'social discipline.' (p. 149, original emphases)

Having worked in Tanzania, I was aware that "social discipline" could be enforced from beyond the country (e.g., through the Third World Teacher Discourse) as well as from within it (e.g., through the structure of gender relationships) and that it could shape the teachers' narratives. I wanted to hear the stories they told, including those told through the focus groups and one-to-one interviews, but I also wanted to contextualize them in order to account for "*all* the barriers – including those from 'social discipline'" that prevented the teachers from achieving their valued goals.

Hopes and aspirations may be limited by circumstances, and so what the teachers said they valued may not have apprehended what they had reason to value. I therefore needed a research methodology that could account for this. Ethnography, with its multiple methods and participant observation generating thick data and enabling iterative triangulation, offered the necessary "informational space" (Sen 1992, 1999) for capability analyses addressing the relationships between expressions of valued ways of living and the circumstances surrounding them. Indeed, Comim (2008) argues that capability assessments should begin with an ethnographic approach. The teachers' narratives were most obviously articulated through the focus groups and interviews, but the ethnographic approach I took meant that they could be embedded in and understood through wider data sets. By choosing ethnography as my research methodology, I was able to develop a clearer understanding of how these teachers made sense of their world (Tedlock 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and why they did what they did.

However, it should be noted that there have been some criticisms leveled at the use of ethnography, most notably those that derive from philosophical debates. Broadly speaking, criticisms of ethnographic case studies reside in the epistemological realm whereby ethnography (along with other forms of qualitative research) does not meet the positivist criteria of scientific rigor and validity, as ascertaining

data entails a “subjective” process (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, pp. 6–7). However, Greenbank (2003) posits:

Even before data is analysed, interpreted and presented the researcher’s method of sampling, experimental design or questionnaires are likely to reflect their (often unconscious) values. . . Whilst researchers may attempt to eliminate the effect of bias, they are unlikely to eradicate it totally and therefore this assumption of value-neutral research is flawed. (p. 792)

During the process of data interpretation, I not only attempted to remain reflexive about my biases and world views and how these would affect my interpretations, but I was also aware of the many layers of interpretation that could be had within the data itself. For example, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that participants’ accounts can be scrutinized in the following ways:

First, they can be read for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer. Second, we can analyse them in terms of the perspectives they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even the psychosocial dynamics they suggest. (p. 97)

The participants’ narratives could be interpreted “at face value” as a source of information about the functionings they valued and the constraints they experienced as well as a source that revealed more subtextual perspectives, structures, and discursive practices. My use of multiple research methods generated a variety of data, which aided the construction and interpretation of these more subtextual perspectives. I primarily used the data gleaned from focus group and interview discussions as the foundation for my interpretations, but the data collected from the other methods within my ethnographic approach were used to deepen and nuance my interpretations of teachers’ narratives.

What Was the Role of Interpretation in This Research Study?

Although I aligned myself with the Teacher Advocacy literature because it challenged the notion that teachers are the causes of poor quality education, unfortunately, it sought to position teachers as victims of a flawed system. To make sense of these polarized views, I set out to better understand the relations between teachers’ conditions of service and the behaviors for which they were criticized. Emphasis was given to collecting the personal narratives of teachers as these simultaneously represent how individuals made sense of their lives, the resources they used to tell their stories, and the auspices under which their stories were told (Gubrium and Holstein 1998). However, it is important to understand how particular kinds of narratives function within specific organizational or cultural contexts. By engaging in close, prolonged ethnographic interaction within these contexts, researchers can understand their subjects’ personal narratives, beliefs, and motivations better than with any other approach (Tedlock 2003).

Ethnography typically “involves fairly lengthy contact, through participant observation in relevant settings, and/or through relatively open-ended interviews designed to understand people’s perspectives” (Hammersley 2006, p. 4). However, while this close engagement has clear methodological advantages, particularly in mitigating the effect of the research on the research situation, it does raise potential interpretative problems. Perhaps one of the biggest problems in ethnographic studies is the possibility of the researcher becoming so immersed in the setting that she “goes native” and her interpretations become distorted through the assumption of the cultural perspective of those with whom she is working.

I was aware that my previous experiences as a volunteer in Tanzania had left me dissatisfied with much of the literature on teaching in the Global South and with a great deal of sympathy for the teachers. I was also aware that I needed to exercise care when interpreting the data generated by this research. Researchers are very much embedded in broader social structures and discourses, and they exercise varying degrees of agency within these bounds, just as the people they study (Archer 2007). Given this understanding, it seems that irrespective of design, research can never be value-free and the positivistic claim of “value-neutral research” is misleading at best (Greenbank 2003). Preliminary interpretations occur between the researcher and the participants, which are generally tacit, unconscious, and immediate in nature and are significantly different from the secondary interpretations in which the researcher “does not construct but (further) interprets and explores ‘data’ in depth” (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000, p. 261). I had to negotiate three such types of preliminary interpretations during this study—linguistic, interpersonal, and analytic; each influenced and informed the role of interpretation in this study.

With regard to preliminary linguistic interpretations, the weaknesses in my Kiswahili did at times affect my interpretations of some responses, and there were times when I was unable to probe further if a teacher offered a particularly unusual answer. Also, some of my pre-translations of focus group and interview questions caused some teachers to misinterpret my intended meaning. This is a common situation when conducting research in a different language:

The nuances of interpreting mean that it is not simply a matter of directly replacing words of some language with another. . . In any language, translation rather requires conceptual transferences, and a degree of interpretation on the part of the translator, at all steps in the conversation. (McWilliam et al. 2009, p. 71)

Although I had had a critical friend double-check my pre-translations, it was clear that there were still slippages in translating the meaning of certain concepts, expressions, and ideas. However, once these mistakes were identified, I was able to change wordings for subsequent rounds of data collection. For example, when asking teachers what kinds of choices they had at school, the direct translation of “choice” into Kiswahili was *machaguo*, but when listening to teachers’ answers during discussions, I realized that they were interpreting the word “choice” to mean “priority.” In examining this issue with my critical friend, he suggested I use the word *mapendekezo* instead. This means “suggestion” in English, but given the

conceptual intent behind my question, he insisted that teachers would understand it to mean “choice.”

The interviewees and I consciously and unconsciously gauged and interpreted the personal dynamics during data collection (Gubrium and Holstein 2002). On my part, I was constantly attempting to interpret the participants’ levels of comfort and ease in order to facilitate discussion. On the participants’ part, interpersonal interpretations may have had less to do with how I was feeling or reacting and more to do with their interpretations of my identity, intents, and expectations.

Although this is my interpretation, there were isolated instances where I felt that my positioning as a researcher (from a prosperous country such as the UK) interested in teachers’ challenges seemed to affect the construction of their narratives. For example, some teachers positioned themselves as “victims” while discussing their constraints—so much so that two teachers concluded their victim narratives with an appeal for money (it should be noted that the teachers who petitioned me for money had previously received money from Western volunteers who had worked at their schools and that this past experience may have greatly affected their interpretations and assumptions about myself and what I would be willing to do). Fadzillah (2004) argues that it is crucial for an ethnographic researcher to acknowledge that she is often under as much scrutiny from her research subjects as they are from her and that their “. . . perceptions of the ‘other-ness’ of the researcher have always influenced the type of information made available to that person” (p. 43). In such situations, Hey (1997) suggests the following:

What is required is not only more reflexivity (about who ‘we’ are) but also a more finessed sense of how these power relations (including those of research) shift and are contested by their subjects/objects in the everyday. (p. 49)

Given this perspective, the teachers’ requests for money could be interpreted not as a sign of victimization but one of agency in that they recognized and attempted to use social differences to their advantage. It should be noted, though, that appeals for money by teachers were not the norm. However, I was reminded of the victim positionings within the Teacher Advocacy literature and reflected on whether, and to what extent, the many expositions of teachers’ impoverished working and living conditions (Fry 2002; Bennell and Mukyanuzi 2005; Davidson 2007) were also affected by the interpretation of interpersonal dynamics.

At the analytic level, preliminary interpretations occurred during interviews with respondents providing retrospective interpretations in the form of their narratives. My own preliminary interpretations were more practical in nature in that I was gauging whether and to what extent the participants were understanding and answering my questions and, if there was any dissonance, I had to consider whether this content warranted further investigation or was it the result of a conceptual misunderstanding of my questions. Either way, these forms of preliminary interpretation provided the basis for the more explicit, conscious, and traditionally understood secondary interpretations that came with analyzing the data after the fieldwork phase had been completed.

Interpretative practices informed the judgments I made concerning the framing of the research and the collection and organization of data. The analysis of the individual teachers' narratives and the wider narratives within which they were located then constituted a secondary form of interpretative practice. I was aware that this analytic process could be done in many ways (e.g., to generate interpretations that aligned with the Teacher Advocacy or the other approaches), and so transparency and self-scrutiny were particularly important. In approaching the analysis, I drew from Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) who suggest that such accounts can be scrutinized in the following ways:

First, they can be read for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer. Second, we can analyse them in terms of the perspectives they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even the psychosocial dynamics they suggest. (p. 97)

In attempting to interpret the teachers' narratives during the post-fieldwork analysis, I drew from narrative analysts such as Somers (1994) who discerned broader forms of narrative that both shape and transcend those at the personal level. For example, public narratives are those attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the individual and "range from the narratives of one's family, to those of the workplace (organisational myths), church, government, and nation" (Somers 1994, p. 62), while meta-narratives transcend the group-based boundaries of family, profession, or discipline and "usually operate at a pre-suppositional level of social science epistemology or beyond our awareness" (p. 65). For example, themes regarding gender relations may be viewed as meta-narratives as their discursive origins are obscured through people's often naturalistic and ahistorical understandings of gender roles (Somers 1994).

To distinguish between the public and meta-narratives in the research, I engaged in the process of comparing and contrasting data and interpreted patterns in the content of the female teachers' narratives, focusing in particular on the functionalities they valued, how they articulated these values, how their capabilities (i.e., their substantive freedoms) were constrained, and how they ultimately contended with and negotiated those constraints. As indicated by the excerpts from the interviews with Aisha and Elias, the female teachers often articulated their values through a deficit perspective, whereas their male colleagues typically used an aspirational articulation. Chase (2008, pp. 64–65) endorses the interpretation of narrative data beyond face value, arguing that narratives can be interpreted as a way in which to understand how participants make sense of their own and others' actions, how they perform particular subject positions, and how their particular settings shape their stories.

Ethnography, with its focus on rich contextual data, facilitates such interpretations. However, the practice of interpretation

... does not take place in a neutral, apolitical, ideology-free space. Nor is an autonomous, value-free researcher responsible for it. Various paradigms, perspectives and concepts, as well as research and other political interests, all bring out certain types of interpretation possibilities, at the same time as they suppress others, often under the guise of what is neutral, rational, right and correct. (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000, p. 9)

Ethnography has “always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self – as much of it as possible – as the instrument of knowing” (Ortner 1995, p. 173). If other methodologies distance the researcher from the context, ethnography can bring her too close. That is, there is a fine interpretative line between the imposition of the researcher’s own interests (a concern that initiated this research) and the problem of the researcher “going native.” This problem was mediated through the use of my own narrative fieldwork journal, which was a personal record of the study that included my own feelings and responses to the research process (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

McGee discusses how this reflexive process also plays a part in refining the main research tool—the researcher herself—as it “requires a high level of critical self-awareness, as well as a capacity for self-evaluation, i.e., the recognition of one’s own limits and the willingness to embrace error” (Blackburn and Holland quoted in McGee 2002, p. 21). By vigilantly reflecting on the analyses and findings of this research, the limits of my understanding of the object of study and my socially situated constructions and representations of the object, I engaged in the process of continually improving my ability to problematize the issue of interpretation and representation and the risks that were involved.

At a methodological level, another function of reflexivity is to also improve the quality and trustworthiness of the research practice, as researchers have a mandate to continually analyze the procedures and processes during their fieldwork. According to McGee (2002), “this seeks to instil in researchers a self-critical monitoring of their application of methods” (p. 21). This necessitates being transparent and sensitive to biases governing interpretive practice as well as critically monitoring and evaluating this ongoing process. The key to rigorous interpretation in this ethnographic study, then, was defined by my ability to understand and interpret my own position in this research on the values held by and opportunities available to primary schoolteachers in Tanzania.

Conclusion

This research collected, constructed, and interpreted the narratives of Tanzanian teachers within the broader narrative of ethnography. A parallel narrative—that was constructed from my research journal—facilitated the reflexive process that informed the judgments, interactions, and meaning making that constituted my interpretation of their narratives. The multiple research methods I used to construct the ethnographic case studies facilitated the triangulation that shaped my interpretations of the data, and my extended time in the field enhanced my ability to create trusting relationships with teachers in order to mitigate researcher effects on their narratives. The use of ethnographic case studies enabled a more context-based understanding of the deeper issues that affect teachers’ practice and behavior, which allowed me to

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interpret and construct nuanced explanations for why Tanzanian teachers do what they do in their classrooms.

That said, I was conscious of my ideological and personal locations during my analysis of the data, and these were in the forefront of producing these interpretive explanations. For example, my analytical positioning led to the delineation of two types of narratives: the personal narratives regarding the types of lives that teachers wished to lead and the meta-narratives of the social and institutional structures that conflicted with them. My feminist politics influenced how I interpreted the meta-narrative of unequal gender relations that not only affected how female teachers articulated their personal narratives but also shaped their valued functionings and their constraints. And finally, my personal teaching experiences in Tanzania and theoretical interests in the capability approach and critical realism impacted on my interpretation of how teachers' criticized practices and behaviors (which are constitutive of the Third World Teacher discourse) were actually a product of teachers contending with capability constraint. By reframing teacher practice and behavior in this way, I aimed to provide a more complete and detailed understanding of why teachers do what they do. This may help to stem unproductive "blame or victimize the teacher" mentalities by demonstrating that certain classroom actions are a result of teachers trying to improve their (and their families') well-being. This perspective, of course, is not meant to justify any and all behavior; but what it has done is provide a new, human development-oriented way in which to approach policy and practice aiming to improve teachers' school-based performance.

By offering this interpretation of teachers' behaviors and understanding the underlying generative mechanisms that produce certain empirically apprehended actions, it is possible to see entry points in which measures to improve teachers' professional performance could be seeded. One policy implication is that interventions should acknowledge teachers' causal mechanisms because these are the valued beings and doings that are central to the lives that teachers want to lead; if interventions could aid in the achievement of these functionings, they would also aid in the reduction of some "deficient" behaviors that are associated with their constraint. Secondly, interventions need to account for and address dominant countertendencies (or constraining conversion factors) that teachers face, as this will ground strategies in context, provide pragmatic solutions, and convince teachers that these measures are worth trying. Without acknowledgement of causal mechanisms or countertendencies, it is highly likely that technocratic fixes that attempt to alter certain criticized practices will not be sustained, as teachers will revert to old ways. The reason being, these criticized "old ways" are grounded in the valued functionings and conversion factors that consistently generate much of teachers' behavior.

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The interpretations offered by this study and its theoretical framework aimed to provide a corrective to the reductive, monolithic identities and assumptions fostered within the Third World Teacher Discourse, by providing explicit connections between broader social structures, teachers' values, their contexts, constrained capabilities, and the process in which these combined to produce certain teacher actions. The benefit of reframing teacher performance in this way was that it provided a theoretically grounded account of teacher behavior that was situated in their values and contexts. Such an account not only fostered rigorous and detailed explanations of teacher performance, but the hope is that this may lay the groundwork for more nuanced and creative policies and strategies aimed at improving it.

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1.7 Life History Research and the Interpretation of Working Class Success in Higher Education in the United Kingdom

Michael F. Watts

The Research Project

Life history research explicitly locates the stories people tell of their lives within their wider contexts. The ongoing life history research upon which this chapter is based addresses the enduring issue of access to the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford (commonly elided as Oxbridge) by students from the state maintained sector. It therefore interprets the stories the students told about progressing to Oxbridge through an understanding of their wider educational and sociocultural contexts.

Widening participation—that is, increasing the number of students from historically underrepresented social groups—is a key element of contemporary higher education policy in the UK. However, statistical analyses unremittingly show that access to higher education remains fractured along the lines of social class. Students tend to choose the university they feel most comfortable with because it is populated by people from similar backgrounds (Reay et al. 2005). The significance of this was summed by Lord Dearing who characterized higher education as a catalyst enabling young people to either progress “from privileged pasts to privileged futures or from less privileged pasts to less secure and lower status futures” (Dearing 1997, p. 106). Fifteen years later, successfully extending the franchise of higher education beyond its historic middle class base remains deeply problematic not only in the UK but elsewhere (Tilak 2002; Giroux and Giroux 2004; Yorke and Longden 2004; Côté and Allahar 2007; Rothblatt 2007; van Stolk et al. 2007). This necessarily generates questions concerning the interpretation of student identities and the real options young people have when it comes to making important educational choices. It also raises questions about the use of life history research as a means of enabling these interpretations.

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Statistical studies show that young people from working class backgrounds in the UK who achieve the same A level grades are significantly less likely to progress to the more prestigious universities than those from middle class backgrounds (Sutton Trust 2000, 2004). That is, decisions about which university to attend—or, particularly in the case of working class students, decisions about whether or not to attend university—are typically dependent on more than academic achievements. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu considered this concern in terms of what he called “cultural capital” (1993, 1996, 2000; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Cultural capital is more than the possession of obvious academic resources such as formal qualifications: it includes the accumulated benefits of the individual’s social background (such as the type of school attended), accents, confidence, and the possession and knowledge of cultural objects such as books and the “high culture” of the arts. This cultural capital has a significant influence on the individual’s interpretation of her identity and of her sense of legitimacy in educational institutions. It also informs much of the research on access to higher education in the UK. Typically, that research is concerned with the reasons why students from less privileged backgrounds struggle to progress to university in general and to the more prestigious universities in particular.

The research concluded that these students had greater agency than is usually attributed to them but that their substantive freedoms to progress to Oxbridge were severely restrained and typically made possible only through the serendipitous interventions of others. That is, it articulated with most of the research on higher education but provided a different interpretation of the students’ agency.

The Focus of the Research

The issue of self-deselection is particularly pronounced in the context of Oxbridge which is typically seen as not only being academically elite but also socially exclusive—a finishing school for the sons and daughters of the rich and powerful. Fewer than one in ten students in the UK attend fee-paying schools (a figure which serves here as an index to social elitism), but approximately half of the UK students progressing to Oxbridge attend such schools. Oxbridge is often used by politicians and policymakers as a litmus test for the widening participation agenda, and the sense of exclusivity is exacerbated by the media which regularly offers stories on the bright state school student failing to secure a place. All this contributes to the wide-held belief that it is out of the reach of students from less privileged backgrounds. In turn, this informs the interpretation of academic studies: if you look for the reasons state-educated students do not progress to Oxbridge (which, it should be made clear, is an important and legitimate focus), you are likely to find them.

However, it can be argued that the accumulation of such studies has generated a normative heuristic framework that operates on this understanding: state-educated students do not progress to Oxbridge. Bourdieu’s work provides a reasonable account of the cultural mechanisms that indirectly produce social order and make individuals

complicit in the reproduction of educational inequalities. Yet his work—or, rather, the way in which it is often put to use in interpreting these inequalities—is liable to charges of overdetermination. It fails to account for working class success, and the suggestion that working class students who do progress to elite institutions are “lucky survivors” (Ball et al. 2002; Reay et al. 2005) is of particular concern as it smothers their agency with the inertia of social structures. The research used the capability approach (Sen 1992, 1999; Nussbaum 2000) which focuses on the substantive freedoms individuals have to choose and lead the good life to interrogate the Bourdieusian analyses that deny the agency of these “lucky survivors.”

It focused on state-educated students who do successfully progress to Oxbridge. That is, its concern was with what enables appropriately qualified students to get in rather than with what keeps them out. It was driven by three key research questions: What conditions shape the identities of widening participation students in relation to Oxbridge? What substantive freedoms do they have to recognize and act upon their entitlement to progress there? What resources are needed to enhance these freedoms and what circumstances are required for the students to use these resources? Looking to provide a workable account of what is needed to facilitate successful progression rather than further entrench failure, the research therefore sought to identify what allows state-educated students to focus on what they have rather than what they lack when considering their higher education choices. At the practical level, this would enable the development of interventions that can promote widening participation. At the theoretical level, it would enable the retheorization of the access debate, shifting the focus away from the notion of lucky survivors to agents taking greater control of their own lives. The purpose was not simply to learn *of* the students’ agential experiences but to articulate them with the structures through which they moved in order to learn *from* those experiences. That is, the research sought to inform aspects of the access debate by illuminating salient issues (including those that may not be addressed in the statistics or that exist only in anecdotal form).

Identifying Sources

The central focus of the project was to understand these issues from the perspectives of students who had successfully progressed from the state sector to Oxbridge. The research was concerned with the breadth of the student experience rather than its typicality and required “thick descriptions” that would generate rich data sets. The life history approach that had been chosen for this purpose links agency and structure and necessitated engagement with two broad sources of that data—the one addressing the agency of the students and the other the social structures within which they moved.

The underlying presumption was that the students would be able to provide the clearest insights into what enabled them to successfully negotiate the social structures that typically impede progression from the state sector to Oxbridge, and so from the outset, it was intended to use life histories. These would allow the students to articulate the stories of their lives and how they perceived their progress to

Oxbridge. However, it was necessary to decide which students to work with: those from less and more privileged backgrounds would have different stories to tell, and these stories would offer different interpretations of the access debate. As the research was concerned with the ongoing problems of widening participation, it was decided that the research should focus on state-educated students only. The different educational and sociocultural contexts of state-educated students with the same exam results tend to influence their progression to higher education, and so it was decided that the life histories of students with relatively more and less cultural capital should be compared. It was presumed (and turned out to be the case) that at least some of these students would have levels of cultural capital similar to privately educated students and that this would enable the research to take into account the sense of inheritance that continues to bedevil the issue of access. It was also decided to work only with students who had successfully progressed to Oxbridge. This was partly a practical concern (it was easy to identify and locate them) and partly because this would allow the research to engage with what enabled them to negotiate the barriers they encountered.

Although a vital source of data, the students could only offer partial views—partial in both senses of being incomplete and of being biased—of the social structures generating these barriers. It was therefore necessary to turn to other sources to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these structures. These sources included quantitative and qualitative studies addressing access rates, exam results, and the student experience from various bodies including government departments and agencies, the two universities, and research institutes. Given the high public profile of Oxbridge and the part it plays in the wider public consciousness, data was also sourced from the media and from fictional representations in books and film.

These sources were all explicitly identified. However, behind them all was a tacit source—my own experience of having been a widening participation student at Oxford (albeit at a time before the phrase had gained common currency), which inevitably informed my engagement with and understanding of these other data sources.

The Research Data

The main concern here is the conduct of the life history interviews that were used to generate data illuminating the substantive freedoms of the students to recognize and act upon the value of their progression to Oxbridge. Accessing Oxbridge was conceptualized as a process rather than simply an end result to be looked back upon and the data sets needed to apprehend this. Life history research locates the stories people tell of their lives in their wider contexts (here, their educational and sociocultural contexts). As such, they can be seen as the little stories individuals tell of their lives within the bigger stories going on around them. Each life history therefore requires sufficient and appropriate data to tell and to link both the little and big stories. When integrated through the life history methodology, these two

sets of stories generate data locating the individual life stories within the wider structures that frame them.

The stories told by the research participants in face-to-face interviews generated the data about their lives. That is, it provided the data that would constitute their life stories and that would be transformed into their life histories. These interviews addressed factual issues (e.g., what schools they attended and their exam results), their experiences and interpretations of general and specific events (such as how they had experienced their schooling and how they felt their schools had helped them progress to Oxbridge), and reflections upon decisions (most obviously, the decision to apply). Such interviews assume that individuals have the best understanding of how they experience their own lives and their own stories therefore give a clearer insight into their lives than other accounts such as formal records (e.g., school reports).

A second presumption is that the accounts are truthful, although Bruner (1990) notes the “factual indifference” of narrative research because it retains illuminative power whether the accounts are real or imaginary. However, truth is taken to be contingent, and because its constructions are subjective, it may sometimes be necessary to corroborate interview data. In some instances, this merely required clarification during the interview. For example, students described classroom disruptions that ranged from peers talking back to the teachers to large-scale fights. Both can be seen as disruptive, but there is clearly a significant difference between the disruptions. In other cases, it was sometimes necessary to seek external corroboration. When talking about the overall academic track record of their schools, for example, students sometimes over- or understated these achievements because their interpretations of good and bad exam results had shifted through the subsequent comparison of their own schools with those sending higher proportions of students to Oxbridge.

As Goodson and Sikes note, “without contextual commentary on issues of time and space, life stories remain uncoupled from the conditions of their social construction. This, above all, is the argument for life histories rather than life stories” (2001, p. 17). The individual interviews contributed much of the data pertaining to these social constructions through, for example, the students’ interpretations of their own schooling and of the widening participation agenda. Comparisons between individual life stories provided information on the lack of cultural capital to be incorporated where appropriate. The aggregated data sets generated by the interviews also contributed to the bigger story framing these life stories. Further data was obtained from other research (including both qualitative and quantitative research), policy documents, and other sources such as the media and Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) reports on the students’ schools.

Preparing to Obtain the Data

The purpose of the interviews was to generate a rich data set detailing the lives of the students as they progressed towards Oxbridge. Interviews were conducted with selected students who were invited to tell the stories of their lives. More

specifically, they were asked to tell the stories of their lives as they led to Oxbridge. Stories can be told in many ways, and narrative is, therefore, a vague concept (Kvernbekk 2003). However, narrative research requires focus, and there is a need for research participants to establish their authority to speak on the issues at hand (Phoenix 2008). Their narratives should be relevant to those issues (Griffiths and Macleod 2009, p. 128), and this requires the researcher to provide the necessary guidance through the conduct of the interviews. Goodson et al. (2010) may simply invite people to tell the stories of their lives, but this can be disquieting and the narrator may well—as sometimes happened in this research—require prompting to realize their narrative capital (Watts 2008). Moreover, the research required a specific story: that of their progression to Oxbridge.

A further concern is that narrators may be unlikely to talk about what has not happened in their lives. A pertinent example here was the level of support the students had received from their schools and colleges: if that support had been absent, they may have needed prompting to talk about the effects of its absence (although in this particular context it was such a “hot topic” that all participants spoke about it at length). The framework for the interviews was therefore structured around a limited number of open-ended questions intended to elicit detailed responses. However, to settle the students into the interviews, the initial questions addressed factual issues (e.g., schools attended, exam results, parental background). That is, they were questions the students could easily answer. These then led into the stories of their lives, and to facilitate the sense of progression, they were invited to describe them in chronological order. They were then asked to reflect on the widening participation agenda, especially in terms of accessing Oxbridge, and to relate that understanding to their own experiences.

Key analytic issues had been identified from the literature, but the interviews needed to engage with them in a way that the students would understand. That is, these analytic issues needed a demotic or everyday interpretation. After all, the interviews were intended to elicit stories rather than academic accounts. These stories, though, needed to address the different understandings the students had of their progression to Oxbridge. In inviting the students to tell the stories of their lives, the interviews needed to give them room for description and discussion. A central concern with the realization of the widening participation agenda is the relative lack of capital possessed by students from less privileged backgrounds. Articulating the absence of educational resources and opportunities can be difficult, and so the interview framework made room for the students to reflect on what would have made their progression to Oxbridge easier.

The interview schedule was kept deliberately flexible to allow for the expected reflections on the highly personal nature of educational experiences as well as the unexpected stories that were likely to emerge. It was anticipated—or, rather, it was intended—that the interviews would generate more data than would be used. This, though, is the inevitable consequence of the production of the rich data sets that are the hallmark of life history research.

Obtaining the Data

To keep the project manageable, it was necessary to select a smaller number of students from the considerably larger number willing to take part. These students were then interviewed, the interviews were transcribed in full, and the raw data were converted into the life stories that informed the construction of the students' life histories.

Recruitment of participants was in two phases. In the initial phase, it was intended to work through just two colleges (one each at Cambridge and Oxford) and interview 12 students at each to provide the necessary "saturation" (Goodson and Sikes 2001, pp. 22–25) required to incorporate the experiences of a diverse range of state-educated students. It also addressed a number of practical considerations (e.g., working with individual colleges made recruitment more manageable because it meant dealing with several hundred rather than several thousand potential participants). The second phase was based on the assumption that insufficient numbers of students from lower socio-economic and/or ethnic minority backgrounds (i.e., those most underrepresented at Oxbridge) would be recruited in the first phase (an assumption that proved correct). These additional students were to be recruited by "snowballing"—asking existing participants and university-based access schemes to identify other students who were then invited to participate. A further seven participants were recruited in this second phase.

To assist in the initial selection of participants, students were asked to provide brief summaries of key points such as the type of school attended and parental backgrounds. In one sense, the selection criteria was simple: with a focus on breadth rather than typicality of experience, the lists of students willing to take part in the project were whittled down by choosing those representing the greatest diversity of experiences. In practice, this was necessarily more difficult because each student had a tale worth telling. The atypicality of some students (such as being the only applicant from their school) made them immediately obvious choices. From there, further participants were selected to maintain the diversity of experience and the balance of gender and subjects studied. Eventual imbalances resulted from the participation of students from the second phase of recruitment and were reasonably assumed to reflect the underrepresentation at Oxbridge of students from certain social groups.

Selected participants were interviewed individually. The purpose of the project was explained to them, and they were invited to review and agree to the ethical guidelines (Bridges et al. 2007) governing the research. The interviews, which were tape recorded, were semi-structured and all assumed the same format. Participants were first asked to provide basic factual data—family composition, schools attended, GCSE and A level results (the exams typically taken at 16 and 18 in England), and so on—to settle them into the interview situation. They were then asked to describe their sociocultural and educational backgrounds, what led them to consider Oxbridge and their experiences of applying to and being at Oxbridge. Having provided their life stories, they were then invited to begin the

co-construction of their life histories by considering what they had described in relation to the classed nature of education.

The raw data were converted into shorter stories which, together with an outline of the initial analysis, were sent to the participants for their comment and approval.

The Processes Followed

The interviews, some of which lasted for up to 8 h, resulted in a considerable volume of data that filled two A4 box files to overflowing when transcribed. Moreover, in its unrefined form, the data was (as was to be expected) at best punctuated by the repetitions, deviations, and hesitations of ordinary conversation, and “at worst” (where the cautionary apostrophes indicate the time required to organize the enriched data) all over the place as the students recalled, refined, and reflected upon additional aspects of their stories. It therefore needed to be organized into a series of cogent life stories. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the research protocols required that the students approve the data for use in the research (a standard concern, particularly in qualitative research, but one that is especially important in life history research given that it is highly personal and could lead to the identification of the participants). As the students had already spent a lot of time being interviewed, it would be unreasonable to expect them to plow through the direct transcripts of their interviews. There are practical considerations to this, too: This stage of the research offered students the opportunity to add to their stories if they so wanted. Secondly, it was necessary to make the data manageable prior to the analytic shift from life stories to life histories.

The distinction between the two is important because although the process of translating the interview data into life stories required some analysis—perhaps most obviously in deciding what should be left out—this was a matter of refining rather than fully analyzing the data. For example, some of the students over- or under-emphasized the significance of the cultural capital they possessed. Yet life history research is a collaborative endeavor between the researcher and the research participants, and it was therefore necessary to see the data as the students saw it rather than rushing ahead to its full analysis. Nonetheless, generating the life stories demanded an initial analysis of the individual and aggregated interviews to identify the key points to be incorporated into each story.

Identifying key moments—what Denzin (1989b) and Kearney (2003) term epiphanies—in the lives of these students was an essential part of interpreting the data in such a way that it could be used to facilitate the subsequent life history analyses (see also Lieblich et al. 1998). When and how did they first recognize that they could progress to Oxbridge? However, the interview data was suffused with the everyday small details of the students’ lives, and these needed tracking because they added up to the accumulation and recognition of the capital they possessed. Having ascertained the content of each story, including the idiosyncratic descriptions around these key moments, a common plot was decided upon to provide a framework for organizing each transcript in such a way that universal and individual concerns could be

incorporated. Structuring the stories around a chronological progression through sociocultural and educational contexts apprehended not only the accumulation of experience but its significance. As far as possible, they made use of the participants' various idiolects to offer greater authenticity.

The Frameworks Used

The research made use of two analytic frameworks: Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of education (1993, 1996, 2000; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) and the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (1992, 1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000). Both are concerned with the influence of structure on agency and so anticipate the shift from life story to life history.

Bourdieu's work, which informs much of the literature on widening participation, addresses the cultural mechanisms that indirectly produce social order and restraint and that tend to make individuals complicit in the reproduction of social inequalities produced in and by education. His analytic toolkit—including the concepts of field, capital, and habitus—offers a means of linking macro level structures to micro level processes by interrogating the self-held truths of social phenomena that “[lead] one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 471). These conceptual tools link the possession of resources, particularly those inherited and acquired by the individual in her youth, to the mental dispositions that generate her understanding of what it is reasonable to expect (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p. 226) and so sanction the perpetuation of relative advantage and disadvantage. However, while it provides a reasonable account of those processes, its focus on educational outcomes leaves it susceptible to charges of over determination that can de-emphasize agential choice. In this Oxbridge context, the argument that Bourdieu's sociology fails to account for working class educational successes (Moore 2004) and the suggestion that those working class students who do progress to elite institutions are “lucky survivors” (Ball et al. 2002) are of particular concern.

The capability approach has its origins in development economics and Aristotelian and Marxist philosophies. It is used to address the issue of human well-being which is considered in terms of the substantive freedoms individuals have to choose and lead the lives they value and have reason to value. It does not consider resources to be important in themselves but in what they enable the individual to do in pursuit of what they understand to be the good life. The focus on freedom means that it recognizes opportunity rather than just outcome and therefore makes room for greater agency in educational evaluations. So, for example, it would take into account the freedom state-educated students have to progress to Oxbridge even if they choose not to pursue that option. However, the key to such well-being assessments is that options should be viable and although it de-emphasizes the importance of resources and the capital they signify, the capability approach acknowledges that a certain amount of visible consumption is necessary for the

individual to take part in the life of a given community (here, the community of Oxbridge). It therefore takes account of the problems arising from the social construction of resources (inter alia, Sen 1999, p. 71), but the capability approach typically leaves education under-theorized.

These frameworks were used to complement each other, each engaging with the analytical and conceptual shortcomings of the other. If Bourdieusian analyses of the progression to higher education typically incorporate rigid interpretations of cultural capital, the capability approach has been criticized for failing to pay proper attention to the social structures which influence the relative value of educational commodities and the consequent freedom individuals have to make use of them. Taken together, these two frameworks enabled a focus on both the agency of the students and the social structures surrounding them.

Interpreting the Results

Widening participation in the UK—particularly as it relates to elite universities such as Cambridge and Oxford—is a highly politicized arena. The issues are not merely embedded in the social structures that influence individual agency but are regularly aired by politicians and in the press. The initial analyses were hardly unexpected: these students valued Oxbridge, their relative lack of cultural capital typically disadvantaged them, and the schools, colleges, families, and friends all had a significant impact upon their own perceptions of their opportunities to progress to Oxbridge. However, the “life story is the *current* interpretation of one’s past” (Goodson et al. 2010, p. 7). Some students from very atypical backgrounds, for example, had experienced relatively few problems because of significant support from their schools and colleges which meant the wider structural issues were sometimes downplayed in their narratives. Similarly, students from less disadvantaged backgrounds sometimes overemphasized the influence of those structures upon their progression. These stories were all important at the individual level but needed to be interpreted as life histories—which demanded attention to the wider social structures framing them—to usefully inform the access debate as life histories. Taken together, though, they still offered a counter-discourse to most of the research on widening participation.

The common thread running through all these life histories was the recognition that the academic and cultural capital possessed by the students had legitimacy in the Oxbridge subfield. Typically, this recognition arose from comparisons with students who had already progressed to Oxbridge from similar backgrounds. As most of the students taking part in this research had not moved in circles where this was the norm, such class matching had been enabled by interventions engineered by their schools and colleges or through their own initiatives. However, these interventions did not invest the students with any additional academic or cultural capital, and their apparent capital shortfall remained. Typical Bourdieusian analyses were therefore becoming less helpful. Further analyses, prompted by the capability

approach, focused on the perceptions the students had of their capital and how they saw it in relation to that possessed by contemporary Oxbridge students from nontraditional and traditional backgrounds. What emerged was not tangible—no additional academic capital, no more cultural capital—but the intangible confidence apprehended by Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital (2000). This was then used to reanalyze the stories of the students and to clarify that they had recognized the legitimacy of their academic and cultural capital.

The next stage was to collate the acquisition of these three forms of capital and, in particular, to determine under what conditions the academic and cultural capital obtained symbolic significance in relation to the Oxbridge subfield. This enabled the identification of the opportunities these students had to attain the formal entry-level requirements that made Oxbridge a viable option and the sociocultural conversion factors—the cultural and symbolic capital—to make use of their academic capital in progressing there. The final stage of the capability analysis was to look beyond the opportunities they had to achieve this educational well-being and consider their substantive freedoms to progress to Oxbridge. The data sets highlighted the difficulties many of these students had in making use of their academic resources, and these problems were located in the wider literature which reiterated the paucity of sustained interventions available to those in most need of them. The final analysis addressed the importance of these interventions in enabling appropriately qualified students from the state sector to focus on the capital they possessed rather than that which they lacked.

Presenting the Results

The research focused on the opportunities of state-educated students to progress to Oxbridge, and although it highlighted the barriers such students must negotiate, it was always likely to be at odds with most research addressing this issue. That is, it was a heterodox interpretation of the widening participation agenda. In a highly politicized context such as this, the practical implications of the research—that not all appropriately qualified state-educated students are able and willing to progress to Oxbridge—are susceptible to polarized interpretation: the opportunities for some call attention to the lack of opportunities for others. It was, therefore, considered necessary to present the research and its results in a way that would enable it to withstand the critical scrutiny not only of the research participants but of academic peers. Even if there is disagreement with the overall interpretation and analyses (something I am usually reminded of when presenting the results at conferences), it remains important that their validity is acknowledged if the research is to inform the policy debate or serve the more self-serving agenda of being recognized through academic publications (and self-serving though this may be, it serves as a reminder that the interpretation of research needs to be defensible).

The research methodology had been specifically chosen to fill in the gaps between the statistical numbers highlighting the enduring problem of progression

from the UK's state schools to Oxbridge. Life histories locate the stories individuals tell within their relevant contexts and so acknowledge the co-related power of both agency and structure. The research was (and occasionally still is) presented in a way that mirrored its methodological justification in order to engage rather than alienate the potential readership.

Having summarized the problems of widening participation in general and in relation to Oxbridge, the main research report therefore presented a selection of the *life stories* illustrating the progression of these students to Oxbridge. These were deliberately arranged from the stories of the most to the least privileged students taking part in the research in order to signal the advantages of the former and the disadvantages of the latter—that is, anticipating the shift to the *life histories* addressed through the contextual discussions. Individually and together, these stories enabled the reader to view it through the eyes of the students. However, although the stories described that progression, they did not fully engage with the social structures framing it. Again, this was perhaps most obvious in the over- or underemphasis of the significance of the academic and cultural capital the students possessed. Nevertheless, as the access debate necessarily turns upon the real experiences of real students, such stories provide the key to understanding the issues these students need to negotiate.

This context was provided by a series of specific case studies addressing the issues of elitism at Oxbridge, perceptions of academic ability and social suitability, and the interventions (or lack of them) made available to these students. Each case drew on the wider research literature to frame the problem and the accounts of the students to illustrate its potential for negotiation. The life histories were then addressed by relating the stories of these six selected students to the cases in terms of that which inhibited and enabled their progress to Oxbridge. This presentational framework therefore not only replicated the life history methodology but enabled the reader to ascertain the validity of my interpretations while giving room for other interpretations informed by the research.

The Reasons for Choosing Life Histories

Thomas and Znaniecki suggest that life histories—what they describe as “life records, as complete as possible”—are the “perfect type of sociological material” for apprehending abstracted laws concerning individuals in society (1918–20, pp. 1831–33). This is a bold claim but one that has some merit. Life histories locate the stories told by individuals in their wider socioeconomic, political, and historical contexts (Goodson and Walker 1991; Hatch and Wisniewski 1995; Antikainen et al. 1996; Dominicé 2000; Cole and Knowles 2001; Goodson and Sikes 2001; Kearney 2003; Dhunpath and Samuel 2009; Goodson and Gill 2011). Life stories allow us to learn *of* individuals whereas life histories allow us to learn *from* them: they provide a means of understanding social structures from the perspective of the agents moving through them and so offer greater insight into the complex

relationships between agency and structure. In the context of this research project, the successes of the students are celebrated through their life stories but understood through their life histories.

The orthodox story told in most research accounts, as well as by certain politicians and some sections of the media, is that state-educated students, especially those from working class backgrounds, are excluded from Oxbridge by social structures that sometimes present as undisguised disdain. The extant research literature typically turns to the backgrounds of these students to explain their nonparticipation. This research set out to generate and theorize a counterstory that would enable a clearer understanding of how such students do succeed in getting to Oxbridge. Although their stories are sometimes told, they are usually decontextualized, perpetuating the notion that they are lucky survivors and reproducing the illusion of cultural destiny. The research was concerned more with opportunity than outcome, and this demanded an appropriate focus on the wider contexts of the stories the students told. The decision to apply to Oxbridge may be triggered by a single event, but the interpretation of such events needs to recognize choice-making processes as evolving from the accumulation of experience and opportunity. Addressing the research questions therefore required a deep understanding of the lives of the students and the social forces shaping their interpretations of their own identities in relation to the Oxbridge subfield. That is, the stories the students told of their lives needed to be located in the wider stories of the social structures framing their individual accounts. Life history research was, therefore, a clear methodological choice.

Narrative research offers a means of filling in the gaps between the statistical numbers, but narrative analyses do not always fit into neat summations, and this makes it “imperative to attend with care to what other people are saying, especially if they use unfamiliar idioms and speak to us from socially subordinate positions” (Rosaldo 1989, p. 148). Concerns and experiences which may seem irrelevant may be anything but if only they could be listened to properly. The agential choices and personal valuations that influence access to higher education do not appear from nowhere when the individual begins to consider her post-18 opportunities but emerge from lifelong evolutionary processes embedded in social structures. Decisions made in the here-and-now are dependent upon decisions made in the past, and current opportunities are delimited by the accumulation of previous opportunities taken or missed. At the most obvious level, higher education choices are limited by entry-level requirements. However, Bourdieu’s work shows that academic capital is typically subsumed by cultural capital and that students are more likely to choose the universities that are most likely to choose them. Orthodox choices are generated by individual and social histories, and heterodox choices, such as those that were the focus of this research, therefore demand a greater understanding of those histories. The research necessitated detailed data concerning their progression to Oxbridge, including their perceptions of the journey, and this demanded some form of narrative research.

Narrative research is concerned with addressing cultural complexities. It does not only give voice to those who may not otherwise be heard, but it does enable

different understandings of data to be elicited and illuminated (Cortazzi 1993; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Watts 2008). It gives insight into how strangers relocate in new societies (Chamberlayne et al. 2002; Ting and Watts 2009) and so has great potential for understanding how the widening participation agenda is experienced. It presumes that the generalizable objectives of other research paradigms cannot fully apprehend the way in which people experience, interpret, and negotiate the complexities of their lives. In the context of much of the research concerning progression to Oxbridge, such understandings are framed (albeit not necessarily in these Bourdieusian terms) by the position of students in the field of higher education which is determined by the capital they possess. The students taking part in this research may have been relatively impoverished (with the important caveat being that this impoverishment is relative to their Oxbridge peers), but their actions were not fully determined by this. They maintained considerable control over their lives, albeit within the habitual parameters of the field.

Forms of narrative research offer powerful testimony and have the potential to influence policy (Griffiths and Macleod 2009; Perry et al. 2010). Indeed, this particular research was partially prompted by the highly publicized story of Laura Spence, a high-achieving state-educated student who was turned down for a place at Oxford, which had such a considerable impact on the framing of higher education policy and practice under the previous Labour government (Watts 2002, 2009; King 2003; Rothblatt 2007). For some, the focus on the thoughts and feelings of the individual story teller is important (Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Chamberlayne et al. 2002; Andrews et al. 2008; Bathmaker and Harnett 2010), but this risks decontextualizing their stories and so either valorizing their acceptance of the social order or downplaying their engagement with it. Thinking small emphasizes the significance of the idiosyncratic interplay of circumstances, but these are played out in the field of wider social structures. A one-to-one correspondence between the stories people tell and the identities that affect their agency cannot be assumed (Sclater 2003; Craib 2004; Phoenix 2008), and there is therefore a need to avoid the dichotomy of thinking small and thinking big. The decontextualized valorization of individual stories may fail to account for the individual's struggle through the social structures pressing upon her and a failure to understand that struggle predicates a failure to address future challenges to the power of orthodox hierarchies. As Atkinson and Delamont (2006a, b) suggest, narrative needs to be rescued from the excesses of qualitative research.

The case of Laura Spence indicated the potential for biographical stories to generate public response and debate, but it also indicated the potential for anecdotes told in the media to be misused (Watts 2002, 2009). Her individuality was, by turns, pulled across the political arena and then lost: "I can't really comment any further," she told one newspaper at the time, "because it has got so political." In this sense, she was disenfranchised twice: first by rejection and then by the uses to which her story was put. There is no view from nowhere (Nagel 1986), and she was held up as both the victim of privilege and as a poor representative of widening participation students. Her life story—which was so much more than the scraps thrown around by the press and politicians—required context. However, the increasing popularity of

narrative research has blurred the distinctions between life histories and other forms of narrative research and life writing.

The use of little stories to understand bigger issues (Griffiths 2002, 2003; Hulme 2004; Tierney 2010) offers a “means of access to social reality, signifying the worlds through which people have moved” (Freeman 2004, p. 69). It provides insights into their agency and challenges orthodox interpretations of the production and reproduction of social inequalities measured out (in educational fields) by cultural capital. Rather than being “merely ornamental, a dab of local color, protagonists’ narratives about their own conduct merit serious attention of social analysis” (Rosaldo 1989, p. 142). The insights they generate have the potential to allow the analyst to avoid becoming complicit in the reproduction of social inequality. However, understanding the significance of individual life stories—of how students feel, act, respond, and so on—can only ever be partial if the structures that frame them are backgrounded. There is, then, a need to engage with the complexities generated by life stories in their contexts.

The experience of social structures may form the narrative of the life story, but analyses of social structures may not be part of the research participant’s worldview (although the highly public nature of the access debate typically generated such understandings in this research). The influence of these structures upon their stories as they are told may therefore go unacknowledged. Yet the deep social structures that underwrite individual stories mean that even the most idiosyncratic of accounts can never be wholly unique. These structures leave marks on the individual’s story even though that story may tell different ways of dealing with them. Here, for example, the students each had their own stories to tell, but each story had a common plot: the student’s progression to Oxbridge followed in the footsteps of those who had preceded them and their predecessors had marked out the route with the signifiers of their own experiences which all reified the social structures impeding the progress of these students. Significantly, these structures are there even if the individual does not notice them (and I had missed them until I took up my studies at Oxford).

So, although narratives may be important in understanding the individual, they can also be limiting if they are separated out from their various contexts. Life history research can enhance the narrative capital of individual (Watts 2008), but unless those narratives are contextualized, they may become nothing more than celebrations of the individual’s life. Such celebrations have a part to play—but not, I would suggest, in researching progression to higher education. What is it that they celebrate? In the wider literature, the subordination of working class students with high aspirations? In this research, their barefaced luck? If the life story individualizes and personalizes experience, the life history contextualizes and politicizes it.

Ignoring the political aspect of contextualizing life stories invites the “sometimes breathless” postmodern celebration of diversity that “often avoids uncomfortable issues of values in favour of an empty rhetoric of pluralism” (Kearney 2003, p. 48). Context enables the analysis of what, in the language of the capability approach, the individual has reason to value and of her substantive freedoms—that is, her capability—to choose how she lives her life. It offers insight into what is important

to her and what real chance she has of achieving it. These are highly idiosyncratic concerns which life histories can illuminate by seeking to understand the character of the individual in the context of her past as it is shaped by the structural forces acting upon her (Goodson 1995; Järvinen 2004). The interpretative need to avoid the dichotomy of big and small stories means that life histories offer a means of rigorously examining the connections between “the lives and stories of individuals [and] the understanding of larger human and social phenomena” (Hatch and Wisniewski 1995, p. 113). The smaller stories told by individuals are framed by the bigger stories being told around them with each informing and illuminating the other. However, while it may seem that the bigger stories tend towards continuity rather than change (and no more so, perhaps, than in this context of accessing Oxbridge), it should be remembered that they comprise all the smaller stories that are told and that close attention to individual lives offers the potential to reveal dynamic new plots.

The orthodox storyline of widening participation, particularly the Bourdieusian storyline that provides the cultural context within which the stories told by the students are located here, is one that writes of—or perhaps even writes off—working class success as the good fortune of lucky survivors. Yet what emerges from these life histories is a far greater sense of agency that demands reconsideration of the orthodox Bourdieusian analyses that typically plot the nonreflective acquiescence in the reproduction of inequalities found in so much of the widening participation literature. The life stories of the students told of their individual experiences but constructing their life histories allowed a deeper understanding of the structures framing those experiences and so offers a means of challenging the structural inequalities these students had to negotiate.

The Role of Interpretation in This Research

It is, perhaps, appropriate that a chapter on life history research should be contextualized by my own story. In brief, then, I left a reasonably good school at sixteen and worked for 7 years before successfully applying to Oxford to read English. Key chapters in this story include: sufficient interest in my subject to have pursued it A level (the traditional preuniversity exams taken at 17–18) in my own time; considerably less interest in my employment, which meant that I was looking for a change of career at the time I took my A levels; and a social network that included teachers who advised me on my educational options and encouraged me to consider university. Also, although the story only tells this through omission, by leaving school I missed the sixth form (the post-compulsory, pre-university phase of education when students typically study for and take their A level exams) where so many of the classificatory processes that influence university choice take place. Many years later, having returned yet again to education, I was looking for a substantive research area for my PhD studies when Laura Spence’s story made

the national headlines. The rest, as they say, is history—and that history informed my interpretation of the research.

The highly personal nature of life history research, together with the tendency for interviews to last several hours and more, emphasizes many issues of interpretation that are pertinent to other forms of qualitative research. Researching life histories involves working through palimpsests of life as it is perceived by those taking part in the research—including the researcher—and the remarkably rich data sets generated by life history research are therefore suffused with interpretations which will always be partial. Importantly, such partiality references both the incomplete understanding of the social world generated through the research and the biases of the participants and the researcher. The very nature of life history research means that stories must be interpreted through ethical frameworks (Bridges 2003; Ramrathan 2009; Sikes 2010) and these should include a commitment to authenticity and verisimilitude in the generation, selection, and contextualization of data as well as the acknowledgement of its epistemological limitations.

Narrative enquiry is “a collaborative method of telling stories, reflecting on stories, and (re)writing stories” (Leavy 2009, p. 27). Life histories are constructed from subjective perceptions revealed in the ways individuals tell stories about their lives and learning and “in researching life histories there is a temptation to ascribe meanings to previous events to explain present lives” (Harnett 2010, p. 167). Researchers, too, may be tempted, and this requires recognition of the interpretive symbiosis of the research: the researcher begins by interpreting the brief and conveying a particular understanding of it through the explanations and questions put to the participants whose interpretation of the research shapes the stories they tell which are then analyzed and interpreted by the researcher.

The influence of my own story can be seen in the empathy that informed my understanding of the widening participation agenda. However, sympathy (or the countervailing antipathy) can exert a considerable influence on the coherence of the narrative of the research itself: within the meta-contextual questions about the purpose of higher education and the stratification of the sector, for example, there is a subtle but very significant difference between research questions addressing the problem of getting students from working class backgrounds into elite universities and those concerned with the problems of them being kept out.

Narrative research can be seen as reflecting the human need for coherence and the investment of what we do and what we value with meaning (Bruner 1990). These are matters of interpretation, which necessarily inform the construction of the life history. The students were not simply asked for a description of their lives but to evaluate their experiences, and this necessarily involved contextualization: how does anyone attribute value, particularly when addressed in terms of choice and freedom, except through interpretative comparisons? These narrative contexts were bound by their understandings of their circumstances, and there were, for example, significant differences in the evaluations made by middle class students who were the first to apply to Oxbridge from their schools and working class students from schools providing enough effective support to send several students to Oxbridge every year. These assessments were inevitably made in the knowledge of what had

happened since: classed references in particular, often made through comparisons with the reported experiences of their more privileged peers, littered their accounts.

This meant that the events the students described in their stories had already been interpreted through their increasing awareness of the contexts framing them. Salient issues (such as family backgrounds and the support—or lack of it—from their schools and colleges) had been rehearsed through conversations with old and new friends. Moreover, the issue of widening participation, particularly as it relates to accessing Oxbridge, has been highly publicized and politicized, and this informed the stories most of them told. Whatever understandings they may have had of the issue at the time they were considering their university applications, by the time they took part in this research they were conscious of the social structures that had influenced their agential choices. Their accounts of their progression to Oxbridge were therefore suffused with a sociopolitical meaning that was given sharper focus by the research. These meanings tended to be aligned to the endpoint and contextual details (such as home and school environments) were typically overwritten by the plotline leading up to their successful application. That is, they were interpreting the past from their present positions.

Narrative research imposes its own interpretative structure on stories, and this research-bound personalized telos offered insight into the retrospective significance they attributed to events which may have been accorded more or less importance at the time. Events become linked through narrative, and this suffused the recollections of the students with meaning whether their life stories foregrounded coherency or highlighted its absence. Their stories, reaching out to their conclusions, became purposeful. However, the contextual data they provided was limited by the inevitable partiality of their experiences and worldviews. Their progression to Oxbridge was often marked by the lack of appropriate support and the significance of such gaps can only be apprehended through an interpretation of what might have been (and it was only when I began researching this issue of access that I began to properly appreciate how lucky I had been to miss the sixth form in my own progression to Oxford).

These post hoc interpretations of the students needed to be acknowledged and understood in terms of the real opportunities they had to progress to Oxbridge. Some of the middle class students had overestimated the barriers confronting them relative to their social advantage. Most of the working class students, however, had only appreciated the extent of those barriers once they were there; and their interpretations of their circumstances generally aligned with those I added to the research. Participant interpretations are an inevitable aspect of narrative research, but here they usefully signaled the capability and capital of the students (i.e., their substantive freedoms and the value of the sociocultural possessions that facilitate opportunity). Moreover, they articulate with the life history approach of explicitly contextualizing stories. Without such contexts, the serendipitous progression of some working class students lucky enough to attend schools and colleges with well-established support for potential Oxbridge applicants can obscure the wider structural influences that typically make such progression so difficult.

Narrative research in all its forms presumes that life stories are the best means of accessing the personal understandings of what individuals experience even though they can never fully comprehend their lives. Such concerns may be mediated to some extent by use of life history rather than other forms of narrative research, but the confusion between them (Denzin 1989a; Roberts 2002; Bathmaker and Hartnett 2010) demands methodological interpretation and commitment. However, just as the contextual understandings of the participants shade their life stories, so too the reinterpretations of the researcher influence the story told in the research. What contexts should the researcher bring to the life history and how should they be interpreted? Extant literature and analytic frameworks provide some guidance, but they are a historical accumulation of previous interpretations, and the greater objectivity they may bring to the research therefore always incorporates subjective dimensions.

An early interpretation of this research (Watts 2002) sidestepped the structural issues and focusing on the notion of the risk society (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Beck et al. 1995), which emphasizes the destabilization of identity and so offered a means of justifying the data. This interpretation prioritized the life stories rather than the life histories of the two students upon whose experiences the paper focused. It bore the hallmarks of my own experience but did not tally with those of the majority of students with whom I had been working. Yet it was validated by the students who were asked to comment on this representation of their lives and by the unknown academic colleagues who had reviewed and approved the paper—which suggests that, in the search for what you are looking for, a cogent argument has the potential to trump interpretative rigor. Put another way, this early argument illustrates how different conceptual frameworks can and do lead to interpretations that may be simultaneously consistent and partial.

It has been suggested that “in terms of interpretation, at the extremes, life stories may be given as (or claimed to be) more or less unmediated by the researcher or adopted as merely illustrative of some theoretical and analytical perspective” (Roberts 2002, p. 47). At one end of the interpretative scale, then, is the phenomenological perspective, which respects the story as it is and takes it at face value. At the other, the story is subjected to a range of theoretical interrogations, and different conceptual frameworks can and do lead to interpretations that may be simultaneously consistent and yet partial. At this end there appears to be something of a competition among some contemporary writers to create longer and longer lists of the interpretative layers—as well as of the options, possibilities, and counterfactuals—that run through narrative accounts, and it is tempting to ask who this serves. Acknowledging the interpretative complexity of such research supports its defensibility but there is also the need to generate accounts with which to work.

It was not possible here to take the naive approach of simply accepting the accounts for what they were because their co-construction even at interview stage disallowed this option. Seeking clarification of their various experiences is one thing, but the contextualization that is a fundamental element of life history research demanded a closer examination of the meanings they had given to their choices and actions. As indicated above, some students from working class backgrounds found their progression to Oxbridge easy because of the levels of support

they received. Yet the research was based on the demonstrable premise that such progression is typically anything but easy for such students. To simply accept such stories of easy progression without engaging with their understandings of why it was easy and without my own meta-contextual analysis would have been to negate the purpose of the research. More than this, I had set out to obtain a clearer understanding of what influences successful progression and to naively accept the stories I was told would have been to abdicate my own responsibility as a researcher.

And this brings me back to my story.

My undergraduate studies, viewed through the interpretive lens of my postgraduate research, allowed me to realize that “there will always be more stories to tell and different ways of telling them to different audiences” (Watts 2007, p. 216, original emphasis). Those studies also introduced me to the work of Václav Havel who wrote that truth “is not simply what you think it is; it is also the circumstances in which it is said, and to whom, why, and how it is said” (1990, p. 67). The words of the playwright-turned-politician are a reminder that the epistemological key to narrative research is its verisimilitude and that, given the inherent problems of representing truths and realities, it must be taken on trust and used in a way (including the acknowledgement of its limitations) that it can be trusted by others. Life stories placed in context to generate life histories are filtered through multiple layers of interpretation and are therefore colored by the understandings of the research participants and the researcher. However, although the layers of interpretation that necessarily suffuse life histories need to be acknowledged, the life historian needs to get on with the research using these extremely rich data sets that enable the world to be seen and therefore interpreted through the eyes of others.

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1.8 An Awareness of the Feminist Subject: An Example of Collective Biography Writing in Poststructuralist Discourse Practice

Monne Wihlborg

Learning to *Become* Aware

Collective biography writing (CBW) involves the co-construction of narratives of memory. The narrator tells a story which, at the prompting of the co-participants, is suffused with emotional and sensory details as it is rewritten. CBW is fundamentally concerned with the social construction of the self. It seeks to develop “a process of collective biography as a means of learning to read/write embodied social selves” (Davies and Gannon 2006b, p. 7) that enables the possibility of becoming critically aware of ourselves in order to question that which is taken for granted. It is therefore particularly useful in opening up methodological and philosophical spaces in which to discuss questions of justice, equality, and diversity in the contexts of education and learning. The particular focus of this chapter is the narrative *Steering the Pilot Boat* which illustrates the sort of data generated in CBW and acts as the focus of the interpretations discussed here in this chapter. Although the narrative may be seen as emphasizing the autonomy of the girl who is demonstrating what she has learned—here, how to steer the boat—the CBW process enables a poststructuralist interpretation that calls attention to the context-specific contingency of her learning.

This particular narrative was part of a wider project addressing the constitution of the feminist subject in poststructural discourse (Davies and Gannon 2006a). The focus of the research was therefore about more than learning processes—it was concerned with how we learn to learn about ourselves through acceptance of frameworks that, if left untroubled, define us. CBW can assist us in the process and insight of unlearning certain mechanisms we have internalized. The illustrative moment used in this chapter shows the strengths of social influences that position us

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as we construct our understandings of the self and of identifies through particular tropes. CBW involves the shared construction of remembered narratives. Participants typically draw on their memories to tell a story about a significant moment which is closely interrogated to heighten the sens(it)ive nature of the moment. The focus is on how the related events felt. Questions encourage the storyteller to engage with and share the emotional and sensory dimensions of the moment in order to embody it. Participants use their “reading/writing to produce a textual base through which [they explore] various aspects of the processes of meaning-making through which [they] become subjects and go on becoming subjects” (Davies and Gannon 2006b, p. 7).

Steering the Pilot Boat is concerned with informal learning, but the insights obtained through this narrative can usefully illuminate more formal teaching and learning situations (e.g., how teachers and learners are positioned relative to each other in learning activities). Working collectively with narratives can be a powerful tool, and it can help us become aware of how knowledge is constructed as well as contribute to the greater critical scrutiny of various assumptions in the research process. It is a methodology that is therefore highly pertinent to education and educational research.

CBW comprises several steps (Barthes 1977; Haug et al. 1987; Davies and Gannon 2006a). These include selecting a group of participants and selecting the topic as well as structuring the writing workshop(s) and the process over time. The processes are initiated by telling memories in relation to the chosen topic and then interactively writing those memories through questions, brainstorming, exemplifications, and elaborations. It is crucial to summons emotions (e.g., how it felt when this or that happened) and the senses (e.g., smells and sensations) to ensure that embodied memories come to the fore where they are visible and/or understandable to others in the group. Over time, the participants read the stories and rewrote them collectively by sending the stories back and forth between the group participants. This stage of the collective biography practice leads up to the writing of an analytic text where the aim is to unravel “the discursive nets in which [the participants’] individual memories are caught” (Davies and Gannon 2006b, p. 14). The outcomes are then interpreted in terms of the relevant theme—which, here, was the constitution of subjectivity.

The original research project was presented as three memory stories attempting to articulate the ongoing process of being subjected, of subjectivity, and of the relations between the outer and the inner, thereby revealing the constitutive force of discourse (Davies and Gannon 2005). Our vulnerability to those discourses and practices became visible through our analytic readings of our memories. The re-examinations of the poststructuralist subject and its transformative possibilities made visible the extent to which we are always caught up in specific reiterative practices, through which intelligibility is made available to ambivalence. As poststructuralist writers, we were engaged in both private and public experimentation with discourse influences through

seeing, at one and the same time, the usual ways of seeing as ways of seeing, and seeing against the grain of those usual ways. The particular detail of specific subjects are

interesting only insofar as they can be used to make visible the ways in which bodies/emotions/desires/memories become the inscribed (and re-inscribed) public/private, inner/outer depth/surface to be read against the grain of dominant/humanist discourses and practices. (Davies et al. 2006a, p. 100)

The outcomes of the research in the original work were presented through showing the process of “becoming a subject” and how the constitution of subjectivity takes place within a social context. Here in this chapter, this process of the constitution of subjectivity and the constitution of selfing is characterized by the example of the narrative *Steering the Pilot Boat*. It illustrates the process of the CBW approach, and this use of a memory story offers a fairly good idea of what is going on when strong social (collective) forces of influences are at work on personal narratives.

The Influences of Being and Becoming

The problem addressed in this research is that gender is still connected with exclusionary and discriminatory practices at home and in society at large, including in educational settings. The overall issue is that most cultures divide the being of women and the being of men—“the female” and “the male”—which inevitably leads to and involves inequalities (Deutsch 2007). What this means, and the denotation of the interpretation of female/male, then becomes a question of social discourse values that are influenced by power and politics. If we accept the assertion that gender inequality exists and is an ongoing matter (as are other forms of inequality concerning race, class, religion, disability, and sexuality), then it is important to make use of methodologies that explore various ways of experiencing and understanding it. The issue here concerns taking a critical stance when data concerning lived experiences and memory-telling are decontextualized and recontextualized in the research process.

Some research methodologies used within feminism and poststructuralism (Weedon 1987; Peters and Wain 2003; Butler 2005; Davies and Gannon 2006a; Davies 2007; Gannon and Davies 2007), postmodernism (Derrida 1978, 1984; Peters and Wain 2003), and postcolonialism (St. Pierre and Pillow 2000; Weedon 1987) raise questions concerning what can be known and who can know it (c.f. Denzin 2003) as well as how we as researchers can get hold of variations of experiences. Research in education and educational studies involves analyzing, understanding, and interpreting data. Such interpretation turns to various research methods to explore and reveal something different or something which goes beyond what we already know. Referring to Derrida, Biesta stresses that

the road towards the other is not an easy road. Derrida might say it is an impossible road, that is, if we understand the impossibility with Derrida as that which cannot be foreseen as a possibility. It is, therefore, the very ‘experience of the impossible’ (Derrida 1992, p. 15), all in purpose to not make ‘explicit a program of possibilities within the economy of the same’. (Biesta 2009, p. 15)

These issues are considered here in connection with the research methodology practice of CBW. The research addressed in this chapter starts from the rationale that what we experience as “reality” and “truth” are not fixed entities and brings the subject and object of research closer together. The social discourse context is assumed to be powerful and important when understanding possible realities. The subject is not constituted in advance, but within the discourse and cultural practice (Butler 1992; St. Pierre and Pillow 2000), the subject is thus learned and constructed. CBW is one way of understanding how we learn about the learning of socially constructed identities. It fosters the critical scrutiny of the meaning given to various outcomes in relation to social discourses (contexts) and so gives insight into issues of equity, justice, and diversity. As a method, it is concerned with the unlearning and with the reconstruction of identities. This should be of particular social and existential interest in education and educational studies. One of the main assumptions when conducting CBW, therefore, is that subjectivity is liable to change and that it can be changed radically if a new discourse becomes available. Contact with a new discourse will inevitably lead to changes in power relations between rival discourses or by revealing that different subject positions could become available within one and the same discourse.

Becoming Subjects

Feminist research approaches are concerned with granting all humans the same opportunities and consider unequal opportunities in relation to gender. Using Butler (2004, 2005) as a point of departure, this research addressed social change and possibilities. In Butler’s writing, when elaborating on the issue of “undoing gender,” she offers arguments that point to an understanding of how restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life might be undone. This process of undoing is not value-based per se, not bad or good. Instead, it is a way of making visible the polarized tension between societal-mediated forces that have an impact on influences for becoming acknowledged and accepted versus the agency of the individual “other” (Butler 2004). Butler reminds us that one does not author one’s gender, for its terms are always negotiated within collective social contexts. If we agree on this statement, then it is also meaningful to elaborate on *what* this social impact means when we are in the process of becoming subjects and, furthermore, *how* we can become aware of our understandings and learning of possible ways of becoming subjects.

In this research, we focused on the topic of becoming subjects and on ways to become aware of this process of constituting and of becoming a subject. As part of this endeavor, we turned to poststructuralist discourse when elaborating on the question of constituting the feminist subject. In *Doing Collective Biography* (Davies and Gannon 2006a) we described our approach in the following terms:

We will draw on Barthes’s concept of decomposition and our own concept of mo(ve)ment.
We will unravel – through focused collective work – the rational choosing subjects of our

individual biographies, necessitating a shift from the rational possibilities of deconstruction to the embodied subject decomposing itself. We focus on the specific remembered moments and on the movement that becomes visible in the particular mode of memory-writing. (Davies and Gannon 2006d, p. 172)

The research therefore engaged with equity, justice, and diversity and the possibilities for recognizing and realizing them. Derrida (1978, 1988) has argued that the history of Western philosophy, in constituting the liberal humanist subject, attempts to seek and locate a fixed centre that everything starts from. It thereby also becomes a point from which attitudes or actions can be predicted and controlled (see also Biesta 2009). Our research asked if gendered values and norms create an absence of meaning in some cases or if certain meaning-based opportunities and ways of being are denied to certain subjects while being offered to others. If the latter is the case, it also becomes a question of power as well as of recognition. Butler's (2004) response to the issue of eliminating social inequality is to "undo gender." The intention is to make it more equal to become a subject and to be able to negotiate on equal (social) terms for being recognized. Our focus was to explore these concerns through our own collective biographies.

The Use of Memories as Sources for Becoming Aware

We used our own biographic stories and moments that capture lives and memories as data. The sources for this data were therefore always going to be the participants in this research project. Our own memories, expressed through the telling and writing of a moment, were the foundation for this project. This kind of data is commonly worked with in collective biography practices. Through the use of our own recollection of early memories, supported by poststructuralist theory, we aimed at creatively "folding and unfolding" history, thereby revealing new possible ways in which sense could be made, by disrupting "what is taken for granted as stable/unquestionable truth" (Davies 2004, p. 7).

The project was concerned with telling(s) and writing(s) as well as asking questions in relation to these told and written stories. We triggered memories about ourselves in certain situations, aiming at taking us into our earliest memories of being a subject (Davies et al. 2006). However, we needed to identify and focus on particular moments in our lives, and so we sourced the data around three subtopics within our overall theme: "being someone," "being hailed as someone in a way that felt good," and "being miss-recognised" (Davies et al. 2006). These stories and moments, which were used as the starting point for further analysis, highlighted the importance of identity formation within the lifelong learning agenda and in relation to the issues of equity, justice, and diversity. In our collective biography writing, we focused on the subject and how she/he might be read in the humanist discourse as well as, and also in, poststructuralist discourse. All six participants contributed one

story on all three topics to generate eighteen stories. We then read our stories, one by one, reflecting and making notes in order to ask each other questions. This part of the procedure involved being able to understand and recognize the story through our efforts to make sense of it.

Three stories were then selected for the subsequent process. The decision concerning which of the stories to use was reached through the procedure of asking each other questions and making the stories as collectively understandable as possible. It was not a matter of assessing the “truth of history,” but instead a question of sense making. In theory, all of the stories could have been included in our CBW procedure. However, since it would be very time-consuming if all the stories had been included, three were collectively selected for this purpose (Davies and Gannon 2006). We analyzed, deconstructed, and broke open the writings of the three stories that were selected. Our collective work aimed to show ways in which the feminist subject can be constituted in poststructural discourse, contrasted to how it would be constituted as a liberal humanist subject. Our exploration used memories that can be read in liberal humanist terms and then compared this to a poststructuralist reading of the memories.

Data: Investigating a Memory of Being Someone

The story presented here is one of my memories related to the theme “being someone.” It exemplifies the character of the stories used in our project and is offered as an illustrative example of how memory-telling stories can be written and related to the topic used as the point of departure. This particular story was told and shared during the research, but it was not included in the published collection (Davies and Gannon 2006). However, as with all 18 stories that were told, it was exposed to our collective critical and “investigating questioning approach” in the research. The intention here is not to repeat the stories told in our published work but to develop an understanding of what CBW is about, how it can be done, and how and why this type of research and interpretative practice can and should be used in educational contexts. The stories written and told during the research were based on the participants’ own memories of various moments related to the three subtopics within the overall topic of constituting the feminist subject. They were written in the third person present tense so that they could be shared as collective memories when investigating them further in the CBW process. The remembered story, which I will return to later on in this chapter, addresses the topic of “being someone” and is titled *Steering the Pilot Boat*:

It was one of those days she went with her grandfather on the pilot boat out on the sea to escort some of the very, very big tank ships. She was standing on a little ladder with two steps holding a firm grip of the boat’s steering wheel. The compass needle was moving back and forth until she got it steady. “Steady she goes,” she said, and her grandfather standing behind her said “Aye, aye. Steady as she goes.” She felt the power of being the one that made the strong little boat plough through the waves, the water coming up against the sides

of the boat and splashing against the front window. Her arms vibrated (sort of shaking but not as being afraid, rather because of the movement of the boat). She saw the big boat they headed for coming nearer real fast and, nearly at the edge, bumping into it, the engine was turned down. She turned the wheel 180° and felt a small bump when the side of the little boat touched the huge side of the tank boat it made her feel strong and capable.

Establishing the Continuing Process of/for the CBW Practice

In our project, and before starting the CBW process, all the participants read and critically reflected on poststructuralist theory and the research approach. This was a necessary process that framed the stories we told of the memories we remembered. This was achieved partly by looking at the general approach, clarifying a theoretical framework for the particular “object of research” and then selecting work from some theorists particularly relevant for the CBW procedure. From there, and as a group, we decided on the final rationales and chose the theoretical framework for conducting the research project. This was an important phase, since such interpretations and clarifications, even disagreements, and not taking anything for granted, contributed to supporting the group’s further collaborative and collective working process. The group agreed on and established some theoretical statements which underpinned the interpretative outcome.

The main topic we agreed on was *the constitution of the feminist subject in poststructuralist discourse*. Collective biography writing using this topic as point of departure was then conducted as a poststructuralist writing practice over approximately one and a half years. In our particular CBW practice, after the workshop, we made considerable use of correspondence by e-mail sending drafts between us according to the schedule we had set up, with stated deadlines.

Viewing the Methodological Options

Critiques of traditional research methodological approaches were also included in this stage of the CBW process. We considered the problem that traditional biographic research methods typically either *do not* recognize or *bypass* the issue concerned with the importance of intertwining the subject–object relationship. Davies emphasizes that “The complexity of the movement and intersections amongst knowledge, power and subjectivity *require the researchers to survey life from within itself*” (2004, p. 5, original emphasis). In this respect, the challenge is to find ways to reveal life “itself.” The researchers in CBW assert that the “subjects/. . ./have language, and are constituted within the social in a multitude of ways and in a multitude of contexts, including the contexts of the research” (Davies and Gannon 2006b, p. 3). In general, positivistic research traditions fail to investigate such relationships. In contrast, in the social sciences new methodologies have been developed, such as collective biography,

where “embodiment and sociality are crucial dimensions as lived experience is re-membered” (Davies and Gannon 2006b, p. 3).

In this kind of research, the source of data we elaborate is not data as “evidence” of something we would be asked to prove as “real.” Nor is it a search for that which is homogeneous with something we could say is “real.” Indeed, the research focus is not about the object of sense making (Wihlborg 2013). Instead, attention is directed towards our statements or descriptions, made through our stories, revealing the ways in which sense is being made. This is an important distinction and, as Davies puts it “when poststructuralists talk about ‘the way that sense is made’ they are not attempting to reveal something about the *sense*maker (the subject) her- or himself, about his or her motives or intentions but the possibilities of sensemaking available within the discourses within a particular sensemaking community” (Davies 2004, pp. 4–5, original emphasis; cf. Foucault 1980; Deleuze 1988).

Writing and Making Sense of the Memory Stories to Be Used

The stories—all 18 of them—were told during a 3-day workshop that was the start for our CBW practice that continued for a year and a half. We started the process by telling our own memories, about moments drawn from our own experiences, in relation to the chosen topic concerned with constituting the subject. The stories were then dealt with collectively, through questions, brainstorming, exemplifications, and elaborations. We all elaborated our related emotions (e.g., what it felt like when this or that happened), and the group then asked about the surroundings, our sensory responses, and so on. This helped support the embodied memories, bringing them to the fore and making them visible and understandable for others in the group. We also decided which stories we were going to continue to work with. The next step, outside the workshop setting, included a process of rewriting the “memory stories” over time and collectively sending the stories back and forth between the group participants. This part of the process, which can take several years, thus become the actual collective biography practice. Eventually the writing was finalized through the writing of an analytic text. In our original work, it was about revealing how our subjectivity becomes constituted in social contexts.

Over the 18-month period of the project, we all agreed to and were involved in the process of rewriting the texts to jointly tap a collective soul, looking for the moments in the texts’ movements—rocking the text and emphasizing the resonances and agreements. This can be both provocative and hurtful and yet exciting, since everyone has the opportunity to view the shared collective understanding during the rewriting process. When we had returned to our respective homes, we were far away from each other and lapses in communication between us were prolonged. The mutual work in our workshop had welded us together, and the process of agreeing on three stories out of the initial 18 played a central role in this respect. Not being able to see or hear each other left us to focus on the text, but it also meant we were constantly dealing with the notion that we granted each

other permission to overwrite each others' sentences, words, and paragraphs in the text. In the writing practice, as well as in our souls, this meant that we really had to engage with the struggle to let go of our own egos. . . Writing and reading for hours, trying to understand the text as intended by the previous writer, then reading the references made in the text, reflecting, interpreting, and, finally rewriting the text. . . Maybe not all of it, sometimes just adding some paragraphs, accepting the text in parts, and sometime completely changing the text, by discovering new possible ways of reading it. Throughout this process, we struggled to still keep the "we" approach.

It is not possible to show the process in full here, but I will show how the interpretation "ended" (the outcome) by using the illustrative example *Steering the Pilot Boat* and by highlighting a possible interpretation and understanding of the story in relation to the search for and of constituting the subject. The learning focus thus is about becoming aware through the process of unraveling and searching for the hidden and developing/accomplishing a critical stance, which, in turn, is a fundamental competence in learning in education and educational research.

Using a Dual Strategy to Grasp the Mo(ve)ment

The memory stories, describing moments based on our own experiences, were exposed to our collective critical and investigating questioning approach. In this part of the process, the aim was to reveal and peel off and make sense of the "moment" we collectively discussed. This procedure is named decomposition. Decomposition does not mean that everything is rejected or "destroyed." Rather, it is a process that involves recognition and reworking of discernible and possible possibilities:

In order to destroy, in short, we must be able to *overleap*. But overleap where? Into what language? Into which site of good conscience and bad faith? Whereas by decomposing, I agree to accompany such decomposition, to decompose myself as well the process: I scrape, catch and drag. (Barthes 1977, p. 63, original emphasis)

This required us to approach the stories by a dual strategy, using our memories (stories about the topics) as data to be analyzed and then "to produce insights into the process of subjectification" (Davies and Gannon 2006d, p. 172). We told our stories to each other and (inter)related to and with them by asking questions, brainstorming, and asking for exemplifications and further elaborations. The aim was to trace the embodied memories so that they could become understandable for others in the group. All members in the group read the stories and rewrote them mostly using email (when the actual workshop had ended) until the group agreed on moving to the next stage. This involved writing an analytic text that included processes of interpretation of meaning by revealing how the memories had been and were caught up in the ruling discourse.

Central to the whole process was an interpretation that showed the outcome in terms of “the revealed.” In our research project, we practiced this dual strategy of retrieving memories and using memories as data that could be analyzed to produce insights into the processes of subjectification. This involved us using “*mo(ve)ment* to signify the simultaneity of specific embodied *moments* and the movement toward the subject as process that can come about through the mode of telling” (Davies et al. 2006, p. 92, original emphases). The dual process, shifting and using a poststructural lens, reveals the “processes through which we become specific individuals” (Davies et al. 2006, p. 92) showing “that the humanist individual is not what it thought it was. It is caught in fictions of itself as unitary, rational and centered, in control of its own subjectivity” (Davies et al. 2006, p. 89).

By revealing the process, we became aware of “the naïve liberal humanist subject – the essentialized, unique, universal and unhistorical subject who believes itself to be creating itself and is blind to the constitutive effects of discourses and systems of thought” (Davies et al. 2006, p. 89); c.f. Butler 1993a).

The Poststructuralist Discourse and Deconstruction

The narratives generated during this CBW project were framed by a poststructuralist discourse practice. The feminist poststructuralist theory used in our project followed liberal feminism and radical feminism (Kristeva 1981). It was not intended to replace previous feminist theories but to enable a poststructural analysis of the discourse and discursive and regulatory practices (Weedon 1987; Butler 1992, 2005; Davies and Gannon 2005). In this respect, our use of feminist poststructuralist theory was in line with other projects concerned with critically reflecting on discursive constructed phenomena. Our theoretical focus was on the process of gendered subjectification as the historically specific processes whereby one is subjected to discursive regimes and regulatory frameworks and through which gendered individuals and their social context are constructed (Butler 1992; St Pierre and Pillow 2000; Davies and Gannon 2006a).

Poststructuralism aims to “conceptualize the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness” (Weedon 1987, p. 19). Language is viewed as a human constitutive product (i.e., human, rather than given by nature), and it is held that meaning is constituted through language. Furthermore, consideration of the relationships between language, social institutions, individual consciousness, and subject position is a central and necessary condition for our understanding of subjectivity. Weedon stresses that:

the meaning of the existing structure of social institutions, as much as the structures themselves and the subject positions which they offer their subjects, is a site of political struggle waged mainly, though not exclusively, in *language*. (1987, p. 38, original emphasis)

Subjectivity is therefore open to be understood by exploring the variation of different subject positions available within the operating discourse.

The search for the discursively constituted subject, according to poststructural theory, is experienced as a subject-in-process, subjects who can become aware and

see the constitutive process; read the text of their 'selving'; recognize the constitutive power of discourses to produce historically located ideas of what it might even mean to be a self, engage in 'selving'; look at the contradictions between discourses (and reject them solely on those grounds; and play endlessly with the discursive possibilities that have been made observable through poststructural analysis. (Davies 2000, p. 137)

At the same time, through a related process, there is a challenge to and exploration of the unaware

naïve liberal humanist subject – the essentialized, unique, universal and unhistorical subject who believes itself to be creating itself and is blind to the constitutive effects of discourses and systems of thought[s]. (Davies et al. 2006, p. 89)

Deconstructing identity, theoretically, helps us to become aware of our gender blindness. The task consists of “imagining a world without gender” (Butler 1991, p. 150) and declining various kinds of fixed identities, including those fixed by and within educational discourses. Working with CBW, and within a framework of feminist poststructuralism, we were able to practice how this could be experienced and so obtain different insights into the constitution of the feminist subject and its implications for equity, justice, and diversity.

Revealing the Relational Nature of Being a Subject and Becoming Subjected

Although *Steering the Pilot Boat* is my narrative memory—or, rather, my shared and co-constructed narrative memory—its interpretation is dealt with in the third person because that is how the memory was presented. The narrative drew on and evoked memories of “being someone,” and, constructed through the CBW process, it is richly sensory. The girl’s heightened recollection of her grandfather saying “Aye, aye. Steady as she goes” highlights the sensory nature of narratives co-constructed through CBW and is therefore central to the following interpretation (which exemplifies the interpretations of the wider project).

Analytic readings in CBW are performed collectively, but they must all begin somewhere. Rereading this memory in liberal humanist terms, it presents a story about an autonomous, confident, and responsible girl, a rational individual subject who is highly capable in what she is doing. She has learned the skills and competences needed to manage the pilot boat on the rough sea and she is demonstrating that learning.

A poststructuralist reading of the memory, though, differs from this reading in that it reveals the relational nature of being a subject accomplished through a specific discourse that considers specific times, places, and space(s) (i.e., context).

The embodied specifics in this memory (which also “talk” to us in silence) tell us that the girl is positioned as being capable to act autonomously not only by her grandfather but also by other sailors on board the pilot boat and by sailors on the larger tank boat as well. She is confident with this subject position, feeling the others believing in her competence and holding the steering wheel as steadily as required and getting acknowledgements from her grandfather. She feels the power as a physical sense, enhanced by the waves and water splashing up against the sides of the boat. The emerging subject position she is taking up is embedded within the discourses of individual competency and of autonomy. She implicitly proves herself “into” a discourse of relationality and reliability. The memory tells us that the “other” characters appearing in this story interrelate (her grandfather saying “Aye, aye. Steady as she goes”) in such a way that they are present and not objecting. She is made possible by this—her subject is made possible.

She could have imagined her grandfather’s words within her, confirming what she knew—that she was sailing the pilot boat steadily. This is easy to imagine since it is evident that the girl is in charge of the situation, standing and holding the steering wheel, steering out towards the big tanker. She has done this before, and she knows how to do it, how it feels when the boat goes steady. The instructions for getting it right could have been incorporated into her understanding about steering the boat, including the feeling of “rightness” in keeping it steady when plow through the waves. That it is her grandfather who instructed her is not hard to imagine either, and thus being positioned as a subject, she is constituting herself as well in this memory as being in position and inhabiting the position of the autonomous and responsible, capable subject. She has been held capable by her grandfather, and his words (whether or not he spoke them on this occasion) frame the recognition of the other sailors who do not challenge the position her grandfather has given her. She is recognized and treated as a person who is legitimately capable of being in control and she recognizes this legitimized position.

This is not a recognition that has come about by chance. It is not an easy environment within which she can be recognized. In the social environment constituted by professional sailors, and within such specific contexts, recognition is strongly relational in character, and she can therefore only gain social recognition in very specific and significant interaction with (the) others. The interactive character of the movement between whole memory and the details constituting the memory show the subject’s dependence on the discourse. This is precisely what poststructuralist researchers are involved in. It reveals to us the girl’s deeply embedded dependency on discourse recognition. This dependency stands in contradiction to the competent, solitary, and independent/autonomous individual first perceived steering the pilot boat. Thus, the dependence on recognition of others in relation to her subjection is revealed. In our original study, we saw that

The memory might thus be said to ‘reveal’ the individual subject as she is constituted and constitutes herself through dominant discourses. The memory is vivid precisely because the fiction of herself as the autonomous subject is so skillfully achieved. The detail of the telling makes visible the constitutive work that is going on, and that has gone on, to make that (illusion of the) autonomous subject possible. (Davies et al. 2006, p. 96)

Davies et al. (2002, 2006), Davies (2004), and Davies and Gannon (2005, 2006a) discuss the subject's dependency on the discourse and context, underlining how the subject becomes vulnerable, for instance, to not being recognized, or having recognition withheld, or sudden breaks in certainty of belonging. The girl has learned to steer the pilot boat and is demonstrating that learning. Here, though, the poststructuralist interpretation of the rich sensory data arising from the CBW process shifts from a demonstration of competence to the validation of that demonstration—from competence to competence in context. The aurally heightened data generated here by CBW enables a (re)interpretation of the narrative that shows the issues of justice, equity, and diversity in a subtly but significantly different light. This interpretation makes us aware of

the naturalized individual who can be described and explained as always having been this person, or this person in the making [but] the story opens another possibility: I see the way in which this kind of subjecthood is granted, and I therefore also see how, on other occasions, it might not be granted – to me, to anyone. I see my attachment to it, I see my dependence on it and thus my vulnerability to it. (Davies et al. 2006, p. 96)

The Reasons for Choosing CBW

Deconstruction and Reconstruction and the Purpose of Becoming Aware

The question of whether the girl's grandfather spoke the words "Aye, aye. Steady as she goes" points to the "imaginability" that is central to CBW. The writing process is not intended as an authoritative or authenticated record of an event. It is an act of careful and focused creativity that allows others to broaden their experience of being in the world by experiencing it from another's perspective. The story should be vividly evocative, making it highly imaginable to others. This is why CBW emphasizes the sensory—the sights, smells, and sounds and the taste and touch of remembered experiences—to generate an "imaginability [that] comes not out of the repetition of predictable or familiar storylines but out of the detailed attention to embodied detail that brings a new and unexpected view of what happened to light" (Davies and Gannon 2006, p. 98).

All too often, the repetition of familiar storylines in education, whether they concern formal or (as here) informal learning, reifies inequalities, injustice, and the denial of diversity. They leave no room to explore the subject. Disrupting the familiar requires an appropriate methodology. CBW, through the collective process of moving beyond the telling of a story, generates narratives that apprehend (but never fully comprehend) the creation of differences that enable poststructural interpretations of justice, equity, and diversity in education. The embodied and emotional nature of the stories, heightened by their being read aloud, provides a sens(it)ive database that allows and encourages the poststructuralist researcher to ask questions that explore taken-for-granted knowledge.

It is asserted that the poststructural subject is open to culture and that the subject is fluid—in process—with open boundaries (Henriques et al. 1998; Davies 2000; Davies et al. 2006; Davies and Gannon 2006a). New interpretative possibilities emerge from the search for and the play with the contradictions and differences of the constituted subject (Barthes 1977; Derrida 1978, 1984, 1997; Deleuze 1994). For Derrida, in writing(s) and in the text, the way differences are created is important. He distinguishes between an open structure of differences and a sealed, closed structure, using the term “structure” in a transparent manner. Based on his concern with the philosophy of language, Derrida develops a way of interpreting texts that has come to be known as “deconstruction,” an activity that is both destructive (revealing) and constructive (building). He reads in a manner which aims at finding representatives of the fragmentary text. Each text is based on a fundamental difference, which is a crucial part of the rationales in CBW. Johnson (1981) clarifies that deconstruction should not be mistaken for “destruction” but that it (the method) lies in line with a deep analysis approach revealing differences in a critical way, the text’s critical differences from itself. It is about understanding(s) and misunderstanding(s) that reveals other(s), different possibilities of a constructed self.

Deconstruction of our life stories can be described in two main steps, which we call “the opposites” and “displacement.” Both of these steps are based on the fundamental distinction that is constantly repeated in the language, in the text. In every story, there are a number of oppositions in which two concepts in one way or another relate to each other. In an initial step, it is important to catch sight of these opposites: Which are they? How can we portray the opposed pairs of a (our) narrative? Although somewhat simplified, one could say that these opposites produce different places in the story.

If the text, by the use of oppositions/differences, is put into change, into movement, then it will be possible to observe shifts in the text. These shifts have the effect that the text/signs are no longer recognizable in the system of conflicts that previously constituted and defined them. It is common in this step of reading to see how the text creates movement and games with language and meaning differences. So the poststructuralist seeks what we are now and—making visible the break with a dominant discourse—the changing of the subject (Foucault 1980, 2000; Henriques et al. 1998; Butler 1993a, b, 2005). The devil is in the detail and the detail helps to create a movement in the language and thus helps to maintain (reinforce) the game with differences and contradictions. This in turn means that the subject can maintain her/his inflexible/fixed position in life, even in situations of great diversity and flexibility. A kind of paradox occurs in this sense, an illusion of “no disruptions” where there in fact are many.

The Question of Trustworthiness

The “imaginability” of CBW and the acknowledgement of fictionalized selves—that is, the epistemological conditions and justifications of CBW—necessarily call into question the concept of “trustworthiness” of this kind of research (cf. Lincoln and

Guba 1985; Wolcott 1990). This means that we consider to what extent the ways we work meet the criteria of credibility and believability of our research (Harrison et al. 2001, p. 324). St. Pierre and Pillow problematize the question, by asking

when does research begin and end if one gives up a linear concept of time? Does it make sense to continue to describe and prescribe a step-by-step, linear research process? If time shifts in poststructural research, then place and space must shift as well. (2000, p. 10)

Harrison et al. (2001) point to the aspect of reciprocity as an important component in qualitative research. This means that the social interactions among the researchers–participants are crucial, particularly (as is the case here) when deep dialogue interactive questioning of each other’s memories is used. In our case, we made use of this interaction and the reciprocity, the give and take of social interactions [which] may be used to gain access to particular settings (Harrison et al. 2001). The narratives with which we worked in the project could be experienced as a means to empower the researched (cf. Lather 1991). Still, the question remains whether the outcome of collecting and analyzing our data met the criterion of “trustworthiness.” Conducting CBW and our choice of topics raise important questions about becoming positioned and marginalized. In line with Harrison et al. (2001), we particularly wanted to “challenge preconceived notions of what is already known and is established scientific fact” (2001, p. 325). In our sessions, we “practiced” a form of *transactional validity* by sharing our stories, our mutual inquiring and asking questions, and elaborating on misunderstandings and on “the not understandings” (cf. Wolcott 1990). In our research approach, we also practiced a form of *transformational validity*. Turning to Lather (1993) and Richardson (1997), our approach can also be said to be close to a *transgressive* approach since we sought to explore underlying forces and to make the social, cultural, and political meanings and influences explicit (cf. St. Pierre 1997). In our deconstruction and reconstruction of the constituting of the feminist subject in poststructural discourse, we also practiced a high-degree of *self-reflexivity* and examined the meanings that are taken for granted. We paid

attention to each moment of storytelling and listening in such a way that we are each fully present to the other, and at the same time vulnerable to the other, and vulnerable to our own incomplete knowledge of ourselves. This form of attention enables a recognition of the other, not as a fictionalized and completed subject who in her completeness is necessarily foreign, but a recognition that responds to our mutual vulnerability to normative discourses and to each other. (Davies and Gannon 2006a, p. 183)

This involved a supportive understanding quality of attention, which nevertheless aimed to critically scrutinize underlying assumptions.

The Possibility for Revealing the Hidden

The life-memory stories generated through CBW do not stand as transparent evidence for that which is “real.” The way that sense is made of gender in terms of descriptions or performances is not the focus of interest here. It might reveal

something about the essence of the individual sensemaker or perhaps about her or his motives or intentions, but again, this is not the primary focus. Rather, the interest lies in exploring the process of subjectification and the kinds of gendered subjectivities that are available within a particular (social) discourse. The memory stories are used by telling and by writing and provide data for this exploration. In education, as well as in educational studies and research dealing with issues of exclusionary and discriminatory practices, the use of CBW enables and supports a critical interpretation in relation to social discourses. Such discourses condition how we learn to become someone, through the learning of identities. Using CBW also allows us to initiate a process of unlearning identities, and this opens up other possibilities. The language as it is presented in texts, produced as data, is deconstructed and broken open to show the ways in which “the real” is constructed. The aim of this analysis is not to expose the hidden “truth” of sex/gender, but to disrupt that which is taken for granted and destabilize assumptions which are taken for a stable and unquestionable truth. The interest lies in the folding and unfolding of history, in the movement (process) from one configuration of gender to another. Feminist poststructuralist research asks questions, through storied lives and memories, about how these narratives reiterate and reconstitute the male/female binary. In turn, this opens up the narratives for questions, debates, and changes concerning equality, power, and equal-other social accessibilities in relation to social discourses.

It has been argued for some time that we need to critically reflect on what is taken for granted: the discourses that underlie our reflection (Wihlborg 2013). Within the present discourse of humanism, it has made sense to say things in a certain way. Therefore, to be able to challenge this “certain way,” poststructural feminists declare an interest in opening up for “different ways” of saying things. Poststructural feminists assert that in different discourses, other statements as well as other material and political conditions might be possible: “poststructural feminists work toward the not-yet-thought, what Derrida calls the ‘as-yet unnameable which begins to proclaim itself’” (St. Pierre and Pillow 2000, p. 4 [with reference to Derrida 1978/1966, p. 293]). The point here is to be able to open up what is taken for granted, what is not reflected on, and what could be and ultimately challenge the notion that discourses are thus not closed systems. Shifts in historical thought and material conditions are both possible and “available.” It is not a question of the right or the wrong way of saying things—changing one apparent truth for another—but rather to acknowledge that it is possible to see different and various ways of construction so that an emancipatory outcome is possible. This process ultimately permits challenges to the liberal humanist subject as constituted in the liberal humanist discourse. It destabilizes the notion of a predetermined, rational, stable, and “unified, knowing individual and fixed self whose morality allows atrocities beyond imagining but still claims inalienable ‘rights’ that protect it from responsibility to the Other it destroys” (St. Pierre and Pillow 2000, p. 6). The subject of poststructuralism is “generally described as one constituted, not in advance of, but within the discourse and cultural practice” (p. 6), a subject-in-process. This is not a dualistic issue, good or bad, true or false. Nor does it imply that poststructuralism asserts that humanism is “evil” or needs to be replaced because it supposes a fixed

coherent self. The argument does not attempt to prove that poststructuralism is an emancipatory and “good” force. Instead, St. Pierre and Pillow argue that “it offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity that we put into place, including those poststructuralism itself might create” (p. 6).

However, telling the same old stories in the same old way limits, and perhaps even inhibits, the deconstructive possibilities and therefore the emancipatory project. Such narratives can become structures or grids of regularity that we put into place to keep hidden that which is already hidden:

The fiction of the self is created when detailed embodied memories are only made relevant to the extent that they fit an essentialized unified (fictional) version of self that fits within and makes sense within hegemonic forms of meaning-making about individuals in the social world. (Davies and Gannon 2006, p. 98)

CBW does not seek to overwrite this fictional subject with a “real” subject. It seeks to bring to light the discourses that frame the subject so that they can be understood for what they are—frameworks for understanding the self that draw their authority from being taken for granted. Within these frameworks, understandings of (in)justice, (in)equality, and (the denial of) diversity are perpetuated because they are told and retold through the same storylines. The poststructuralist reading of the girl who had learned how to steer the pilot boat through the discourse of liberal humanism thus reveals a literary trope, a fictionalized cliché embedded (but not embodied) in a make-believe autonomy. The embodiment of the narrative through CBW—capturing the echoes of her grandfather calling out “Aye, aye. Steady as she goes” down the years—allows such rereadings of this early learning experience and so facilitates different perspectives on the justice, equity, and diversity of that educational moment.

The Role of Interpretation in This Research Study

Becoming Aware of What Is Going on: Experiencing Involvement in CBW

The narrative used to illustrate this chapter—*Steering the Pilot Boat*—was not, along with most of the stories we shared, subjected to the full CBW-based analysis of the three narratives chosen for inclusion in *Doing Collective Biography* (Davies and Gannon 2006a). Such analyses are conducted over an extended period of time. However, although the analysis is incomplete, it does illustrate the role of interpretation in CBW.

Interpretation and a close scrutiny of interpretative processes were inevitably central to this research as our purpose was to understand the constitution of the feminist subject in poststructural discourse. As researchers we make theoretical and methodological decisions all the time and thus have to be able to argue for chosen

standpoints and point of departure concerning our research projects. The general view is that various methodologies can be used when we try to seek some deeper understanding concerning *what is going on* and *how we can learn to learn about what is going on*. Here, in the context of justice, equity, and diversity in education, the interpretative process is not simply concerned with how the girl learned to steer the pilot boat (or, indeed, about how she would go on to learn anything else) but how we as researchers learn to learn about that learning process and its context. This required the participants in the project to agree on what could be considered as an ontologically coherent standpoint for the validity of the narratives generated during the research.

What, then, is the standpoint in research concerned with collective biography writing(s) and in poststructural research practice more generally? Choosing this research practice means choosing to reject dichotomous paradigmatic ontological and epistemological arguments that alienate the subject–object relationship. This rejection is an important stance which guided us as CBW practitioners during the whole process of the project. Following this and whatever methodology or theoretical framework is used, it is acknowledged that social discourse plays an important role when people shape and construct their realities and understanding(s) of those realities. Consequently, the challenge as a researcher in the CBW tradition is to become more aware of the extent to which we actually become “discourse blinded” and so miss out on possible ways of understanding what is going on. Put more provocatively, we try to become aware of *what is really really going on in our lives* and of *what other realities can we find*.

In line with Weedon (1987), the poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity refers to that aspect of an individual’s psyche by means of which she/he identifies herself/himself and her/his place in the world. This idea can be linked to the concept of “subject position” and is particularly useful and important when interpreting narratives about education and those that address issues of equity, justice and diversity. The researchers have to be engaged and to give “of themselves” through making use of personal narratives. They therefore become integrated in the research process as a part in a collective whole. This includes taking a position incorporating both a conceptual repertoire and the recognition of rights for those using the repertoire. Having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person (the researcher) inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines, and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in (Davies and Harré 1990, p. 46).

These positions underpin the role of interpretation in CBW, some aspects of which have already been outlined. Against the outlined methodological and theoretical background, the interpretation of these remembered narratives was not random by any means. On the contrary, it was carefully and critically worked through over time.

As researchers with a poststructuralist point of view, we wanted to find out more about the possibilities of sensemaking available within social discourses and to examine the processes of subjection and forces of subjectification. When we are

engaged in this kind of research, it is held that the subject is always inscribed in language and that the discourse is constituted. Researchers in the CBW process aim at creatively working with the constitutive process—the “selving”—to look at the contradictions and play with the discursive possibilities (Davies 2000), and this includes becoming aware of our own discourse blindness. We are not aiming to destroy/dissolve the subject, but rather to look for possible ways of becoming a subject, making use of our own selvings. We, as researchers, made use of our earliest memories

of being a subject. . . in order to examine more closely questions about being caught up in humanist forms of subjection and about the transformative mo(ve)ments entailed in reconstructing ourselves post-structurally. (Davies and Gannon 2006d, p. 172)

We made use of our memories as data and also conducted collective reading (s) of our memories, using a dual approach in our analysis and interpretation. The dual strategy, reading and so interpreting the subject through both humanist and poststructural discourses, made it possible to unravel “the rational choosing subjects of our individual biographies, necessitating a shift from the rational possibilities of deconstruction to the embodied subject decomposing itself” (Davies et al. 2006, p. 92). Through our writing of remembered stories, moments, and movements became visible:

The process of transformation, then, is not so much the result of a rational choice to be someone or something else in particular, but a movement, a ‘decomposition’, an engagement in a messy process in which one ‘scrapes and catches and drags’ in a complex process of re-inscription, of rubbing out the unthinkable; a decomposition, and a fractured, messy recomposition, of thought and of body. (Davies et al. 2006, p. 90)

Working the Ground: Peeling Off and Decomposing

What we achieved through the dual strategy of decomposition was to decompose or peel off the layers of innocence so that we could then observe the self as an object and shift the self to become recomposed in thought and body. The kind of “alienation” of the body and mind, looking at the self through various lenses, gives the feeling of being a spectator while still being very present. This process can go on for months and even years, a practice where we conduct the “messy” and “slippery” collective biography work, peeling away the constituent layers of the liberal humanist subject that “desires to be taken up (by others and ourselves) as unique and individual” (Davies et al. 2006, p. 92). Finally, we continued our collective biography sessions by recovering the embodied details—“details that might be lost in the rendition of oneself as a unique and rational subject who remains essentially the same over time and varying contexts” (Davies et al. 2006, pp. 92–93).

CBW begins with the participants listening to each other, asking questions, and pushing the storyteller to explain and express how it felt to experience the particular situation. This can be read, for example, in the physical sensations recalled by the

girl in the pilot boat. The storyteller is encouraged to relive her memory, and this leads to all kinds of emotions and experiences—sadness and happiness, becoming upset or confused—which the participants must interpret as they intensely question her about what happened. Although it can be unsettling, this is an important point of departure, and without the collective biography approach, it would not be possible to reach the same initial quality of awareness. The process is therefore layered with interpretations—interpretations of how the story is initially remembered and then told, of the collective response to it (as individuals within the group share their interpretations with the group), and of the storyteller’s retelling. The sens(it)ive nature of CBW demands sensory interpretations of this collective enterprise as the narrative becomes embodied. We found that CBW supported the difficult task of deconstruction through our collective

interrogation of the selves that we habitually tell ourselves (and others) that we are (as in our memory stories). . . and decomposing the subject movement through which we unmoor our embodied selves from those discourses we have worked on deconstructively to make them unthinkable. (Davies et al. 2006, p. 99)

In relation to learning and education (whether in formal or informal settings), but also in a more general sense, it is important to develop the critical ability to recognize and identify differences. The collective search for possible scenarios, moments, illustrations or scenes is a central part of the process. It opens up the possibility of becoming aware of such differences and of becoming aware of differences as phenomena. We had to keep an eye out for the unexpected as we became engaged in dealing with resonance and agreements, exclusions, and rewritings. The process involved challenging ourselves in being open and yet argumentative in reading and writing our collective text, agreeing to overwrite each other in order to collectivize our search and let go of our individual egos. In some sense, each participant lost *herself*, but, at the same time, each one of us became more—in becoming we—through writing the text together. This sense of togetherness is the impetus which sets the writing in progress and constitutes the very force behind the struggle to reveal and make visible.

The place of interpretation as individuals and as a group is important in CBW because its concern with the embodiment of experience requires responses to sensory cues. However, after the workshop, we all returned home. During the workshop itself, all authors were present and worked in real-time sessions. We were able to look at each other, to ask follow-up questions, and to elaborate further on those issues needing attention. After leaving the workshop, the collective writing processes had to negotiate time differences and online work. E-mails and online multimedia tools (such as Skype and Adobe Connect) are extremely helpful, but they are very different to being physically present in the same time and place (while wary of imposing new discourses to be identified, interpreted, and negotiated, online meetings could be used to help elaborate understandings—although this is not something we chose to do for this project). In our postworkshop sessions, we primarily used e-mails. Changes of time and place shifted the interpretative process as we sought to read and respond to each other. Yet this should not be seen as

wholly disadvantageous. After all, writing rather than speaking gives more time for reflection. As the CBW process unfolds over a long period of time, it is almost inevitable that these different means of interaction must be negotiated and their interpretative consequences incorporated into the process.

Letting go of your ego, whether in the workshop or in the following writing processes, can be fun as you ride the roller coaster of deconstruction and feel a turbulent and tingling sensation. This description maybe does not sound very “academic”—but this is hardly surprising since deconstruction challenges a number of fundamental presuppositions in academia. It is profoundly creative and yet analytic and deep. Engaging in this form of collective analytic process really pays off since the outcome becomes so much more. Through the support of all the participants’ readings and writings, the whole becomes far richer, elaborated, and produced by the variations of differences that are processed throughout the process.

It Hurts So Good: Becoming Aware and Letting Go!

CBW suffuses narratives with emotional and sensory details to generate a sens(it)ive account, and so it seems appropriate to offer a more personal response to my engagement with this methodology as I address some aspects that have impressed me particularly and reflect on my own experiences as a member in a CBW group, participating in the process of practising this method (see also Davies et al. 2006, pp. 114–144).

The first experience I would like to focus on is *letting go of your/my ego*. How did this feel bearing in mind the personal investment of doing and being involved in a CBW activity that progresses over a considerable period of time, which might range from a couple of months to several years? Personally, I can say that it made me feel and reflect in various ways in the course of this period. It is rather a complex process to be involved in, but overall it was very challenging in a good way. The undoing of what you know is to surrender to what we cannot yet see or make sense of. It’s scary and thrilling at the same time—it sharpen ones senses—an explorative adventure, where your own interpretation merges with others, shaping new compositions. In the course of this process, I also perceived that my prejudices floated up to the surface and become visible. Dealing with these was painful—taking a good look at myself through the collective lens, so to speak. For me, this meant seeing myself as a capable and autonomous person—and at the same time seeing how (contextually) exposed this self actually is. Being utterly vulnerable and exposed to being subjected by others (as in the memory story about the pilot boat) and realizing that this is something that is happening all the time have made me much more humble—*nothing is for sure*.

Other aspects or the process that impressed me are above all the experience of developing *critical awareness* and *the insight of the deconstruction of the self* (with particular emphasis on the dimension of insight). What did I learn and how has this made a difference, beyond the work that we shared in this period? This can be

discussed in terms of developing and strengthening the ability to achieve critical awareness as a scholar, which is of course eminently useful in my continuing research approach. It all boils down to the understanding and insight that differences are always available. Grasping this intellectually may be a cliché, but the implications become far more tangible when you are personally involved in an analysis using a dualistic strategy: the differences become very present and are highlighted in a striking manner. *In between*, I felt lost, with no belonging to either—the opposites and displacements, at the same time trying to deconstruct and reconstruct *the other*. Derrida has shown how differences are created, but reading his texts is not enough to really grasp what it entails. In my own experience, I felt that the process for doing so demanded both passion and deep engagement, since creativity—in a most fundamental way—is an attribute that absolutely needs to be present, *there is no way around it*. In my research approach today, this has made me open for dealing with a bit of chaos, and I am no longer afraid of getting “variations” as an outcome in my scientific results—a kind of outcome space (cf. the phenomenographic methodology), that *gestalts* a richer whole—*revealing contradictions and differences*.

Finally, believing, as I did, that the support from all the participants’ readings and writings would lead to achieving a far richer whole, I did my best to hold on to this conviction, as a motor from the very beginning, at the same time, quoting myself, “doing my best to hang on to the swing” (Davies and Gannon 2006c, p. 126), trying not to fall off. Initially, it was not easy to expose myself, my thoughts and feelings, to five unknown and highly competent scholars, telling about real life memories, problematizing theoretical and methodological assumptions. It was difficult to merge the private and academic sides of my person. My – *I and she* – started out strong, but during the process became dissolved, when everyone joined in and became a part of my own memory stories. The collective experience turned it into a shared experience, decomposing and peeling, elaborating on and recomposing, and highlighting the variations of differences that appear and transform throughout the process. The ride in the pilot boat became quite a journey.

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Genre 2 Analysis of Language and Significations

Introduction

Jane Mulderrig and Vally Lytra

In this section chapters highlight the role of semiosis in constructing and interpreting the practices through which roles and relationships are negotiated across a range of educational settings. For the authors interpretation in educational research is not something performed exclusively by the researchers at the end of the study, but is relevant to every stage of the process and all its participants (both researchers and researched). It therefore follows that language and other forms of semiosis should be a key analytical focus in exploring the importance of these sense-making practices in education.

Dunn's chapter addressing the UK government's school exclusion policy puts a critical spotlight on the dilemmas posed by those on the margins of state schooling: children with challenging behavior. Dunn's chapter sheds light on the role of powerful actors whose voices shape the terms of the debate as well as opportunities for relatively powerless actors to engage in it, by reframing school exclusion in a discourse of criminal justice.

Djonov, Knox, and Zhao present a social-semiotic multimodal approach to the exploration of websites and the challenges they present in terms of fostering critical educational engagement with digital knowledge resources. Drawing on three case studies, they demonstrate that interpretation is integral to the highly complex, multimodal, and dynamic construction of meaning in hypermedia texts.

Montesano Montessori and Schuman use participatory action research in Dutch primary schools to explore the implications for social justice of including students with additional support needs in mainstream classrooms. Focusing in particular on

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interactions between teachers and pupils as well as among pupils themselves, the researchers strove to integrate fully the perspectives of the research participants.

Perhaps no field of educational research is more obviously defined by the interpretive process than intercultural communication. As Zotzmann argues in her chapter, competing theories of intercultural communication do not simply provide academic interpretations of the phenomenon but also in doing so provide the discursive and cognitive resources that in turn shape the communicative practices they analyze. Drawing on evidence from three prominent theoretical frameworks for investigating intercultural communication, she shows how interpretation impacts on the entire process from theory to practice.

Pahl's chapter explores children's writing practices in out of school settings, namely, in the home and in a local library. Drawing on collaborative ethnography and the process of doing reciprocal analysis, the author shows the children's creative use and combination of different representational resources, as they produced visual, material, and written texts.

Rowsell explores video game design and production through the perspectives of two video game designers. The author uses multimodality and modal learning to discuss the different modes and strategies the game designers employed to create successful video games and the insights their design and production practices can provide to learning and understanding texts in general and literacy education in particular.

Mulderrig's chapter examines the negotiation of power roles and relations between citizen and state in UK educational policy discourse under the New Labour government (1997–2005). The author combines critical discourse analysis (CDA) with corpus linguistics to illustrate how the systematic use of personal pronouns in educational policy documents, alongside a more distanced form of grammatical agency, helped to transform the model of governance into a more personalized, inclusive, and managerial one.

Snell and Lefstein investigate a feedback session where the teacher uses popular culture, more specifically the televised talent show *X-factor*, as a means for the class to evaluate student writing. The linguistic ethnographic analysis of a segment of a video-recorded literacy lesson is deployed to show the social, interactional, and discursive resources pupils drew upon as the discourse genre of conventional classroom feedback shifted in line with the demands of *X-factor*.

2.1 Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Interpret Educational Policy on School Exclusion in England and Wales

Yo Dunn

Introduction to the Research

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), and, in particular, Fairclough's (2009) dialectical–relational CDA, is a problem-focused methodology. The CDA research on which this chapter is based examined the social problem of exclusion from school (as a disciplinary measure) in the UK during the period from 1997 to 2006. Rather than focusing on identifying correlates of school exclusion by means of statistical analysis, or interpreting the experiences of excluded children by investigating their individual perspectives, this research focused on political discourses and their role in and interaction with this area of educational policy.

Until the early 1990s, exclusion from school was a rarely used sanction in the state education system in England and Wales. Its use increased dramatically between 1990 and 1997. The election of the New Labour government in 1997 brought with it a new policy: an explicit aim to reduce exclusion from school as part of a wider policy focus on social exclusion. The 3 years after 1997 saw a notable fall in permanent exclusions from their peak of 12,700 per year to a low of 8,320 in 1999/2000 (DfES 2001). From 2000 to 2006, however, permanent exclusions rose slightly and stabilized in a range from 8,500 to 10,000 per year (DfES 2007). The overall level of exclusions remains substantially higher than was the case prior to 1990. The dramatic change from 1990 to 1997 had already been the subject of considerable research interest (e.g., Hayden 1997; Wright et al. 2000). This research focused on changes in school exclusion policy after 1997 and investigated why the initial falls had not been sustained.

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This issue was well suited to investigation by means of an approach with a discursive focus. Under New Labour, political discourse had become a highly significant part of how government policies are not only transmitted but also enacted (Chilton 2004; Graham 2001). The 1997 policy of reducing exclusion from school had been the subject of vocal opposition in the media and, by the time of the research, had ceased to be a stated educational policy goal. So the trend in exclusions between 1997 and 2006 raised questions about the interaction between political discourses around exclusion from school, educational policy, and exclusion itself.

The research identified two trends in New Labour's discourses around school exclusion between 1997 and 2006. The first was a substantial shift away from discourses of social exclusion focused on targets to reduce exclusion from school towards strongly negative, individualized discourses of behavior and responsibility focused on punitive responses to children and parents. An inextricable part of this change was the increasing elimination from the discourse of the agency of powerful social actors including the government itself. The second closely related trend was an apparent decrease in dialogical engagement of government with the citizenry and in particular with potentially critical discourses. These findings enhance explanations of the social problem of exclusion from school by extending the multilevel analyses already available beyond the individual, their family, and the immediate school environment, to include the role of educational policy and political discourse.

The Focus of the Research

The treatment of children at the margins of the education system is of perpetual interest to researchers concerned with social justice (Slee 2001). While the numbers formally excluded from school (especially those permanently excluded) remain a tiny minority of the total school population, their difficulties can be seen as an acute representation of much larger issues within the educational policy. There are substantial social inequities involved in exclusion from school. Although the causal connections are complex, children who experience exclusion from school are more likely to be involved in crime, to experience poverty, to experience unemployment in later life, and to go into local authority care (Berridge et al. 2001; Hayden 1997; Munn and Lloyd 2005). The risk of exclusion from school falls disproportionately on particular groups, notably boys, black children, and pupils with special educational needs (SEN) (DfE 2011). Formal exclusion is at the thin end of a wedge which includes truancy and self-exclusion, school (in)discipline, disaffection, and, at its broadest, concepts of social exclusion extending out beyond the school to issues of poverty, class, disadvantage, and inequity. Exclusion from school can be viewed as the most acute point of conflict between the education system

and the child as pupil. Thus, research into exclusion from school is relevant to understanding broader issues in social relations between state and child through the structures of the education system.

Previous research on exclusion from school has tended to focus heavily on the agency of individual excluded children, with some discussion of broader social factors as identifying characteristics of the excluded population. Methodologically, the existing literature is dominated by statistical analyses (usually investigating either the causes or the consequences of exclusion) (such as Daniels et al. 2003) and studies focused on understanding the individual experiences of excluded children and their families (what is mainly thought of as “interpretative” research) (such as Kane 2012).

The CDA approach taken in this research is a form of explanatory critique, focused on explanation rather than simple relations of causation. This approach allows access to structural factors of potential interest in explaining exclusion from school, but which are not amenable to statistical analyses, such as political discourse and the role of central government. Similarly CDA provides a means of focusing on social and discursive forces which social actors in the event of exclusion from school may be unaware of and which are, therefore, unavailable to research focused on understanding the experiences of excluded children and their families from their own perspectives.

The central question posed in the research was how have New Labour’s discourses relating to exclusion from school, related educational policies and the social practices in which they were embedded, evolved between 1997 and 2006? The research process evolved in an iterative way, moving back and forth between theory and data, and between levels of abstraction, in a process which sought to continually refine understandings on all of these levels. This type of process is both common and necessary in interdisciplinary research of this kind and is theoretically consistent with CDA (Fleming and Moloney 1996, pp. 120–121; Wodak 2009, p. 95).

Subsidiary research questions were thus gradually refined during the course of the research, informed both by theoretical insights and guided by emerging findings. These subsidiary questions both helped to focus the investigation and structure findings. They were:

1. How does the way the social problem is defined in political discourse evolve?
2. How are social events represented and how does this change?
3. How are social actors represented and how does this change?
4. What shifts are there in the power, authority, and agency of the social actors involved?
5. Are there changes in the dialogicality¹ of government discourse and what are the implications of this for (a) discourses and policies in the area of exclusion from school and (b) governance?

¹ See “The Process of Analysis” below.

The findings generated by these questions were then interpreted with reference to a set of sociological questions which were derived from the literature on New Labour's discourses of social exclusion. These were:

- (A) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion narrow the concept of equality?
- (B) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion represent the world in a way which demonstrates a commitment to neoliberal values which overrides social democratic concerns?
- (C) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion focus on individuals rather than structures?
- (D) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion obfuscate issues of power and agency?
- (E) Are New Labour's discourses around school exclusion constructed in a way which tends to deflect criticism and avoid conflict?

The two sets of subsidiary questions are clearly related but do not precisely map on to each other. The following section on the dialectical–relational approach explicates how the levels of analysis represented by these two sets of questions coexisted in the research process.

A Dialectical–Relational Approach (DRA) to CDA

The research broadly followed Fairclough's (2009, p. 167) four-stage framework for dialectical–relational CDA:

1. **Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect.** In this case, the social wrong was school exclusion with all its inequalities and adverse social consequences. It is important to note that this step involves the researcher adopting an explicitly normative position. While uncommon in social research generally, it can be argued that this is a necessary step in achieving truly adequate explanatory critique. In order to develop more rounded explanations and propose specific emancipatory changes, research which aims to be "critical" has to engage in explicit moral debate about preferred forms of social organization (Sayer 2000). In identifying the act of school exclusion as a "social wrong," this research took the moral position (based on the extensive evidence outlined above of power imbalances in the use of school exclusion and correlation between its use and other social harms) that school exclusion is a source of avoidable suffering (Sayer 2009) and that its use should be eliminated or, at least, minimized.

While other semiotic aspects to this social problem undoubtedly exist, this study focused on political and particularly government (at the time New Labour) discourses around school exclusion. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, CDA's inherent focus on power relations (Fairclough et al. 2011) and extensive prior use to analyse political discourse suggested that a CDA methodology could

be usefully applied to such material. Secondly, the heavy emphasis in the existing literature on researching the excluded themselves and their families (the relatively powerless) suggested the need for an approach which would allow a research focus on the powerful in relation to school exclusion.

2. **Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong.** The research aimed to identify discursive and extradiscursive elements which might contribute to perpetuating school exclusion or act to make inclusion more difficult. Four main obstacles were identified by the research. The first of these was a cycle in which texts produced by the teaching unions, media, and government interacted in ways which continually increased punitive and decreased welfarist discourses. Another obstacle identified was the importation of criminal justice discourses into this area of educational policy discourse from 2000 onwards. Related to both of these was a persistent, increasing focus on the agency of individual children and parents rather than that of other social actors and relevant structural factors. The final obstacle identified by the research was the curtailment of opportunities for critique, including the exclusion of those most adversely affected by this policy from public debates/dialogue on the subject.
3. **Consider whether the social order “needs” the social wrong.** The research considered not only whether school exclusion could be reduced by making changes within the current social order but also whether power relations needed to change. Two key interests were identified as being served by the perpetuation of school exclusion during the period studied. The political interests of the New Labour government were protected by avoiding potential threats to neoliberal policies that would have arisen from recognizing and addressing the structural factors relevant to school exclusion (particularly poverty). In the face of limited resources to provide for the needs of children with challenging behavior in schools, the interests of teachers and headteachers (as represented by the teaching unions) were being served by removing children in need of such resources from their working environment.
4. **Identify possible ways past the obstacles.** DRA encourages the researcher to go beyond stating findings to identifying strategies with the potential to change relations of domination (Fairclough 2009). The research identified some specific discursive strategies that might allow the dominant discourse to be opposed. These included:
 - Challenging the underlying assumptions in the framing of government consultations as a potential avenue to overcoming the curtailment of opportunities for critique identified by the research
 - Challenging the *non sequitur* that an explanation cannot be valid if it is not a justification, in order to open up public debate around school exclusion to discussion of the relevant structural factors, rather than allowing these to be dismissed
 - Counteracting the persistent discursive focus on individuals identified in the research through the deliberate use of inclusive pronouns (e.g., “our children”)

- Countering the dehumanization of excluded children by telling “human-scale” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, p. 312) stories highlighting the damage caused by exclusion and positive stories about inclusion in order to encourage empathy
- Reframing the problem in terms of the right to education and, generally, reintroducing morality to political discourse (Harvey 2005, p. 204)

Identifying Sources

The project’s focus on discourse was underpinned by a dialectical view of discourse and the social, which sees discourse as both shaping the social world and shaped by the social world (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Sayer 2000). This entails a particular focus on issues of power, since discursive practices can play an important role in producing and reproducing power relations through representations of social events and positioning of social actors (Fairclough et al. 2011). New Labour’s discourses around school exclusion were seen, therefore, as both a reflection of power relations in the education system (as realized through conflict over behavior) and as a mechanism through which power relations were potentially being reproduced. It was, therefore, appropriate for the project to focus on examples of New Labour’s texts already in the public domain, since these were the texts with the potential to act as such a mechanism for the transmission of power relations.

The formal means by which UK governments state their policies is through White Papers. However, White Papers are not the only “genres of governance” (Fairclough 2003, p. 32), that is, texts that are concerned with governing the way things are done as opposed to actually doing them. “Policy” involves not only what government does or intends to do but also reasons, justifications, legitimations, and the communication of these (Parsons 1995). So policy is also formulated and implemented through wider political discourse (Colebatch 2002, pp. 130–131; Fairclough 1989, pp. 70, 90–91). Political discourse was, therefore, conceptualized as a “technology of government” (Rose and Miller 1992, developing Foucault 1981). Consequently, the data selected for analysis includes speeches and press releases alongside White Papers, in order to access a more rounded picture of New Labour’s political discourses around the issue of school exclusion.

Having made this choice of genres, the next step was to build a small, specialized corpus of texts focusing on school exclusion and related issues for the period 1997–2006. This corpus totaled a little over 300,000 words and included texts from all three genres. Some of the analysis made use of this entire corpus of texts. The majority of the research, however, focused on close textual analysis of nine of these texts (or sections of them)—three from each of the genres—and relating these nine texts to their sociopolitical context.

In CDA generally, as is the case in this study, data collection can be seen as part of the ongoing iterative process of research rather than as a distinct phase (Wodak and Meyer 2009a, p. 27), and in this respect CDA is similar to grounded theory

(Glaser and Strauss 1967). In this study, investigation of the sociopolitical context suggested that the 12–18 months after each of the general elections of 1997, 2001 and 2005 were “critical periods”² during which discourses around school exclusion were particularly prominent in New Labour’s political discourse generally and during which important policy announcements in this area had been made. Consequently, as far as possible, the core texts were selected from those published within these periods.

Within CDA, methods of sampling vary widely, with most CDA approaches not recommending particular sampling procedures (Wodak and Meyer 2009a, p. 27). Since this project aimed to investigate diachronic change, it was important to select texts that would be as comparable as possible, at least within each genre, over time. However, the iterative approach at times conflicted with the need for comparability, and as a result, the core texts, while comparable within each genre, were not necessarily directly related to those from similar time periods.

In summary, the nine core texts selected for qualitative analysis comprised extracts pertaining to school discipline from three White Papers; the complete text of three of Tony Blair’s speeches in which school discipline was a significant theme; and three Department for Education and Skills (DfES) press releases relating to school discipline. One text from each genre dated from the 12 to 18 months following each of the general elections which took place in 1997, 2001 and 2005.³

The Process of Analysis

Corpus Analysis

The corpus analysis was carried out by dividing the large corpus of texts into three smaller cross-genre subcorpora, each covering one of New Labour’s three terms in government.⁴ These subcorpora were then compared using the lexical analysis software WordSmith (Scott 1999). Keyword analysis was used to compare the vocabulary used in each subcorpus, determining which words appeared more often in one corpus than another and measuring the extent and significance of the change (a score known as “keyness”). Originally designed to detect stylistic changes in different versions of the same text, this tool has been used successfully both in CDA generally (e.g., Baker 2006) and for the specific purpose of tracking

² Drawing on aspects of Fairclough’s notion of “moments of crisis” (Fairclough 1992, p. 230) and Wodak’s criterion of “specific periods of time relating to important discursive events which are connected with the issue in question” (Wodak 2009, p. 98).

³ With the exception of the third press release which was issued in 2004, this anomaly is due to the inclusion of this text in a pilot project predating the 2005 election.

⁴ The third period ends in 2006 because of the timing of the research.

shifts in language use over time (Mulderigg 2006, 2008). Measuring “keyness” provides an indication of the strength of any shift in vocabulary and indicates not just frequency but salience (Baker 2006, p. 125).

In this research, keyness was used to examine changes over time in the vocabulary used to describe and circumscribe the social problem: terms such as “exclusion” and “behavior” and their ideological associations. One finding from this aspect of the research was a substantial shift away from the use of words such as “exclusion,” “exclusions,” and “inclusion” between New Labour’s first term in office and subsequently. This contributed, along with indications from elsewhere in the research, to identifying the prominence of discourses of social exclusion prior to 2001 and their relative absence after that point.

Collocation (the occurrence of words in proximity to each other) is a means of understanding meanings and relationships between words which may not be apparent from qualitative analysis of individual texts (Baker 2006, p. 96). Words which occur frequently together are indicative of powerful discourses as the strength of collocation (the degree to which such words occur together and only together) suggests that these concepts have been linked in the minds of people and used again and again (Baker 2006, p. 114). In this study collocation was used to aid in the identification of such powerful discourses and track shifts in those discourses over time.

Analyzing collocations in each of the subcorpora allowed the identification of sets of labels associated with key social actors, such as “children” and “parents.” These were interpreted through CDA’s conception of the dialectical relationship between discourse and society via the assumption that frequently occurring associations were likely to reflect the presence of socially important discourses (Mulderigg 2008).

Metaphor Analysis

Cognitive perspectives can be extremely useful in understanding the mechanisms through which power relations can be obscured in political discourse (Chilton 2004, p. 51). Analyzing metaphors in particular can illuminate values and assumptions in texts that are deeply embedded and obscured from casual awareness because we are so accustomed to the use of certain metaphors that we take them for granted. Cognitive blending theory (CBT)⁵ (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) describes metaphor usage as a blending in which concepts are associated by means of existing associations between them and then blended, which creates emergent concepts as a result of the blending process. The project focused, therefore, not on novel one-off metaphors but on those conceptual metaphors that underpinned a range of lexical

⁵ See “An eclectic approach” below for discussion of the choice of CBT over alternative theorizations of metaphor and its compatibility with CDA.

patterns in the texts and that, by virtue of having become established and conventional (Goatly 2007, p. 30), were most likely to be effective at conveying hidden ideology (Chilton 2004, p. 52).

One example was the common metaphor “misbehaving child as runaway train.” The presence of this blend was indicated by the use of phrases such as “out of control” and “off the rails” to describe children in the core texts. The concepts of a misbehaving child and a runaway train are initially associated because both share the characteristic of a failure to conform to commands. The emergent concepts are of children as objects in need of control and who pose a catastrophic danger if they are not controlled. Identifying these emergent concepts illustrated the hidden ideological content of this blend. Associating children with inanimate objects tends to deny their rights as members of society. The blend also evokes emotions of danger entirely disproportionate to the literal threat posed by children.

My CDA Toolbox

A huge range of CDA techniques were used in the project, and there is only space here to describe a selection of the most useful:

1. **Policy analysis/analysis of social context** (Fairclough 2003, p. 191). This comprised a mixture of the sociological tradition of policy analysis (Parsons 1995, p. 85) and the type of analysis of social context advocated in DRA (Fairclough 2003, p. 191). It involved examining the political and media context in which policy statements about school discipline were made and the other voices and texts with which the core texts interacted. This allowed the research to address the external relations (Fairclough 2003, p. 39) of the core texts, that is, those texts and social events that were outside of the core texts but which, in some way, were brought into them. These were identified through a range of indications such as one text being directly referred to in another or chronological correlations (e.g., a newspaper article being published the day after a press release on the same topic). These were then mapped through the creation of timelines and diagrams showing relationships between different texts (including texts outside those in the study) and between the core texts and non-textual social events (such as general elections). The diagrams then facilitated the identification of further connections.
This process served the research in two important ways. Firstly, it provided essential contextualizing knowledge that informed the rest of the analysis. Secondly, it also provided important analytical insights, for example, by initially identifying a chronological association between government texts, media texts and those produced by teaching unions, which led to further investigation of these interactions in the project.
2. **Representation of social events** (Fairclough 2003, p. 193). This involved textual analysis at the whole text level, looking at the ways in which social

events were represented in the core texts. For example, by looking at which elements of the social event were included and which excluded. This provided an overview of diachronic change. For instance, in an analysis of sections from the White Papers, a distinct difference was evident between texts from 1997 and from 2005. In the 1997 text, the social problem was represented as the act of school exclusion. Institutions (schools, LEAs, and the government) were included in the text but individual persons largely excluded. On the other hand, in the 2005 text, the social problem was represented as the behavior of individual children and parents. Institutions were largely excluded, while individual persons were prominently included (parents, individual pupils, headteachers). This fed into the overall conclusion that over time the discourses had shifted away from a representation of the social problem which recognized structural factors towards an emphasis on individual agency.

3. **Discourses** (Fairclough 2003, p. 193). Also working at a whole text level, this involved examining specific discourses which were drawn upon in the texts. Levitas' (1998, 2005) existing typology of New Labour's discourses of social exclusion was used to classify discourses of social exclusion in the core texts. For example, the 1998 press release describes the purpose of the target set by the government to reduce exclusions as "to give thousands of children a better chance in life" (DfES 1998). This assumes that giving children a better chance in life is an appropriate social goal and that social mobility is best achieved by providing access to better education leading to better paid employment. This suggests that the social exclusion discourses that are prominent in this text are those described by Levitas (1998, 2005) as redistributive (focused on equality) and social integrationist (social mobility through access to paid employment). In contrast the 2004 press release describes the purpose of government policy in phrases such as "tackling poor behaviour and enforcing discipline" (DfES 2004). School exclusion is mentioned only to emphasize that headteachers "have every right to exercise permanent exclusion" (DfES 2004). There is no sign in that text of any concern for the disproportionate impact of exclusion on disadvantaged social groups (redistributive discourse). Nor are there any indicators of concern for equality of opportunity within the education system (social integrationist discourse). In this text a blaming discourse of behavior, which constructs socially disadvantaged young people as solely responsible for their exclusion from education (moral underclass discourse), is completely dominant.

Analyzing the presence of discourses of social exclusion in the texts in this way provided insights into changes over time in the weight given to competing discourses. Recognition of the growing dominance of moral underclass discourse contributed to the identification of the importation of criminal justice discourses into educational policy discourse.

4. **Representation of social actors** (Fairclough 2003, pp. 145–150; Van Leeuwen 1996). Another key tool in analyzing the core texts was Van Leeuwen's (1996) systematic categorization of the representations of social actors. The categories of textual analysis used in the research included whether actors were included or excluded from a text, activated or passivated, personalized or impersonalized

and whether actors were assimilated or individualized in the text. These tools were applied primarily to examining representations of children and parents in the core texts, while drawing on the corpus analysis for broader contextualization. This provided insight into changes over time in the agency ascribed to these groups.

These tools were particularly useful in identifying and analyzing overwhelmingly negative and “othering”⁶ portrayals of some children and parents in later texts. For example, in analyzing a representation such as “how do we protect the majority from the dangerous and irresponsible minority?” (Blair 2005), Van Leeuwen’s categorization was used to identify the key linguistic mechanisms by which this was achieved. In this example, agency in relation to the social problem has shifted onto children (relative to earlier texts) who are differentiated from “us”, homogenized and impersonalized. Through detailed analysis of such examples, the research was able to describe the mechanisms through which New Labour’s characterizations of children changed between 1997 and 2006, representing them first as bad, then as violent, and finally associating them with the use of weapons (particularly knives). Analyzing representations of social actors in the texts also identified a changing relationship between children and schools in which the emphasis shifted from schools meeting the needs of children to children conforming to the needs of schools; discursive strategies that effectively reduced reader empathy with the “othered” children represented in the texts; and how, particularly in texts from 2005/2006, these children were further impersonalized as less than human.

5. **Dialogicality** (Bakhtin 1981; Fairclough 2003, p. 42). Indications from multiple strands of the study suggested the possibility of changes in the nature and/or quality of communication between government and citizen. The ability to identify and then investigate unanticipated issues is a strength of the iterative nature of this methodology. Fairclough’s concept of dialogicality (Fairclough 2003, p. 42) was employed to investigate this issue. Drawing on an aspect of Bakhtin’s “dialogical” theory of language, Fairclough suggests that texts differ in their orientation to difference, the degree to which they engage with the views and utterances of others. This is particularly important in political discourse because:

One of the central problems of contemporary politics is the squeezing out of the ‘public sphere’, of spaces where people can openly dialogue over matters of common concern free from the constraints of both the state and the market, and in a way which can influence government. . . . The argument over what constitutes ‘real’ dialogue is a central part of the political struggle over the public sphere. (Fairclough 2000, p. 127)

⁶“Othering” is used to describe the representation of a group of social actors in a way which emphasizes differences and minimizes similarities between that group and the author and/or intended audience of the text. Such representations tend to reduce identification with, and thus empathy towards, members of the social group.

Very little in the way of previous attempts to operationalize the concept existed. Consequently, the project took a novel approach, seeing dialogicality in terms of the ability of social actors to access and effectively use:

1. The means of communication
2. The language of communication
3. Discourses

Each of these was investigated: (1) by considering changes in public consultation; (2) by investigating the intelligibility of the texts through a range of potentially relevant factors including sentence length, lexical density, grammatical complexity, and specificity; and (3) by considering to what degree the texts were open to the presence of competing discourses and alternative perspectives. Overall the research found low and decreasing dialogicality between 1997 and 2006.

An Eclectic Approach

DRA's problem-focused approach permits the researcher to draw on whatever tools may be useful in investigating the problem studied. Such an eclectic approach is appropriate to the study of public policy, that is, the study of "what governments do, why they do it, what difference it makes" (Dye 1976). It can be argued that studying policy requires the researcher to cross disciplinary boundaries in order to bring to bear whatever approaches, models, theories, and methods are necessary in order to understand a specific social problem (Parsons 1995, pp. xv–xvi).

This research was particularly eclectic and, within the broad umbrella of DRA, made use of tools, not only from within CDA (which itself equips the researcher with a range of tools with which to investigate a problem) but also corpus analytical techniques and CBT. In the study as a whole, these tools were deployed strategically. At any given point during the study, research issues were investigated using the most appropriate tools for those issues (Fairclough 2009, p. 167) and those which were most relevant to the texts under analysis. Consequently, not all tools were applied to all texts.

The eclecticism of the approach taken in this research had several advantages. The use of a diverse range of methods allowed the problem of school exclusion to be examined from many angles. For example, when changes in vocabulary over time were initially investigated using corpus analysis, words sharing a common root, for example, "violent," "violence," etc. (or "disruption," "disrupt," "disruptive," etc.), did not appear to have undergone any significant changes in usage. However, subsequent closer analysis of the representation of social events and social actors suggested that in fact usage of these words had undergone some change. Returning to the corpus for a more detailed examination of these items demonstrated that both words abruptly entered government discourse from 2000 onwards. This finding aligned with other insights from the research, such as

changes in metaphorical representations of the relationship between schools and children. Thus, each of these separate stages of the research helped build an overall picture of substantial discursive change occurring in 2000/2001.

Another advantage of this flexible methodology was that the wide range of tools allowed for contrasting (though complementary) units of analysis that ranged from individual words to discursive patterns across groups of texts and non-textual elements. This methodological breadth and diversity was particularly useful in allowing connections to be made between insights from disparate areas of the study. For example, one pattern that emerged from the corpus analysis was a substantial increase in the number of references to children and parents in later texts. This linked to a finding from CBT analysis of texts from this same period wherein parents and children were metaphorically positioned as “the enemy”, both findings demonstrating that specific instances of “negative other” (van Dijk 2003, p. 263) representations of these actors (identified in the close text analysis) were not isolated cases but formed part of a wider pattern.

The eclecticism of the research also improved validity through methodological triangulation as advocated in more recent overviews of CDA (Wodak and Meyer 2009a). The use of corpus analysis to ground close text analysis within a quantitative methodology (Mautner 2009) was particularly important for a researcher taking an explicit ideological stance. Close text readings, which are particularly vulnerable to researcher bias, were thus guided and supported by statistically significant changes in word usage across a large corpus of texts. The use of a range of text analytical tools meant that findings were based on repeated indications of change across different linguistic categories, thereby offering robust support of findings through a multi-method approach.

Nevertheless, such extreme eclecticism also had some disadvantages. Breadth was achieved at the expense of more intensive analysis of individual textual features. There is also a significant risk of theoretical incompatibilities when bringing together methods from such different traditions. This was particularly a risk in using CBT in conjunction with CDA.

Of the two leading theorizations of metaphor—conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002)—the latter is considered more theoretically compatible with CDA (Hart 2008; Koller 2005). This is largely because CBT’s dialectical view of the cognitive processes involved in metaphor is compatible with CDA’s dialectical view of the relationship between discourse and the social (Hart 2008, p. 98). However, theoretical work remains to be done to build a bridge between the individual cognitive focus of blending theory and the socio-cognitive perspective of CDA. Nevertheless, CBT can contribute to problem-focused CDA research, provided a certain degree of pragmatism is used in considering conceptual tools on the basis of their usefulness for addressing the particular problem investigated rather than their internal consistency within a seamless conceptual framework.

The Frameworks Used

Throughout the research sociological and linguistic frameworks were used to complement each other. This is a result of the interdisciplinary nature of the research and the dialectical view of discourse and the social, which inherently brings social and linguistic theories into dialogue with each other (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, pp. 16–17). The CDA toolkit contains its own conceptual frameworks as described above. The research made extensive use of these. These were complemented by the use of two main frameworks from broader social theory: the concept of social exclusion and Bourdieu’s “constrained communication.”

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a heavily contested concept, and this struggle over meaning was evident in the discourses investigated in the research. Definitions of social exclusion can be loosely grouped into “strong” and “weak.” Strong versions emphasize the role of those who are doing the excluding, see exclusion as the result of processes that derive from a fundamentally unequal social structure, and posit solutions that redress power imbalances (Byrne 2008). This is contrasted with “weak” versions of social exclusion (such as those derived from Giddens 1991). Weak versions see exclusion as a consequence of the negative attributes of excluded individuals and groups and posit solutions that focus on altering the handicapping characteristics of excluded people and promoting their integration into the dominant society (Byrne 2008, pp. 2, 8; Viet-Wilson 1998, p. 45).

Rather than attempting a superficially “objective” analysis, the normative position taken in this research led me to explicitly adopt a strong definition of social exclusion. The weak versions of social exclusion dominating the political arena that were the focus of this research were then critiqued from this explicit perspective using the typology provided by Levitas (1998, 2005) as described above, in which redistributive discourse can be seen as roughly equating to a strong version of social exclusion, while social integrationist discourse (emphasizing integration into the dominant social order) and moral underclass discourse (emphasizing the negative characteristics of excluded people) can both be seen as weak versions.

Concepts of social exclusion were useful in the research in differentiating between competing conceptions of the social problem of school exclusion. The explicit presence of some versions of the concept of social exclusion in the discourses under study (primarily in earlier texts) meant that this framework was particularly relevant to understanding these representations and a strong version of social exclusion was useful in providing a critical perspective on the failure of the state to uphold a universal right to education. However, in isolation, concepts of social exclusion were unable to account sufficiently for the role of public sphere discourse in processes of exclusion.

Constrained Communication

For some time now, social theorists have been raising concerns about the hegemony of neoliberalism and its implications for democracy (Bauman 1999; Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001; Fairclough 2000; Harvey 2005; Mouffe 1999; Sayer 2005). Bauman (1999, p. 4) argues that “Liberalism today boils down to the simple ‘no alternative’ credo.” Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) describe the neoliberal discourse of political parties such as New Labour as “cultural imperialism,” which they see as “a form of symbolic violence that relies on a relationship of constrained communication to extort submission” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001, p. 1 emphasis original).

The key critique is that neoliberal discourses have performative power (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001, p. 4), that is, that they are used as an instrument to both construct and evaluate social policy and that they discourage questioning by incorporating an “implacable and irreversible logic of social reality,” which disallows any alternative possibilities (Bauman 1999, p. 127).

The research described in this chapter did not set out to investigate these issues. However, issues which began to emerge from the analysis were interpreted in terms of the sociological concept of “constrained communication” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001). This was operationalized through the linguistic concept of “dialogicality” (Fairclough 2003) in order to investigate specific linguistic mechanisms that were identified as acting as constraints on communication. Fairclough (2000, p. 125) proposes five criteria for assessing the substantiveness of dialogue, of which three were relevant to this study:

- Access is open to whichever sections of society want to join in—there is “equality of opportunity” to join in and to contribute.
- People are free to disagree, and their differences are recognized.
- It is talk which makes a difference—it leads to action (e.g., policy change).

Interpreting the Results

The findings were interpreted using the set of five sociological questions set out above:

(A) Do New Labour’s discourses around school exclusion narrow the concept of equality?

The findings suggest that New Labour’s discourses around school exclusion between 1997 and 2006 shifted from a fairly narrow view of equality (deriving largely from social integrationist discourse) to largely eliminating concerns about equality from the discourse altogether (in the course of an overwhelming focus on moral underclass discourse). This shift can be illustrated in the changing representations of parents during the period. The research identified

assumptions in the texts throughout the period that parenting is a teachable skill and that parents can (and should) control their children's behavior. Both assumptions are rooted in a narrow view of equality which focuses on personal responsibility to the exclusion of any recognition of the role of wider social inequities (Bevir 2005; Davies 2005). Over time, the prominence of parents as social actors in the texts increased markedly, and there was a shift towards coercion rather than support. By using "responsibility" as a rhetorical device rather than a coherent concept that would allow consideration of the degree to which parents really are responsible for their children's behavior when broader social inequities are considered (Koffman 2008, p. 119), this shift virtually eliminated concern for equality from the discourse altogether.

(B) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion represent the world in a way which demonstrates a commitment to neoliberal values which overrides social democratic concerns?

The finding of a substantial discursive shift away from welfarist discourses (epitomized in the 1998 target to reduce exclusions) and towards punitive discourses was interpreted as a consequence of inherent conflicts in New Labour's fundamental model of society, particularly those between social democracy and neoliberalism (Levitas 2005, p. 177). The early welfarist discourses appeared, at least to some extent, to be rooted in social democratic concerns. However, textual analysis indicated that these were founded on a weak version of social exclusion that did not really engage with structural inequalities. Nevertheless, even a weak attempt to promote social inclusion inherently conflicted with what is arguably a key neoliberal reality: that the socially excluded are a functional requirement of capitalist labour markets (Byrne 2005; Harvey 2005; Smith 2007). Alongside external pressures from powerful groups within education (primarily teaching unions) and the media, this inherent conflict is a plausible explanation for the transformation of concerns about the inclusion of all children in education into punitive discourses that tended to blame the socially excluded for their own plight (Byrne 2005, p. 173; Harvey 2005, p. 185).

(C) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion focus on individuals rather than structures?

Social theorists have postulated discursive shifts towards individualization (Bauman 2000; Beck 2001; Byrne 2005). The findings illustrated a strong shift in that direction in New Labour's discourses around school exclusion: elements of collectivity and focus on structures, which were evident between 1997 and 2000, were supplanted from 2001 onwards by a dominant focus on the personal responsibility of individual parents and children. This individualization of the social problem became, by 2005, so pervasive as to eliminate discursive space for consideration of the role of institutional and systemic factors.

(D) Do New Labour's discourses around school exclusion background issues of power and agency?

Many of the findings were interpreted in terms of issues of power and agency. Across the period, linguistic mechanisms (such as nominalization (Fairclough 2000, pp. 54–56)) were identified that served to background the agency of

those doing the excluding (both specifically from school and in broader social exclusion terms). The role of government, schools, and teachers was backgrounded and that of capital was entirely absent. In later texts, power and agency were ascribed to those who actually have very little (e.g., through the use of warfare metaphors representing excluded children as powerful adversaries against whom the “majority” needed to be defended). These children and their parents were also ascribed total individual responsibility for their situations (with the consequent implication that they possessed the agency to effect change).

(E) Are New Labour’s discourses around school exclusion constructed in a way which tends to deflect criticism and avoid conflict?

There were indications throughout the study of a broad tendency in New Labour’s discourses around school exclusion towards deflecting criticism and avoiding conflict. The findings confirmed the presence in these texts of tendencies identified in other studies of New Labour’s discourse towards less substantive processes of consultation (Fairclough 2000, pp. 124–127): aligning the government with “the people” to deflect popular criticism (Mulderig 2006, p. 179; van Leeuwen 1996, p. 49), reduced accountability (Brown 2006; Funnell 2000), decreased dialogic engagement with other voices (Fairclough 2000, pp. 124–127), and deeply embedded assumptions that tended to exclude alternate world views (Fairclough 2003, p. 173; Ozga 2000, p. 7). Additionally, the results suggested a link between intelligibility and the avoidance of genuine dialogue with potentially critical citizenry. These findings were interpreted in terms of the assertions of Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001), Bauman (1999, p. 74), and Harvey (2005, pp. 39–41) about the weakness of public sphere debate under the neoliberal government. The research concluded that the lack of dialogicality in New Labour’s discourses around school exclusion did not merely act to deflect negative criticism of policies in this area but did extend to an avoidance of engagement with critique more broadly.

The Reasons for Choosing CDA

CDA in General (and DRA in Particular) in Educational Policy Sociology

The project described in this chapter took an explicitly interdisciplinary⁷ approach. Research that seeks to analyze “real-world” social problems must engage with the full range of influences on those issues using whatever tools that provide the most

⁷ Across CDA various terms are used to describe research which goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries: trans (Fairclough 2005)-, inter (Van Leeuwen 2005)-, multi (van Dijk 2001)-, or even post (Jessop and Sum 2001)- disciplinary. However, recently “interdisciplinarity” seems to have become the most widely used term to describe this core aspect of CDA (Weiss and Wodak 2003; Wodak and Chilton 2005).

robust explanations, rather than being artificially constrained by disciplinary boundaries. The dialectical–relational approach to CDA is well suited to this type of research because its focus is explanation of the social problem. In addition to the extensive range of linguistic tools already available within DRA, it allows the researcher to bring additional tools under its umbrella in the practical investigation of social issues without, necessarily, requiring smooth theoretical compatibility. DRA is situated at the intersection of linguistic and social theory (Fairclough 2003) and is, therefore, particularly effective in bringing linguistic tools into the operationalization of sociological concepts.

Educational policy sociology has been widely criticized in recent years. CDA methodologies (such as the type of DRA described here) are capable of effectively addressing current concerns. The empirical investigation of sociological theory in the educational policy field has been identified as a weakness (Hallinan 2011). Even where nominally “CDA” methodologies have been used in the field, they have frequently lacked detailed linguistic analysis and the secure theoretical foundations necessary to relate linguistic features directly to sociological conclusions (Rogers et al. 2005). The CDA methodology described in this chapter makes use of empirical tools that are well suited to investigating sociological questions in areas of policy and capable of providing a rigorous analysis. While empirical investigation of this type does require the nonlinguistic researcher (such as myself) to grapple with new analytical skills, most of the CDA tools used in this study are sufficiently accessible to be effectively deployed in textual analysis at a relatively early stage of familiarity. What is essential is for the researcher to risk going beyond a sociological reading of the texts and engage in detailed textual analysis.

Policy sociology has also been criticized for its implicit redemptive agenda and lack of effective impact on policy making (Lauder et al. 2010). This research illustrates that, rather than denying redemptive goals, one approach to addressing this criticism is to make the normative element explicit (Balarin et al. 2011; Sayer 2009, 2011). This project also recognizes the limited likelihood of direct impact on policy makers since the research findings themselves suggest that policy makers are unlikely to be open to such dialogue. Instead, following the structure provided by DRA (Fairclough 2009 pp. 171–174), the project sought to empower those seeking to challenge those dominant discourses with specific strategies for doing so.

CDA was particularly suitable for this project because of its flexibility. It is not one single methodology, but allows a variety of positions on philosophical grounding, theory, and methods (see Wodak and Meyer 2009b for an overview of the main approaches). Using CDA allowed the project to draw on tools best suited to particular sociological issues and/or types of textual analysis, while remaining under the broad umbrella of CDA, and to draw together the analyses using Fairclough’s dialectical–relational approach as a unifying framework (1989, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2009). As a result the project was able to bring together insights from approaches as diverse as Van Leeuwen’s (1996) work on the representation of social actors; Van Dijk (1998, 2006, 2008) on ideology; Wodak (Reisigl and Wodak 2001) on argumentation; Baker (2006), (Baker et al. 2008), Mulderrig (2006, 2008, 2009), and Mautner (2009) on the application of corpus analysis to

CDA; Fauconnier and Turner (2002) on blending theory; and Hart (2006, 2007, 2008) on the application of blending theory to CDA.

The use of CDA also addresses the difficulty policy sociology in educational research has had in trying to keep up with the growing importance of rhetorical practice in not merely communicating but also creating and enacting policy (Walford 1994). It has been argued that:

educational researchers need to develop sophisticated methodologies for investigating these power discourses. Without such methodologies, our understanding of the process of policy formation will be underdeveloped, naive and sometimes inaccurate. (Walford 1994, p. 9)

The CDA approach used in this project is just such a sophisticated methodology.

The Strengths of CDA for This Topic

The research benefited from CDA's ability to recognize what is not present in a text as well as what is. CDA has this capability because, unlike approaches such as thematic analysis and content analysis that depend on topics and content derived from the texts themselves, CDA relies on linguistic categories for its core operationalizations (Wodak and Meyer 2009a, p. 28). This project was thus able to recognize that the target to reduce exclusions and the whole concept of social exclusion were entirely absent from later texts. Without this recognition, the research would have been trapped within the definitions of the social problem contained in the texts. Since the texts themselves do not acknowledge (and in some cases actively deny) any change in policy, this would have meant uncritically accepting the shift from seeing school exclusion as the problem to seeing badly behaving children as the problem. Instead, using CDA allowed the research access to a perspective from which to recognize and investigate this key discursive change.

The research also benefited from CDA's ability to show how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies (Fairclough 1992, p. 12), rather than simply describing how participants in the discourse represent themselves (as in narrative analysis). For example, in analyzing a statement such as "Our actions on exclusion reflect our values and those of the British people" (Blair 1997a, emphasis added), the use of relations of parataxis⁸ to co-opt a homogenized citizenry as sharing equivalent values to those of the government was identified. Identifying the power relations and ideological content of the texts contributed to the developing explanation of how opportunities for critique were being curtailed.

⁸ Grammatical distinctions between the ways in which clauses are related to each other can be made in terms of parataxis, hypotaxis, and embedded clauses. Parataxis describes clauses which are in a relation of equivalence, often joined by a conjunction such as "and" or included as elements in a list.

Weaknesses of CDA for This Topic and How These Were Addressed

CDA is always open to criticism from different epistemological perspectives that it cannot do what it claims (Jones 2007). This was addressed in this research by making epistemological assumptions explicit. Jones' position is that CDA is incapable of producing meaningful analysis because the use of analytical techniques based on systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1994) forces the analyst to separate out semiotic aspects of social interaction from their context. This is based on a misunderstanding of CDA's epistemological assumptions and was addressed by making the dialectical view of the relationship between discourse and society explicit and ensuring that linguistic and sociological analyses were strongly integrated throughout the research.

Both CDA (Widdowson 2004) and policy sociology (Lauder et al. 2010) have been criticized for unacknowledged ideological bias in analysis. These concerns were addressed in this project by making the researcher's ideological position explicit from the outset, using robust and valid data selection, transparent analytical techniques grounded in corpus analysis, and methodological triangulation. As a researcher I came to this study with a preexisting interest in social relations of domination, a belief in the internationally recognized human rights of people and in social equality as a normative goal. CDA research requires the researcher to make ideological positions explicit not only in order to reflect on and minimize potential bias but also in order to engage in moral debate about avoidable suffering (Sayer 2009). CDA research is most effective in engaging in such debate where it is demonstrably robust. The influence of my ideological position can be seen in the normative interpretation that goes beyond the finding that the dominant discourse contributes to perpetuating school exclusion to conclude that the dominant discourse is contributing to avoidable suffering and **should** be resisted. But this interpretation is built on an analysis which uses explicit and defensible data selection, findings from a larger corpus to support findings from close text analysis of a small number of texts, and findings supported from multiple strands of the research using different textual analysis tools.

Nevertheless, applying CDA to research on school exclusion was not without its difficulties. A particular challenge was the degree to which conclusions about discursive change could be related to the level of exclusions. Discursive representations and legitimations cannot automatically be translated into effects. The research was, therefore, unable to make direct causal claims.

One approach to addressing this issue would have been to carry out a reception study focusing on how the dominant discourses were being received and interpreted by social actors directly involved in school exclusion decisions, such as headteachers. Unfortunately, as yet, DRA lacks a theoretical account of discourse reception, although other CDA approaches (such as the discourse–historical approach) have made some headway in this area (Koller 2008). In addition there were a number of other factors which would have made researching discourse

reception in this project highly problematic. Interviewing those who read/receive texts is unlikely to account adequately for (a) the influence of wider exposure to dominant discourses through sources that the interviewee does not remember or is not consciously aware of or (b) effects of exposure to the dominant discourse of which the interviewee is not themselves consciously aware. And it is these two effects (i.e., those of which discourse participants are not consciously aware) which CDA is most interested in and which this project sought to investigate.

Instead, then, this weakness was partially compensated for through the use of CBT which contributes something of the cognitive perspective that DRA lacks (Fairclough 2009, p. 183). For example, analyzing the conceptual blending of very unbalanced realities with the concept of balance complemented findings from the qualitative analysis in furthering understandings of how dialogicality was being reduced through the exclusion from the discourse of potential avenues of critique. The project also considered intertextual connections that provided some insights into how some of the texts in this study were recontextualized in other texts. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that this study did not directly analyze how these policy texts were received by those who read or heard them.

Overall it is fair to say that definitive causality is extremely difficult to establish in relation to discourse. This is generally true of structural factors in school exclusion and contributes to the tendency in existing research towards an overemphasis on the role of individual agency (because that is what is readily measurable). The CDA approach taken in this project allowed it to contribute to redressing that balance when taken as a contribution to the overall explanation of the social problem, extending the multilevel analyses of school exclusion already available to include the role of political discourse.

Impact on the Topic of Using This Approach

The CDA-based research described here brings to explanatory accounts of school exclusion a discursive perspective and a focus on powerful social actors that had previously been absent. The use of CDA has drawn attention to the important role of powerful discourses, government, media, and union, in both shaping and implementing the educational policy in this area. The existing literature has frequently bemoaned the direction of school discipline policy (Parsons 2005), but has not been able to provide an account of how and why that direction seems fixed. A CDA approach to the problem contributes an understanding of discursive cycles that perpetuate the dominant punitive discourses and, through the concept of dialogicality, an account of the decreasing openness of those discourses to critique.

The DRA framework employed in this research led to the identification of specific strategies with the potential to oppose the dominant discourse. This is a particularly important element of the approach. Research that takes a moral position on social issues is of limited use if avoidable social harm is identified, but strategies for its amelioration are not. By making explicit some of the hidden assumptions and

ideology of New Labour's discourses around school exclusion, CDA is capable of contributing to countering discursive strategies that seek to disguise changes that impose punitive policies on already marginalized children and parents and to dodge critique that seeks to challenge the hegemony of a neoliberal world view.

The Role of Interpretation in This Research

Interpretation was key throughout this research. The interpretive process began (as always in research) with the framing of the research problem. The usual framings of the issue of school exclusion in terms of either identifying the "risk factors" which make children more likely to be excluded from school or interpreting the accounts of those involved in and affected by exclusion tend to overemphasize the agency of children themselves. The lens provided by DRA reframed the issue in a discourse-orientated way that shifted the focus towards structure. This produced questions and answers that, rather than being about what is wrong with children or how families experience exclusion, were about how social events and social actors were represented in New Labour's discourses and about power relations in the education system.

Throughout the research overarching concepts that draw on both linguistic and social theories were used to interpret the findings from disparate analyses and develop a coherent explanation of the social problem. Each of these contributed to interpreting the texts in particular ways.

Representations of Social Events and Social Actors

Analyzing the texts in terms of the representations of social events and social actors that they contained (and that they did not contain) assumes that such representations are crucial in the dissemination and reproduction of dominant ideologies (Fairclough 1989, p. 3; van Dijk 1998, p. 191). The most influential ideologies are often those that are the most deeply embedded and least explicit (Wodak and Meyer 2009a, p. 8). It is through these ideologies that discourses manufacture consent or at least acquiescence (Fairclough 1989, pp. 3–4). Ideological discourses play a particularly crucial role in policy texts (Fairclough et al. 2011; Muntigl et al. 2000). Consequently throughout this study, a central focus of the analysis was the identification of ideological values and assumptions that underlie—but are not explicitly expressed in—government texts. Weiss and Wodak (2003, p. 14) contend that CDA aims to "'demystify' discourses by deciphering ideologies." In this research identifying and making explicit such latent values and assumptions was a core component of investigating the discursive processes through which consent to government policies around school exclusion is produced.

Legitimation

In the research, many findings were interpreted in terms of legitimation strategies:

In liberal democratic systems, political elites have to give rational reasons for what they propose or what they have done (Parsons 1995, p. 16)

so legitimation is a primary purpose of political discourse (Fairclough 1989, p. 90). For example, the finding of strongly negative representations of excluded children and their parents in later texts was interpreted as “negative other presentation.” This has repeatedly been identified as a key legitimation strategy in political discourse, particularly discourses that seek to maintain an ideological situation of dominance between social groups (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 44; Riggins 1997, p. 6; van Dijk 1998, pp. 257–258).

Unequal power relations are embedded in the education system. According to Bernstein, “Pedagogic communication is a relay for patterns of dominance external to itself” (1990, pp. 168–169). Despite New Labour’s claims about creating “equality of opportunity” (Blunkett 1997) which imply that the education system is a level playing field in which all children have an equal chance, there is consistent evidence that the UK education system does largely reproduce the social relations of wider society (Trades Union Congress 2008) and that it does so to a greater extent than the education systems of many other countries (OECD 2008). Indeed the legitimization of preexisting social inequality has been argued to have become a primary function of the education system (Parsons 1999, p. 17). Children who behave, or are labeled as behaving, unacceptably in school can be conceptualized as resisting (Sayer 2005, pp. 30–35, 159) the existing power relations of the education system. Educational researchers have repeatedly argued that such resistance is frequently construed in ways that reinforce these power relations (Munn and Lloyd 2005; Parsons 1999, 2005).

The intertextual connections and discursive shifts identified in the research were interpreted in terms of a reactive process that powerfully influences the direction of political discourses and policy on school exclusion (in their dialectical relationship) towards such reinforcing construals. The early New Labour government policy to reduce school exclusion was unpopular with powerful social actors within the education system (particularly the teaching unions) and media. The government’s response to that criticism can be seen as a continual process of appeasement and attempts to placate through policy responses that achieve immediate and readily understandable “action.”

Increasingly negative representations of some children and parents were thus interpreted as legitimation strategies for increasingly punitive policies. Both were seen as being driven by the government’s need to assuage electoral anxiety by responding to the demands of socially powerful groups (Lister 2001; Pitts 2000). Negative representations led to an increased perception of threat from this group of children and parents. In turn that led to demands for action to address the perceived threat from powerful social actors. Punitive policies were thus needed in order to placate these demands for action. The legitimation of those policies then required

even more negative and “othering” representations of children and parents. Accusations of unfairness in the extent of negative representations were countered with discourses of individual responsibility; such characterizations were justified as a naturalistic or inevitable response to their behavior (Cook 2006).

Dialogicality

The concept of dialogicality (Fairclough 2003, p. 42) was used throughout the research to interpret findings in terms of their implications for governance rather than for educational policy. The research found that New Labour’s discourses in this policy area were never particularly dialogical, being very much more promotional than genuinely consultative. This is consistent with the findings of other linguistic (Fairclough 2000, pp. 132–141) and political (Bevir 2005, p. 148–153) analyses of New Labour’s style of governance. The findings also indicated that, at least in this area of social policy, the limited degree of dialogicality present in early texts reduced still further in later texts. Moreover the degree to which the lack of substantive dialogue was camouflaged by texts with superficially dialogical traits appeared to have increased over time, shifting from avoiding engaging with dissenting voices towards an increasing denial of the possibility of dissent at all.

If government texts are not open to different and dissenting views, then policies are less open to being challenged or contested. This is what Brown (2006, p. 695) describes as neoliberalism’s “business approach to governing,” in which the promotion of a political “product” has become more important than any conception of the social good. The project thus saw the resulting reduction in substantive public debate about policies in this area as allowing the development of policies on the basis of that which is politically expedient rather than morally justifiable.

Decreasing dialogicality in New Labour’s discourse implied a reduction in government accountability through the minimization or elimination of opportunities for critique of government actions. The period studied was one in which the real power of other social actors in the education system (heads, LEAs, etc.) was being eroded and the centralization of powers in the hands of the government had increased (Bache 2003, p. 312). Thus, the government had become less accountable for policy in this area at the same time as its power had actually increased. This was interpreted in terms of hegemony, which was defined as an attempt to close down practices and networks of practices, which can be undermined by new opportunities for resistance generated by the diversity and unpredictability of social practices, but constrained by variations in the ability of different social groups to access semiotic possibilities (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, p. 25). The hegemony of neoliberalism is thus reinforced by the decreasing dialogicality of New Labour’s discourse, making attempts to resist social injustice increasingly difficult by minimizing or even eliminating spaces in which counter-hegemonic discourses might be constructed. The finding that the absence of dialogicality in New Labour’s

discourse was being disguised in later texts was thus interpreted as compounding the hegemony of neoliberal discourse by making it more difficult for citizens not only to engage in substantive dialogue with the government but even to contest the lack of dialogue itself.

As Fairclough describes it following an analysis of New Labour's discourses around welfare reform:

Language has been used to promote the outcomes that the Government is seeking. The precise management of that process has inevitably had the effect of discouraging dialogue and making it more difficult – it is very difficult to engage in real dialogue with someone whose every word is strategically calculated. Discouraging dialogue means discouraging democracy. . . . (Fairclough 2000, p. 132)

Dissent and critique have a vital role to play in the process of democratic governance. Public debate promotes the development of better answers to social problems, in which the needs and rights of competing social groups are balanced through the give and take of dialogue. As Bauman argues:

No society which forgets the art of asking questions or allows this art to fall into disuse can count on finding answers to the problems that beset it – certainly not before it is too late and the answers, however correct, have become irrelevant. (Bauman 1999, p. 7)

Without the process of dialogue, social problems will not be resolved. The powerful will simply continue to assert their power unchecked.

Bauman argues for the role of intellectuals in reopening the public sphere to real debate:

where not just the selection from the choices on offer is made, but the range of choices is examined, questioned and renegotiated. (Bauman 1999, p. 107)

This research attempted to examine, question and renegotiate the range of choices offered in New Labour's discourses for dealing with the social problem of school exclusion.

The Role of the Researcher

Research using DRA does not require the researcher to step outside the society they are researching, but rather to engage with it (Sayer 2009). In 1997 I listened to Tony Blair's very first speech as Prime Minister. Having known nothing but Conservative government to that point in my life, I hoped for progress towards a fairer, more equal society. In that speech he focused on social exclusion, saying:

For 18 years, the poorest people in our country have been forgotten by government. They have been left out of growing prosperity, told that they were not needed, ignored by the Government except for the purpose of blaming them. I want that to change. There will be no forgotten people in the Britain I want to build. (Blair 1997b)

By 2005, however, my expectations had dampened. Listening once again to Tony Blair, I was struck by the contrast with the way he had talked 8 years earlier.

He was still talking about people on the margins of society, but his focus seemed very different:

I think the first question should be: how do we protect the majority from the dangerous and irresponsible minority? (Blair 2005)

I wondered when Tony Blair had begun to talk so differently about such issues and to what extent my emotional reactions reflected actual change in that talk. These were, after all, isolated speeches and my reactions at this point were personal rather than the product of systematic analysis. Using a CDA methodology allowed me to go from that emotional reaction to the research described in this chapter through a process of reflexivity, the deployment of systematic strategies for data collection and analysis and defensible frameworks for interpretation. But, it also allowed the interpretation of the findings in terms of a moral argument favoring the avoidance of suffering.

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2.2 Interpreting Websites in Educational Contexts: A Social-Semiotic, Multimodal Approach

Emilia Djonov, John S. Knox, and Sumin Zhao

The World Wide Web is the world's largest hypermedia environment. The ability to use it effectively to locate or present information in ways that foster knowledge construction and critical engagement is essential for success in many educational and professional contexts. This chapter presents three research projects, each of which addresses a different challenge that websites present for discourse analysis and educational research. The projects all take a social-semiotic, multimodal approach to analysing the design and/or use of online hypermedia, yet also incorporate insights from diverse academic and professional fields, in order to develop solutions to these challenges.

This chapter is organized into four sections. Section “[Introduction](#)” orients readers to the distinguishing features of websites as online hypermedia texts and the challenges they present. Section “[A Social-Semiotic, Multimodal Approach to Hypermedia](#)” introduces the common approach adopted by the three studies, each of which is described in section “[Three Social-Semiotic Projects on Hypermedia](#)”, and section “[The Role of Interpretation](#)” discusses the role of interpretation across these studies.

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Introduction

What Is Hypermedia?

The term ‘hypermedia’ is nowadays used interchangeably with ‘hypertext’ as it describes any hypertext featuring both typographic and non-typographic elements and is no longer restricted to hypertext with sound and/or video. Hypertext has two fundamental components: nodes and hyperlinks. *Nodes* present information through a variety of communicative modes, that is, multimodally—using verbal and visual and increasingly also aural and kinetic semiotic resources.

Nodes typically include anchors. An *anchor* is a clickable area from which hypertext users can activate a hyperlink and visit another node. So, the anchor is what the reader clicks; the *hyperlink* is the connection (the *link*) between one node and another. Anchors then allow nodes to function as an interface for navigating through hypertext.

While hypermedia include CD-ROMs and ‘closed’ spaces such as intranets, the world’s largest and most complex hypermedia environment is undoubtedly the World Wide Web. On the Web, nodes are *webpages* (HTML documents opened with a Web browser such as Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox) and a group of webpages that displays cohesion, and coherence (i.e., functions as a text) is called a *website*.

Three Perspectives on Hypermedia

The roles of hypermedia in professional, educational, and recreational contexts have been explored in various disciplines, including computer and information science; literary, cultural, and media studies; education; and linguistics. Adopting the three complementary perspectives recognized by Lemke (2002b), these studies can be classified according to their tendency to view hypermedia as (i) digital technology for realizing hypertext, (ii) a platform for integrating multiple media/channels of communication (e.g., aural, visual, haptic, i.e., touch based), and/or (iii) content/text, that is, in terms of its meaning-making potential.

The first of these complementary perspectives dominates research on the similarities and differences between hypermedia and other technologies such as print or TV. It also characterizes efforts to support the development of computer and information literacy skills, including familiarity with specific software and hardware, information retrieval skills, and the ability to evaluate the authorship, validity, currency, and appropriateness of information on the Web (e.g., Large and Beheshti 2000; Rader 2003; Stern 2003).

The second is typical of empirical research that argues that instructional design can support learning better when information is simultaneously presented through

mixed channels, rather than a single one, and interactively, so that the learner has control over the pace and sequence in which it is presented (e.g., Mayer 2009).

The third perspective motivates most studies of hypermedia in applied linguistics and multiliteracies education, which is the main perspective adopted in the three projects presented in this chapter. This perspective focuses on the meaning-making potential of hypermedia, while acknowledging that it is influenced by the technology and media that materialize it. It is also reflected in the idea that literacy in hypermedia environments, or hypermedia literacy, extends beyond computer and information literacy skills and includes the ability to interpret the meanings of hypermedia texts such as websites critically, in relation to the sociocultural contexts in which they operate (see Bigum 2002; Burbules 2002; Lankshear and Knobel 2008).

Websites as Hypermedia Texts and the Challenges They Present for Discourse Analysis and Education

Meaning in hypermedia texts is construed through the interaction of hyperlinks with various semiotic resources such as language, typography, layout, color, sound, and movement. Hyperlinks may connect nodes that belong to the same or different texts, activate an application other than the user's Web browser, or link existing to newly designed nodes. *Hypertextuality* is the presence of hyperlinks. It allows designers to establish potential sequences of nodes, and allows users to forge actual paths through hypertext by selecting which nodes from one or more texts to visit and in what order. Users usually explore hypermedia environments by focusing on one node at a time and switching between three dominant *modes of hypertext use*: *searching/information retrieval*, *browsing* (navigation aimed at fulfilling a specific task, such as looking for a cooking recipe), and *free navigation* (exploring hypermedia with a more general interest such as browsing through news of the day). They may also redesign and contribute hypermedia content, particularly in Web 2.0 spaces such as personal blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. Hypertextuality thus renders hypermedia texts multi-sequential, fragmentary, and—especially on the Web—open-ended and transient and defies the notion of text as a unit bound in space and/or time.

Although hyperlinks reveal the presence of meaningful relations within and between hypermedia texts (Burbules 2002), the meaning of these relations (e.g., similarity, temporal sequence, exemplification) can only be revealed by their *multimodality*, the interplay of semiotic resources within and across nodes. In fact, meaningful relations may be constructed within nodes as well as between nodes or groups of nodes not hyperlinked with each other or visited in a user's navigation path (Djonov 2005). The meaning of hypermedia texts is thus contingent on the potential of language and other semiotic modes to make meaning, independently and in collaboration with each other. To analyze hypermedia texts and support hypermedia

literacy, then, researchers and educators require a metalanguage for describing and interpreting multimodal interaction (cf. New London Group 1996).

A further challenge that many websites present for discourse analysis and educational research is generic complexity. Websites for children, for instance, are frequently labeled “edutainment” or “infotainment,” as they address a dual audience and have a hybrid purpose: to educate/inform and entertain children, while seeking the approval of educators and caregivers (Djonov 2008). The flexibility of hypermedia design conventions and the ease with which different modes and media can be digitally combined and manipulated have also contributed to the emergence of new genres alongside genres adopted from traditional media (Baldry and Thibault 2006), for instance, the emergent visual genre of online news galleries in news websites (Caple and Knox 2012) and multimodal history genres such as the visual autobiographic recount found in online learning materials (Zhao 2011).

The hypertextuality, multimodality, and generic complexity of websites present considerable challenges for discourse analysis as well as major practical issues for educational research. Practitioners and researchers ultimately aim to understand how to design and use such texts so as to support (i) user orientation, (ii) knowledge construction and learning, and (iii) critical engagement with website content.

A Social-Semiotic, Multimodal Approach to Hypermedia

Social semiotics is the study of meaning-making resources and their use in social contexts and originates in Halliday’s (1978) theory of language as a social semiotic—systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Social-semiotic theory provides a highly suitable basis for developing tools for analyzing the design and use of websites and for addressing the challenges hypermedia texts present for discourse analysis and education. It also allows analysts to incorporate insights from diverse professional and academic fields.

Central to the theory is the definition of *text* as “a social exchange of meanings” (Halliday 1985, p. 11). The definition implies neither linearity nor finiteness, so that a text can be any act of communication perceived as meaningful in the social context in which it is produced or received or having “socially ascribed unity” (Hodge and Kress 1988, p. 6). This has motivated researchers to develop social-semiotic tools for analysing both generically complex texts (e.g., Lemke 2002a; Martin 2002b) and hypermedia texts (e.g., Baldry and Thibault 2006; Djonov 2005; Knox 2009a; Kok 2004; Lemke 2002b; Unsworth 2004; Van Leeuwen 2005a; Zhao 2011).

The theory’s primary focus on meaning has also made its central principles adaptable to the study of multimodality. Social-semiotic research on multimodal discourse typically focuses on developing frameworks for studying the meaning-making potential of both modes other than language such as visual design (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]) and sound (Van Leeuwen 1999) and of their interaction with each other and with language. Indeed, social-semiotic theory views all meaning-making as multimodal, for any act of communication that

involves making choices from different semiotic resources (e.g., sound, gesture, typography, etc.) and combining these selections following the logic of space (e.g., on a visual unit such as a page) and/or time (e.g., in a dynamic composition such as a dance) (Kress 2010).

Multimodality, while the norm in communication, is relatively new as a defined area of study, and agreement is yet to be reached on fundamental notions such as “mode” and “semiotic resource” (Bateman 2011; Kress 2009). A shared understanding, however, is that the meanings created through multimodal or intersemiotic interaction are “multiplicative” in nature or greater than the sum of the meanings that each semiotic resource could realize alone (Lemke 1998).

The focus on meaning is evident in one of social-semiotic theory’s central tenets, its model of the mutually defining and dynamic relationship between text and context. For instance, texts can be classified in terms of the social purpose they serve (e.g., to entertain, to explain, to invite, etc.) within a given context of culture. The systematic relationship between social purpose and identifiable patterns of meaning observable across texts is captured in the social-semiotic definition of *genres* as:

staged, goal-oriented social processes. Staged because it usually takes more than one step to reach our goals; goal-oriented because we feel frustrated if we don’t accomplish the final steps . . . social because writers shape their texts for readers of particular kinds. (Martin and Rose 2008, p. 6)

While this definition focuses primarily on short, linearly unfolding verbal texts typically with a single, clear purpose, it has been adapted to multimodal texts by recognizing that multimodal genres may rely on the logic of space and time to present genre-specific patterns of meaningful choices and that such patterns may be realized nonverbally and/or through different modes (Bateman 2008; Van Leeuwen 2005b).

Social-semiotic theory also explores changes in the relationship between text and context over time, through the scale of semogenesis. *Semogenesis* concerns changes in the meaning potential of different semiotic modes and genres and comprises three main time frames: *logogenesis* (the unfolding of a text), *ontogenesis* (the development of the individual), and *phylogenesis* (the evolution of systems comprising the meaning potential of a culture). Each time frame provides a lens for focusing on a different type of semiotic change.

Analyzing hypermedia from a social-semiotic perspective, then, involves understanding the meaning-making potential of the interaction between multimodality and hypertextuality and the relationship between the meanings of hypermedia texts and the social context in which they operate. This is encapsulated in Lemke’s notion of “hypermodality”:

Hypermodality is one way to name the new interactions of word-, image-, and sound-based meanings in hypermedia [. . .]. It is not simply that we juxtapose image, text, and sound; we design multiple interconnections among them, both potential and explicit.

Hypermodality is the conflation of multimodality and hypertextuality. Not only do we have linkages among text units of various scales, but we have linkages among text units, visual elements, and sound units. And these go beyond the default conventions of traditional multimodal genres. (Lemke 2002b, pp. 300–301, original emphasis)

Three Social-Semiotic Projects on Hypermedia

This section offers an overview of the three research projects on hypermedia texts presented in this paper, each of which addresses a different challenge presented by the use of hypermedia in educational contexts. These projects focus on:

- User orientation within websites for children (Djonov 2005, 2007, 2008)
- Knowledge construction in online educational multimedia interactives for children (Zhao 2008, 2010, 2011)
- Visual design in online newspapers (Knox 2007, 2009a, b, c) and its relation to cultural and institutional contexts and the potential and challenges of using online newspapers in TESOL and applied linguistics teaching (Knox 2008, 2010)

This section describes each project in terms of its data, methodology, use of insights from professional and theoretical fields beyond social semiotics, and main findings of relevance to understanding hypermedia in educational contexts.

User Orientation in Websites for Children

This project aimed to develop a framework for analysing (i) how information is organized in websites and (ii) how visual, verbal, aural, and kinetic resources can interact with hyperlinks to signal this organization and thereby support user orientation. This aim was motivated by studies in computer and information science as well as hypermedia design and use according to which user orientation relies on understanding how information is organized in hypermedia environments (e.g., Edwards and Hardman 1989; Krug 2006 [2000]) and by educational research that viewed successful orientation as contingent on two factors: users' skills in using visual, verbal, and other cues to conceptualize the structure of a hypermedia text (Downes and Fatouros 1995, p. 104; Moore 1996, p. 322) and their "understanding of the relations among ideas" presented in the text (Luke 2000, p. 73).

Websites for upper primary school children were selected as a fertile ground for developing this framework for two main reasons. First, these websites epitomize the challenges of multimodality and generic hybridity which hypermedia presents for discourse analysis and literacy education. At the beginning of the project, children's websites were considerably more likely than other websites to use not only visual and verbal resources but also sound and animation (e.g., rollovers—anchors that change their appearance, move or make sounds when the cursor is placed over them) to signal the ways in which information was organized in them. Most children's websites are also generically hybrid as they aim to both entertain and educate/inform children (their overt addressees), perhaps due to the fact that, like other products for children, children's websites seek to gain the endorsement of a covert audience of adult censors such as teachers and parents. Second, children's websites were more likely to be used and designed for browsing and free navigation

(rather than information retrieval), the two modes of hypertext use where the ability to draw on multimodal relations in order to conceptualize the organization of information within a website is crucial for user orientation.

Specifically, five websites designed by adults for primary school children were selected for developing the framework:

- *ABC's The Playground* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1998–2004)
- *Sanford—A Lifetime of Color* (Sanford Ink Corporation, 1998–2005)
- *CBBC Newsround* (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2001–2004)
- *National Geographic Kids* (National Geographic Society, 1996–2005)
- *TryScience* (New York Hall of Science, 1999–2005).

Each was owned by a well-established company or organization and had existed for at least 3 years, offered rich content organized into many different sections and subsections, and included sections addressing parents and educators and was listed in the two then most popular Web directories for children—*Yahooligans* (Yahoo! Inc. 1996–2005) and *KidsClick!* (Ramapo Catskill Library 1995–2005), both maintained by adults (Web developers, educators, and librarians) and served the hybrid purpose of providing “edutainment” or “infotainment.” These selection criteria were adopted to ensure that the five websites were representative of children’s websites in general, yet offered enough variety to build a framework that was rich enough to adopt for and/or adapt to the analysis of other websites.

A sixth website, *Tracking Trains* (State Rail Authority of New South Wales, 2000–2002), was also analyzed together with the navigation paths of 14 upper primary school students through it, which were recorded as individual log files showing the order in which webpages/URLs were visited and the duration of each webpage visit in each student’s navigation through the website. These log files were used to illustrate how the framework could be employed to analyze and evaluate website use and its interaction with website design. This website was selected to suit both the theme of local transport that the participants were exploring in the science and technology class in which their paths were recorded and the project’s focus on edutainment and infotainment websites for children. Interviews with the children, their teacher, and the designers of *ABC's The Playground*, *National Geographic Kids*, and *Tracking Trains* were also conducted.

While systemic functional linguistics (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2007) provided tools for studying the role of verbal resources in signaling how information is organized within a website, social-semiotic frameworks for analyzing visual and multimodal discourse (e.g., Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001, 2006 [1996]; Martin 2002a; Thibault 2001; Van Leeuwen 2005a) were employed for identifying the contribution of resources such as color, layout, and movement and of their interaction with language and with each other.

The main methodological challenge consisted in adapting tools originally developed for analyzing verbal texts to hypermedia. Specifically, the notion of hierarchy of Themes (Martin 1992) provided a basis for reconceptualizing website hierarchy as an aspect of the textual organization of meaning in websites. This

reconceptualization was then used to build a system for describing the potential of hypertextual relations (those whose presence is signaled by hyperlinks) to reveal, transcend, or obscure a website's hierarchical structure and thereby support or hinder user orientation.

Parameters for describing conjunctive relations in language (e.g., similarity, contrast, cause) were also adapted to hypermedia in building a system for analyzing the relations that can obtain between elements presented in different (combinations of) modes within and between (groups of) webpages, which may or may not be hyperlinked with each other.

Finally, the two systems were employed to explore the interaction between the design of *Tracking Trains* and students' navigation paths through the website. This exploration was limited to hypertextual relations only as these lend themselves to both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The analysis of the website's design was further restricted to relations originating from (i.e., anchors found on) webpages representing the top three levels of website structure—the homepage, the main pages of website sections, and the main pages of website subsections.

The framework for analyzing how information is organized in websites and the results of the analysis of *Tracking Trains*' design and use were interpreted in the light of insights derived from the professional literature on hypermedia design and use, from research in information and computer science, ICT in education, and literary, cultural, and discourse studies of hypertext, as well as from the researcher's observations of the students' navigation through the website and interviews with the students, their teacher, and an educational consultant who was involved in redesigning *Tracking Trains*. For instance, the homepage was suggested as the topmost level in a website's hierarchical organization in both website usability studies (where it was seen as the main point of entry to a website, with the levels of other webpages determined by how many clicks away they are from the homepage) and in information architecture for the Web (where the homepage is seen as representing the organization of content in the website as a whole).

This project produced analytical tools and findings that extended existing understanding of website design and use in education, while remaining adaptable to hypermedia in general.

Website hierarchy had been widely acknowledged as the key principle for organizing information in the professional Web design and usability literature (e.g., Garrett 2003; Krug 2006 [2000]; Nielsen and Tahir 2002), yet existing definitions of the term tended to consider the role of navigation, webpage design, or website content in isolation. These perspectives were reconciled by adopting the SFL notion of Theme as a resource for creating cohesion by packaging information into unified wholes such as chapters, paragraphs, and clauses and reconceptualizing website structure as comprising hierarchies of Themes.

Within this structure, a website's homepage typically serves as the website's highest-level Theme (macro-Themeⁿ) as it orients users to the website as a whole. Through the use of language and images, it provides information about the website's subject matter/content. It can also present, say, a children's infotainment website such as *CBBC Newsround* as an up-to-date and reliable source of

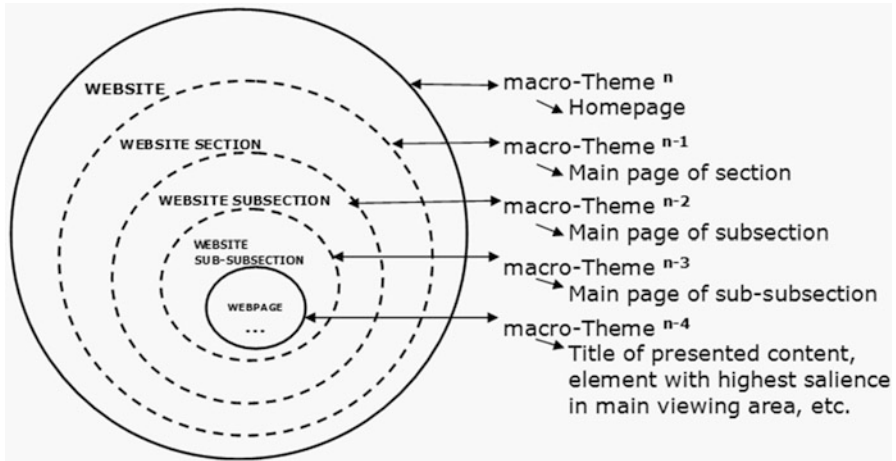


Fig. 1 A hierarchy of Themes in website structure

information that complies with social norms related to products for children. Further, by displaying anchors to the website's main sections (in the form of section icons, titles, or icon-and-title combinations) and any new features/stories/games, the homepage points cataphorically (i.e., forwards in the text) to them and by presenting these anchors as similar or different from each other (e.g., through visual design principles) can construct different types of relations between website sections on one hand and between website sections and the website as a whole on the other. Similarly, the main page of a website section can be considered as the highest-level Theme of that section (i.e., as a Theme below the level of the homepage, macro-Themeⁿ⁻¹) and the main page of a subsection as the highest-level Theme for that subsection (macro-Themeⁿ⁻²).

Thus—in analogy to the relationship between the title of a chapter in a book, the first clause/s in a paragraph within that chapter, and the Theme of a clause within that paragraph—the relationship between the homepage, the main page of a website's section, the main page of a subsection of that section, and so on, can be modeled as a hierarchy of Themes, as represented in Fig. 1. Reflecting the multilinearity and potential for expandability and change of websites as hypermedia texts, the addition of a new website section, subsection, subsubsection, and so on is modeled as giving rise to a separate hierarchy of Themes (see further Djonov 2007).

While webpage design is the key means for signaling how website content is organized into sections and subsections, hyperlinks have the potential to transcend (e.g., by taking users outside the website), reveal, or obscure a website's hierarchical structure. To describe this potential, this project used the reconceptualization of website hierarchy as the basis for designing a system of hypertextual distance relations (presented in Djonov 2005, 2008). The system reveals that hyperlinks can obscure a website's structure if they allow users to skip pages that function as higher-level Themes (which Web usability studies had shown to be essential for

Table 1 Parameters for describing logico-semantic relations in hypermedia

Explicitness	The extent to which the presence and the meaning of the relationship are explicitly signaled
Scope	The size of the related units (e.g., elements within a webpage, webpages, groups of webpages, website as a whole)
Interdependency and directionality	Whether a related unit depends on first interpreting and/or accessing the other unit/s in the relationship and how this affects the direction in which the relationship is actualized in a user's navigation path and/or interpreted (e.g., from website as a whole (represented by the homepage and the website logo)/general to its sections/particular or vice versa)
Recursion	Whether a relationship is presented as self-contained or as part of a chain of relationships
Orientation	Internal (revealing aspects of the organization of the text itself) vs. external (construing entities as related in the text-external world)
Type	The meaning of the relationship (e.g., exemplification, similarity, contrast, cause, purpose, projection, etc.)

successful orientation) in their navigation through a website, for example, to visit a news story page directly from the homepage (without having to first visit the main page of the section to which that story belongs), to return to the homepage directly from that story page, or to jump from one website section to another website section (without having to go through the homepage).

Although potentially increasing disorientation, these hyperlinks enable freedom of navigation and are therefore indispensable for a website's attractiveness. For this reason, website designers need to combine such hyperlinks with webpage design that clearly signals the organization of information within a website, and literacy educators need to equip learners with knowledge of website design conventions and the visual and multimodal design principles that support Web orientation.

Drawing on the systemic functional work on conjunctive relations in verbal discourse, i.e., logico-semantic relations such as cause, contrast, and addition, which may be signaled by conjunctions such as "because," "equally," "but," and "and" (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Martin 1992), the project also developed six parameters for describing the logico-semantic relations (LSRs) that can relate units presented on the same or different webpages within a website. These are presented in Table 1.

Each parameter was considered specifically in terms of its relevance for user orientation and learning in children's edutainment and infotainment websites. To illustrate, when units occupying different webpages are interdependent, their presentation almost always entails linearity since a dependent webpage or group of webpages cannot be accessed before visiting the webpage or group of webpages on which it depends. In educational hypermedia, such relations have long been employed to ensure that learners attend to information in a particular sequence, for example, from simpler to more complex ideas (e.g., Whalley 1990). Linearity, however, does not preclude LSRs being (re)interpreted both prospectively and retrospectively (e.g., Tosca 2000), as they are in written texts (Martin and Rose 2007).

Turning to the type, or meaning, of LSRs, in children's websites, *projection* relations are often employed to construct fictional characters such as children or personified animals as the projectors of content presented in the form of speech, thoughts, drawings, or songs, thus contributing to constructing these characters as pseudo-teachers that guide the child-user in learning games and compensate for the apparent absence of teachers and parents. Relations construing a *temporal sequence* may be used to impose a sequence of steps in educational activities, while *purpose* relations may be employed at the beginning of such activities to motivate users to undertake them. *Reason* relations may link to an explanation about why the strategy adopted by a user was, or was not, successful at the end (see Stenglin and Djonov 2010).

Finally, the *Tracking Trains* case study illustrated that the tools developed in this project offer a useful means for evaluating the interaction between website design and use (e.g., the freedom of navigation a website offers its users and the ways and extent to which they use that freedom). The quantitative analysis revealed that there were discrepancies between the proportions and kinds of both hypertextual distance relations and hypertextual LSRs available in a website on one hand and those actualized in its use on the other. Further, it suggested that such discrepancies can indicate problems in the website's design, users' hypermedia literacy, or both.

To understand the source and nature of these problems, however, researchers need to investigate the multimodal relations constructed within and between (groups of) webpages as well as closely analyze individual navigation patterns. The results of such investigations can also be productively interpreted in relation to the opinions of website designers, website users, and educators, as well as in relation to relevant findings from other studies of hypermedia design and use (see further Djonov 2005, 2008).

Knowledge Construction in Online Educational Interactives for Children

This project explored online curriculum materials, referred to as multimedia interactives (MIs), designed for lower primary social science subjects in Australia. It had two aims:

- To account for the relations between verbal text and other modes in MIs and formulate a metalanguage for describing these relations that is readily adaptable to educational contexts
- To provide an understanding of the ways in which primary social science knowledge is recontextualized in MIs as a type of emerging electronic multimodal discourse

The data, multimedia interactives, were selected from online curriculum materials, designed by the Le@rning Federation (<http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au>), an Australian government initiative established in 2001 to develop online materials

for supporting learning in six priority curriculum areas in Australia and New Zealand (cf. Freebody 2005). Five MIs—*Mystery object: Torres Strait Islands*, *Emergency at Lonely Creek*, *New homes*, *The first golden age of cricket*, and *Gold Rush!*—were selected for the project. These five MIs were selected as each covered a different topic from the Australian primary social science syllabus, each was designed for children aged between 7 and 12, and each differed from the other four MIs in its interactive structure and learning task.

A typical MI involves a variety of media, audio, animation, and graphs and requires a learner to accomplish a certain learning task through a series of hypertext navigation and interactive activities. *Gold Rush!* (Plate 1), for example, is a mission-oriented MI where the learner is to use limited financial resources to select and buy food, shelter, and other requirements related to gold mining in order to complete a successful dig in 1865 in outback Australia.

The game starts at a fictitious street in the Australian town of Ballarat in 1865 (see Plate 1a) with instructions regarding the game's tasks, which are (1) buying a permit, (2) choosing the type of mine to dig from the map, (3) purchasing suitable tools, (4) obtaining sufficient amount of food and utilities, and (5) digging in the goldfields. Once the learner decides on the sequence in which these tasks will be accomplished, he/she selects an anchor (e.g., the shop with the sign "Tools"), which takes the learner to a micro-site (e.g., the tool shop in Plate 1b) where each task (e.g., purchasing mining tools) is performed by following a number of steps (e.g., reading descriptions of various mining tools and deciding which to purchase). Upon successful completion of the digging task, the learner is awarded with "gold" (Plate 1c).

The project explored the MIs from three different theoretical perspectives: from above (contextual level), as a type of social process and "pedagogic discourse" (Bernstein 2001); from around (the textual level), as texts involving various types of (inter)semiotic relations (Zhao 2010); and from below (medium), as hypermedia technology (Bolter and Grusin 1999). More specifically, the first, the Bernsteinian, perspective recognizes that MIs are a type of pedagogic discourse with two embedded registers—*instructional*, which concerns the construal of educational knowledge/content, and *regulative*, which concerns the overall pedagogic directions taken, their goals, pacing, and sequencing (Christie 2000, 2002). In *Gold Rush!* (see Plate 1C), for instance, the text in the text box titled *Dig Over!* can be seen as belonging to the regulative register, as it indicates the completion of a learning task and evaluates the learning result (e.g., *That is a great result for your effort*). In contrast, the text in Plate 2, which can be activated by clicking on the anchor of the Windlass in Plate 1b, belongs to the instructional register as it offers a description of the mechanism of a windlass and its role in gold mining.

The second perspective focuses on exploring the inter(semiotic) relations in MIs, that is, the ways in which language and image co-construe meaning in the multimodal textual environment. In particular, this project highlights the importance of exploring the ways in which meaning accumulates while semiotic patterns form and cluster—referred to as a logogenetic model of multimodal analysis—throughout the unfolding of a hypermedia text. In essence, it allows us to look at the ways in



Plate 1 Gold Rush! (a) A fictitious street in Ballarat. (b) In the tool shop. (c) In the Goldfields! Dig Over!



Plate 2 Example of instructional register: Windlass

which fields of knowledge build up and expand in an educational hypermedia text. In *Gold Rush!*, for example, depending on their navigation paths, learners may encounter in sequence a range of multimodal texts such as the one in Plate 2 and others, typically much more complex in nature, with more images and more complex genres. They need first to understand the semantic relations formed between the images and text. In the example in Plate 2, the relationship is categorized as classifying–exemplifying as the visually represented object is classified as a windlass, while the visually represented object exemplifies the typical features of a windlass. If a learner then reads another multimodal text about a tool (e.g., a cradle) which like the windlass can be used in gold digging, the image of the windlass and that of the cradle form a second semantic relation—co-hyponymy. A comparable semantic relation is also formed between the texts that describe the two mining tools. In this way, a complex semantic cluster is formed, allowing learners to build not only local knowledge about a tool such as the windlass or the cradle but also an extended visual–verbal taxonomy of mining tools and their historical roles in gold mining. In the course of the interactive activity, similarly, various fields of knowledge are built up through inter(semiotic) semantic clustering such as those about tools, people, and places in gold mining.

Finally, the perspective from below explores the nature of the medium in which the MIs are embedded, using Bolter and Grusin’s (1999) notion of remediation, the idea that every medium “appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media” (p. 65) to various degrees. It shows that the design of MIs appropriates a space-based medium like that of the museum, manifested in the space-based and nonlinear logic of the organization and placement of learning contents. Simply put, the navigation through an MI such as *Gold Rush!* is comparable to navigating through a museum exhibition rather than reading a book page by page.

Ultimately, the synthesis of the three perspectives produced a sophisticated treatment of hypertext that does not treat hypertext merely as hyperlinked pages or semantically complex print-like texts. Rather hypertext is conceptualized as an emerging type of “text” in its own right. The incorporation of three perspectives, at three different levels of analysis (contextual, textual, and medium), also facilitates multiple analyses in a single study, as will be demonstrated next. Subsequently, several tools have been developed for analyzing educational hypermedia materials such as MIs.

The first analytical tool is a model for categorizing hypertext anchors in MIs (e.g., in Plate 1 all the shops are anchors, and clicking upon each leads to a different micro-site). The model distinguishes the affordance (technological function) of anchors from their semiotic representation (i.e., the language and/or other semiotic resources used to specify their function). In MIs, the technological affordance of anchors is to enable learners to perform various hypermedia tasks, including navigating through the virtual space and activating multimedia artifacts. Anchors also allow the learner to perform certain exchanges of meaning (i.e., seek or provide information and goods and services) within hypertext (e.g., “Play Again” in Plate 1c).

Anchors are often represented by one or more semiotic resources such as language, image, or visual icons. When these resources have meaning beyond identifying an anchor’s technological affordance, the anchor enters as a semantic unit in the logogenetic unfolding of a given MI. This allows the anchor to perform a second, non-technological function and facilitate learning (of primary social science) and “playing” (of the interactive game). For instance, the shop anchors in *Gold Rush!* belong both to the field of interactive activities (i.e., buy equipment needed to complete the task) and to the field of primary social science (i.e., a type of shop during the Gold Rush). Anchors thus provide a means of controlling the pacing and sequencing (i.e., “framing” in Bernstein 2001) of learning and playing in MIs, by, for example, giving learners different degrees of control and having their non-technological functions clearly indicated (or not).

In addition to categorizing hypertext anchors, the research dealt with three textual patterns in MIs: genres, couplings, and clusters. The first pattern was verbal elementary genres. The categorization of the verbal elementary genres suggested that successful engagement with MIs (i.e., learning *while* playing) requires the ability to handle a range of genres, including procedure, report, and explanation generally and history genres such as biographical recount, historical account, and historical recount in particular (see Martin and Rose 2008). For example, while procedures specify the interactive activities and realize the regulative register of MIs as pedagogic discourse, other genres construe the field of primary social science and realize the instructional register.

The second pattern was verbiage–image couplings. This part of the analysis revealed five main types of coupling relations—naming, identifying, representing, classifying–exemplifying, and circumstantiating—with naming, identifying, and classifying–exemplifying predominant in MIs. These five types organize our experience based on three basic principles: abstraction, generalization, and specification.

The third pattern was local clustering. This part of the analysis revealed a relatively consistent link (or clustering) between types of verbiage–image coupling and types of elementary verbal genres, while naming and identifying tend to occur in history genres, classifying–exemplifying couplings are often found in factual genres such as report or explanation, and representing and circumstantiating do not appear to be associated with a particular genre.

Finally, the research provided a contextual interpretation of MIs through the lens of Bernstein’s sociological theory of pedagogy (see Bernstein 1971, 1974, 1975, 1990, 2000 [1996], 2001). The interpretation focused on how primary social science knowledge is construed and recontextualized in MIs. This analysis showed that the key area of knowledge in primary social science as construed in MIs deals with building hybrid notions of community through the multimodal construal of people (the community members) and places (the social spaces to which the members belong). The construal of people is concerned with both the celebration of individuality and the reinforcement of communal values and shared emotions. The construal of places focuses on the encoding of various social values onto politically, culturally, and economically significant sites and locations. In this way, the physical spaces in which the community dwells are transferred into social spaces to which the community belongs.

The interpretation of how primary social science knowledge is recontextualized in MIs drew on Bernstein’s notions of classification (the translation of power relations, which create, legitimize, and reproduce boundaries between social categories) and framing (control relations, which establish legitimate forms of communication appropriate to the different categories). The analysis of classification has two implications:

- Primary social science is a subject of low-level speciality; even though there are signs of transition taking place from commonsense knowledge to specialized school discourse, a distinctive boundary between various fields of social science (e.g., history, geography) is yet to emerge.
- In MIs there is no clear boundary between the activities of acquiring subject knowledge and navigating through hypermedia; in other words, in MIs fields of social science and activities are both weakly classified, so that learning is often hidden behind “playing.”

The open nature of hypertext structure gives the learner a strong sense of control over the learning process (i.e., different learners can create different types of traversals). Yet, control by educators, designers, or other pedagogic agencies and agents is not absent; rather, it is often concealed in a labyrinth of hyperlinks and can easily be made visible through simple manipulation of technology and semiotic resources. In this sense, hypertexts such as MIs constitute potential sites in which a struggle for power and symbolic control takes place in the age of digital learning.

This project made a twofold contribution to the field of educational linguistics, in particular multiliteracies and digital learning. First, it provided a semiotic account of primary social science as a less well-documented subject area, adding to the ontogenetic profile of social science literacies in schools within the

Australian context (cf. Coffin 2000, 2006; Humphrey 1996). By extending existing understanding of the evolving multiliteracies demands of the subject during the years of schooling, the research has the potential to help better apprentice students and support their transition from primary to secondary school into this particular area of learning.

Second, although the descriptive framework developed in the research is complex in nature, involving various theoretical categories and principles, the analytical results are rather straightforward and can be easily translated into the teaching of multiliteracies. In essence, the two types of patterns described in the research—coupling and clustering—separate the issue of multiliteracies into two interrelated dimensions.

Coupling deals with the ways in which image and language co-construe experience. It allows the teacher and the student to understand that language and other semiotic resources can organize various aspects of experience through some fundamental principles, such as abstraction, generalization, and specification. These principles are not unique to one developmental stage but are relevant throughout ontogenesis (see Painter 2001 on learning classification in first language development). During a given developmental stage, however, the emphasis of multiliteracies education can be placed on a particular principle or a semantic relation within it. For instance, in early primary school it can be on building abstraction and teaching students to name, identify, and then classify various visually represented objects. The understanding of coupling also has the potential to promote critical literacy. For example, the distinction made between identifying and classifying—exemplifying coupling may help reveal how stereotypes about a particular group of people (e.g., gender, ethnicity) can be created. When a certain social group is represented visually, each member of the group only *exemplifies* rather than *identifies* the characteristics of this particular group. This semiotic pattern then highlights the risk of making generalizations about a group of people from a few images.

The description of clustering, on the other hand, potentially extends the practice of genre-based literacy programs into the realm of multimodal texts. It will help teacher and students to understand how different types of images can be used in different types of genre and how the meanings of a written text can change when the images accompanying it are changed (e.g., images in biographical recount). From the perspective of critical literacies, understanding how various clusters are formed can help, for example, unpack how a particular cultural myth is built (e.g., who are the heroes and how the community aligns itself around values ascribed to a place or an individual) and thus help students develop a resistant reading of various ideologies.

Ultimately, the research project challenged the prevailing rhetoric around digital learning that the students of today are “digital natives” (Prensky 2001a, b) because they are born into the world of digital technology. However, just like native speakers of English or any other language, while they may have (arguably) similar access to digital technologies, their access to a particular “semantic code” (Bernstein 1971; Hasan 2009) is not necessarily equal. If the pedagogic discourse is both weakly

classified and weakly framed (as in *Gold Rush!*), what type of students will then be able to recognize the boundaries between learning and playing and between genres that realize a particular field of knowledge? In other words, not all students who can play the MIs analyzed in this project will benefit and learn primary social science knowledge as intended.

Exploring News Design in Online Newspapers

The purpose of this project was to identify similarities and differences in the multimodal design of three online newspapers written in different cultural and institutional contexts, for different primary audiences. At the time the study was begun, there had been no studies of this kind on online newspapers and very few on websites. The literature on the visual design of online newspapers typically took a more quantitative approach to news design, employing surveys (e.g., Utt and Pasternack 2003) or content analysis (e.g., Greer and Mensing 2004; Li 2002; Lin and Jeffres 2001). The work of Kress and Van Leeuwen on the design of print media texts (e.g., 1998, 2006 [1996]) was a primary inspiration for the approach taken in this study.

The study looked at three online English-language newspapers published in three countries:

- *The Bangkok Post*, written in English and published in Thailand
- *The People's Daily*, written in Chinese, translated into several languages (including English), and published in China
- *The Sydney Morning Herald*, written in English and published in Australia

Much of the literature that examines newspapers has a focus on newspapers published in the USA and the UK. The choice to focus on English-language newspapers in Asia and Australasia was a deliberate decision to contribute to re-balancing the weight of research away from the two traditional geographical sites of newspaper research.

The initial data collection was conducted from February to April 2002. The “constructed week” data collection method was used: across a number of weeks, an edition of a newspaper from a different day of the week is collected to give, eventually, 1 week’s worth of newspapers. The rationale for a constructed week is to capture all parts of the “typical” weekly news cycle, while at the same time avoiding a potential “skewing” of the data from significant news events which may dominate the newspaper discourse in a given week. This approach gives a representative sample of news discourse much broader than the weeks over which it is collected (e.g., Bell 1991; Riffe et al. 1993). In this study, a five-day constructed week was used (Monday–Friday) and weekend editions were not collected.

Homepages of each newspaper were saved, as were the “section pages” of the “National” section of each newspaper (or its equivalent). Several stories from each

homepage and each National section page were also followed, and these “story pages” were also downloaded.

By late 2005, all three newspapers had changed the design of their homepage, and another round of data collection using the same methodology was conducted from September to November 2005. At the end of 2005, both the *Bangkok Post* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* again changed the design of their homepages. Design change suggested itself as a research focus, and another round of data collection using the same methodology on all three newspapers was conducted from January to April 2006.

In all, 45 homepages (15 from each newspaper) and 45 “National” section pages (15 from each newspaper) were collected. In addition, 513 story pages (over 100 from each newspaper, over 200 from the *Sydney Morning Herald*) were also collected.

Employing Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006[1996]) “visual grammar,” each page was approached as a multi-semiotic, visual sign. In the early stages of the study, detailed linguistic analysis was conducted, but the findings of this analysis were not novel. Much of the language of online newspapers is “shovelware”—text “shoveled” from the corresponding print version of the newspaper, and the analysis of the visual design of the pages was more productive and more interesting, so this part of the study was pursued.

The study proceeded on a number of levels. The design of pages was analyzed using Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006[1996]) “grammar of visual design.” A number of aspects of this framework worked well with the data, but due to the nature of the Web pages under examination, other aspects did not and had to be developed and adapted for application to webpages.

The structure of websites was explored using the theoretical tool of a rank scale from systemic functional linguistics, where the combination of the semiotic elements at one “rank” constitutes an element at a higher rank (e.g., texts on pages combine to make a “zone,” “zones” combine to make a “page,” “pages” combine to make a “section,” “sections” combine to make a “website”).

Newsbites—the short headline-plus-lead-plus-hyperlink stories that dominate online newspaper home pages—were also analyzed in terms of their multimodal structure and identified as a news genre. Over time, considerable structural variation in newsbites was identified, and paradigms of design choices were identified and mapped in order to explore the relations between design and social context.

The prevalence of thumbnail images in the data also led to an exploration of the function of these images—typically an extreme close-up of a human face. The function of these images, as part of short texts and also collectively across the entire page, was explored employing Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006 [1996]) visual grammar, Caple’s (2013) framework for analyzing composition in photographs, and a historical perspective on press photography, punctuation, and typography (see Knox 2009a, b).

In a later part of the study, interviews were conducted with senior editors from *The Bangkok Post* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*; attempts to contact *The People’s Daily* were unsuccessful. These interviews allowed the researcher

to “get a feel” for the geography of each newsroom and also to learn about institutional attitudes towards the online edition in each newspaper. In these ways, the insights gained were very helpful in explaining some aspects of design, and combined with insights from literature on news design (e.g., de Vries 2008; Machin and Niblock 2006) and newsroom ethnography (e.g., Boczkowski 2004; Paterson and Domingo 2008), it was possible to discover relations between social and institutional practices and the visual design of each newspaper and to provide informed speculation when “discovery” was not possible.

This study generated several findings of particular importance to understanding how to support the development of critical hypermedia literacy in educational contexts, with a specific focus on TESOL and applied linguistics education.

First, the newsbite—a new genre which has emerged with online newspapers—was identified and described. The functions of newsbites are to highlight stories valued by the news institution as important, to contribute to an “overview” of current news on the homepage (and on section pages), and to provide multiple “entry points” to the content of the newspaper by encouraging readers to “follow” these stories through hyperlinks to other pages. Newsbites differ from the stories to which they are hyperlinked. While they often use exactly the same wording as in the longer story, sometimes they do not, and they always appear in a different visual and rhetorical environment from the longer story. Sometimes newsbites are hyperlinked to audio or video stories and sometimes to entire section pages (and, therefore, not to a single story at all).

Newsbites emerged as a result of a number of social and historical factors. The first is the tendency in English-language newspaper reporting to move the “peak” of information to the front of the story in headlines and leads, allowing the remainder of the story to be moved or even deleted if needed (Feez et al. 2008). Similarly, the existing practice in print newspapers of “splitting” stories, with headline and early paragraphs on the front page and the rest of the story inside, meant that when editors and readers came to online newspapers, they were already familiar with stories beginning on one page and continuing on another. Third, the historical tendency towards “soundbite news” (e.g., Hallin 1997) and the emergence of the “attention economy” (Gauntlett 2000) reflect a greater interest in attracting the attention of media readers than maintaining it, and the brevity of newsbites is consistent with this. Fourth, writing and designing for the screen require different practices to writing and designing for print.

The emergence of the newsbite is of interest because, if news institutions are partisan and powerful institutions (e.g., Herman and Chomsky 1988; Iyengar and Reeves 1997) and ideology is an important factor in news reporting (e.g., Fairclough 1995; Fowler 1991; Hall 1982), these small texts must perform functions consistent with the ideology of news organizations, or they would not have become so prevalent so rapidly. The finding of this part of the research was that the brevity and ubiquity of newsbites in online newspapers are part of a trend whereby the content and ideological import of any single news story is downplayed and backgrounded against the ongoing discourse between the news institution and its readership, which unfolds on a much longer timescale. Further, subtle

features in the visual design of newsbites and homepages create a paradigm within which news events are positioned. The verbal content of news stories and the details of what happened are stripped to a bare minimum; the visual design and positioning of these news stories give them value in relation to other stories on the same page and other stories which appear on the same page in other editions of the newspaper over time (Knox 2007).

Homepage design, then, becomes an important feature in the communication of news and of the social value of events and actors. Homepages vary in the degree to which they classify news on their home pages. Some provide explicit categories, using headings and framing, and some use implicit categorization where the classification of content and the distinctions between categories are unclear.

For teachers and learners of second and foreign languages, these findings are significant for a number of reasons. First, in foreign language education (where the language being learned is *not* typically spoken in the social environment), online newspapers provide an accessible source of authentic, target-language material. Similarly, in second language education (where the language being learned *is* typically spoken in the social environment), online newspapers are also a useful source of public discourse. In both cases, newspapers deal with public events and issues and give learners access to public discourses and values. Because they are short texts, and often deal with concrete actors and material events, newsbites are often suitable for use with learners of different levels.

Newsbites and homepages provide valuable material for language teachers and learners to work with in and outside the classroom. Basic comprehension of these short stories can be developed through vocabulary-building exercises and grammatical analysis. Predictive reading (guessing content through headlines), familiarity with idioms and puns (common in headlines), and identification of authorial position through evaluative terms in headlines (and their typical absence in “hard-news” leads) can be the subject of classroom activities.

More critical pedagogical approaches can also be taken. How is the page designed? What visual and verbal framing devices are used to categorize content? Or put another way, which stories are grouped together and how is this achieved visually? Are borders, frames, white space, and/or headings used? Is there consistency in the size/color scheme/layout of newsbites? How do these devices work to create explicit or implicit categorization of the news? What kind of content is covered in certain categories? In which stories does explicit evaluation of actors and events occur and in which is such evaluation absent? How would the students rewrite a story (within the design constraints of the new category) if it were moved from one category to another?

This kind of analytical approach to these pervasive and powerful multimodal texts can also be applied by learners to online news texts in their first language, and comparisons can be made of how stories and actors are represented across cultures and languages. At a more abstract level, the kinds of categorization and social valuation made by news institutions in the learners’ first and second languages, first and second cultures, can also be explored in a systematic, explicit way that can be taught and learned and that goes beyond comprehension and beyond individual readings of and responses to individual texts.

Such an approach is not limited to foreign and second language education. All language learners (and that means all of us, all our lives) can benefit from explicit understanding of the multimodal practices of online news reporting, which are evolving rapidly.

The Role of Interpretation

This section concludes the chapter by exploring the role of interpretation across the three projects presented in section “[Three Social-Semiotic Projects on Hypermedia](#),” highlighting their similarities (including their shared theoretical and methodological foundation in social-semiotic, multimodal discourse analysis) and their differences in relation to the position taken in each project on the nature of hypermedia texts, the relationship between social-semiotic theory and different types of hypermedia texts as new data, contributions from diverse professional and research perspectives, and the relevance of findings to educational contexts.

Interpreting the Semiotic Nature of Hypermedia Texts

Drawing on Lemke (2002b), all three projects can be described as viewing hypermedia predominantly as content/text but also differentiated from each other in terms of (i) the extent to which hypermedia is also considered as technology for realizing hypertext and as platform for integrating different channels of communication and (ii) the aspects of meaning explored in the hypermedia texts analyzed in each study.

The studies by Djonov and Knox consider the webpage an important technological unit in hypertext with significant implications for the meanings and social functions of hypermedia texts. Both examine relations between various webpage elements on the homepage before considering broader questions such as how these relations reveal the overall organization of information in children’s websites (including how they signal relations between whole website sections) or how the visual design of online newspaper homepages relates to social and institutional practices.

Additionally, due to its focus on user orientation as a challenge directly related to the fragmented and open-ended nature of hypermedia texts, Djonov (2005) distinguishes hypertextual from non-hypertextual relations and specifies which semantic relations are most likely to obtain within and which between (groups of) webpages. On this basis, she argues that semantic relations within (groups of) webpages are essential for enabling users to predict where hyperlinks may take them, and relations between webpages are essential for confirming and/or reevaluating such predictions and enabling users to identify their current position in a website’s structure.

Further, while Knox focuses exclusively on homepages as multi-semiotic, visual units, Djonov's (2005) analysis accounts for any medium (co)deployed to signal the organization of information within a website. For instance, sound and movement were considered when they signaled LSRs between website components (e.g., sounds and animation played when website section anchors are rolled over to suggest a relation of similarity or contrast between different website sections).

The studies by Djonov and Zhao both consider website navigation, by exploring, respectively, the (actual) navigation paths forged by students through a children's website and the (potential) critical navigation path that would allow learners to achieve the goal/s of an MI most efficiently.

One way in which all three studies interpreted hypermedia as content/text was through the social-semiotic approach to (macro)genre. A broad understanding of social purpose was adopted in Djonov's (2005, 2007, 2008) study, and the studies by Zhao and Knox employed genre in more depth. Zhao (2011) explored the contribution of various verbal elementary genres (e.g., procedure, historical recount, explanation) and their multimodal recontextualization (through hyperlink anchors and intersemiotic relations) to fulfilling the learning goals of MIs (cf. Stenglin and Djonov 2010). Knox (2009a) established systematic correlations between social purpose and the multimodal composition of hypermedia texts (e.g., visual-verbal relations and/or use of specific linguistic and visual patterns) in order to identify the newsbite as a genre that emerged with online newspapers.

Interpreting the Relation Between Theory and Data

All three projects adopted and further developed social-semiotic, multimodal discourse analysis to explore hypermedia as a new type of data. Each dealt with a different type of hypermedia texts and addressed a different challenge that they present for discourse analysis and education. The projects also varied in their interpretations of the relation between theory and data and in the ways each adapted and built on the theory.

Djonov (2005) aimed to account for the role multimodal interaction plays in signaling the organization of information within websites (particularly those designed and used for free exploration) and thereby supporting user orientation. Accordingly, the data included whole websites, and both their multimodality and hypertextual structure were considered. Yet, as the open-ended nature of websites makes analyzing entire websites neither possible nor productive for understanding user orientation, the study adapted the SFL notion of hierarchy of Themes in a reconceptualization of website hierarchy as an overarching principle for organizing information in websites and then employed the data to identify as diverse a range of LSRs as possible (both within and beyond the webpage). The exploration of the data involved both adapting and questioning social-semiotic analytical distinctions. An example is the parameter of explicitness for describing LSRs. In SFL a verbal LSR is described as either explicit (when a conjunction is used) or implicit

(when it is not). Yet, while the conjunction “because” may reveal both the presence and the meaning of the relation between two stretches of discourse, conjunctions like “and” make explicit the presence but not always the meaning of such relations. The latter thus function comparably to hyperlinks, which cannot signal the meaning of LSRs, leaving this function to be fulfilled by the interaction of various semiotic resources. Such observations then suggest that the parameter of explicitness should be modeled not as a binary opposition but as a scale for LSRs in hypermedia and verbal texts alike. Additionally, differences among the fourteen navigation paths through *Tracking Trains*, interpreted in light of the opinions of the website’s users and designers, suggest that the explicitness of LSRs depends on users’ familiarity with website design conventions as well as their world knowledge.

Zhao’s (2011) research addressed the challenge of understanding how knowledge is constructed in hypermedia through the analysis of multimedia interactive curriculum materials for primary social science in the Australian context. The nature of these data, which present learners with tasks that they need to accomplish, and the aim of understanding how knowledge is constructed in hypermedia (through the use of anchors, intersemiotic patterns, and multimodal genres) prompted Zhao (2010, 2011), while drawing on existing SFL accounts of verbal genres and text–context relations, to expand social-semiotic theory in two main directions. One consisted in identifying intersemiotic relations in MIs (naming, identifying, representing, classifying–exemplifying, and circumstantiating) and linking them to basic principles for organizing experience and constructing knowledge (abstraction, generalization, and specification). The other resulted in a model for studying how meanings are configured and reconfigured over time in the unfolding of MIs and other multimodal texts. Because of this (re)configuration, semantic relations and fields can be expanded through the clustering of verbal genres with images and verbiage–image relations. Central to this model, and reflecting both the nature of the data and the purpose of Zhao’s project, is the notion of the critical path as a new, semiotically motivated, unit of description.

Knox (2007, 2009a) explored the multimodal design of online newspaper webpages as visual units and its relationship to the newspapers’ sociocultural contexts of production and reception. Adapting Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006 [1996]) framework to the analysis of webpages highlighted key differences between the design of images/print layout and that of webpages in general and online newspaper homepages in particular. For example, considering the information value of different positions on the page, Knox (2007) argued that Kress and Van Leeuwen’s distinction between ideal and real, which operates between information presented in the top part vs. information presented in the bottom part of a printed page/image where the two parts are compositionally distinguished from each other, does not operate in webpage design. Rather, in webpage design there is a continual (rather than oppositional) difference in the value and salience of what appears first in a webpage (i.e., prior to scrolling down) vs. what appears below it. The study also showed that online newspaper homepages rely on grid-based design (rather than on polarization between top and bottom, left and right, or center and margin) in order to classify news and other content in ways that reflect the social

value assigned to different types of content by a given institution. Considering this type of data allowed this project to build on existing SFL accounts of news genres and media discourse by identifying newsbites as an emergent multimodal genre and exploring changes in its realization over time. This exploration also suggests that additional distinctions may need to be drawn in social-semiotic theory's model of the dynamic relationship between text and context in order to capture the timescales at which the ongoing discourse between the news institution and its readership operates.

Interpreting Contributions from Other Professional and Theoretical Perspectives

In addition to assumptions based on social-semiotic theory, the purpose and data of each project led the researchers to draw on insights from different professional and theoretical perspectives.

The study of children's websites identified insights from the professional field of hypermedia design as most relevant to understanding user orientation. Its different subfields, however, tend to focus on different aspects of website design and/or use in isolation from each other—interface design on webpages, information architecture on the organization of website content, and Web usability on the role individual resources (e.g., hyperlinks, labels, color) play in supporting the accessibility and efficient use of websites. Reinterpreting these insights through the lens of social-semiotic theory, by contrast, was seen as a means of understanding how the interaction between webpage design, content, and website structure can support user orientation by establishing meaningful relationships within a website as a coherent and cohesive text (see further Djonov 2007).

Zhao (2011) employed Bolter and Grusin's (1999) theory of remediation for examining MIs as hypermedia. This provided evidence that MIs draw on media such as film and museum exhibitions, rather than print, which justified proposing space rather than the page as a suitable metaphor and the critical path as a unit for describing meaning making in MIs. In social-semiotic research, Bernstein's sociology of education had already established itself as a suitable means for explicating the role language plays in recontextualizing knowledge in pedagogic discourse (e.g., Christie 2000, 2002; Hasan 2009). Engaging in the continuing dialogue on language, knowledge, and pedagogy between social-semiotic theory (SFL and SFL-MDA) of the Hallidayan tradition and Bernstein's (2001) sociological theory of pedagogy enabled Zhao (2011) to interpret MIs as pedagogic discourse and consider the role that anchors, verbal genres, and intersemiotic patterns play in the realization of regulative and instructional registers in these texts.

The aim of relating the multimodal design of online newspaper homepages to social and institutional values led Knox to draw on interviews with newspaper editors and on literature on journalism and press photography. In this way, the

project represents a well-established tradition of employing and developing systemic functional linguistic and multimodal analysis for the purpose of revealing the ways that power relations as well as social and cultural changes are enacted, maintained, and negotiated in communication. Part of this tradition, also followed by Knox (2009a), is to use ethnographic data such as interviews and observations to support the interpretation of the results yielded by such analysis. Insights from media studies, on the other hand, were of particular value for understanding changes in the use of various technologies in the production of news media.

Interpreting Research Findings for Educational Purposes

All three projects offer social-semiotic tools for the analysis of multimodal and hypermedia discourse that can support advanced students in applied linguistics and (critical) discourse analysis to further explore hypermedia texts, and each presents findings with implications for hypermedia in educational contexts. These tools and findings, however, differ in the nature of the educational research and/or practices to which they can be most readily adapted.

The tools offered by Djonov (2005) are most suitable for analyzing and evaluating the interaction between website design and use, with a focus on user orientation. They can be used to evaluate the extent to which a website's design grants freedom of navigation while supporting successful orientation as well as to identify gaps in users' hypermedia literacy skills (e.g., familiarity with website design conventions). Such evaluations can provide a starting point for research aimed at developing guidelines for the design of websites for children, evaluating websites and their suitability for upper primary students, and developing teaching strategies that foster the development of hypermedia literacy.

Zhao's (2011) project was explicitly designed to develop a metalanguage for describing verbiage–image relations that is readily adaptable to pedagogic practices and to understand how primary social science knowledge is constructed multimodally in online learning materials such as MIs. The different types of verbiage–image couplings and the description of clustering hold considerable value for multiliteracies education. And while this project focused on a specific subject area—social science—at primary level, the principles for organizing experience and constructing knowledge proposed in it are applicable to other subject areas and levels as well. Findings of this research also have significant implications for critical literacy pedagogy as they draw attention to the role that verbiage–image couplings and clustering play in construing stereotypes and cultural myths. As well, they reveal the risk that MIs with weak boundaries between learning and playing may limit some learners' access to the knowledge constructed in them.

The findings of Knox's research on online newspapers are readily adaptable to pedagogic practices oriented towards helping second and foreign language learners to develop not only target language skills but also familiarity with and understanding of public values and discourses in the target culture. They can also

support the development of pedagogic approaches oriented towards enhancing multimodal and (critical) media literacy in secondary and adult education contexts (for both first and second/foreign language learners) and fields such as language and communication studies, applied linguistics, and media and cultural studies.

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2.3 CDA and Participatory Action Research: A New Approach to Shared Processes of Interpretation in Educational Research

Nicolina Montesano Montessori and Hans Schuman

Introduction

This chapter is based on a research project exploring social justice in the classroom (2008–2010), which took place in the context of the research group “Behaviour and Communication in Educational Praxis” which then formed part of the knowledge center of the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences (UUAS). The research was done in the context of the official policy in the Netherlands to include more students with disabilities and/or special needs in mainstream school classes (Schuman 2010). This brings about a responsibility on behalf of the teacher to respond to the diversity of students in such a manner that they feel that “all students get a fair deal” (Gerschel 2003, p. 106). Since this problem is embedded in the heart of the classroom where educational practice and the interaction between teachers and students take place, it was decided to include teachers, student teachers, and pupils in a form of Participatory Action Research (PAR). It was furthermore decided to combine PAR with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The main aim was to give a central voice to school teachers and student teachers throughout the research process. This has led to the deployment of an emergent research design and a focus on narrative inquiry in the earlier stages of the research and the use of focus groups throughout the process. In general it was attempted to create a horizontal (nonhierarchical) research group which included researchers from the UUAS, some with and some without a PhD degree, eight teachers, eight student teachers,

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and pupils from the four classrooms. There was a strong emphasis on dialogical validity. The effect was that interpretation was not something performed exclusively by the researchers at the very end of the fieldwork/data collection, but was an ongoing and integral process which was inherent to every stage of the research process. Interpretation became a matter of shared meaning making, systematically integrating insiders' and outsiders' perspectives. The goal of the research was a genuine transformation of everyday practice in the various participating schools and classrooms. This approach allowed for contextually sensitive results, achieved in each particular school, which were connected to the findings of teachers from other schools during focus groups. Hence, there was a continuous movement going back and forth from the parts to the whole and vice versa.

Social Problem Addressed in This Research

New legislation in the Netherlands is aiming at decreasing the numbers of students referred to special schools, in particular students with behavioral difficulties. The Dutch Ministry of Education is trying to control the budget for specialized provision, and teachers and support staff in mainstream schools face the challenge of including more students with disabilities and/or special needs in their classes (Schuman 2010). Some mainstream schools in the Netherlands are already quite experienced with having students with disabilities and/or a diagnosis of, for example, ADHD or autistic spectrum disorders, in their classes. However, the staff working in these classes often finds it hard to respond to the diversity of students in such a manner that they feel that “all students have the opportunity to realise their potential and develop their talents” (Oliver 1996). In Dutch primary schools the deployment of learning support assistants is not everyday practice. Thus teachers are pretty much left on their own when facing the challenges of coping with diversity in their classes and rethinking issues of segregation, inclusion, and social justice. The UUAS researchers distinguished the following problems with this policy:

- A dominant, often implicit, focus on a “deficit” perspective, despite a rhetoric of social inclusion
- A view on inclusion which remained restricted to the provision of financial means for SEN pupils
- Avoidance of the issue as to how a more inclusive educational context could or should be created to include pupils with various different needs in the mainstream educational system

Furthermore the commission charged with the evaluation of the official policy of inclusion stated that the discussion is performed by policy makers and managers, who fail to include teachers. Officials tend to talk *about* but not *with* practitioners. If they mention them at all, they tend to see them as part of the problem. On the other hand, the commission recognized that teachers have a key position when it comes to realizing sustained change in education (Evaluatie- en adviescommissie Passend

Onderwijs 2009, p. 17; Schuman 2010). In order to address these issues, it was decided to involve practitioners in the research by setting up a research community to perform PAR.

The Research on Social Justice in the Classroom¹

The particular focus was on inclusive and exclusive relationships and the impact of a social justice approach on the interaction between the teachers and their pupils and among pupils and the dilemmas that it provokes. Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Carr and Kemmis 1986; O’Hanlon 2003) was selected as the research strategy to explore the relations between classroom interaction, education, and social justice and to engage in a shared process of constructing knowledge, stimulating professional development and improving everyday practice in the classroom. A central tenet of this approach is the explicit involvement of the practitioners in the research process, rather than simply treating them as passive providers of data. It was decided to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodology, as will be further explained below. The research in four different primary schools was supervised by university researchers from the UUAS in cooperation with three university lecturers who are involved in initial teacher training, eight primary school teachers, six student teachers, pupils, and the Special Educational Needs coordinators (SENCOs) of the four schools. All of the preceding stakeholders acted at some stage of the research as participant researchers. The entire process was run and coordinated by the first author of this chapter.

Research Questions

Some of us had already been involved in in-service training with SENCOs and teachers of the schools. Current government policy regarding the development of more inclusive practices in mainstream schools and the implications it may have for the work of teachers were recurring topics in our meetings. To learn more about these implications, we decided to set up a small research group. Collaboratively we decided to address the following research questions:

- How do teachers and pupils communicate and behave when managing difference in a socially just way?
- What limiting and what supportive factors do they encounter at the micro (class), meso (school), and macro (society) levels when engaging with social justice?
- What dilemmas do the teachers face when engaging with social justice?

¹Publications about this project include Montesano Montessori et al. (2011); Montesano Montessori and Ponte (2012).

At the end of the general exploration stage, teachers further operationalized these research questions so that all teachers were empowered to study the situation in their classes on their terms. At school A, the teachers reinterpreted the original research question to: How do we communicate in specific situations with the pupils? How does this form of communication relate to social justice? At school B: How can I, as a teacher, influence the interaction between myself and the pupils in the light of social justice? At schools C and D: How can I enhance the self-regulative and self-corrective capacity of the pupils? With these operational research questions, the teachers would initiate the specific explorative research stage, as will be described below.

Process and Content Goals

The research aimed at reaching both process goals which had to do with the dynamics and development within the research group and the classroom and content goals aimed at generating knowledge in the field of inclusion from the perspective of social justice. The process goals aimed at empowering teachers to do systematic research in their classrooms and establishing a horizontal dialogue with colleagues, university researchers, and teacher students. The content goals aimed at generating knowledge in relation to the conditions and implications of dealing with diversity in the light of social justice and developing innovative ways of communication and behavior in classroom settings. The ambition was, furthermore, to do research from an insiders' as well as an outsiders' perspective (Cochran Smith and Susan 1993). In order to facilitate and strengthen these research dynamics, we applied the layered approach to data analysis found in the abductive methodology of CDA and analyzed and evaluated the impact of this approach on the interpretative cycle throughout the research.

Our Concerns Towards the Topics of Social Justice, Special Education and *Passend Onderwijs*

As stated in the beginning, one of our aims was to critically address the current practices in Dutch compulsory education with its emphasis on the shortcomings and problems of pupils (the medical-deficit discourse) in order to create a climate for an alternative discourse which values differences and activates and supports the development of the strengths and unique talents of each pupil (the social model of disability discourse) (Oliver 1996). We intended to broaden our focus from pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to all pupils, who, for a variety of reasons, need additional support during a shorter or longer period. Therefore we also challenged the concept of SEN, being reminiscent of the medical and deficit discourse of the 1980s. Hence, we suggested the adoption of the social model of

disability and a focus on the barriers which may prevent pupils from learning and participation (Booth and Ainscow 2002). These barriers may be present in the person concerned, but, in our perspective, it is equally important to consider whether certain barriers may be the result of, for example, the attitudes of the teacher, the social relationships in the classrooms, or an unwelcoming teaching and learning environment that does not meet the needs of the pupils. For instance, previous research indicated that the existing curriculum in a special school for adolescents with a visual impairment was not appropriate for the target group (Schuman 2009).

We were aware that, as has been observed elsewhere, people in different situations make use of identical words, but do not refer to identical situations or imply identical meanings (Palshaugen 2001, p. 261). We assumed that this situation might occur within our research community. Given the open meaning of “social justice,” we believed that a collaborative process of meaning making would be necessary. This interest in language further supported our decision to triangulate PAR with CDA. CDA states that discourse and social practice are mutually constitutive. Discourse helps create the realities it describes, but is also constrained by social structures. Thus, a medical perspective on SEN will call for other measures (a budget to hire special educators) than a social perspective which will focus on developing an inclusive practice ready to acknowledge and to deal with difference. It will also bring into practice different discourses, as stated above. We therefore wanted to take into account the language people use in everyday life about, for example, pupils with challenging behavior, and the way it shapes their actions, thus integrating PAR with a critical discursive analysis of their language in use.

Again, this perspective was supported by previous research: in the case study of the teenagers with a visual impairment at the Bartimaeus Institute in Zeist, it became clear that involving these teenagers in the research required creating a new frame and new terminology to develop a shared and empowering language which was more in agreement with the reality of these teenagers than the dominant disability discourse in society was, which had produced most of the texts and the frames in which to discuss the reality of persons with a visual impairment (Schuman 2009).

The Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was based on the work of Iris Young (1990) who considers social justice a matter not only of the just distribution of material means but also emphasizes the need for a just distribution of (institutional) power. While we agreed with this perspective, we noticed that Young does not provide tools as to how to analyze these processes of distribution. For the reasons mentioned above, we were therefore looking for ways to connect her rather abstract approach to social justice to other social theories which would help us to critically address the official Dutch policy towards *passend onderwijs* (the Dutch equivalent for inclusive education). We therefore reinterpreted Young’s advocacy for a more equitable participation of minority groups in society as removing barriers to learning and participation for pupils in mainstream school classes considered to

having SEN (Booth and Ainscow 2002). Thus we were connecting her theory to the social model of disability (Oliver 1996). As discussed in a previous section, the social model of disability challenges the more traditional medical-deficit view which suggests that the difficulties and challenges people with disabilities face, i.e., pupils with SEN, are the outcomes of personal characteristics (Ibid.). For pupils with SEN the medical model led to their exclusion from mainstream schools because they could not cope with the standard curriculum and were not able to assimilate (Thomas et al. 1998).

In order to address these concerns, we designed a research model to facilitate teachers to contextualize general theories on social justice to their own practice. After the initial round of gathering data through narrative inquiry with the participant researchers, we selected Harvey's ideas about social processes (Harvey 1996) to be used as a model to further explore Young's notions of social justice. Harvey analyzes social processes in terms of six simultaneously operating moments: language/discourse, power, material practices, institutional practices, beliefs and values, and social relations (Ibid). The analysis of the narratives called for the introduction of one more moment: social identities. The following table provides the model of Harvey with the added moment and the way in which it was related to our research purposes and results. Thus, the moments are mentioned in the first column, the way these were defined in the context of this research appears in the middle column, while the relation to the data is included in the third column (see Montesano Montessori and Ponte 2012 for further details).

Our Research Position

The two authors of this article met in this research project and have cooperated in several others, since. Both received their PhD's in the UK: Schuman performed Participatory Action Research with teachers, support staff, and teenage students with a visual impairment in a special school in the Netherlands and graduated at Roehampton University in 2007 (Schuman 2010). Montesano Montessori completed a discursive analysis on hegemony and political discourse in Mexico. This research was performed in a CDA tradition. She graduated at Lancaster University in 2008 (Montesano Montessori 2009). Schuman's research resulted in designing and implementing a curriculum which was more appropriate for adolescents with a visual impairment and which better prepared them for adult life and getting into paid work. A central concern for Schuman is that pupils with special needs should not be looked at through a medical-deficit perspective, which sees them as being subjects in need who require special medical and technical (monetary, special educators) help. Rather, he defends the view (Schuman 2009, 2010) that children with special needs and, in fact all children, have the right to receive whatever support they need to realize their strengths and talents and to develop their personality in harmony with others. In other words, he prioritizes a citizenship model over a medical model.

Montesano Montessori was well introduced in the critical theory in which CDA is rooted and she sees research as an instrument for social change in the direction of a more just and more sustainable world. Critical theory aims to “produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection” (Wodak and Meyer 2009, p. 7). She therefore, but also out of personal involvement with minorities, shared the emancipatory view which is implicit in Schuman’s perspective. Both authors agreed on the importance of performing research *with* the practitioners who operated in the context to be researched, in this case: the four classrooms. Schuman selected three primary schools from a cluster of about twenty-eight collaborating schools. From these three schools six teachers participated in the research. The fourth school participated as a single entity. Both authors consider research as a form of social practice. Following authors such as Fullan (2001) and Pring (2000), we were convinced that it is essential to include practitioners in the research community, in order to come to a process of shared meaning making, to develop a shared view on the research questions and the social challenges these address, and to come to a full understanding of a professional activity.

Epistemological, Ontological, and Methodological Assumptions

At a more abstract level, both authors agreed on a series of epistemological and ontological assumptions, which we will briefly present here. Our epistemological position is based on the perspective that there is no such thing as an “objective” world out there which can be objectively grasped by an uninvolved, objective researcher. We believe that both university and participant researchers are situated in their own context, their personal history and beliefs, and the knowledge system(s) that they were formed by. We believe that this position is strongly influenced by personal values and beliefs. In fact, we believe that, in order to allow true participative research to happen and to allow processes of social change as a result of this research, it is necessary to question and discuss and be prepared to change these values and beliefs (Schuman 2009, 2010; De Lange et al. 2010).

We believe that PAR constructs a form of contextualized knowledge which is situated in the context in which it takes place. We do not believe that there is a bias of theory over practice or that research should start with theory. In fact, we believe that empirical research focusing on involvement and change requires a dialogue between theory, data, and context. In that sense we have been using the abductive approach proper to disciplines situated in critical theory, such as CDA. We will explain this further below. We believe that the social world, and therefore social research, is different from the natural world and that it is undesirable to blindly adopt research methods from the objective-empirical paradigm to processes of PAR. In our view, PAR is originating from Critical Theory because of its focus

on participation, emancipation, experience, plural ways of knowing, and social justice (Reason and Bradbury 2001). In our various common research projects, we opt for the critical emancipatory paradigm, in that we intend to facilitate processes of social change which enforce the position of the practitioners and the participants in the practice that is under research. The choice for performing research in the critical theory tradition further sharpens our epistemological position. We believe, following Habermas (1984), that knowledge claims are valid when they are meaningful to the research community; when they are true in the sense of being based on valid arguments; when they are sincere, which, in our view, means a coincidence between “saying” and “doing”; and when the speaker is justified to say what he or she is saying. An important condition for this kind of truth to be generated is discussion or dialogue (Habermas 1984; Scott and Usher 1996). We also share the idea that the creation of knowledge is the result of both cognitive and social processes and therefore never absolute, but always open to discussion and revision. We share the critical realist ontology of CDA, which accepts that there are causal powers in the world and that reality is stratified. A research object exists at various levels. For instance, in educational research, one can investigate at micro level the day-to-day practice in a classroom, at the meso level school ethos or professional relationships, and at macro level the impact of society and major structures, such as the Ministry of Education, on education more generally, for example, on the PISA results of Dutch students. We believe that PAR normally takes place at the micro level, but that the researcher should take into account the ways in which the micro level is embedded in larger social meso and macro structures.

Our Perspective on Interpretation

Having described our research position, we will now address our perspective on interpretation in educational research. We see interpretation as a double hermeneutic process. Seeing research as a social practice, it is performed by social actors who are previously constituted by their education and training, their readings, the social groups they belong to or have access to, and their current knowledge and experience. Social subjects understand texts and social practice, in part, through their previously constituted knowledge, earlier interpretations and through their personal understanding of that reality which, together, form the member’s resources which determine a persons understanding of a situation (Fairclough 1989). We work in agreement with the hermeneutic/interpretative epistemology (Usher 1996, pp. 18–21). Following Laragy (2004), we intended to produce emancipatory knowledge which would support self-determination, through a collaborative process of interpretation and meaning making of the professionals and students involved.

This implies that we consider that all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices. This by itself

implies a double hermeneutic. Social actors give meaning to their actions by interpretative schemes. But researchers also make sense of their research topics through interpretative schemes. This implies distancing ourselves in two ways from research traditions found in the natural sciences, which still remain dominant in the social sciences and even in practice-oriented research. First, we do not believe in a strict separation between subject (researcher) and object (the researched), since both share the characteristic of being interpreters and sense-seekers. Second, we do not believe that research can be done by restricting ourselves to the observable only, as we explained above. It requires investigating and discussing underlying values and beliefs. Therefore, in our view, dialogue is of eminent importance in this kind of research. We furthermore believe that knowledge formation is circular, iterative, and spiral, because it is a matter of increasingly combining the interpretation of the parts with the interpretation of the whole (Usher 1996, p. 19). In CDA this is reflected in its concern to always combine the micro and the macro, in this case the micro reality of the four classrooms and the macro level of Dutch policy in relation to *passend onderwijs*.

Implications of Our Research Position for the Initial Stages of the Research

Triangulation of Research Strategies

Our research concerns have gradually led to a new framework which was implicit in this research on social justice, which has been elaborated further in other projects and which implies a subtle integration between CDA and PAR (De Lange et al. 2010; Montesano Montessori, Schuman and De Lange (2012), and recent research on democratic citizenship in the classroom. While we use the social justice research as a case study to illustrate this, we emphasize that our work in this direction has developed beyond this particular project. The most obvious research strategy chosen for social justice was that of PAR, since it was also the main strategy employed in the formal research group in which the research was initiated (Montesano Montessori et al. 2011; Montesano Montessori and Ponte 2012). Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 1) give a working definition of PAR which matches our ideas about research in schools and classrooms: “Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world-view.” Action research takes place in several stages, which include orientation, exploration, reconstruction, and evaluation (Ponte 2002, 2006). We agree that for action research to become effective, that is, having a positive and sustained impact on the learning and teaching that takes place in classrooms, it is best treated as “an emergent, evolutionary and educational process of engaging with self, persons and communities which needs to be sustained for a significant period of time” (Reason

and Bradbury 2001, p. 1). In this sense the knowledge we developed did not equate with certainty, but it was “always embedded in analytical processes and open to review and reinterpretation” (Nixon et al. 2003, p. 91).

CDA is the analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse and other elements of social practices, such as power, values and beliefs, and institutional and material practices. It focuses on the relation between discourse and power relations in society. It looks at how discourse contributes to maintain asymmetric power relations or to resist or modify these. It is a framework which allows researchers to develop a model in agreement with their research purposes and orientation which requires transparency on behalf of the researchers’ position. In our view, CDA presents a sophisticated methodology with a layered approach to the collection and analysis of data. The abductive approach includes a cyclical research process, in that the researcher, at each stage of data analysis, sets up a dialogue between theory, data, and social context (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). The first author of this chapter, for instance, developed a research model to analyze hegemonic procedures in political texts (Montesano Montessori 2009). In the case of social justice, as stated above, a framework was developed based on Young (1990) and an adapted version of Harvey (1996). The layered approach of CDA connects well to PAR because it also advocates a cyclical approach of the research process: plan → act → observe → reflect → and act again (Carr and Kemmis 1986). We will demonstrate, in this chapter, how the combination of PAR and CDA enabled a hermeneutic and cyclical—rather than linear—approach to interpretation. In fact, we believe that the combination of CDA and PAR helps to overcome a classical problem in educational research, namely, the gap between positivist research and practice. CDA provides a sophisticated research approach which integrates the macro and the micro levels, theory, and empirical data. PAR introduces the social agent in the research and helps to make sense of the research findings at each level of analysis.

An Abductive Approach to Research

Abduction involves constructing theories based on social actors’ language, meanings, and accounts. Research starts by describing these activities and then deriving from them concepts and categories that contribute to understanding the problem that is being researched (Blaikie 2010, p. 90). Although abduction as a strategy has been criticized as a misinterpretation of its original source in the philosophy of Peirce (Deutscher 2002), this study adopts the prevailing view in CDA, which considers abduction as a constant movement between theory and empirical data (Reisigl and Wodak 2009). This choice was indicated by locating the research in a post-structural framework, which requires this dialogue between theory, methodology, and data, in order to make sense of the social and linguistic processes it seeks to understand. Therefore, the accumulation and analysis of data was performed in three stages. We started with a general exploration stage, which included narrative

inquiry in which the participant researchers expressed their insights and experiences in relation to social justice and inclusion. This was followed by a specific exploration stage in which the teachers defined their own research focus and described, analyzed, and reflected on specific situations in the classroom. The third research stage focused on specific situations or on specific children and led to the reconstruction stage in which teachers and pupils experimented with innovative ways of addressing difficult issues in their classes which were then evaluated and described in the final reports of the participant researchers. Every stage was completed with a focus group meeting with all participants, which facilitated processes of interpretation of the results achieved in that particular stage and common decisions as to how to proceed into the next stage.

The Creation of a Horizontal Research Group

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, one of our main aims was to provide a central voice to the practitioners, since we considered that they have the experience and the knowledge but also the duty to take care of all of their pupils. This central role of teachers in developing an educational practice suggests a research approach which is supportive of the idea of teacher participation and stakeholder involvement (Senge et al. 2000). In doing so, we also aimed at overcoming the problem mentioned above and perceived by the Evaluation and Advisory Committee of *passend onderwijs* that researchers do not involve practitioners. The choice to incorporate the voice of the practitioners was also inspired by our personal stance of combining social research with processes of social change. In order to achieve this horizontal community, we took distance from traditional hierarchical research relations. We made no formal distinction between university researchers (with or without a PhD) and participant researchers. As university researchers we saw it as our task to facilitate the research process, to focus the attention of the research group in line with progressing insights, to design appropriate research instruments, and to provide support when needed.

The Creation of an Emergent Research Design

We decided to the deployment of an emergent research design (Reason and Bradbury 2001; O'Hanlon 2003) and a focus on narrative inquiry at the earlier stages of the research and the use of focus groups throughout the research process (Trahar 2006; Abell and Myers 2008). An emergent design was prepared that was strong enough to support the entire research process in all its stages. It therefore included an agenda for the various stages distinguished in PAR (see Table 2). It was simultaneously flexible enough to allow for changes in

agreement with the research process in terms of generation of new ideas or common decisions taken during the process, yet flexible enough to sustain the entire research process.

The Use of Dialogical Research Instruments: Narrative Inquiry and Focus Groups

In order to facilitate this, we started with a process of narrative inquiry in which teachers were invited to present a narrative interview, based on a series of topics concerning communication in relation to difference in the light of social justice and inclusion. The indication of the required topics to deal with, though providing some coherence, still differed from a structured interview, since the teachers were free to decide on the order in which they would deal with these topics. The teachers were invited to prepare their ideas on a mind map and to freely transmit their experience and their ideas to the interviewer who operated as a moderator (Abell and Myers 2008). The strength of narrative inquiry is that it provides informants with freedom to articulate their personal story and to describe the causal relations as they see them. It also gives them time to prepare the interview, which helps them to increase their own responsibility and to further limit their dependency on the interviewer. In this sense a narrative inquiry is a more open and less structured method than an open interview (Trahar 2006). We furthermore worked on the principle that every participant who entered the research process (for instance, the teachers started in January 2009, while the student teachers started in September 2009) would formulate their personal research questions within the larger framework. This was done in order to distribute ownership and it would help to remedy as much as possible the issue of parity of influence. At the end of every research stage, a focus group was organized (three plenary and one round of focus groups held at all different schools), which helped to turn interpretation into a process which played a role in every stage of the research and in which all stakeholders had a say. It thus facilitated the cyclical character of interpretation according to the hermeneutic/interpretative epistemology described above.

Taking into Account Ethics

In our view, setting up a research community requires a climate of security, mutual interest, and respect. If we were to invite participant researchers, we expected of ourselves to have respect for their current positions and points of views as well as for their further process of investigating their own practice. From the beginning we took this into account and we paid careful attention to the facilitation and accommodation of the participant researchers. We made sure that every participant would get considerable research time allocated within their normal duties.

This counted for teachers as well as for student teachers, who compensated part of their curriculum with their participation in the research. It was also arranged that they would receive an official acknowledgement of participation at the end. Contracts were made and signed between the participants and the school directors. Accommodation involved the support and the preparation for participant researchers to take up their roles as researchers. Narrative inquiry played a significant role in this attempt. We were aware of the fact that participants made themselves vulnerable by questioning their own practice and sharing the outcomes with direct colleagues and student teachers.

We therefore gave high priority to the creation of a safe research climate that tested practices and beliefs, without becoming judgmental about them or about those who raised them.

Description of the Research Process

We will now proceed to describe the research process. Table 2 describes the various stages of the research. The five stages mentioned in the left column correspond to stages distinguished in PAR, to which we added a division of a general and specific stage within exploration. We added in bold and italics the steps of data collection and analysis inspired by the CDA methodology. Below follows a detailed description of each stage.

The First Level of Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation: Narrative Inquiry

With the CDA methodology in mind, the focus was also on a layered organization of the collection and analysis of data. It was decided to perform narrative inquiry during the general orientation stage with content analysis of the results then being done using principles of narrative analysis in the tradition of CDA and aided by software tools (Atlas.Ti). At this particular stage, the participative researchers expressed the following dilemmas: How many pupils with SEN can we admit within the present budget? Will inclusive education disturb the learning process of the other children?

The Second Level of Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation: Bumpy Moments

In order to make a second step in data collection and analysis, it was decided for the specific exploration stage to start registering the so-called bumpy moments, which are

moments that could, in hindsight, convey several legitimate and competing courses of action with regard to classroom interactions with pupils (Romano 2004). Bumpy moments were introduced as dichotomous situations: “The term bumpy moment did not refer to a situation in which teachers did not know what to do (incapacity to act) but to a situation that could, with hindsight, convey several legitimate and competing courses of action with regard to classroom interactions. We assumed that these mini dilemmas have an inherent moral significance” (Van Kan et al. 2010). In other words, a bumpy moment is a moment where the teacher could have exercised agency—in the sense that agency is the ability to act otherwise than one did.

At this stage of specific orientation, various significant developments took place:

- The teachers collectively reformulated the question of how to improve social justice in the classroom, deciding instead that the issue to address was “how to enhance the self-regulative capacity of the pupil.” This completed the specific exploration stage in the sense that this now became the group’s definition of social justice. This was a significant moment in a process of shared meaning making. Harvey (1996) was selected as an interface to analyze bumpy moments.
- These two decisions led to the design of the proforma which the group then developed further in order to gather data on these bumpy moments. The structure of this proforma included a description of the bumpy moment, the situation which caused the teacher to act in a way which caused a conflict with her personal values and beliefs. This was followed by the dilemma as experienced by the teacher. The third step was a reflection on the bumpy moment and on thinking of possible alternatives. Alternatives had to be checked in terms of consequences for the pupil, the teacher, and the group. Then feedback should be asked from the pupil to find out how he/she had experienced the situation, what he/she thought of the behavior of the teacher, and whether he/she thought that the teacher had acted in a just way. Then the teacher had to write down the lessons learned. The final category included the formulation of innovative ideas for alternative ways of acting and communicating (see Montesano Montessori and Ponte 2012, for a full account and a copy of the proforma).

The findings of the bumpy moments were then analyzed in terms of the seven moments of Harvey (Table 1). The dilemmas formulated at this stage included: “Shall I intervene now or later?”

The Third Level of Collecting and Analyzing Data: The Reconstruction Stage (February 2009–June 2010)

Teacher and student researchers now started to experiment on the basis of their reconstruction plan. In one school the teacher invited a pupil who suffered a light form of autism to list alternative ways of acting, which he/she could consult during future incidents in order to learn to regulate his/her own behavior. One student

Table 1 Model of social processes developed by Harvey (1996) in relation to this research

Moment	Definition of the moment in the context of this research	Results from the narrative inquiry
Values and beliefs	Values and beliefs carried out implicitly or explicitly by stakeholders	Values and beliefs. Conditions. Considerations. Vision on inclusion
Discourse/ language	(a) Communication and information	Communication and information at micro (classroom), meso (school), and macro (society) levels
	(b) Communicative relations	
Social identities	All stakeholders. The description of and attributions to these identities	Pupils, teachers, coordinators, assistants, parents; characteristics attributed to them; social role
Institutional practices	(a) Organized institutional procedures at the micro, meso, and macro level	Policy at the micro and meso level; classroom management, differentiation, specific working methods, inclusion or segregation of groups or individuals
	(b) Ceremonies	
	(c) Institutional cooperation	
Material practices	The presence or absence of material means and facilities	Facilities or the lack of them at the levels of the classroom, the school, and the Ministry of Education
Power	The capability to: Have someone do something or to forbid someone from doing something. Influence the distribution of material or nonmaterial goods	Communication. Distribution of facilities. Considerations and decisions. Choice of teaching methods. Policy of admittance
Social relations	Social interactions, social relations, forms of cooperation at the levels of the classroom and the school	Educational climate. Relations between stakeholders. Forms of cooperation. Interactive educational methods

teacher invited three girls to each write a short story on the conflict that they had had so that the different points of disagreement would become clear. They would then write an alternative story with alternative solutions. Another teacher assigned a section on the wall where children could describe a problem with other children on a piece of red paper (after having discussed it with the child concerned). Other children could give advice as to how to resolve the conflict on green sheets of paper. This particular teacher engaged in frequent group or circle discussions with the pupils to discuss norms and values and how to resolve problems or conflicts which emerged in the group. At another school, a teacher decided to focus on a girl from Morocco who remained isolated in the class. It was assumed that the girl experienced a gap between the situation at home and at school. This led to the formulation of an innovation plan in which the child would be invited to do activities outside the classroom and to sometimes join the school coordinator in order to have a cup of tea and a chat. Other children would be invited to join her so that she would get a chance to get to know more children and to make friends. The coordinator and the teacher both hoped to get a better understanding of the child.

Table 2 The stages of the Social Justice Project in relation to CDA methodology

Stage	Research methodology	Outcome in terms of contents	Outcome in terms of processes
Orientation (Sept. 2008–January 2009)	Preparation of a vigorous, but flexible research design in close collaboration with university researchers	The joint formulation both of the research questions and of the planning of the research design	Establishment of external network with the participating schools
General exploration stage February 2009–June 2009 <i>First step of data analysis in terms of CDA</i>	Narrative inquiry through open interviews with the teacher researchers. Content analysis	Selection and adjustment of Harvey's model (one extra moment was added: social identities)	(<i>Dynamics</i> : teachers changed roles from informants to researchers and decided on the research focus in their classrooms)
Specific exploration stage September 2009–January 2010 <i>Second step of data gathering and analysis</i>	Description of “bumpy moments” connection of bumpy moments to Harvey's model	Reinterpretation of the concept of social justice as “to enhance the self-regulative capacity of the pupil(s)”	Development of the research instrument for <i>bumpy moments</i> . Integration of insider and outsider perspectives
Reconstruction February–June 2010 <i>The third step of data analysis</i>	Action research by teacher researchers using video-observations, reflective dialogues	Identifying indications which are needed to improve the pupils' “self-regulative potential”	Continuous focus on specific children of procedures. Shift in power position of teachers
Overall analysis June 2010	Overall analysis in terms of lessons learned	Focus groups in each of the schools and a final plenary focus group	Teachers reported to have a multiple lens to look at their practice. Order became more organic

Analysis of Results (June 2010)

In terms of process, the reconstruction cycle seemed to have a remarkable result in the classroom: bumpy moments became less frequent in all classrooms. Relations became more harmonious and order seemed to become more organic and less regulated by the teacher. Most participant researchers reported that the pedagogical climate in their classrooms had changed. The outcome of this stage in terms of content implied a more subtle view on power and on the position of the teacher. Children developed their own strategies to regulate their behavior and communication. New teaching methods had been developed. Teachers gained insight into the motives of children which influenced their behavior. In making motives more explicit, new ways of dealing with them emerged. The teacher of that group reached the insight that social justice required equality. She has to hold to the same rules as the children. So when she does something wrong, she apologizes. She sometimes discusses norms and values with the group and involves them in the process of

decisions taken as to how problems should be managed in the class. Participant researchers now formulated the following dilemmas: “Should my norms and values be the rule or should I discuss this (sometimes) with the pupils?” “If I let go of my power, then what is my position and my responsibility?” “Should I always do what the children want or should I engage in a dialogue with them?” “Should I protect the child or should I prepare it for its new environment at secondary school?” “How do I make sure that social justice becomes a shared process between me and the children and not an idea that I impose?”

Specific Features of This Research Model *During* the Research Process

We would now like to present some specific features which emerged and developed throughout the process of this participative research.

Research Activities and Instruments Were Designed to Simultaneously Serve Various Functions

The *narrative inquiry* served a series of purposes. It gave a central voice to teachers, and further decisions on theory and methodology were taken on the basis of the outcome of these narratives. It helped to establish a transparent and horizontal research relation between university and school researchers. It empowered teachers and helped them prepare for the role of researchers. It laid the basis for processes of shared meaning making and the exchange of insiders and outsiders’ perspectives. It led to the selection of Harvey’s dialectical view of social processes in terms of six dialectically related social moments, namely, discourse/language, power, social relations, material practices, institutions and rituals, and beliefs/values/desires, and the addition of one more moment: social identities. This represented a moment where theory informed practice, while practice informed theory.

The proforma of the *bumpy moments* was a multifunctional template which served simultaneously for the collection of data by the teachers, reflection, dialogue, and formulation of innovative action (preparation for the reconstruction stage).

Participant researchers systematically related their bumpy moments to Harvey’s model, which helped them reach an understanding about their practice in relation to the seven moments and seemed to draw their attention to their own power position. Finally, it was through the proforma and the procedure of providing feedback that the integration of the insiders and outsiders’ perspective reached its moment of greatest intensity. Teachers sent the proforma to the university researchers, who provided feedback through comments in the margins of the proforma.

The *feedback* provided by university researchers turned out to be twofold. On the one hand, university researchers helped participant researchers to focus

on their reflections on the now chosen definition of social justice as “the enhancement of the self-regulatory capacity of pupils.” On the other hand, it also turned out to be a process of joint reflection, for instance, when there was doubt as to how to relate aspects of the description of the bumpy moments to the model of Harvey.

Shift of Roles The first focus group, held in June 2009, implied a serious challenge. The focus group was meant to discuss the results of the analysis of the narrative inquiry. But it was also during this session that participant researchers were invited to formulate their own specific research questions to investigate in their classrooms starting in September. In other words, participant researchers would let go of their role of providing data as they had done during the general orientation session, in order to adopt the role of co-researchers. University researchers shifted their role in the direction of facilitators of this micro-research in the classroom, the organization of plenary meetings, and providing feedback as well as any other kind of support when needed, to the participant researchers.

Especially the project leader had to find a subtle balance between controlling and facilitating the entire research process in all its stages while providing freedom and support to the participants. It required taking on multiple roles varying from being the researcher who had the overview, and who took the initiative, to being a critical friend and co-researcher, to being a partner when discussing educational problems in the classroom. While performing these various roles, she always remained conscious of her role as a researcher.

Stratified Dilemmas While the participant researchers clearly showed a shift from technical and material dilemmas in the first stage, to more procedural dilemmas in the second stage and significant personal dilemmas in the third stage, it was certainly true that the university researchers had to face a series of dilemmas as well. During the first focus group, when the shift of roles had to take place, university researchers made themselves dependent on the very procedure they had designed. What if the teachers were unwilling to take up the role of researchers? It might have meant the end of the research, at least in the way it had been designed during the orientation stage. University teachers faced a second dilemma when the school researchers were supposed to submit bumpy moments. Initially hardly any material was received. One option was to remind them to do it. But this could easily lead to a counterproductive dependent relationship. University researchers were sensitive to the fact that teacher researchers should consider the bumpy moments procedure as part of their research and not as homework to be done for the university researchers. This problem was resolved through an internal meeting at the university among colleagues, through an additional informative letter sent to the teachers, and through the help of the SENCOs at the schools who discussed the issue with the teachers. Then the procedure started to flow. Prompt feedback by university researchers helped teachers to keep an interest in the process. An interesting finding was that participant researchers started to experience similar dilemmas. One teacher was hesitant to say too much about social justice to the children, because she wanted it to be their (and not her) social justice.

A final specific feature was the *interpretation* as a collective process at the end of every research stage. Since this represents the main topic of this handbook, we will address this in a separate paragraph.

Interpretation in the Research on Social Justice

As indicated before, each research stage was completed with a plenary session that allowed for a process of collaborative sense making and interpretation of the results achieved in that particular research stage. One could say that the orientation stage was embedded in the authors' orientation about research as a social practice. This led to the interpretation of research as a social, contextualized, cyclical process, which required participation, a layered form of research and, as such, an emergent research design which was developed at that stage. It also led to the decision to select narrative inquiry as an instrument for the first round of data collection.

The general exploration stage in which the narrative inquiry took place and the selection of Harvey's model can be considered an initial reinterpretation of Young's approach to social justice in terms of the simultaneous occurrence in social processes of power, language/discourse, social relations, material and institutional practices, and values and beliefs. Based on the narratives, it was then decided to add a seventh moment, social identities, which represents a reinterpretation of the model, when recontextualizing it explicitly to the topic of social justice. The first focus group furthermore revealed that the research group considered that social justice was a matter of acknowledging that diversity is a given and that this requires an inclusive approach by everyone involved in the social practice in the classroom. It also became increasingly clear that inclusion was a matter of both behavior and communication.

The specific exploration stage led to the definition of social justice in this research as a means to "enhance the self-regulative capacity of pupils." This moment occurred when one participant researchers made this as her research question. It was then collectively recognized as a meaningful definition of social justice for this research community in this context. This paved the way for focusing on the bumpy moments, the reflection on these moments in terms of what can the teacher or the pupil do to enhance the capacity of self-regulation of the pupil, which in all cases led to the formulation of innovative actions which were tried out in the reconstruction stage. It definitely provided university teachers with a lens to look at the description of these bumpy moments as a basis for providing feedback. Much of the feedback was directed at questioning participant researchers on their habit of rewarding and punishment. University teachers were now inclined to ask the teacher whether he or she saw an opportunity for starting a conversation with a child about its behavior, rather than rewarding or punishing. The result was seen in later descriptions of bumpy moments and the results were significant. Children very often had very clear motives for their behavior, and when asked about it, the road was open to them to remove certain causes or to change behavior patterns.

During this stage, the participant researchers decided on redefining bumpy moments as critical moments in which the established norms and values (of the teacher) in the relationship between a teacher and a student were called into question. Even though this same relation between bumpy moments and values and beliefs is also described in theory (Romano 2004; Van Kan et al. 2010), this was definitely a moment of increased understanding within the research community. It helped to make the distinction between general hectic situations and actual bumpy moments. In a certain way, this confirms the importance of contextualized PAR: people do not learn as readily from theory as they do from experience and collaborative reflective practice.

During the specific orientation stage, a salient and increased understanding of Harvey's model in relation to social justice was developed as a result of a teacher who could not communicate spontaneously with the pupils due to the excessive power of the parents in that school. It brought the group to identify the need of the seven moments of Harvey to be *in balance* for social justice to occur. If one moment manifests itself too strongly, social justice is rendered impossible. In a certain way, this reconfirms Young's assumption that just the material distribution of goods does not lead to social justice.

During the reconstruction stage, participant researchers reinterpreted their role as teachers. They let go of their expected and routinized role of conductors of group processes. They started to pay individual attention to children and facilitated them to create their own solutions to their challenging behavior or conflicts in the group. The intriguing result was that the number of bumpy moments seemed to decrease. All teachers reported a more organic order which seemed to emerge spontaneously.

Last but not least, and we may call this a salient CDA research result, the research allowed for a reinterpretation of the Dutch policy towards pupils with SEN at school and classroom level.

The final and official interpretation was drawn by university researchers after the research cycle was completed. In fact the results—and in many ways the features of the research procedures—became manifest in the process of publication of the results (Montesano Montessori et al. 2011; Montesano Montessori and Ponte 2012). Unfortunately, it was not possible to involve the participant researchers in this process. Especially the latter publication formulates the results of this research in four particular fields: a critical revision of the official policy from a medical to an inclusive perspective, the theoretical development of the theory of Young, the selection and further elaboration of the theory of Harvey, and an innovative process in the classroom.

Reflections on Interpretation in Educational Research

In this chapter we described ways in which interpretation was a process which took place in each of the three research stages. However, though it is certainly true that interpretation occurred in a layered way, perhaps not even too surprising in a

research that was set up in order to go through different layers, a series of problems emerged. How exactly do we define interpretation? While describing the process for the purposes of this chapter, it became clear that interpretation in this research has meant several mental and social activities, such as *seeing* or *considering* or *further understanding*, *a collective process of making sense of*. It has also meant a *reinterpretation* of the theory of Harvey which, in any case, was recontextualized, since he never connected this model to social justice. It also implied the *reinterpretation* by the teachers of their own role and position. In a hermeneutic process such as this, what is the difference between an interpretation and a reinterpretation? Some future research may be necessary to flesh this out. Does one thing lead to the other? In other words: did the “further understanding” lead to rethinking social role and position in the classroom and acting on that? How does this process of interpretation relate to more linear research strategies?

To further complicate matters, in fact each and every publication on this topic has been an example of a reinterpretation of the research process. Surprisingly, this was the case with the two official publications of the research itself (Montesano Montessori et al. 2011; Montesano Montessori and Ponte 2012). In the first article, for instance, it was only when writing it up and after requests of the reviewers to specify certain aspects of the research that it became clear to us that we had to distinguish a general and a specific orientation stage, whereas we had considered it a uniform orientation stage during the process itself. When writing the second article, it turned out to be necessary to clarify the issue of the shift of roles and the stratified dilemmas in order to convincingly describe the research results in four different fields. As a side product of this research and as a result of the aspect of the integration of critical theory, CDA and PAR, this research has been recontextualized to the field of management (Edward and Montesano Montessori 2011).

The preparation of this particular chapter set interpretation center stage. In order to fully explain the stratified character of the research inspired by critical theory—as well as being inspired by increased research experience after this particular project—it seemed necessary to explicitly describe our research position.

Last but not least, it was only in this particular rewriting of the project for this chapter that we recognized, for the first time, that we had achieved a very clear CDA result per se. So far we believed that we had used CDA mainly as a methodological approach which led to a layered research design and an abductive research strategy. Since the orientation of this chapter forced us to rethink the research in terms of interpretation, we became aware that we obtained a CDA result proper in terms of revealing the implicit medical-deficit approach of the official policy and suggesting a new perspective in the direction of the empowerment of the pupils. We definitely demonstrated that the belief that teachers are part of the problem and should not be taken into account in the research is unfounded. When given a chance, teachers and student teachers are extremely capable of investigating their social practice, the context in which it is embedded, and, above all, their own position and responsibility within that practice. Furthermore they showed the world that they are willing to critically address this position and change it when this is meaningful to them.

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2.4 Discourses of Intercultural Communication and Education

Karin Zotzmann

Introduction

Research on intercultural communication is characterized by great theoretical and methodological heterogeneity which is not surprising given the “broadness” or “fuzziness” (Blommaert 1998) of the topic. Despite these differences, a common denominator seems to be that “phenomena of cultural differences [are] ‘somehow’ meaningful for the communication process” (Otten and Geppert 2009). It is assumed that communication is intrinsically bound up with cultural presuppositions, values, and identities and that these can potentially lead to misunderstandings, stereotypes, and prejudices. Overcoming the ills of ethnocentrism in particular—the idea that one’s norms, values, and forms of being, acting, and relating are universally valid and superior to those of others—is one of the principal goals of intercultural education. One of the main methods to achieve this is to increase knowledge about other perspectives and to generate awareness about similarities and differences between people who do not, or only partly, share a common sociocultural and linguistic background. Openness, flexibility, tolerance, and empathy are essential objectives, and so are self-reflection and ultimately relativization of taken-for-granted assumptions.

This is however as far as commonality reaches. A closer look at individual approaches brings to light the diversity of, and the tensions between, theoretical stances towards the nature of intercultural communication and concomitant recommendations for intercultural education. The present chapter starts from the assumption that academic discourses about intercultural education do not merely discover, describe, and analyze intercultural communicative practices that already exist in an

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objective manner, but actively co-construct them (Risager 2010). Academic authors as well as teachers, consultants, and trainers significantly shape ideas and practices of intercultural interaction by providing cognitive and discursive resources for thinking about, relating to, and communicating with others. Taking this discursive mediation of social scientific knowledge as a point of departure, the discourses of intercultural education are understood to be interpretive and evaluative moments that require a heightened reflexivity towards the role of language in the constitution of reality and the construction of knowledge:

... we should not only worry about intercultural communication per se, but also about the way in which it is perceived, interpreted, construed, and structured by all kinds of people, including ourselves. In short, we should be committed to investigating the ideologies surrounding intercultural communication. (Blommaert 1995, p. 5, see also Tochon and Cendel 2009; Holliday 2011)

The chapter will present a meta-analysis of approaches to intercultural communication and education. That is, it will provide an “interpretation of interpretation” (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000). It will discuss three different frameworks developed in the field: a modernist and essentialist view, a first postmodern and also distinctly postcolonial perspective, and a second postmodern account, this time focusing on intercultural communication through English as a lingua franca. By comparing research on intercultural communication from these different standpoints, I will show how interpretation impacts upon the entire process, from theoretical choices over the identification of social domains and contexts as relevant for the extrapolation of data to the selection of methodological instruments, the analysis of the data, and the promotion of particular pedagogic interventions on the basis of the results obtained. Therefore, the overall objective of this chapter is not to provide an overview of major strands of current research in the field—this would be impossible in the face of the diversity of research that exists and disciplines that are drawn upon—but to demonstrate that differences between views on intercultural communication can be traced back to decisions on five distinct but interrelated levels: *the theoretical–conceptual*, *the methodological*, *the political–normative*, and *the epistemological–ontological*. Connected but secondary to choices on these planes are *generalizations and pedagogical recommendations* drawn from empirical findings. Such a matrix, it is argued, allows a systematic comparison which is a precondition for identifying compatibilities and incompatibilities and fostering dialogue across frameworks. Additionally, it can guide researchers, educators and students to a systematic reflexivity and scrutiny of assumptions underlying academic and educational practices, which in turn is demanded by the very subject of intercultural education itself.

Previous overviews of the variety of research on intercultural communication and education have so far concentrated either on common themes (Landis et al. 2006), contributing disciplines (Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey 2007), or on theoretical–conceptual components, in particular the notion of *culture* (Risager 2007; Holliday 2011; Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009) and *identity* (Kim 1988). Both concepts are not only essential to the field as they underlie and shape the view on the nature of intercultural communication, but they are also rather

vague and can be employed in different, often even contradictory ways (Bauman 1999). Hence, this is a good starting point for a comparative analysis. Blommaert (1998), quoted above, expands this discussion by emphasizing the political–ideological implications of different concepts of culture. Otten and Geppert (2009) provide a “heuristic frame to manoeuvre through a rapidly expanding ‘galaxy’ of research on intercultural communication.” In contrast to Blommaert, their point of departure is less political and more focused on core components of academic research. Similar to the normal process of quality control through peer review, they discuss and evaluate the coherence of empirical studies according to three dimensions: the theoretical assumptions that underlie the concept of culture; the basic research design, modes of analysis, and reflexivity; and the generalizations drawn from the empirical findings.

The matrix proposed in this context not only shares an acknowledgement of the importance of each of these dimensions with previous meta-analyses but also combines, systematizes, and extends them. While theoretical and methodological choices undoubtedly shape research on intercultural communication and pedagogic recommendations, the latter two, the political–normative and the epistemological–ontological level, need further justification. The political–normative level is relevant as research on intercultural communication and intercultural education is almost always justified by references to social change, often subsumed under the buzzword of “globalization.” Most authors seem to agree that educational institutions have to respond in one way or another to the interweaving of cultural, economic, technological, and other processes on an international plane, in order to prepare students for the exigencies of a rapidly changing and interconnected world (Risager 2010). Intercultural competencies, however defined, have therefore become essential to many educational programs, either as an integrated part of existing modules, stand-alone units, or entire degree programs. But while diagnoses of socioeconomic change are decisive for recommendations of particular pedagogical interventions, the actual nature, causality, and effects of “globalization” are highly contested and hotly debated. In addition to this, specific diagnoses of contemporary social change are generally linked to a prognosis; that is, an image of a potential future society and its desirability. In this sense, the application of discourses of globalization is normative presupposing “a discernible difference between what ought to be and what is” (Sayer 2004, p. 5). In the case of pedagogy, references to and narratives of internationalization processes are employed to justify specific content areas, methods, and curricula which do not only shape education itself but also feed back into wider perceptions and dynamics of the social transformation in question (Pennycook 1994, p. 225). It is in this engagement with the project of social change that the field of intercultural education is, according to Young (1996, p. 20), “a political-ethical act which is not independent of history but occurs in the full blood of history’s law, bound by its urgency, and specifically, by the urgency of our current, global problems.” In order to capture differences between approaches, the discourse of globalization or internationalization that authors draw upon—and the particular goals and objectives intercultural competencies are related to and designed for—needs to be analyzed.

Inexorably linked to the political–normative views on social change are the interests behind particular forms of research and the concomitant pedagogical recommendations. In order to capture this epistemological–ontological component, I will draw upon Habermas (1971, 1987), who departs from the assumption that there is no such thing as pure knowledge; instead the creation of knowledge is always motivated. Habermas differentiates between three kinds of generic interests that can drive and influence the creation of knowledge: *technical*, *practical*, and *emancipatory*. The *technical* interest stems from the need to manipulate and control the environment and is often accompanied by empirical investigations founded on objectivist and positivist assumptions. Whereas this form of instrumental rationality dominates the natural sciences, knowledge creation in the social sciences and humanities usually does not aim for efficient control, given that human behavior is complex and necessarily mediated by language and the self-understanding of individuals. Knowledge about human interaction and communication is therefore interpretative and oriented towards *practical* understanding. *Emancipatory* interest, in contrast, engages critically with ideologies, taken-for-granted assumptions, and power relations and ultimately aims for liberation, social transformation and alternative ways of living that enhance human flourishing. Self-reflection and reflection upon the sociocultural factors that influence one’s own ways of thinking, being, and acting are essential to this kind of knowledge (Table 1).

To capture the choices at each of the five levels described above, the three different frameworks on intercultural communication and education will be subjected to the following five questions:

Theoretical–conceptual level:

- **How is the key concept of *culture* theorized?**

Methodological level:

- **How is the research designed and conducted?**

Political–normative level:

- **How is “globalization” (or any other internationalization process) represented?**

Epistemological–ontological level:

- **Which research interests drive the respective study?**

Table 1 Habermas’ three types of knowledge

Type of human interest/knowledge	Research methods
Technical: control and manipulation (causal explanation)	Positivist sciences, empirical–analytical methods
Practical: interpretation and understanding	Interpretive and hermeneutic methods
Emancipatory: reflection, critique, and liberation	Critical social sciences

Generalizations and recommendations:

- **What generalizations and pedagogical recommendations are drawn from empirical findings?**

The five analytical meta-criteria are distinct but closely interrelated. A specific epistemological–ontological stance, for example, tends to influence conceptual choices and pedagogic recommendations. A study that aims for critical reflection will thus in all probability choose a more complex notion of culture than one that aims for a practical and efficient “handling” of intercultural encounters, and both will come to different conclusions as to what intercultural education should look like. Similarly, particular views on the political–normative level will impact upon the design of the study: A researcher who is convinced that globalization generates increased information flow and communication between people who come from geographically distant places and sociocultural backgrounds will probably select a social domain for investigation where communication is intensified and not restricted. As a result, decisions on all five levels work together to generate a specific discourse of interculturality, although the weighting and impact of these nodal points might differ across studies.

In order to categorize adequately the respective view on culture and globalization adopted by each author, a range of available options will be outlined in section “[Levels of Interpretation](#).” The aim here is not and cannot be to cover the whole spectrum of theoretical standpoints on either one of these concepts, as they are endorsed by different disciplines and debated among an infinite number of authors in an equally uncountable number of publications. The discussion will therefore be confined to some of the most crucial arguments in current debates. In the first instance however, a brief overview of the emergence of the field of intercultural communication will clarify the historical context of this kind of knowledge production as well as its core terminology.

Historical Overview of the Emergence and Diversity of the Academic Field of Intercultural Communication and Education

The institutional establishment of academic fields or disciplines is a complex and uneven process. With this in mind, I will attempt to give a meaningful but unavoidably partial account of the historical and political factors that have helped to bring about and shape the institutionalization of intercultural communication and education as a field of research and subject area at university level.

It is generally agreed that the field first emerged in the USA (Dahl 1995; Leeds-Hurwitz 1990; Schweitzer 1994; Kenji 1985; Kohls and Brussow 1995). In this prototypical context of extensive immigration and ethnic diversity issues arising from the coexistence of different cultural groups gained, albeit to a modest degree, academic attention as early as the 1930s. Yet the decisive historical and political constellation that brought intercultural issues to the attention of politicians,

and a wider range of academics and funding bodies, took place in the international order of the post-World War II era (Dahl 1995; Hart 1999; Brislin and Yoshida 1994). As the US emerged as one of the two superpowers of the Cold War and began to exert an unprecedented political and economic influence throughout the world, a new set of competencies for politicians, army personnel, and business people was required, in particular a knowledge of foreign languages and cultures. Intercultural communication, education, and training turned into a topic of national interest and therefore benefitted from funding and institutional support.

In the 1960s, cross-cultural or intercultural communication had become a recognized subject at universities, a development that was accompanied in the 1970s by the foundation of societies and academic journals, the publication of textbooks, and the organization of specialized conferences. By the 1980s two hundred US universities offered undergraduate courses in intercultural communication, 50 offered master's degrees, and an estimated 20 more offered programs at the doctoral level (Wasilewski 1999). This institutional growth mirrored growing concerns over the "financial costs of employee turnover in overseas assignments" (Dahl 1995, p. 30; Kramsch 1991; Schweitzer 1998) and even more importantly over the stagnation of the US and Western European economy after the oil crisis in the late 1970s. Research into Asian cultures, organization structure, and management styles abounded in the face of the success of East Asian economies, and foreign languages, cultural knowledge, and intercultural competencies were again "viewed as a solution to the nation's problems" (Kramsch 1991, p. 220). In the 1980s and 1990s the USA and the world witnessed the phenomenon of the globalization of the economy. Businesses were "going international" to an unprecedented degree in order to expand their market reach and enhance their competitiveness and profitability (Paige and Martin 1996, p. 42).

Although both directions of intercultural research, education and training—that is, the international/external and the intranational/internal—are conceptually linked and influence each other, they are also institutionally and practically separated and display different, sometimes contesting, pedagogical approaches. This equally applies to the institutional establishment in Western Europe, where the topic of intercultural communication and education initially arose in response to the growing cultural plurality *inside* the nation state through labor immigration from Southern to Northern European countries in the 1960s. Accommodating and integrating people from diverse backgrounds into the labor, educational and social system became an urgent task and is still a highly contested battlefield between conservatives who insist on an alleged cultural homogeneity of nation states and those who point to the evident multicultural reality of Europe. From the second half of the 1980s onwards, intercultural issues began to be discussed in relation to international (business) scenarios and processes, a debate that was strongly influenced by the already institutionalized US-American academic field. Here again, both areas—the *intranational* and the *international*—have partly developed alongside each other, but are institutionally separated with little dialogue or academic exchange.

Parallel to the diversity of theoretical stances towards the nature of intercultural communication, the terms which are used to designate the field or discipline also

differ. Two main strands, the *cross-cultural* and the *intercultural* approach, can be identified. The first is commonly based on large-scale and often comparative empirical studies about intra-cultural patterns, values, and attitudes. On the basis of their findings, researchers attempt to predict the possible difficulties and potential misunderstandings that can occur when people from different cultural backgrounds meet. Authors writing from an *intercultural* perspective hold onto the idea that individuals often enter interactions with unconscious and taken-for-granted assumptions, expectations, and values. In contrast to cross-cultural studies, though, individuals and their interaction in concrete situations are regarded as unique and outcomes as ultimately unpredictable. As Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 125) succinctly describe it: “Cultures do not talk to each other, individuals do.” Some authors (see, e.g., Kumaravadivelu 2002) might even reject the term intercultural, as the prefix “inter” appears to imply and demarcate some kind of space between two entities—“us” and “them”—each with their own fixed boundaries and essential qualities.

The choices of terminology not only depend upon different theoretical perspectives but also reflect the institutional context the term is used in. “Intercultural education,” for instance, tends to be employed by schools and universities, whereas the notion of “intercultural communication” and “intercultural training” is mostly related to research about and preparation of professionals who already work in international contexts or students who aim to do so. “Intercultural language education” draws attention to the fact that language is one of the most important cultural resources, and that learning another language has to go along with intercultural learning. For the purpose of the present chapter, I will use the term “intercultural communication” whenever I refer to the investigation of intercultural encounters, however defined, and “intercultural education” when intercultural learning becomes an intentional educational goal.

Levels of Interpretation

The Theoretical–Conceptual Level: Different Perspectives on Culture

Culture, in the most general sense, sets humans apart from other beings in the natural world. It designates the capacity for meaning-making processes through the use of semiotic systems such as language (Ray and Sayer 1999, p. 5). On an equally general level, the term addresses the relationship between the individual and larger social entities. Whereas many authors would agree on the definition of culture in the singular, the plural *cultures* is a platform for heated debate as it brings into focus culture, society, and the nation state (Swingewood 1998). The use of the plural has traditionally been associated with the work of the German romantic philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) who regarded culture as the shared

worldview, values, and way of life of the members of one nation, a perspective that has been accused of overemphasizing homogeneity and consensus. Indeed, Herder's ideas are inexorably linked with the historical phase of nation building and the concomitant political imperative for its citizens to identify with "the nation." Cultures and national languages were thought to overlap. They were conceptualized as containers including national citizens and excluding foreigners, which almost automatically entailed a positive evaluation of one's "in-group," and by implication a view of "others" as not only being different but also deficient. Thus the symbolic, political, and linguistic homogenization and unification of the modern state was accompanied by a variety of practices and policies to suppress differences, marginalize, exclude, and even persecute and kill others (Bauman 1999).

This notion of culture has obviously been challenged on a variety of grounds. Many authors would agree that such a view homogenizes otherwise diverse people and essentializes alleged qualities of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991). Instead, culture and identity should be understood as always multiple, hybrid, and co-constructed. Street (1993, p. 23), for instance, argues that culture should be defined not in terms of what it supposedly *is*, but by what it *does*: namely, actively constructing meaning. "The job of studying culture is not of finding and then accepting its definitions but of discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances and for what reasons." This idea—that every account of culture has to be seen as a resource in itself in the ongoing signifying process—is basic to many postmodern and poststructuralist accounts which try to break down binaries of the "self" versus the "other" and the "home culture" versus the "foreign culture." Culture and identity are seen here as in a constant state of flux and remaking. The argument is often justified with reference to contemporary changes that brought about an increase in the transcultural flow of people, ideas and ideology, information, technology, and finance, and a concomitant hybridization and mixing of cultures and languages. Globalization supposedly diminishes the force of the nation state through increasing international economic and political interdependence, mobility and transport, constantly developing communication and information technologies, the global reach of the Internet and cultural industries, and so on. Today many people cross borders and are—either voluntarily or by force—familiar with living in two or more nation states. They also identify with different communities and will in turn be influenced by these memberships (Dupré 2001, p. 108). Modern states therefore need to go beyond nation-based identifications and politics and embrace hybridity, heterogeneity, and difference (Parekh 2000).

While I fully agree with the main thrust of these perspectives, I nevertheless want to draw attention to the fact that such an understanding of culture as fluid and procedural leaves one of the most pressing questions open, namely, what kind of meanings become prevalent in a particular interaction and for what kind of reasons. A fruitful perspective is offered by Sealey and Carter (2004, p. 139) who argue from critical realist perspective and distinguish between the "ideational elements of knowledge, belief and norms" accessible to a group of people (society)—the cultural system, the roles and relationships or social structures instantiated by

social practices—and the people with the power actually to do things in the world (human agents). Culture in this perspective is different from but strongly related to social practices which it orders and shapes (and vice versa). Both are mediated by self-reflexive individual agents who are nevertheless enabled or constrained by particular contexts. According to Parekh (2000, p. 145), “[b]eliefs are necessarily general, even vague and amenable to different interpretations, whereas practices which are meant to regulate human conduct and social relations are fairly determinate and concrete.” Furthermore, “while beliefs are not easy to discover and enforce, conformity to practices is easily ascertainable and enforceable.” Social practices are thus cultural but at the same time different from beliefs and subject to their own logic, characteristics, and patterns of change. Institutions and their concomitant practices can, for instance, be changed for political and other reasons without people believing in their merit which in turn might make these structural changes unsuccessful. In contrast to strong poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives which emphasize the relative free interplay of cultural resources, this view allows us to relate cultural elements to structure, institutions, and relations of power and hence to put

... semiotic processes into context. This means locating them within their necessary dialectical relations with persons (hence minds, intentions, desires, bodies), social relations, and the material world—locating them within the practical engagement of embodied and socially organised persons with the material world. (Fairclough et al. 2001, p. 7)

The Political–Normative Level: The Discourse of Globalization

Globalization has become a key concept for politics as well as academia since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the expansion of the capitalist market system into the so-called transition economies of Middle and Eastern Europe and Asia (Held and McGrew 2002, p. 2). *Globalization* has since become a meta-narrative for contemporary socioeconomic changes, mostly referring to the alleged integration of the world into a single market and the withering away of nation states and their influence. In its broadest sense it includes all economic, political, cultural, or environmental processes that take place beyond the confines of the nation state. As stated earlier however, the actual causes, nature, consequences, and even existence of the phenomenon are highly contested. In order to structure this extreme heterogeneous field of discourses, I will draw on Held and McGrew’s (2002) categorization of three main views: *globalists*, *skeptics*, and *transformationists/moderates*, and briefly describe their view in relation to the actual domain the changes are supposed to take place in, that is, the *economy*, the *state*, and *culture*. I follow Marcussen (2000, see also Shaw 1997; Block 1994) who argues that the relationship between the state and the economy is inseparable. I therefore combine them into the *political–economic* domain. The classification groups together authors and perspectives according to the assessment of the causes and

dynamics of globalization, not according to the normative evaluation of these processes. Overall, the categories represent ideal or pure types and cannot account for overlaps or mixtures.

Globalists argue for a qualitatively new phase in either the history of capitalism or Western civilization, driven and supported by, for example, substantive developments in communication technologies (Castells 2000). The assumed changes can be evaluated positively as well as negatively. For instance, neoliberals celebrate economic globalization, claiming that eventually all participants in this process will gain through the spread of the market forces. Ohmae (1990), as one of the most famous proponents of this view, sees nation states as becoming increasingly irrelevant due to changes in patterns of trade, finance, and governance. A majority of those in line with the antiglobalization movement would agree with the main tenets of this diagnosis and view globalization as a quasi self-realizing process that is occurring while nation states are eroding. However, they evaluate this process rather negatively. For them, the effects of an unfettered capitalist system on a global scale are adverse to equality, democracy, and ecology.

Cultural globalists hold that on the basis of profound economic and political changes, we will sooner or later inhabit a homogenized, uniform world as not only products and services but also particular cultural practices and values are distributed worldwide. This end state, often metaphorically referred to as a *global village* (after McLuhan 1962), seems to be welcomed only by few authors. Others fear a flattening out of cultural differences that will lead to the complete loss of diversity (Bourdieu 1998; Barber 1995) or give rise to the reaffirmation of traditional values and ethnic, national, or religious identities (Nida-Rümelin 2002; Castells 2000). This in turn can lead to hostility towards external influences, reactionary politics, and fundamentalism, which then again feed into social conflict.

Skeptics doubt that a qualitative change in the international economic and political order, as the term *globalization* seems to imply, has or is taking place. Hirst and Thompson (1996), for example, draw on an avalanche of longitudinal data in order to support their claim that international trade is no more intense than at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some authors might acknowledge that some changes are underway, but refute attempts at mono-causal explanation as suggested by the term “globalization.” *Skeptics* in the cultural domain would hold that there is either no change which could be attributed to something like globalization (and there is therefore no effect on culture) or that shifts in the economic, political, and social spheres do not entail alteration in the cultural domain.

Transformationists/moderates, like many *skeptics*, allow for the contingency of current socioeconomic processes and argue that although there are profound changes underway the outcomes are still highly contested and uncertain (Fairclough and Thomas 2004; Jessop 1999). The idea that globalization is an agentless, self-realizing process is refuted and political agency and responsibility emphasized. Authors in this category differ as to how these changes are accounted for. Harvey (1996), for instance, speaks of a *time space* compression in global capitalism, by which he means not only the speeding up of the production and distribution of goods and services but also an intensified interaction between global cities and the

further marginalization of rural areas. In terms of culture, this perspective strongly opposes views of globalization as the imposition of cultural goods, values, and practices. Tomlinson (1991), for instance, argues that the global is always locally appropriated, transformed, or even resisted. Giddens (1991) argues along similar lines and emphasizes the positive and liberating aspects of the global–local interaction, in particular the shift towards a post-traditional, reflexive, cosmopolitan identity and culture. To him, traditional national views of culture and identity have often generated discrimination, suffering, and violence.

The table below shows the range of possible stances (globalist, skeptic, and transformationist/moderate) available to authors who legitimate intercultural education through reference to globalization, or more generally through current political, socioeconomic, and cultural changes at the global–local nexus. This taxonomy allows us not only to systematically identify the particular perspective adopted by a given author, but can likewise indicate silences about potentially relevant issues (Table 2).

Each of the three approaches to intercultural communication and education that will be discussed in the following sections represents *one* example of a particular discourse of interculturality: a modernist and essentialist view, a first postmodern and also distinctly postcolonial perspective, and a second postmodern account, this time focusing on intercultural communication through English as a lingua franca. Inside these broad philosophical outlooks, there is obviously an infinite number of variations and combinations, as well as debate and contestation. As a matter of fact, the examples were randomly chosen, and although the work of individual authors will be discussed, the purpose—in the limited space available in this chapter—is not to give a comprehensive account of individual research programs or conceptual development over time, nor is it an evaluation of the robustness of

Table 2 Taxonomy of perspectives on “globalization” (After Held and McGrew 2002)

	Economy–state	Culture
Globalists	Globalization is strong and new. There are different driving forces, e.g., transnational companies (TNCs), innovation in communication technology, international financial markets, etc.	Cultures are becoming more homogeneous
	(+) This development is positive and desirable, state sovereignty is lost	(+) National backwardness will be overcome
	(–) This development is negative and undesirable, state sovereignty is hollowed out by supranational organizations, international financial markets, and TNCs	(–) Multicultural diversity is being flattened out
Skeptics	Nothing fundamental has changed, only tendencies might have intensified	The cultural domain is not affected or only insignificantly
Moderates	Some changes might have taken place. In general, however, these processes are complex and outcomes still uncertain and contested	Global influences are locally appropriated and changed in the process (“glocalization”)

particular research designs or the feasibility of specific methods of data collection and analysis. Instead, the approaches will exemplify the diversity of views that exist in the field, the differences between them, and the need for a matrix that allows us to compare them systematically and reflect upon the choices that were made on different levels.

Three Approaches to Intercultural Communication and Education

Case 1: A Modernist and Essentialist Perspective

Writing about intercultural education is impossible without reference to the work of Geert Hofstede who is one of the most widely read and influential authors in the field. His empirical study of cultural differences has greatly contributed to the popularization of the concept of inter- or cross-cultural education and training, although it has been criticized from a wide variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. In the present context Hofstede's work is significant not only for the impact it has had but also for its quantitative nature. The author aimed to prove with empirical "hard" data the causal influence of culture on individuals. The objective of this analysis is hence to show that "interpretive" does not equal "qualitative" but that "[a]ll research is interpretive. It is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p. 33).

In order to describe cultural differences and their impact upon communicative behavior, Hofstede (1991) draws upon the anthropological work of Kluckholm and Strodtbeck (1961) who compared cultures along the so-called value orientations. Cultures are assumed to solve a limited number of universal problems for societies, for example, how to define human nature, how to conceptualize time, how to regulate interpersonal relations, and so on. According to Hofstede, different national cultures provide different understandings of and responses to these questions and generate specific norms and values that orient members of society to behave in an acceptable way in relation to these challenges. The author claims that there are five of these specific solutions or "cultural dimensions," each consisting of a cluster of correlating phenomena:

- *Masculinity/Femininity*: This dimension refers to the "social" versus the "ego orientation" of members of a society (Hofstede 1994, p. 3) and is based on generalized gender roles: More socially oriented behaviors are associated with the traditional role of women and competitiveness and assertiveness with men.
- *Power Distance*: According to the author, cultures endorse and accept inequality and dependence in social relations to different degrees.

- *Uncertainty Avoidance* designates the degree to which members of a society are comfortable with, or afraid of, ambivalent and unstructured situations and to what extent they control and express their emotions.
- *Individualism/Collectivism* identifies degrees of integration of individuals into groups. A strong integration allegedly entails the prevalence of group interests over the interest of individuals (collectivism), a weak integration has the opposite effect.
- *Long-Term/Short-Term Orientation* is associated with thrift and perseverance (long term) as opposed to more immediate concerns with social obligations and face protection (short term).

Methodology

On the basis of this theoretical framework, Hofstede designed a large-scale empirical study about intra-cultural patterns, values, and attitude. He administered 116,000 questionnaires each with over 100 standardized questions about values related to work situations to 72 IBM subsidiaries in 53 different countries from 1967 to 1973. The specific sample allegedly offered the methodological advantage, that all variables apart from culture were held constant. The author claimed that since the participants were employed by the same international company, they therefore shared the same corporate values and professional identity, adhered to the same code of practices, used the same technology, and had similar educational backgrounds, professions, gender (almost exclusively male), and age. Hofstede reasoned that any substantial attitudinal difference to be found could therefore only be attributed to “culture.”

According to McSweeney (2002, pp. 7–8) this argument is tautological: Hofstede assumes first that national cultures influence every aspect of an individual’s behavior and then exempts organizational culture from its influence. He thereby maintains

.... the convenient, but fantastic, assumption that throughout the world members of the same occupation regardless of diverse entry requirements, regulations, social status, structure and number of trade associations or professional bodies each share an identical world-wide occupational culture. (ibid)

It is equally illogical to take a tendency among some employees of a particular company to be representative for the national average since its employees constitute a very specific group with a particular social status and educational background. As a matter of fact, it is the a priori assumption that cultural dimensions exist in the way Hofstede describes them that shaped the analytical tool (the questionnaire) which in turn determined the results (measurable differences between national cultures):

The circularity of Hofstede’s reasoning is evident from the effect of not presupposing national uniformity. Without that supposition there are no valid grounds for treating the miniscule local as representative of the national. Instead there is a huge unbridged

conceptual chasm between the micro-level [...] and the national. To assume national uniformity, as Hofstede does, is not appropriate for a study which purports to have found it. (McSweeney 2002, p. 8)

The fallacious assumptions that went into the design of this quantitative study are accompanied by flaws on the conceptual level.

The Concept of Culture

A number of compelling objections have been raised against Hofstede's notion of culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (1991, p. 5). Supposedly, human beings are socialized into and have internalized this "mental software" specific to their cultural group through different institutions starting from the family through the school to the community and the workplace. By interpreting cultures a priori as overlapping with nation states, the author overemphasizes cultural homogeneity and consensus. Wider political and economic structures, power, contestation, and struggle are excised from the framework and no difference is made between what culture *is* and what it *is not*. As a consequence the term becomes all-embracing and explains everything and nothing at the same time. By portraying people as being determined by national culture, the framework is hence in danger of contributing to the formation and consolidation of stereotypes and prejudices instead of reducing them (Jack and Lorbiecki 1999; Holliday 2011, p. 7).

The fallacious assumptions that went into the design of this empirical study are probably easy to critique and deconstruct. What remains puzzling however is the decision to use a large-scale quantitative instrument in order to study something as unquantifiable as culture. To explain what McSweeney (2002, p. 27) calls the "too great a desire to prove his a priori convictions rather than evaluate the adequacy of his 'findings'" we need to turn to the political–normative assumptions and interests behind this kind of research and the context the framework was designed for.

The Discourse of Globalization

In Hofstede's work globalization is represented as a quasi-autonomous agent in the international economic order. It unfolds naturally, is inevitable and irreversible, and forces economic actors, including states, cultures, companies, and individuals, to adapt or perish. From this market-fundamentalist perspective, local cultures tend to be seen as potential problems and instantiations of backwardness that have to be overcome in order to enhance business success:

Although culture is a 'soft' characteristic, changing it calls for 'hard' measures. *Structural changes* may mean closing departments, opening other departments, merging or splitting activities, or moving people and/or groups geographically. The general rule is that when people are moved as individuals, they will adapt to the culture of their new environment; when people are moved as groups, they will bring their group cultural along. People in

groups have developed, as part of their culture, ways of interacting which are quite stable and difficult to change. Changing them means that all interpersonal relationships have to be renegotiated. However, if new tasks or a new environment force such a renegotiation there is a good chance that *undesirable aspects of the old culture will be cleaned up*. [my emphasis] (Hofstede 1994, p. 201)

The law of the market, i.e., the accumulation of profit, is erected in this *globalist* discourse as the defining standard for all practices (Bourdieu 1998, p. 1). While it is claimed that values and norms are culturally relative, the approach promotes strategic and instrumental rationality as neutral and given, a position that “has a priori secured the correctness of its own position and only gets involved with foreign cultures with the *strategic attitude* of bringing them to reason step by step and in line with the situation” (Steinmann and Scherer 1998, p. 35). The idea that life could be understood in different ways and that intercultural dialogue could be beneficial to the common good is not entertained. Such a stance is obviously highly problematic for any approach to intercultural communication and education because of its lack of empathy, reflexivity, and underlying social-Darwinian assumptions. It puts, as Halsall (2002, p. 76) describes it, “intercultural communication in the position of denying its own *raison d’être*: the respect for every culture as equally valid.”

Research Interest

According to Said (1983) the cultural production of the “other” has to be understood in its specific historical and political contexts and the power relations therein. For the case of cross-cultural studies à la Hofstede, the construction of the “other” constitutes a specific form of “objectifying the other” and thus rendering them controllable: “the impetus for many international and cross-cultural studies is the desire to make accurate outcome predictions based on a given theory in various countries or cultural settings” (Earley and Singh 2000, p. 8). Underlying Hofstede’s framework is a *technical* interest and a concomitant empiricist assumption that culture is a systematically determining cause of behavior that manifests itself in observable, measurable, and quantifiable data. The aim is to decode this (unconscious) set of cultural rules in order to make them manageable and the highly complex context of international business more predictable and profitable. In addition to this, the adoption of an empiricist stance and a quantitative methodology establishes credibility in the respective target readership, managers and other clients, who hold similar beliefs about the nature and purpose of science.

Case 2: A Postmodern, Postcolonial Approach

From a strongly antiessentialist postmodern perspective, Holliday (2010, 2011) emphasizes how individuals co-construct their identities in instances of communication by drawing upon specific discourses. He is particularly interested in the

postcolonial relation between “the West” and “the periphery” and the allegedly neutral, but implicitly biased, categories of “self” and “other,” “us” and “them” it produces.

Methodology

The study under investigation is an exploratory, qualitative study of the relationship between constructions of cultural identity and perceptions of nation (Holliday 2010, p. 165). Twenty-eight interviewees from diverse national backgrounds (European, Asian, Latin American, Arabic, and African) were invited to speak about the complexity of the cultural realities in which they lived. The participants were selected according to two criteria: They had to represent a variety of nationalities and should have engaged consciously with issues of culture because of experiences with crossing cultural boundaries of one type or another. The group was a convenience sample as the researcher knew all participants personally which explains why 18 interviewees were academics, of whom 14 were applied linguists. It is thus very unlikely that this selection is representative of the wider population, as the author admits himself: “A probable weakness of the study is that the data may have been skewed by the interviewees being all middle class, often academics, expert users of English and personally known to me” (ibid, p. 166). Participants were invited to respond via e-mail to two questions: (1) What are the major features of your cultural identity? (2) What role does nation play in this? Holliday tried to be as careful and noninterventionist as possible by bracketing off his own assumptions, being attentive to the themes that emerge from the data itself and to cross-check his interpretation with the respondents. On the basis of his analysis, Holliday concludes that in the first instance, his interviewees did not appear to use the concepts “Western” and “non-Western.” Secondly, “nation” as a concept was important to the participants but more as an external force than a source of identification. Instead, participants displayed changing identities and alignments with a variety of communities that crossed national but also ethnic, class, professional, and gender boundaries and displayed fluid and organic cultural trajectories.

The Concept of Culture

Holliday views culture as implicated in power relations and imbued with ideology. In this context he aims to deconstruct biased representations of “self” and “other” that the colonial “center” produces and that, according to the author, serve particular interests by the dominant West. The question, however, is whether tying systems of thought and interest to social groups like “the West” does not constitute another form of neo-essentialist polarization of in-group versus out-group. Holliday could thus be subjected to the same criticism as Said who introduced the concept of “Orientalism” in the first place, namely, of homogenizing and objectifying the rather diffuse

“Occident” by presenting “it” as an entity with a single voice, a monolithic discourse, and a homogeneous interest to subjugate “the other” (Mills 1997, p. 119).

On a more general level, postmodernist accounts of intercultural communication are less interested in the cultural aspect and more in the “inter” understood here as the discursively mediated interaction between people (Piller 2011). With reference to Bauman’s (2000) concept of “liquid modernity” Dervin even calls this the “liquid” approach to interculturality as opposed to “solid” essentialist views that overemphasize the durability of cultural characteristics and dispositions. “Liquifying” the nexus between language, identity, discourse, and culture has however the disadvantage that there is little conceptual clarity about how linguistic, cultural, and symbolic resources are distributed. This is important as privileged groups not only enjoy access to higher valued goods and services, they also have a greater say in “which characteristics to use to categorize and rank people” (Goodman 2011, p. 5). Evaluations and (mis)representations of others hence reflect not only cultural but also socioeconomic and sometimes even legal differences and inequalities, as Blommaert (1998) points out in his discussion of the role of context in intercultural communication:

It makes a world of difference whether someone talks to the police or to a co-worker, in a formal and administrative setting or in a loose, informal chat. It also makes a world of difference whether the ‘ethnically marked’ interlocutor (e.g. a Pakistani man in London) is the dominant party in an interaction, or the dominated party. For instance, whether the Pakistani man is the one who needs something from someone else, or vice versa. And also, what makes a world of difference is the larger context of interethnic relations in an area, a city, a community, at a particular historical point in time. It is this larger context that accounts for aspects in intercultural communication such as racism, stereotypes, cultural schemata and so on. It is immensely relevant to realize that most of what we call intercultural communication occurs in an urban context, between people who are multilingual, and with socio-historical dimensions of immigration, labor relations involving immigrant workers in particular roles, ethnic antagonism and stereotyping and so on. If ‘cultures meet’, they usually do so under rather grim socioeconomic circumstances.

Even though Holliday expresses his concern about the generalizability of his findings given that his participants came from a highly privileged group, he does not provide an explanation of how context and structural preconditions enable or constrain identification and interaction at the micro level.

The Discourse of Globalization

From Holliday’s postmodern and postcolonial perspective, globalization is presented as a continuation of colonialization and imperialism. He (2010, p. 165) aligns himself with cosmopolitan sociologists who claim that

... a methodological nationalism, borne from nineteenth century European nationalism, has imposed false boundaries on a cultural complexity which has become apparent in recent trends in globalisation (e.g. Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Schudson, 1994). At the more critical end of this thinking, cosmopolitanism and globalisation themselves are accused of constructing images of culture which serve centre-western commercial interest within an unequal world. (Bhabha 1994; Hall 1991)

Dirlik (1994, p. 344) argues that in spite of their “insistence on historicity and difference,” postcolonial authors present colonialist thinking as ahistorical and universal. While colonial relations are regarded as still persisting alongside neocolonial reconfigurations, the transformations that take place internationally on socioeconomic and political levels have, as the same author argues, re-organized earlier global relations.

The Research Interest

Holliday’s research interest is, above all, *critical*, as he engages in depth with unjust representations of others. The author speaks of a “moral imperative” to ensure fair treatment as well as “fair labeling” and to “refrain from Othering” (Holliday 2009, pp. xii–xiii). In order to do justice to the complexity and fluidity of identities, the author calls for critical cultural awareness, critical cosmopolitanism, and the ability to deconstruct (neo)essentialist and hence unjust discourses and representations of “self” and the “other.”

Case 3: Intercultural Communication Through English as a Lingua Franca

The majority of people who use English today are non-native speakers who communicate with other non-native and native speakers in an infinite variety of contexts (Graddol 1997, p. 10). The motivation for research into the particularities of communication through English as a lingua franca (ELF) is thus clearly linked to and motivated by demographic developments and internationalization processes. Although studies on intercultural phenomena through ELF again differ according to the philosophical perspectives adopted, there seems to be an agreement that in the context of the ELF communication, “the nation state view of language varieties and speech communities no longer suffices” (Jenkins et al. 2011, p. 297). In such interactions, it is argued, there is no need to speak an alleged “standard” variety of English, comply with a native speaker “norm,” or dispose of a particular sociocultural knowledge as long as individuals are intelligible. What is important instead is the communicative ability to negotiate meaning with other speakers who belong to different linguacultural communities. This does not mean that ELF communication is regarded as culturally neutral, but rather that its speakers appropriate it and articulate their identities through it in different ways (Baker 2011). Communication through ELF is interpreted as hybrid and fluid, “continually renewed,” and “co-operatively modified” (Jenkins et al. 2011, p. 303). Intercultural competence from this perspective means that learners move beyond cultural stereotypes, develop a sense of belonging to the international community, become

aware of the hybridity and fluidity inherent to all communication, and acquire “the pragmatic skills required to adapt one’s English use to the demands of the current communicative situation” (ibid, p. 301).

Methodology

Approaches to intercultural communication informed by an ELF perspective usually include an investigation into the empirical realities of native and nonnative speaker communication (see, e.g., Cogo 2012; Cogo and Dewey 2006). The study (Baker 2011) under consideration however presents a model of intercultural awareness and employs the data only to illustrate its usefulness for understanding intercultural communication through English. The data originated in an ethnographic study conducted in a higher education institute in Thailand, a country where English is the de facto second language used to communicate with others in a variety of, for instance, commercial or academic contexts (ibid, p. 200). Similarly to the study by Holliday, the site and participants were selected on the basis of the privileged access the researcher enjoyed. Baker describes himself as “a participant observer” (ibid, p. 206) as he worked as a visiting lecturer at the institution during the fieldwork. The participants were seven fourth-year undergraduates majoring in English with different proficiency levels in English and experiences abroad. While appreciating the advantages of such an “emic” or insider perspective, the author introduces “a degree of objectivity and reflexivity” (ibid) through a number of techniques such as an extended period of fieldwork, triangulation of data sources, peer and member checks, contradictory cases, thick description, a research journal, and an audit trail. The actual data presented are semi-structured interviews with each of the participants and examples of intercultural communication (a mixture of focus group-style discussions and more naturalistic informal conversations between Thai English speakers and other “nonnative speakers” and “native speakers” of English). The extracts exemplify each level of intercultural awareness of the proposed model: In the first conversation, participants explain their own culturally based perspectives, in the second they compare this perspective with those of other cultures, in the third participants move towards a more “complex” understanding of cultures as fluid and relative, and the fourth extract shows how participants discuss mediation, adaptation, and negotiation in intercultural communication. On the basis of the findings about the way these speakers perceive, experience, and enact the relationship between culture and language, recommendations for intercultural education, i.e., the types of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that need to be developed to engage in ELF communication, are put forth.

The Concept of Culture

Research in Global Englishes generally rejects static models of language and culture and emphasizes the performative character of meaning-making processes. The account of culture is in this, as in many other ELF studies (for a selection, see,

for instance, Archibald et al. 2012), based on empirical performance of actual speakers who come from a variety of backgrounds. Baker (ibid, p. 201) explicitly adopts Street's (1993.) view that culture should be defined not in terms of what it supposedly *is* but by what it *does*, namely, actively constructing meaning. From a clearly postmodernist perspective, the author refutes structuralism and the essentialist idea of an "unbreakable bond" between a specific language and a national conception of culture (ibid, p. 199) and attempts to show empirically that culture and language are emergent, dynamic, fluid, and hybrid. "Diversity in performance" is hence not only a key factor in accounts of ELF, as Baird (2012, p. 5) clarifies: ELF interactions are assumed to be intercultural, multilingual, and dynamic before "data is even sought."

Again here it could be argued that even though it is of great importance to attend to the discourses employed by and the identities and self-understanding of individuals, the circumstances they find themselves in and the resources they can draw upon need also to be addressed. Individuals or groups who have less control over the conditions of their lives might lack knowledge or resources recognized as valuable by society and therefore cannot to the same degree choose how to express and realize their identities. Such a perspective, however, requires attention to rather durable power relations and social structures which enable and constrain human beings. Structures are enduring; they persist over time and hence preexist individuals who enter into them and whose activity reproduces or transforms them. The way individuals and structures interact, however, does not have to display regularity; contexts differ and interrelate differently with the particular realization of agency in each specific case.

The Discourse of Globalization

In order to understand the differentiated use of ELF in a global context, researchers commonly draw upon and modify a model developed by Kachru (1985, 1992). It consists of three concentric circles representing "the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages" (Kachru 1985, p. 12). The author calls the countries where English is the primary language of communication (e.g., the UK, the USA, or Canada) the *Inner Circle*. The *Outer* or *Extended Circle* includes countries formerly colonized by England such as India or Singapore where English has become an important second language and is used largely in administration. The third *Expanding Circle* includes those nations, e.g., China, Chile, and Japan, which acknowledge the importance of English as an internationally useful language and therefore include the teaching of English as a foreign language in their curricula.

While the use of ELF has traditionally been associated with the Expanding Circle, it is now regarded to be geographically unbounded and culturally decentered and used by native and nonnative speakers alike in a diverse range of international contexts. In other words, English has turned into a multilingual language (Kachru and Nelson 2006). At the same time research on ELF is conceptually tied closely to

globalization: The widespread use of English is regarded as an effect of and at the same time as contributing to it. Jenkins et al. (2011, p. 303) summarize in their *state of the art in ELF* that “globalization is the process by which the world has become/ is becoming more interconnected, where relations across local, regional, and global contexts become more enmeshed, where flows of language, culture, and people are intensified and accelerated.” In the study under investigation the author states:

Key notions include viewing language and cultural practices as part of a ‘global flow’ which is influenced by and in turn influences more localised linguistic practices (Canagarajah 2005; Pennycook 2007; Risager 2006). Pennycook underscores the tensions in these flows between the centrifugal forces of ‘fluidity’ and the centripetal forces of ‘fixity’ (2007, p. 8). The commensurable idea of liminality (Rampton 1995) also aids in an understanding of the way in which cultural and linguistic practices can take on new forms and meanings in intercultural communication that are not attributable to any one culture; although, with the caveat that ELF users are not seen as borrowing the resources of a particular community or in-between ‘target’ languages and cultures.

This and other similar pronouncements indicate that globalization is viewed from a strong *cultural globalist* perspective emphasizing and celebrating the interconnection, intermeshing and mixing of cultural resources. At the same time, little attention is paid to processes in the political or economic domain. Authors with a more critical perspective on globalization might argue that although transcultural interaction and communication have increased, the hybridization and mixing of cultural elements seems to follow rather *structural* paths (Gorski 2008). The widening gap between rich and poor (OECD 2011) has made some differences more accentuated, while others have diminished; this is most particularly the case for those practices with greater “market value.” National financial “elites,” for instance, are becoming internationally more similar in their forms of consumption, their mobility, access to technologies, and ways of communicating. At the same time, they are increasingly disconnected from other classes of the same nationality who are excluded from such practices and goods (de Rivera 1998, p. 113).

The Research Interest

ELF theorists regard themselves as politically engaged and *critical* as they attempt to offer learners and speakers of English choices they might not have been aware of. They argue that non-native speakers of ELF should be acknowledged in their own right and not subjected to any kind of native speaker “correctness.” On a more general level the normative aims of this approach could be described as the appreciation of diversity and, ultimately, the emancipation from alleged “norms” and “standards.” To this end, data collected for research purposes often serves to illustrate the richness of ELF communication, the equality that seems to predominate the interaction, the choices its speakers exert, the communication strategies they employ, the free flow of ideas and information, the creativity and playfulness that characterizes the collaborative construction of meaning, the apparent unwillingness to categorize others, and the positive attitudes towards nonnativeness

(Cogo 2012; Cogo and Dewey 2006; Baird 2012; Archibald et al. 2012). With its strong focus on empirical data from actual ELF communication and the bottom-up generation of theoretical concepts, ELF research also displays a distinct *practical* interest.

Conclusion

Interpretation generally enters into every stage of the research process, from the theoretical assumptions and philosophical stance adopted to the design of the research, the selection of the particular site for the extrapolation of data, the understanding of what counts as evidence, through to the analysis and presentation of the data. In intercultural research, interpretation is, however, a sensitive issue as misrepresentation of and bias towards others is always a danger. A heightened reflexivity towards underlying and often taken-for-granted assumptions is therefore demanded by the very subject itself. An acknowledgement of the researcher's own position, theoretical assumptions, and interests can enable a more critical reading of the respective construction of knowledge and interculturality. The aim of the preceding meta-analysis of three different approaches to intercultural communication and education was to demonstrate, firstly, that the object of research, the "intercultural encounter," is highly amorphous and lends itself to diverse interpretations, conceptualizations, and research designs. It was argued secondly that these interpretations can be traced back to decisions on five distinct but interrelated levels: the theoretical–conceptual, the methodological, the political–normative, and the epistemological–ontological. Connected, but secondary to choices on these planes are generalizations and pedagogical recommendations drawn from empirical findings.

The three research examples were randomly chosen and exemplify the diversity of views that exist in the field more than individual research paradigms or "schools of thought." The modernist and essentialist research by Hofstede probably presents the most pressing conceptual and ethical concerns as so many unquestioned assumptions went into the design and analysis of his quantitative study due to the *technical* interest driving the investigation. Globalization was presented here from a rather uncritical *globalist* perspective as a natural force with its own dynamic and apparently unavoidable consequences. Culture was predominantly seen as overlapping with national borders and as a burden for successful international business that needed to be brought under control. The empiricist and positivist assumptions underlying this quantitative study were both aligned with its overriding instrumental research interest and attuned to expectations of what counts as evidence for potential consulting and training clients. The research site (the large transnational company IBM) and the participants (IBM employees) were chosen to be representative of the same clientele. Paradoxically, it

(continued)

was assumed that organizational culture was at the same time exempt from and indicative of the influence of national culture.

In the postmodern postcolonial example, the author explicitly stated his research interest to be *critical* as he deconstructed the discourses about “self” and “other” understood to be inherited from a colonial past and thus ideologically biased. The data originated from interviews with individuals from a variety of national backgrounds and was meant to exemplify the discursive use and construction of the “nation” for particular identities. While the sampling was convenient (the interviewees were friends of the researcher who had engaged with the topic explicitly before the investigation took place), the researcher checked the validity of his interpretation against the participants’ perspectives and subsequently modified it on the basis of their input. Globalization was represented here from a strictly postcolonialist perspective which made it difficult to capture contemporary complex and diverse international processes that take place at a cultural, economic, and political level.

The second postmodern account of interculturality came from research on English as a lingua franca. The study under consideration shared many of the assumptions and conceptual choices of Holliday’s investigation but was less oriented towards the deconstruction of ideological representations of “self” and “other” and more *practically* interested in the resourcefulness of real world speakers of ELF. Here again, data was employed to exemplify the particular theoretical perspective and the particular model of intercultural awareness the researcher wanted to promote. Globalization was represented in a fairly uncritical way as an agentive force that brings about increased international interconnections and contact and thus enhances fluidity, mixing, and hybridity of cultural elements.

As the analysis showed, the selection of the focus of enquiry, the chosen method, the site of the research, and the forms of data depended in all four cases on specific interpretations of social change, theoretical–methodological commitments, as well as the interests (e.g., instrumental or emancipatory) motivating each particular kind of academic research. Such a meta-theoretical matrix, I argued at the beginning of this chapter, would allow us to identify essential components of any approach to interculturality. It would make reflexivity, the sine qua non of intercultural research, more systematic and enable thorough comparison between different perspectives.

A caveat has to be made: By showing how much interpretation there is in intercultural research I do not want to imply that research in this field is biased, or that my own meta-level interpretation is not equally partial or fallible. Clearly, researchers need to bring their theoretical knowledge and practical research experiences and their values, expectations, and purposes to the research process, both in quantitative and qualitative studies. But while it

(continued)

is important to acknowledge the decisions that go into the construction of a specific kind of knowledge and, more generally, its discursive mediation, there is also a danger of reducing knowledge to subjective interpretation, to discourse, or to mere social construction. If this was the case and all interpretations of the social world were equally valid, then researchers in general and those investigating intercultural encounters in particular would be free to bestow any interpretation on the social reality they claim to describe or explain. The basic assumption underlying my own interpretation of research in this specific field is that there is a world “out there” independent of our understanding of and discourses about it that guarantees that there can always be a debate about the truth status of our validity claims: “How things seem to us, in other words, depends *both* on the world *and* our descriptions of it” (Sealey and Carter 2004, p. 125). In other words, although research always involves some form of interpretation, some accounts of the world are more accurate than others. In order to come to an intersubjective agreement about the truth status of specific knowledge informed discussions and debate are essential. The precise claims made about the social world and the desirability of specific pedagogic interventions need to be brought to light, subjected to scrutiny, and contrasted with alternative views. The suggested meta-theoretical matrix might serve this purpose.

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2.5 Literacy in the Community: The Interpretation of “Local” Literacy Practices Through Ethnography

Kate Pahl

The Research Project

In this chapter I look at the interpretative practices that are involved when an ethnographer investigates local literacies in home and community settings (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Ethnography is concerned with everyday life and ethnographers tend to focus on the cultural practices people engage with (Heath and Street 2008). The process of “doing ethnography” as a process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation is here discussed in relation to the field participants’ own interpretative processes and practices (Wolcott 1994). I draw on the tradition, from Eric Lassiter, of collaborative ethnography and the process of doing “reciprocal analysis” (Lassiter 2005; Campbell and Lassiter 2010). I use this mode of analysis to make sense of grounded interpretations which then enabled me to construct a shared epistemological space in which to make sense of these interpretations (Pahl and Pool 2011).

Literacy has been understood, drawing on research from the New Literacy Studies, to be a social practice realised in different domains, such as home, school, and community (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Street 1984, 1993, 2000). I focus here on literacy in home and community contexts. I draw on an ethnographic study of writing practices in a home and a library. In each case, children and young people as well as family members were involved in the construction of the interpretative framework that I used to make sense of the data. They also participated in the process of dissemination. Ethnographic research brings to the fore issues connected to reflexivity, positionality, and the relationship between participants (“emic” perspectives) and researcher (“etic” perspectives). It is therefore a methodological approach that problematizes the process of interpretation from the beginning.

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The setting for the study was a Northern town in the UK with a minority population composed of British Asian families. The research study was conducted in areas of high deprivation according to the UK Indices of Multiple Deprivation (these measured particular indices such as education, access to good quality housing, the economic status of the households, and so on). This study built on my previous work on literacy practices in the home (Pahl 2002, 2004). In previous studies I was interested in the ways in which the “habitus” of the home could be found sedimented in children’s multimodal texts (Rowse and Pahl 2007). I was also interested in the different frameworks that young people and families brought to literacy in home and community settings. For example, I found in my previous work studying home literacy practices (Pahl 2002, 2004) that literacy in school contexts is associated with certain kinds of practices such as writing reports and doing exams; at home the uses of literacy and the practices associated with it are less commonly recognized and understood.

Here, I describe an ethnographic investigation of a family’s home literacy practices (the “home” study) together with a study of literacy practices based in a library (the “library” study). They are here described as different strands but part of a longer study of home and community writing practices. The research was funded from the AHRC’s Connected Communities program (as “Writing in the Home and in the Street”) as well as Yorkshire Forward, a regional agency, and ran from 2009 to 2011. The research described here includes a closely observed study of one British Asian home. The family included three children, all girls, aged 3, 9, and 12. I describe the process that led me to construct an interpretative framework in order to understand the children’s home writing practices. This involved a process of interpretation and analysis that was co-constructed, in which analysis was conducted within the field and interpretation was an ongoing process of construction.

I also describe a parallel study, conducted in a library, of writing practices in a community context, funded through a local authority. This study was part of a larger survey of literacy events and practices present within one particular community in the town. I conducted an audit of literacy in the community, drawing on the ecological approach suggested by Neuman and Celano (2001). Through funding from the AHRC “Writing in the Home and in the Street” project, I was able to bring an arts dimension to the project in the second year of the study. The research upon which this chapter is based considers the way in which home and community writing is conceptualized and the cultural shaping of home and community writing practices. While the research took place in different sites (a home and a library), it was part of a wider series of research engagements which addressed the issue of how literacy is framed and understood in out-of-school settings. In both home and library projects, the process of interpretation was contested and complex.

Studies of literacy in the community using an ethnographic perspective understand literacy to be a social practice (Street 2000). An ethnographer might study the things people do with literacy and the different domains of practice where literacy takes place (Barton and Hamilton 1998). By understanding literacy to be a social practice, links could be made between everyday social practices such as shopping

and cooking and cultural practices such as popular cultural activities, and literacy. It would then be possible to understand how literacy was embedded within particular events and practices. For example, shopping often might involve the writing of a list or cooking the reading of a recipe.

Research studies of writing in the home have focused on children and their families, in an attempt to make sense of what children bring to schooling from “everyday” settings. Studies of young children’s early writing in naturalistic settings began by looking at environmental print and then studying the making of meaning from the child’s perspective (Bissex 1980; Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982; Kress 1997; Lancaster 2003; Pahl 2002). Studies of home writing practices have considered the way in which children come to writing in the home as a process of engagement with multimodal forms, including drawing and oral storytelling (Kress 1997). Writing in the home is characterized by ephemeral productions, often seen as “mess” by adults (Pahl 2002). Researchers have looked at the way in which writing in multilingual households is conceptualized and framed (Gregory et al. 2004; Kenner 2004). This has enabled them to understand these practices as strengths and from the perspective of a “wealth” model of home literacy practices (Gonzalez et al. 2005).

Studies of writing in the community have considered place and space and the location of literacy practices within particular places and spaces (Neuman and Celano 2001, 2006; Comber 2010; Morrell 2008; Kinloch 2010). Many of these studies look closely at power relations to consider why certain communities have more access to literacy than others (Neuman and Celano 2006; Nichols et al. 2009). The way in which spatial literacies are configured and play out in local contexts have been studied by Comber and colleagues in looking at the shaping of literacies through place-making (Comber 2010). More recently, a focus on timescales and family life has informed the way time intersects with family life and shapes literacy practices in the home (Compton Lilly 2010).

From an interpretative perspective the study of home writing practices requires an understanding of how “schooled” literacy practices are framed (Street and Street 1991). Research from a more cognitive or psychological perspective has sometimes assumed that the “acquisition model” of literacy is more salient, with a particular focus on the processes and practices of writing as a technical, “autonomous” skill, decontextualized and without a focus on social practice (Street 1993). Street (1993) calls this model the “autonomous” model and contrasts it with an “ideological” model of literacy that understands literacy to be subject to relations of power and ideologies within discourses. This insight brings the role of interpretation in constructing and understanding literacy practices to the fore. When constructing interpretations of home literacy practices, it is important to foreground an “emic” perspective to bring participants’ perspectives to bear on texts and practices, which is why the concept, from Campbell and Lassiter, of “reciprocal analysis” of texts (2010) is so important. In this chapter, I address the way in which interpretation both co-constructs and shapes the way writing is understood and framed in out of school settings such as a home and a community library.

The Focus of the Research

Both of these projects focused on home and community literacy practices in naturalistic settings. Literacy in the home and in the community is often disregarded in institutional settings. For example, a child might create a bird from tissue paper and produce such an ephemeral object in a home setting (Pahl 2002). This object, however, carries within it intergenerational meanings and sedimented experiences of grandparents and “home” stories (Rowse and Pahl 2007). Recognizing these practices as being related to stories and written texts is the job of the ethnographer (Pahl 2004). The focus of the home study was to explore the uses of “literacy” in relation to the interpretative frameworks of the participants. What did they consider to be reading and writing? How was literacy linked with other multimodal practices such as drawing and model making? What kinds of literacies could be found, in which languages and modalities? Were there “hidden” or “vernacular” literacies that could usefully be explored in more detail to make sense of language and literacy practices outside school?

In this research, both in the library and in the home, the process involved repeated visits, on a regular basis, together with the development of an interpretative schema that was collaboratively created with research participants. This collaborative ethnographic methodology enabled interpretations and understandings to be checked with participants on an ongoing basis (Lassiter 2005). Campbell and Lassiter (2010) describe the processes and practices that make up a collaborative ethnography:

An ethnography that makes collaboration an explicit and deliberate part of both fieldwork and the broader processes of research, interpretation, and writing is not just about producing more dialogically centered and multivocal texts . . . Because it also seeks to encourage more ethically responsible practices, verifications of findings, and reciprocal analysis . . . (p. 377)

Here, I explore the process of doing “reciprocal analysis” with children and young people in home and community contexts. I explore the strengths and weaknesses of this approach and consider what the role of reciprocal analysis is in developing a collaborative interpretative framework.

In the case of the “home” project I analyzed writing by Lucy (pseudonym) aged 12. Lucy produced fairy tales as well as factual reports in writing as well as more textile-based objects such as sewing with writing inscribed within it. I began to understand Lucy’s texts in relation to their everyday aesthetic properties. For example, I was able to recognize, working in collaboration with Lucy, how a moral and aesthetic schema was drawn upon to inform the way the texts were written. I then related these texts to other texts that could inform their meaning, and also discussed my interpretations with the young people in the study. This was particularly useful when the texts found in the home were from different genres, e.g., from fairy tales, or from a factual “essay” model but carried the same sets of meanings and ideas.

The “library” project was an ecological study of literacy in a library within a community. By ecological study, I mean that I took an area-based approach to data

collection. By seeing literacy as a resource that could be found in communities, the focus of the study was in conducting an audit of the literacies available to families in the area. A group of children and young people met regularly in order to find out what kinds of literacy resources were available to young people within the library and in the community. Children conducted community walk arounds to log the kinds of literacy practices found in the community. These different images and films were viewed and discussed in a group. Selections from the young people’s videos and images were then turned into a short film. This was then shown to the local community and library officials. As a shared form of data collection, the young people decided to use scrapbooks to document their home literacy practices. These could then be discussed with me in a collaborative interpretative mode of analysis.

Both studies (home and library) involved creating a shared interpretative framework. This meant that participants were involved in the collection of the data and then the selection of key episodes for further discussion. Research data collection methods were chosen by children. In the case of the home, the children in the families used Flip cameras and disposable cameras to record key writing episodes. I then collected these and asked about the films that the children had made with the Flip cameras, and these films and discussions then dictated the focus of the study. In the case of the library, the children who visited the library took photographs and made films about the library. One film was put together from these resources and shown at the end of the project. It was important that the methods used for the studies were congruent with the practices of the young people. In this, I followed Law’s insight (2004) that methods, and even more, methods’ practices, dictate the reality that they are supposed to represent. While some of the young people chose to use films made by Flip cameras for their data collection methods, others used more traditional print literacy methods. For example, two girls, Bonni and Dionne, who initially attended the film making research sessions in the library, chose to represent their findings about their home literacy practices in the form of scrapbooks that they co-curated together in the first year of the study.

After working with Bonni and Dionne in the library for a year, we continued the project, drawing on funding from the AHRC “Writing in the Home and in the Street” project, but this time we also worked with visual and art materials to describe their writing practices and to record the literacy resources available in the library and the community. This part of the project was also in collaboration with an art gallery, who agreed to display their texts and artifacts with the theme of “Writing in the Street.” They used a chest of drawers from Bonni’s home to document their home literacy practices. We met within the gallery for one day in May 2011 and, after some discussion, filled the drawers with documents and images to represent home literacies. This project was enabled with the help of a visual artist and co-curated with the two girls. In both cases, visual modes were the preferred mode used to present the findings of the research, for example, the chest of drawers and the film.

Studies of home and community literacies have tended to be placed in a sometimes oppositional relationship to schooled literacies (Hull and Schultz 2002). However, data from these studies showed that the links between home and

school were permeable and fluid, with children and the young people carrying literacies across the spaces they inhabited (Dyson 2003). This quality of permeability means that interpretation of texts is less about the “domains” in which the texts were produced and more about the traveling of texts, the “lines” they follow across territories and spaces (Ingold 2007). By not reifying home and community literacies, these situated yet fluid practices become alive with movement and can be recognized as emerging within a number of different, connected spaces. For example, within the “Writing in the Home” project, literacy practices were found associated with textiles, craft activities, nail art, gardening, tiling, and other everyday home practices. Some of these spaces had links with other spaces such as craft groups in community settings and gardening practices in Pakistan. In this research, the connections across the spaces were revealed through the ethnographic fieldwork.

The Research Data

Because the data sources were co-curated by informants, data was presented selectively in the home by informants to me. The data set for the “Writing in the Home” project included field narratives, which were extended pieces of writing composed of observations drawn from field notes, audio files recorded on site, and pieces of writing by informants (Gregory and Ruby 2011). While some of the data was collected by me, as a researcher, most of the data was collected by informants. They then collaboratively made sense of the data with me, and I then worked with informants to select the most apt “mode” (Kress 1997) in which to disseminate results. In many cases, writing did not seem the most appropriate mode in which to present findings. The findings of the study were presented in various forms, including film, material objects placed in a chest of drawers, scrapbooks, and collage (see Fig. 1). Art galleries and exhibitions were then used to display these findings (see Fig. 2). While I have presented collaborative research with young people in the form of an academic peer-reviewed article (Pahl and Pool 2011), this was not the preferred presentational mode for the young people, not surprisingly. Data, then, if collaboratively collected, interpreted, and presented, can look different, in that it can have qualities that are embodied, tactile, and apprehended through sensory and visual formats (Pink 2001, 2009). Below I present the data sources for the home study and the library study in table formats (Table 1).

Data sources also included Flip camera videos recorded when the researcher was not present, which often took the form of an explanatory “voice” showing an example of a home writing practice. Photographs taken on site by informants in the library and also in the home were also useful for shared interpretations.

In the case of the library project, a weekly meeting with a group of young people, who called their group “Research Rebels,” enabled the identification of research questions, the process of collecting data, and the processing of writing up and presenting data to be worked through in a 9-month period. In that way, children

Fig. 1 Scrapbooks of home literacy practices as a form of research interpretation



and young people were involved in a participatory research framework. This framework reflected their “becoming” status as adults in the making (Franks 2011; Uprichard 2008). The data sources therefore included the process of writing up, and the different formats used by the young people to present their findings included a film, scrapbooks, a chest of drawers, and a library book which was de-accessed from the library and presented in a new setting (Table 2).

However, the process of presenting the data in this way concealed the issue of the ethics of data collection. Some of the writing by young people remained inaccessible. Because the data was shaped and presented by informants, there were a number of sources that remain hidden. Some of the writing young people



Fig. 2 Chest of drawers: exhibition at Bank Street Arts, Sheffield

Table 1 Data sources for the home study (2-year ethnographic study of writing in the home)

Type of data	Quantity and nature of data set	Quantity and nature of data set
	Year 1 2009–2010	Year 2 2010–2011
Flip camera videos taken by children	60 Flip videos, taken when researcher was not present	7 Flip videos taken when the researcher was not present
Photographs by children	120 photographs taken by the girls (aged 8 and 12) with a disposable camera	60 photographs taken by the researcher, 10 by the children
Field narratives drawing on participant observation	7 field narratives based on repeated visits lasting up to one hour long, every other week	6 field narratives based on regular visits, every other week
Field visit audio tape	4 audio files to support field visit data	36 audio files recording language in the home
Writing by children	1 scrapbook each, about 10 pages filled with writing	1 scrapbook each plus 40 A4 pages of writing and a further 12 pages of notes

did at home was regarded as “private” and not shown. Where young people did show me their stories, and in the case of the library, the scrapbooks became a source of knowledge exchange, passed between researcher and young people. Some data sources were more “open” than others to collaborative analysis. For example, scrapbooks could be photocopied and shared for analysis. Construction of meanings on site could be enabled through multimodal methods such as working collaboratively to fill a chest of drawers with “Writing Materials” (exhibition, May 2011) as described in Fig. 2.

Table 2 Data sources for the Library/Art Gallery project (2-year ethnographic study of writing in the community)

Type of data	Quantity and nature of data set from the library February 2010–December 2011
Flip camera videos taken by children	60 Flip videos, over the period of the Research Rebels study (Feb 4, March 22, March 29, April 19)
Photographs by children	120 photographs taken by the children (aged between 6 and 13) over the period of the study plus 6 disposable cameras taken home
Field narratives drawing on participant observation	5 sets of fieldnotes (March 9, March 29, April 19, April 26, May 10) on library study
Interviews by children, audio recorded	7 interviews of library users by the children, audio recorded (March 22, May 10)
Writing by children	6 scrapbooks by the children. This became the scrapbook club from July to December 2010
Art objects and films and other materials produced by children	Two of the participants produced a chest of drawers (May 2011), two canvases, and a library book, customized, in response to the Writing in the Home and in the Street project displayed in an art gallery in September 2011. All of the participants produced a film, shown to library staff in July 2010

The Processes of Collecting Data

When beginning an ethnographic study, the researcher often starts by “casing the joint” (Dyson and Genishi 2005) which involves conducting a series of walks around the neighborhood. I had previous links with families from the British Asian community in the town through an exhibition and website, co-curated by a visual artist, Zahir Rafiq, called “Every Object Tells a Story” (Pahl and Rowsell 2010).¹ My contacts within the town were further supported by a research project, funded locally, in which I evaluated a literacy initiative called “Inspire Rotherham.” Through these networks, I met families and was able to select families and sites for the ethnographic study in the home as well as in the library. Drawing on Neuman and Celano (2001) who conducted an ecological study of four neighborhoods in Philadelphia and the access to literacy of each of these neighborhoods, with a particular focus on public libraries, we (myself and a co-researcher Chloe Allan; for a detailed account of this study, see Pahl and Allan 2011) looked both at the fabric of a neighborhood, its affordances in terms of literacy, and the literacy “sponsors” within the neighborhood (Neuman and Celano 2006; Brandt 2001). Key informants who worked in the library were interviewed by the young people, to gain a sense of the “literacy hubs” in the neighborhood (Neuman and Celano 2001, 2006). Mapping was conducted through repeated visits, which were necessary to log the literacy activity and resources within hubs and then establish a picture of

¹ See www.everyobjecttellsastory.org.uk.

literacies circulating within these hubs (Nichols et al. 2009; Nichols 2011). In the case of home ethnography, a slow process of “making the familiar strange” involved repeated visits to the home, to establish routines and practices and to agree with research informants’ ethical protocols and the focus for the study (Agar 1996). Much depended at this point on trust between field informants and the researcher.

The process of collecting data in the library started with weekly visits to the library and a series of craft exercises to find out what literacy meant to the young people. This developed into a project called “Research Rebels” led by the young people in which films were made by them about literacy in the community. For this part of the project, young people selected episodes they wanted to include in a final film, which was shown to the head of libraries. Ethical protocols meant that this film was made for the community by the community. While the home project involved checking consent as the project unfolded, the library project involved a discussion with the young people about the outputs and where they should be shown. The young people who attended the library wanted to change the opportunities for young people in their area, which was why they continued the project and made the film. Bonni and Dionne, who continued the project using scrapbooks and the chest of drawers, were interested in the affordances of visual art for representing home literacies. They used their own names in the project, and in the exhibition at the art gallery, and continue to meet with me to negotiate how they are represented within the research. When I reflect on this process, what is clear that in both settings, the library and the home, what is important is an ongoing relationship with the young people to negotiate consent for all stages of research and to continue to meet with young people long after data has been collected. These relationships are real and valued.

Examples from Data I Used in the Study

Below, I describe some specific examples of data. The first example is from the “home” study and was part of a longer analysis of the role of textiles and the ways in which writing was embedded within a range of craft-based practices in the home. The second is from the “library” study. In both cases, these examples helped me think differently about literacy in home and community settings, and I could then use this thinking to inform educators in informal and formal learning settings.

Writing in the Home: Textiles, Craft, and Writing

The data I collected from the home consisted of a number of short videos, which were constructed by the children when I was not there. In the process of coding the videos, I was struck by how many of the Flip videos recorded by the children of

their home literacy practices included textiles, such as sewing, craft activities, and stitching. One of the first pieces of data I collected was an image of some home embroidery with a name written on it. This was collected in the form of a Flip video of the embroidery by Lucy (pseudonym chosen by the child), then aged 11 in August 2010. I asked Lucy’s aunt, who I was then in contact with, about this. She emailed back:

The textile side of our heritage comes from the women in the family. We have older relatives that do appliqué, crochet, embroidery, sewing and knitting (from the girl’s mother’s side their grandmothers sister and cousin and from their father side his two cousins who live close by). My younger sister loves craft type of activities and buys the girls a lot of resources to do sewing and fabric work especially on birthdays, Christmas and Eid. (Written text from the girls’ aunt, e-mail, August 2010)

Another aspect of the home writing practices was a focus on craft and the materiality of writing materials. I collected many examples of pieces of paper decorated with glitter, illustrating the name of the child and using colors to create a bright image (see Fig. 3). I discussed these objects with Tanya (pseudonym chosen by child) then aged 8:

Researcher: *Can you tell me a bit about this please?*

Tanya: *I did it in my big sister’s bedroom called Lucy. I used watercolors and I wrote it in my name and I have done lots of stories. And I used some glitter and I wrote some crystals (audio transcript recorded in field notes October 4, 2010)*



Fig. 3 Glitter writing

Here, writing could be linked to an interest in sparkle and gold using watercolors and glitter. The aesthetics of glitter could be partially linked to an interest in glittery forms as demonstrated by this website, which was recorded in field notes as being regularly used by the family at the time of the data being collected (Craft 4Kids: <http://www.crafts4kids.co.uk/sequin-and-mosaic-art/c12>) but also could be linked to the category “gold” which I found was often strongly linked to home values in British Asian homes. This collage of representations draws on a complex set of meanings that can be found sedimented within everyday texts (Pahl and Pollard 2008). Alongside this visual and material text, the author, Tanya, had also written stories. These stories were often kept secret from the researcher. Writing involved an assembly of a number of different representational resources for writing, including stickers that could denote privacy, as Lucy, Tanya’s older sister, outlined in a home video she produced and then showed me. I transcribed the video as an audio recording:

Lucy: *Here, I have made a purse
 And I can put my money and cards in it
 And I have put lots of stickers
 And three D stickers as well on
 And I have put all my favorite things on this side
 And I have put some things I hate and some things I like on this side
 I have got little gems and stars
 And little animals and food on
 And little signs that say keep out top secret* (audio from film August 4, 2010)

Writing using stickers is an example of vernacular literacies in the home that might be invisible to the researcher (Ives 2011). Stickers are not cursive written text, but like the text that is produced through the “copy and paste” mechanism on computers, they are arrangements of text that produce “writing.” They constitute a multimodal form of writing as a design process (Kress 1997). They are linked to writing through association both with the script on the stickers and through the meanings generated in the stickers. Literacy can be understood as a series of lines and traces (Ingold 2007) which a researcher can follow and can then see as materialized in stickers, sewing, and craft, as well as writing and drawing. Much of the girls’ texts were stitched as embroidery, or stuck, as in Lucy’s stickers on her purse, or took the form of craft activities such as nail art, which included decorative written text, as well as writing embedded within craft objects such as bookmarks, pencil cases, and masks. These small pieces of writing could have been rendered invisible; however, their meanings were important. When I discussed the meanings with Lucy, she highlighted the message on the nail art, which was “say no to racism,” and also highlighted the role of her aunt in supporting her in the craft activities. This then led to a longer discussion about the importance of writing for Lucy as a site of resistance and resilience using the concept of “reciprocal analysis” (Campbell and Lassiter 2010).

Writing in the Community: Making Meaning from Scrapbooks

In the case of the library, meetings with the group of young people who attended the library were held and a research group was set up, called “Research Rebels.” With the support of the library assistant, the researchers (Kate Pahl and Chloe Allan) conducted the meetings to work with the young people collaboratively on the research. The young people took images of library use, made films, and collected audio data about how the library was used (Pahl and Allan 2011). These audio and video data were then played back and analyzed on site by the young people. The process of data analysis led to the production of a film about the use of the library which was shown in the library setting.

As part of a study of literacy practices in a library, I worked with Bonni and Dionne, both aged 12, who made a scrapbook using books provided by the project and then drawing on material cut out and stored at home (see Fig. 1). Here, Bonni and Dionne talk about cutting out:

Dionne: In the library we started sticking our pictures in and we got bored at school so Bonni messed about with the Tippex in Spanish and started writing and then she started sticking pictures in.

Kate: How did you choose the pictures?

Dionne: Well Bonni and me had a camera we used some of the film at my house and some at her house and we had like six left and we used some of them when we went to Much Wenlock on holiday. (discussion July 2010)

Dionne, here however, sees this practice retrospectively; it was what she and Bonni used to do “when we bored at school” in their Spanish lesson. The two young people jointly re-constructed their past selves in the scrapbooks. For example, Bonni included a picture of herself as a young child to signal this “self” that used to be. Writing contained past “selves” and the young people talked to me about how these different selves were realized in writing. Bonni and Dionne also described the layers of “stuff” that they drew on to make their scrapbooks:

Kate: Where did you get the ideas to put the different things in like color?

Dionne: Bonni had this blue folder and it were full of cut up stuff and we just went through it put them in piles like for hours like things we what she has collected over the years.

Bonni and Dionne used their scrapbooks to recall their past writing identities. They were fascinated by their childhood writing selves:

Kate: This is a good page as well

Dionne: That’s one of Bonni

Kate: Is that one of your drawings when you were little?

Girls: Yeah

Dionne: She did a little note saying to mum: “this is just a little note to too you how much I love you” (that’s embarrassing by the way).

Kate: I love it

Dionne: She used to write backwards! (from recorded conversation July 2010)

Time, as well as writing, is something that can be assembled retrospectively and presented in these formats. By listening to the girls’ interpretative schemas on their writing practice, I could see how writing was linked to their process of “becoming” (Uprichard 2008) and could be a point of remembering past selves as well as an inscription of future identities.

The “Writing in the Home and in the Street” project, which funded a continuation of the library project also involved a local art gallery in the process of dissemination. Bonnie and Dionne co-curated their thoughts and ideas and produced an exhibition in the art gallery (see Fig. 2). The production of images and artistic outputs such the chest of drawers enabled a different interpretative schema to be placed on the young people’s writing, taken from arts practice (Kester 2004). This schema understood their productions to be relational and produced in an interpretative framework that was inherently collaborative and co-constructed. The framework was constructed in relation to the modal choices the young people decided upon for dissemination processes (Kress 1997).

Using arts practice as mode of dissemination was congruent with the interpretative frameworks the children and young people in the study brought to the analysis as this enabled a wider and more visual form of knowledge to be available. An arts practice approach combined with ethnographically informed methodologies opened up an engaged practice that understood interpretations to be relational and reliant on collective conversations (Pahl et al. 2010). This approach to data collection, when combined with ethnography, enabled the production of multimodal communicative artifacts such as a co-curated chest of drawers and a jointly produced library book, de-accessed and then reinterpreted in an arts space. This book was filled with such phenomena such as “lift the flap” but, instead of messages for young children, included much more complex messages constructed by the two young people who curated this (Fig. 4).

The Frameworks Used

The process of doing ethnographic research in home and community settings involved a process of gradual embodied knowing (Ingold 2011; Pink 2009). This approach relied on perceptual schemata from sensory ethnography (Pink 2009). Sensory ethnography can be understood as being an engaged anthropology that is about a commitment to site and space. In the case of these studies, I committed to regular fortnightly visits and regular exchanges with the people I worked with. They came to the University and also were invited as guests to my home and were part of my daily life as well as on weekend and holiday visits. My commitment lay

Fig. 4 Library book in the art gallery



outside the recognized spaces of “research” but was informed more closely by the concept of “engaged practice” from socially engaged arts practice as described by Kester (2004). This approach was a crafting of practice as experiential, intuitive, ethnographically informed and engaged in ways that were not just about linguistic modes of knowing. Arts practice was important in recognizing the way in which collective conversations about objects and meanings could be co-constructed with informants, and these conversations were both the subject and the object of research, an approach that comes from relational aesthetics (Ranciere 2006). I took from the anthropology of Finnegan (2002, 2007) the recognition of cultural spaces in embodied and multimodal forms. These frameworks then meant that the data collected was wider than the concept of “writing” as presented in “schooled” contexts (Street and Street 1991). When I looked at the content of the writing, both with the girls in the library project and the girls in the home project, we could trace back together where the ideas came from. For example, Bonni and Dionne had pasted in a page of bus tickets (see Fig. 5), and we talked about the importance of their routes out of their neighborhood and why traveling was important to them. With the home study, Lucy described her experience of racism and Tanya’s aunt described their home gardening practices to frame and make sense of their texts.



Fig. 5 Scrapbook with Manga drawing and bus tickets

The data presented to me included information about gardening, animals, moving house, racism, tiling and house building practices, school and nursery information, as well as cultural practices and values. By linking these, and connecting up the “fragments and fields” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992), that is, the texts taken together with an understanding of the contexts they came from, the links could be made to make sense of home writing practices. I relied on informants to make those links visible, and the constructing of the links was the “work” undertaken within the ethnography, together with regular visits, generating field notes, the collecting and recording of ethnographic data.

Reasons for Choosing an Approach

In this section, I reflect on the process of taking this approach to the interpretation and analysis of home and community literacy practices. My concern when doing this analysis was to remain attentive to what the young people were trying to tell me. In the case of the home, some of the data set involved exploring the racism the family had explored. This process meant attending to the meanings the children and young people created in the home in imaginative ways. As they produced stories and recounted the experience of racism, I had to remain vigilant as to the weighting of these meanings. I used Hull and Nelson’s concept of “imaginative vigilance” (2009) to help in this analysis. In that sense, I began to move outside the schema of “New Literacy Studies,” which understood literacy to be a social practice, and

began to use schemas from everyday aesthetics (Saito 2007) to analyze my data. By thinking about the data from an aesthetic perspective, whether I was thinking about glitter, or about the moral purpose associated with writing about racism, I could identify the decisions made about the piece of writing that were not just about its medium but about the mode used and the materiality of the piece of writing. It mattered whether it was in glitter, inscribed on the body or presented in the form of a work of art.

I have discussed above the intersections between methods such as collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2005) and relational arts practice (Kester 2004). I have become convinced of the necessity to recognize forms of knowledge outside the “academic” domain, such as the aesthetic choices made by an informant about a text, and equally, collaborative ethnography enables me to construct meanings dialogically within the field. Important publications in this field (arts practice and ethnography) include Willis’ *The Ethnographic Imagination* (2000) which argued for recognition of the symbolic power of everyday creativity, rooted in everyday life and practices. In the field of arts practice, Kester’s *Conversation Pieces* (2004) is also helpful in understanding the relational nature of situated encounters in the field. Harnessing these encounters to create new kinds of discourses and practices is a complex and active process, which has been described by Campbell and Lassiter (2010) in their return to the “Middletown” research and their discussion of the difficulties of writing up ethnographic research with community members.

Reflecting on this approach now, I can see that I have constructed my epistemological position in relation to a particular strand of theorizing, originally stemming from the work of Raymond Williams (1961), which could be said to render aesthetic and therefore special, hidden, or vernacular literacies (Barton and Hamilton 1998). In this, I could be guilty of a certain kind of valorization. I have not, for example, discussed the genres I encountered in home settings that drew on school literacy practices such as the report, the formal letter, and the story. I have focused less on what the young people gained from formal education and more on how they constructed writing relationally within family and home settings. In this sense, I focus on ethnographic interpretation as relational social practice.

What I would hope is that this way of working could impact on educational policy. Following the work of Heath (1983), Street (1993), Barton and Hamilton (1998), Gregory (2008), and Gonzalez et al. (2005), I am seeking to redress the power imbalance that privileges “school literacy” over less visible forms of writing in home and community contexts. This power imbalance has serious implications for many children and young people who fail to thrive when their literacy practices remain unrecognized. Teachers can often be surprised by the range and complexity of children and young people’s literacy practices. The disadvantage of this method is that it comes from a post-modern interpretative paradigm that acknowledges the situated and contested nature of knowledge produced in such a way. Clashes can be found within the data set, including a discussion with my co-researchers about the purpose and meaning of the chest of drawers. The power of the “ethnographic present” can hold sway over analytic imperatives.

More broadly, the field of everyday aesthetics (Saito 2007) recognizes the importance of the mundane and the everyday in holding key meanings and ideas that are sometimes “lost” in educational contexts. The choices children and young people make in home settings about how they construct their worlds can look different in out-of-school contexts. For example, here is a written description of a page of Dionne’s scrapbook:

Dionne showed me a new page of her book. She had been documenting her home writing practices in different ways. She had pasted in bus tickets to represent her home/school journeys. She also had been representing her online and off line literacy practices. She did this by cutting and pasting an image of ‘Google’ search engines, with the open box in the middle of the page. Then she pasted what she had been looking for on the search engines, which in this case was an example of a Manga drawing. She hand drew her own Manga drawing, in order to signal what she meant by Manga. Dionne has therefore represented the search engine (Google) by cutting and pasting from a screen shot of Google together with a hand drawing of her Manga person, and had also pasted in her bus tickets. Dionne’s meaning making was entirely multimodal, being composed of cut-out screen shots, bus tickets collected and pasted in, and hand drawing. In this way, she could make meaning from an ensemble of semiotic resources and re-assemble them to create a new text signaling her home writing practices. (Pahl and Rowsell 2012, pp. 25–26)

In this example, literacy practices include bus tickets, the “Google” search engine box, and Manga drawings, which are in themselves semiotic, with writing inscribed within them. While in an educational context the “Google” search engine box will be a tool for a certain sort of literacy practice, possibly referencing or looking up a concept, here it is used as a window to create an aesthetic response to Manga. The framing of this practice is therefore entirely different from a school framing.

What Was the Role of Interpretation in This Research Study?

For me, the role of interpretation was intertwined with the situated practice that was informed by my own epistemologies and practice. My first degree was in English Literature and I focused on writing in social context, particularly fragmented or unheard writing, such as women prophets of the English Revolution. I became an outreach worker in a London inner city borough, I had worked with parents in community settings to support home literacies (Bird and Pahl 1994). I then worked in a voluntary sector organization, the National Literacy Trust, and explored community-focused approaches to literacy (Hannon et al. 2003). My MA was a study of meaning making in a nursery (Pahl 1999) and my doctoral work used an ethnographic approach to explore the meaning making of boys aged five within three London homes (Pahl 2002). Accordingly, I had combined an English literature approach on texts with a commitment to outreach as a methodology and as a practice. The interpretative schemas I brought to this research came from this history described above.

Ethnography is a very situated approach to home and community literacies. It involves the whole person (Coffey 1999), and, increasingly, ethnographers value a sensory and embodied relationship to the data they encounter (Pink 2009; Ingold 2011). Working in an ethnographic way involves commitment to the field. In any one week, I can sit in a home and listen to a story, visit a youth center in a public park, or hang out with informants in a local museum on a Saturday. These events blur into my own personal life, as informants come to be part of the “fabric” of my life, due to the longitudinal nature of the commitment and the way in which this is perceived, by both me and my informants, as a personal as well as professional commitment. My interpretative framework then does involve this commitment. I do not assume that my interpretative schemas are correct; rather I remain skeptical of them, preferring to develop a shared interpretative framework through a long period of engagement and encounter that is site specific and boundaries were created by research participants.

Interpretation is a process that is constructed by both time and space. In terms of time, I have drawn on time theory, particularly Ricoeur (1980) and Lemke (2000), in understanding the different ways time operates. Ricoeur (1980) talks about how time is more of a spiraling process and is framed by memory rather than a modernist “marching” on process. Lemke argues that time shapes artifactual encounters in different ways, and different timescales impact differently upon understandings of events and practices (2000). In my interpretative framework, I took time into consideration. For example, while the concept “glitter” had a relatively short time frame, connected to a website that had been consulted a few weeks before I collected the data, gold and its associated values in British Asian households often stretched back over generations (Pahl and Pollard 2008). Likewise, the phenomena of textiles was linked, in my data set, to craft clubs and sewing clubs that the informants attended on a weekly basis; however, as the girls’ aunt wrote to me, the family had a long heritage involving textiles.

I also drew on visual as well as spatial interpretative frameworks when analyzing the data (Massey 2005; Soja 2010). I understood that space was constructed and its arrangement was not given. For example, when constructing an interpretative framework for understanding the data I collected in the community library, when I did a visual analysis of the photographs the children took of the library, I noticed how many photographs were blurred and had an “underwater” quality. This was not because the children were not able to take sharp photographs. More, the images reminded the children of their previous experience of the site that was now a library. Before the library was built, it had been a swimming pool. Therefore, I could draw on an interpretative framework of the different states of “being” the children associated with the library (Uprichard 2008). The construction of an interpretative framework was enabled through an encounter with the literature on the way in which space was something that enabled more or less powerful those who inhabited it. The children were able to reflect on the different ways they moved within the site that was now the library and was their swimming pool. For the first year they often moved around the library on roller skates. More recently the library contained less movement in it, and the spatial affordances shifted again. An interpretative framework informed by visual ethnography (Pink 2001) helped this process.

Ethnography is a process of coming to know that involves historically and spatially informed information that contextualizes data (Duranti and Goodwin 1992). In the case of home and community literacies, this might involve drawing on interpretative frameworks that are historically and geographically located. Collaborations with community members across the University/community divide were also an important part of the interpretative process. In this, the focus for the construction of the interpretative framework is an awareness of the crafting of the practice that was involved in its construction. Present within this included the following:

1. An embodied and sensory understanding of the field that included the visual. I used visual ethnography (Pink 2009) to inform my understanding and interpretation of home literacy practices and was thus able to see them as much more materially situated.
2. An aesthetic awareness of the potential of writing in the home and in the community that encompassed ephemera as well as more recognized aesthetic categories such as “glitter” and “Manga” characters (Saito 2007).
3. A focus on embodied and careful listening (Back 2007) that led to a construction of methods that were congruent with informants—recognizing with Law (2004) that methods and even more methods’ practices constructed the realities they purported to represent.
4. Interpretations led by the epistemological frameworks of the people within home and community contexts. To build these up I spend time interviewing and being with informants in community contexts, such as Children’s Centres and nurseries, voluntary groups, libraries, craft groups, and youth groups, as well as visiting arts and related heritage events. I learned from policy documents in the Council domain as well as drawing on networks and contacts I had built up since previous work in 2006 (see the website www.everyobjecttellsastory.org for an account of this project)

Taken together, a focus on embodied, intuitive understanding that constructed an interpretative framework from arts practice and ethnography was the basis of my interpretative framework (Pahl et al. 2010). This framework could be described as a crafting of practice that is situated, contingent, and rests on epistemologies and knowledge construction that, in many cases, lie outside the University domains of knowledge but is also constructed relationally and in conversation with the interpretative schemas I have described in this chapter.

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2.6 Touch Points and Tacit Practices: How Videogame Designers Help Literacy Studies

Jennifer Rowsell

*Videogames are bad for you? . . . That is what they said about
rock and roll.*

Shigeru Miyamoto, 1952

The world of videogames continue to capture interest and their popularity only increases with time. With this popularity, there is an acknowledgement of their merit as learning, problem-solving tools. Videogames demand that players strategize, communicate, interpret context, solve problems, analyze characters, possess hand/eye coordination, have patience, understand semiotic tools, and use their spatial sense, and the list goes on. Many scholars (Abrams 2009, 2010; Gee 2003; Squire 2008; Steinkuehler 2007; Williams 2008) have argued that these same skills can be transferred to literacy. In this chapter, I explore what videogame designers can offer literacy studies. Interpreting game designer perspectives offers this collection a different approach to new media and digital technologies; it gives readers a more critical understanding of what these texts assume and the implications of these assumptions on learning.

Rather than exploring actual game play, I offer insider perspectives of game producers who share their stories and expertise in game design as alternative ways of thinking about the way that we make meaning. Designers and producers of videogames have a veiled knowledge and expertise on learning in gaming environments that is valuable for understanding how we communicate and make meaning with texts. Contemporary learning theories are increasingly arguing for understanding virtual environments as a way forward for literacy pedagogy and policy (Gee 2003; Knobel and Lankshear 2010; Williams 2008), and videogames and gamification specifically have been targeted as models for future pedagogy (Abrams 2009, 2010; Gee 2003; Steinkuehler 2007).

What is clear is that videogames are not easy and their tacit practices call on skills and competencies that can be used within more formalized settings such as

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schooling. To play videogames requires spatial sense; the use and understanding of semiotic tools in the form of language, objects, and visual cues; and they call on higher-order thinking processes. There have been significant accounts of game play and practices, gaming epistemologies, and connections to school learning, but there has been much less attention on how videogames are designed and produced, from a videogame producer perspective. I cannot claim to be a gamer, but what I have researched significantly is how much we can learn from media and technologies producers (Sheridan and Rowsell 2010; Rowsell 2013), and this chapter extends such work by focusing on videogame producers. The chapter takes account of two videogame designers' experiences designing and producing videogames and what this insider knowledge and folk wisdom can contribute to literacy studies.

Researching Producers

What I have researched for some time now is how the design and production of print and digital texts can inform contemporary understandings of literacy learning (Rowsell 2006, 2012; Sheridan and Rowsell 2010). Such research is built on a contention that to be critical, active text consumers, we need to fully comprehend the logic, processes, and practices of production. For example, with videogame design and production in mind, what ideologies are games based on? Who is the target user? What assumptions are made during the design process? What skills and competencies are called upon? From such a line of questioning, I speculate on the kind of learning and thinking that happens during game play. If we accept the pervasive nature of videogame play, which indeed we should, and if we go one step further and attempt to stretch such pervasive, tacit practices into formalized structures like schooling, then we open up learning and teaching to new skills and competencies that remain outside of the purview of "school learning." Through this line of questioning and this heuristic, I examine production to inform more conventional notions of learning and teaching.

Drawing on a 2-year study of professionals in a variety of fields from architecture to dance to interface design (Rowsell 2013), this chapter focuses on interviews with videogame designers and producers and the practices and epistemologies that they invoke to create games. When I interviewed professionals¹ about how they work with modes, I had specific research questions to explore their perspectives on making meaning through modes:

1. How did producer backgrounds play a role in what they produced?
2. In what ways did this background play a role in their approaches to design and production?
3. How does their chosen mode (visual, language, interactive, game-based) afford more meanings than other modes?

¹To conduct the *Working with Multimodality* research study, I interviewed 30 professionals across a variety of fields.

4. What is the design and production process?
5. Who enters and exits the design and production process?
6. What forms of knowledge and concepts about learning come into play during the design and production process?
7. Describe the production of a specific text.

This line of questioning accessed the thinking and the practices used to design games. The methods used to probe professional expertise was informal interviews with producers in their workplace or by phone or Skype and some shadowing of interviewees to incorporate an ethnographic perspective into the research. What I wanted to capture and had some success in capturing during the research process is Geertz's notion of "thick description" of the design and production process. For data collection, I wanted to take an ethnographic perspective (Green and Bloome 1997) to have an iterative engagement with data inscribed in field notes and interview recordings (Lederman 1990). For data analysis and interpretation, I aimed to make sense out of records of observed behaviors and verbal accounts of subjective experience. What this approach to data collection and analyses illuminated was cultural meanings and conceptual structures that direct and are constructed from particular individual experiences (Geertz 1973). It is this multilayered and cultural nature of ethnographic interpretation that is referenced in Geertz's (1973) oft-cited term, thick description; it is the desired outcome that ethnographers refer to as a richly textured interpretation. I was limited by my lack of access to production sites and to a more intensive investigation of professional practices in situ. Given that I interviewed most participants, I can hardly say that I had an ethnographic perspective on their work; however, through questioning and personal reflections, I was able to document recurring practices and thinking processes across participant accounts. In the future, I would like a far more situated account of practice.

Although there are many educational settings that may include technology, the educational community needs to understand *why* virtual experiences can support learning and *how* this learning can actually happen. Understanding how games are designed and systems of knowledge embedded within them will fill out a picture of new forms of learning and ways of instantiating these forms in student learning.

Multimodality and Modal Learning

The chapter is built on a theory of multimodality (Jewitt 2008; Kress 1997, 2003; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001) and modal learning. A theory of multimodality allows for ideas to be represented through different modes, which includes but does not privilege writing. Such a perspective sees representation as crossing different ways of representing, that is, visual, oral, written, moving images, etc. Therefore, an idea can be drawn, embedded in interface, enacted, modeled, and spoken. These different possibilities that offer ways of representing can be called *modes*. A mode is one particular form in which it is possible to represent an idea. Sometimes it is easier to put an idea into a drawing rather than a piece of writing. This idea of

possibility in meaning making can be described as an *affordance*. An affordance describes the specific possibilities resident within a mode, whether these are determined by the material possibilities of the mode or the cultural possibilities (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001). Because there are options in terms of sound, image, language, and texture, there are more possibilities for meaning making. The shaping of meanings into modes is always culturally shaped, and it is materially and socially situated. This theory comes from the work of Kress (1997) and in his joint book with van Leeuwen *Reading Images* (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996). These books explored how it is possible to make meanings that are situated in social contexts but are spread across modes, that is, they are *multimodal*.

By putting together literacy with the multimodal, it is possible to see how a text has material qualities. Scholars have taken up the challenge of multimodal literacy (Flewitt 2008; Kress 1997; Jewitt and Kress 2003; Lancaster 2003; Stein 2003) and have illustrated in their research how meaning makers learn quite naturally through a variety of modes, sometimes in isolation and sometimes combined. When looking at meaning makers' intentions, a multimodal text also needs to acknowledge what lies behind the meaning, that is, what meaning makers bring to texts. This brings us back to the cultural qualities of texts. They are infused with meanings. By thinking about literacy as multimodal, it becomes a wider experience of not just words on the page but the feel of the page, the sound of a voice talking, and the curve in a drawing. Literacy, as a multimodal practice, is material.

If we accept that literacy can be seen as multimodal and as material, then it is possible to extrapolate material qualities in texts so that we know how to emulate these practices in our own meaning making. That is, how we can use a mode that best suits a composition when we produce texts. For a long time now, I have been interested in how producers choose modes to design and produce texts. Printed and digital texts alike rely on the affordances of modes to express meanings an author wants to express. Case in point, to access and extrapolate the perspectives of new media and digital technologies producers, Mary Sheridan and I interviewed producers to explore their logic and language for producing "texts" (toys, videogames, movies, TV shows) for the marketplace. Our research identified a framework comprised of four stages: spinning an idea into a design, designing the spin, remixing and converging the idea into branded items, and using social networking to promote the text and give it life. As a formula for text production, producers viewed these four stages as exhibiting what they call "fearless creativity." Learning in the twenty-first century implies these skills and a disposition for trial and error until you find the right design and fitting modes to express the spin. Design and its nuances and its logic are central to a twenty-first-century literacy mind-set.

Design and Production

Design has been a focus for much research in multimodality and multiliteracies. Love (2004) argues that design has both conceptual and expressive features. Albers and Harste (2007) believe design is "one of the most important parts of multimodal

expression because it encourages imagination, vision, and problem solving, when learners become designers” (p. 13). Design involves deliberate decisions regarding modes of expression. The New London Group views design as “the concept of design emphasizes the relationships between received modes of meaning (available designs), the transformation of these modes of meaning in their hybrid and intertextual use (Designing), and their subsequent to-be-received status (The Redesigned)” (pp. 304–305). The New London Group (2000) delineates six areas of design: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal. Each area constitutes a mode (form) in the process of meaning making. Visual design includes images, layouts, or screen formats (Love 2004; Merchant 2007). Audio involves music and sound effect contributions to meaning making. Body language and behavior are involved in gestural design. Spatial design incorporates elements of the environmental spaces. Multimodal design incorporates all in the meaning-making process. From design comes the concept of enacting design through production.

Production refers to the creation and the organization of representation—in other words both the product (text) and the technical skill used during the design process (Albers and Harste 2007). Changes in communication have resulted in new relationships between the production of texts and dissemination of texts across an array of media and technologies, which has resulted in reconfiguring the circumstances, operations, and functions of authorship and audience (Jewitt 2008). For the New London Group (2000), production involves the following decisions: delivery, modality, transitivity (choice of words), vocabulary and metaphor, nominalization process (how actions, qualities, assessments, and logical connections are turned into an ontological state), information structures of presentation, and logical and global coherence.

Videogaming, Design, and Pedagogy

Reflecting on design and design-based thinking, videogames encourage the expression of user’s cultural backgrounds and traditions for “information and resource exchange” (Pinkett 2000, p. 4) across broad contexts that engage a reciprocal and developmental relationship between individuals and communities, and literacy research supports this relationship. For example, in *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, Gee (2003) offers an in-depth look at what goes on when children use videogames and the ways that videogames teach our children how to conceive and use language. Gee’s detailed analysis of what goes on cognitively and linguistically when children use videogames is a powerful rethinking of the uses of console games. Considering how videogames are designed and how they are played, Gee argues that there are 36 important learning principles built into videogames including how we form identities, how we connect sign systems, how we solve problems, and how we learn nonverbal cues.

Aarseth (2000) argues that game players learn both technological and programming skills through game play, both through the user interface design and the development of three-dimensional programming techniques. Galloway (2006) adds to the discussion arguing that gaming comes into being at the hand of the players who must control, strategize, and execute game play. There are also theorists who argue that contemporary studies on literacy education neglect to acknowledge sophisticated and nuanced practices involved in game play (Gander 2000; Dawes and Dumbleton 2001; Egenfeldt-Nielsen 2005; Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2008; Walsh 2010). After all, digital games are systems (Juul 2003; Salen and Zimmermann 2004) with rules (Järvinen 2003) that players engage in and follow. Yet in addition to interaction with the game itself, players engage with information about the game, the game industry, and other players to generate strategic moves, thereby promoting (Consalvo 2007) reflection in action (Schon 1983; Salen 2007; Walsh 2010).

Gaming also promotes procedural literacy (Bogust 2007), a term which encompasses gamers' understandings of the rules of game systems and the significance of these rules. For example, Salen (2007) talks about "game-play literacy" as literacies that compel gamers to strategize, navigate, and redesign structures during their participation. Consalvo (2007) argues that gamers acquire a sophisticated gaming capital together with an accumulation of cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu 1984). Consalvo (2007) used the concept of *paratexts* as a means to study digital game culture: they are systems of media products that work to frame digital utilization. From a critical perspective, these paratexts "provide a focus for critical discussion, talk and textual production, thereby acting as a pivotal point in the social and cultural lives of many players" (Newman 2005, p. 50). Thus, they provide an effective segue into a critical discourse of gaming, corporate culture, and media manipulation.

Researching, playing, and designing digital games place students into new literacy domains that are positioned outside traditional reading, writing, and multimodal design practices, because games are enacted through game play and actions in virtual and non-virtual worlds. Playing digital games and engaging in game design involve understanding that taking actions has consequences. Game play and design require players to, on their own and/or collaboratively, explore and negotiate risk, possibility, identity, and subjectivity in new and emerging virtual worlds.

With all of this research attention on videogames and what videogames can teach us about learning (Gee 2003), there has been relatively little attention on what it takes to produce a successful videogame. Because an understanding of the hidden folk wisdom and know-how of game producers can help educators replicate the same composition and design practices in their own lessons. The following two case studies of videogame designers examine the choices producers must make to engage users and the modes they find most appropriate to accomplish their goals.

Building Gaming Worlds: David Elton

David Elton has worked in the videogame industry for two decades, entering the industry before there were even degrees in videogame design.² Originally trained in theater, Elton had every intention to act professionally, but, through serendipity, he ended up in the videogame industry. Following a Fordist work model, Dave started his career from the ground up. For his first job in gaming, Dave worked at a videogame store in British Columbia called Games Exchange, which allowed shoppers to play videogames before purchasing them. Because he needed to familiarize himself with various genres of videogames such as fighter games, first-person shooter games, and action–adventure games to help customers, Elton accumulated hours upon hours of game-play time before and after work, developing in the process a holistic sense of game design logic. After moving back to Ontario to manage a Games Exchange store in Markham, Elton ultimately decided to tackle all domains videogame work.

Elton worked inside the videogame and software industry for some time in the United States and Canada designing and producing videogames, acquiring knowledge and expertise in purchasing, selling, designing, producing, scheduling, and project management. Elton has worked for grassroots videogame designers all the way up to software juggernauts like Microsoft. He has worked for large game designers like Silicon Knights to working freelance for local and international game designers. He avows to having “had the gamut of experience in Canada and the United States.” In this time, Elton developed a comprehensive view of the evolution of gaming from a fringe hobby to a part of everyday life.

There are always moments in interviews that stand out, and one moment during the Elton interview that, in retrospect, seems emblematic of his philosophy of production occurred when he discussed an art class he had during his theater training. Elton shared the anecdote from an art professor that captures a notion at the heart of game design, *touchpoints*:

So one of the best examples I was given, I guess, was an example an art professor gave me, he went to his class, and he said, alright, class, next week I want you to come back with a fantastic painting, and the students came back the next week, he found a lot of them really, really struggled with what it is they were going to create because they had options, it was completely wide open. And he said, ok, class, this week what I'm going to do is, I'm asking you to paint a bowl of apples, I want you to paint this bowl of apples any way you want to, but it has to be focused on this bowl of apples, and the following week they came back with some of the most creative paintings that he'd ever seen from his students because they'd been given one sort of touchpoint, and it all had this one little focus, so some went realistic, some people went completely abstract but they all had that one framework. March 2011

Only by explicitly framing an idea—focus on the bowl of apples—could art students find their style and interpretation for the assignment. Touchpoints bracket off modal representation. Rather than having a wide field of interpretation, the

²I use the actual names of interview participants in the Working with Multimodality project.

art professor narrowed the task and in many ways the modes that could be used. Elton kept returning to the notion of touchpoints in the interview—as a process of narrowing the modes that could be used to paint the bowl of apples.

Elton's description of touchpoints can be seen in his discussion of the videogame industry. A veteran in the business, Elton gave me a panoptic view of where the gaming industry was and where it is going. Where Elton used to focus on how to structure an idea, feature, or license in a gaming world, he now helps and often manages junior game designers working through issues and troubleshooting their designs. From this patchwork of experience, Elton described how gamers build gaming worlds by communicating an idea.

According to Elton, a concept within videogame design is “world building” for a player:

When it comes to an idea for a story or concept or for *building a world* [my emphasis] with a player, designers construct worlds around stories. One of the things that's in the toolbox for every designer is being able to communicate, and it is the same for a producer or people working in teams. You need to be able to communicate your ideas in ways that different people will be able to understand. March 2011

Recognizing the importance of crafting worlds in videogames, Elton stresses the value of communication for game designers. When he talks about communication, Elton is referring to how designers *communicate* a world to gamers. During our interview, Elton talked about how immersive and augmented worlds can be communicated visually, orally, or through prototypes, but he emphasized, “a core idea needs to be communicated.” Throughout our interview, he peppered in concrete examples of communicating an idea. Ideas are materialized through modes in game interfaces.

During our interview, Elton talked about how designers focus on touchpoints when designing a game. The first touchpoint Elton touched on is spatial modes. He did not refer to a specific game that he has worked on, but we spoke in generalities about games and he offered some examples. With spatial games, designers construct interface for games based on how a gamer might navigate through a space and how to create more and more challenges with space and shapes as a player moves up levels. For example, the *World of Goo* is a game of strategy where players figure out a trajectory for globs of goo to travel through cylinders and rods before they enter a vat. At first, the game is fairly easy, but it gets steadily more complex as you move up levels. Think back to the days of Tetris, and anticipating, within seconds, where a square can fit with other squares, this game works on a similar principle. The starting point of spatially dominant games is to communicate the story of moving around a confined space through an object and a system. The dominant mode at work is spatial and geometric, and designers play up this mode when they design spatially ruled games. With the *World of Goo* example (Dave Elton did not work on the game itself), a gamer starts from the idea of figuring out how to launch balls across a space and conceptualize space and cylinders to find the best, fastest, most efficient path to launch the goo. The premise of the game is to figure out the most expeditious way to shoot goo into a cylinder and the nature of space and obstacles become increasingly more complex as you move up levels.

Whatever touchpoint or mode dominates in a game, there needs to be a story communicated. Throughout our conversation, Elton kept going back to the notion of “bounded story worlds.” Essentially, there needs to be boundaries within the structure and story of a videogame that emerge from the actual practices used and understood to problem solve through a game. Boundaries might include characters having a certain, quite specific palette and illustration style to match the overall aesthetic of the game. Elton gave the example of the licensed *Xmen* story and how characters such as Cyclops look and act a certain way within the story. Bounded worlds have lines around the content and structure that create consistency and coherence throughout the game. Licensed videogames such as the *Xmen* game are helpful examples because only certain sorts of actions can take place and certain kinds of characters can inhabit these worlds.

A mode that dominates licensed stories like *Xmen* is illustration style. Elton talked about illustration as a mode when he discussed his work on the *Xmen* videogame. Elton discussed how modes can create story boundaries. With the *Xmen* example, the distinct illustration style of *Xmen*, and Marvel Comics characters more broadly, make the characters singular and tied to the storylines. Through the printed comics, television show, and movies, *Xmen* characters have come to look and sound a certain way, and relying on this aesthetic helps game designers frame the gaming world. A technical term in the media industry for migrating a product or license to another media channel is *transmedia*.

Elton talked about the notion of *transmedia* where stories move from one media to another media. Kress (1997) talks about “transduction,” and Siegel (2006) talks about transmediation—both referring to a process when one mode switches into another mode. That is, moving a character like Cyclops from an *Xmen* Marvel comic into a videogame interface not only changes what the character can do through three dimensions and moving images but also slightly changes the aesthetic. When modes shift from one medium (printed cartoons or moving image) to another medium (e.g., videogame), the properties and affordances of modes shift. During our interview, Elton talked about working on the *Xmen* videogame and how they were allowed more design license and expansion of modes by introducing new characters:

... for Xmen, we have the universe. We're fortunate enough in that we're able to create some original characters for it, which are actual playable characters in addition to the Marvel characters, but these characters still need to fit inside the universe. March 2011

Elton here directly refers to how modes need to “fit inside the universe” of the *Xmen* aesthetic and illustration style, yet there is some latitude to distinguish characters by introducing new characters into the gaming universe. Although there is an in-place aesthetic, idea, type of character, and storyline in *Xmen* that cannot be tinkered with, the fact that these characters need to be transferred into a new, interactive paratext or digital world offers an artistic design license that game designers can use to create new characters who fit “inside the universe.” In Elton’s case, this meant adhering to the integrity of the original, preexistent story style, aesthetic, and dispositions of Marvel characters within the *Xmen* world even as new characters emerged.

Embedded within the *Xmen* example, there are practices used with modes—customizing characters and elements/modes (e.g., distinctive features, superpowers, aesthetics, etc.) about characters. For example, when Elton met the *Xmen* producers, he and his team asked about introducing new characters into the *Xmen* videogame version to give players a chance to construct and customize their own character to their liking. As Elton elaborated “they’re not necessarily playing as Cyclops, although they can. But he already exists [within the larger media text in the movie, etc.]. There’s not a lot of customization to that, whereas if we have an original character as long as we’re inside the overall guidelines of what makes a Marvel superhero.” As a result, according to Elton, customization is key to gaming experience because it is a way of imbuing subjectivity into the experience. “Customizing” refers to the act of choosing specific modes (e.g., illustration, color, movements, vectors, etc.) to give across or materialize a particular kind of message. Drawing on the customization practices, Elton argued that players find it more relaxing to work within existing characters; having said that, a winning videogame usually gives players an option to either work with predetermined, storied worlds or create their own characters.

Another transmedia example is *Transformers* that was converted into a videogame in 2009. Noting that *Transformers* characters are robots in disguise, Elton explained how the core idea of the story needed to underpin the design of the videogame. In other words, a designer must work “within the boundaries of that universe” and allow for characters to transform into some kind of robot. A designer can, for example, develop a character who is an object such as a car or lamppost that turns into a robot. As with the *Xmen* example, the characters in the *Transformers* story have a variety of practices that accompany their modal representation—heavy weaponry or light weaponry that robots use in battles. Gamers have the option of unlocking color schemes when they get to certain levels. Where the *World of Goo* is about spatial dimensions and the *Xmen* game is about action and adventure and taking on characters that fight enemies, the *Transformers* videogame is far more about strategizing and using the right tools in the right moment.

What the transmedial movement from *Transformers* the movie, toy, and books to the videogame signaled is a shift from an elaborate storyline to more about applying an understanding of characterization to a gaming strategizing through levels.

The movement of modes and affordances of modes was a recurring topic in the Elton interview. Framed as remix, Elton and I talked about how game designers build on modes in other texts and embed and often couple them with other modes. Modal remix and convergence works on these principles whereby game designers combine vestiges of characters or texts or actions that have a distinct color palette, texture, expression, and recognizable backdrop and they add these modes to game interface. For example, a lead character in a videogame could have Scarlett Johansson’s body type with an Angelina Jolie head, and the character could appear in a desert setting with traces of a Pixar film background. Through bricolage, designers construct characters and backdrops that are remixed and converged

versions of other texts. Elton talked about how gamers combine modes from other media texts to create immersive environments:

It happens actually in a variety of ways, so, part of it is, the main reason why that is successful is because what you're trying to do is communicate your idea in a way that people can understand or grasp, and one of the easiest ways to do that is to come up with examples everyone is familiar with. So if you say, so for example, if you say, I want this to taste like chicken, pretty much everyone knows what chicken tastes like so, by using examples from film or a very popular film or very popular painting or a very popular movie, people have a level of understanding of what that idea is about, be it tone, be it what the audience is, what it is they want the player to be feeling or experiencing during that time, so by taking all these examples from different media and applying them together. I know a lot of studios use film as a reference, so, say, I want this to be as epic as Star Wars, you know, and have this, or I ordered this as more of a period piece, and bring examples, so here's in the '40s, and just so here's an example from Ice Age, so that sort of idea. There are other cases, so when you're doing concept art, for example, you're trying to define what that visual look is on your board or object or character, you know, being able to take ideals from different places, so I'm looking for a character. I'm looking for, you know, Angelina Jolie's mouth, you know, the hairstyle off of Scarlet Johanssen, or the overall body build of Julianna Moore. March 2011

Aspects of videogames such as a character's hairstyle looking like Scarlett Johansson are a way of taking a mode and transplanting it into another place giving it new meaning but reminding the player and/or viewer of the original character.

One of the best examples of designing a game around a mode is an award-winning videogame that Elton worked on, *Need for Speed*. The dominant mode in *Need for Speed* is sound. Designed with sound and audio as the focal mode, much of the success of the game relies on the mode of sound signaling the experience of driving a car. *Need for Speed* relies on sound—accelerating, stopping, and honking to communicate the world of the road to players. Elton elaborates:

... the way that they (designers) went about it, the way they realized that part of the sense of driving a car is the audio, so when you step on the gas, feeling of power, slamming on the brakes going around the corner, the sound of the wheels against the concrete, a lot of feedback for the player but also it helped give a sense of speed and power, it's realistic but it's also emphasized. March 2011

Whereas the *Xmen* videogame might rely on images or actions, *Need for Speed* relies heavily on audio, so Elton and his fellow designers said they charted in detail the kinds of driving practices that gamers would use and the sounds that accord with these movements:

That was very much a deliberate thing [R: ok]. So they actually took cars, put a ton of mics on them, took them to a track, and thought about what the sound is like in real life [R: right], through a wide variety of situations, so light load, heavy load, squealing the tires, doing donuts, heavy acceleration, light acceleration, so they had a wide gamut of what those sounds are for a car. Then the audio engineers and the sound designers would then take those sound effects and emphasize them where [muffled] you get a real solid feel for driving a car, only slightly exaggerated [R: ok]. We had basic interactive sound in that we had musical sound tracks that were divided up into layers, so, a lot of video games, they have a licensed piece of music, they just play the whole piece of music. What we did we actually got the original files for the music so we had all the original tracks so we could pull out the guitar, we could pull out the drums, we could pull out the vocals. So what we were able to

do was change the music dynamically with what was happening inside the game. So if you were going full board and you knew that the player was going really fast, but when they hit a jump we pulled back almost all of the audio so it was just a little sense of the music that's playing, and pump up the sound effects for all the wind and everything, and the end result is, you get a sense of, it just really supported the idea of 'ohmygod' I am flying, I am 100 feet, 200 feet above the ground", and the thing that's really, at that point we're changing the camera. March 2011

By explaining how he and his design team mixed audio with visuals, Elton shows how producers carefully craft a bounded story through dominant (sound) and subordinate modes (visuals).

There is much that we can learn from Elton's case study and seasoned experience as a videogame producer. Brought together, Elton unravels a process that happened working within an immersive world. First of all, once there is an idea for a game such as building on an existing, perhaps licensed story or fulfilling actions or a repertoire of practices, then there need to be touchpoints that materialize this world. Does the world have a darker, more abstract aesthetic, or does the immersive world use bold, fun colors to represent levity and light-hearted play? From touchpoints, the story develops and there needs to be a structure and boundaries to the story. If the settings and characters are good and evil illustrated in darker, more somber colors, then it would not make sense to introduce comic, pastel characters. Is sth missing from this sentence? Modes need to match and adhere to story boundaries. What is more, modes exude the internal meanings and thinking systems. Take the example of *Need for Speed*, which uses sound to signal, the dominant practice to play and be competent, maybe even skillful at the game. Sound and particularly the sound of speed turning corners or making jumps across canyons provide gamers with feedback on game play. In this way, modes in videogames materialize immaterial, ephemeral experiences such as driving or battling a Cyclops through movement, colors, interactivity, etc. In the next case study, the research participant offers a videogame genre or medium and how its materiality shapes the boundaries and storyline.

Mobile Gaming: Kevin Kee

Kevin Kee is an academic who developed a successful augmented reality game called the *Niagara 1812 Heritage Tour*. Similar to Elton, Kee entered the gaming industry by the backdoor through a job that eventually led him to technology in general and gaming in particular. Kee completed a PhD in History in 1998, and when he graduated there were very few academic jobs, so Kee worked at the National Film Board (NFB) in Montreal for several years, where his main job entailed building a history website. Although Kee used the Internet during his graduate studies, it wasn't until he joined NFB that Kee began to use and understand virtual environments. At that time, all the NFB knew about was film and printed text, so Kee being "conversant and somewhat capable just elevated" his status to

Web authority within the organization. And it was in this capacity that Kee pushed NFB into augmented experiences and immersive worlds.

Responsible for building the history website, Kee was ushered, “theoretically and technically,” into the Web world. Reading scholars like Marshall McLuhan, Kee gravitated from conventional ways of doing history to a digital humanities approach to history. Noting that he was “underwhelmed” by the strategy games he found, he began to think about strategy games that might help learners think about history as process, one that “supported a system analysis of history writ large”:

... what I felt was there was very little history going on in these strategy games, so that what one was doing actually was learning how to play a strategy game, was learning how to, for instance, weigh resource allocation – that’s basically what strategy games do – and how your present decisions will affect your future within the game environment, and other people are now making this case, that what you’re learning is to play a strategy game, you’re not really learning much history [R: ok]. It’s incidental, which doesn’t mean it can’t happen but it’s incidental. So, why spend all that time on it if it’s incidental? Anyway, what that got me back to think was I kind of liked reality, and I thought the real world was a really compelling place. February, 2011

Working within a history mind-set, Kee recognized that there was great potential for thinking and learning in terms of history within augmented reality games, which triggered an epiphany that augmented reality has potential for teaching and learning, but not gaming as it is typically conceived. Built on the affordances of digital, immersive, embodied experiences, Kee envisioned a mobile gaming environment where players could learn and use historic information to strategically move a character through screens.

After some years at the National Film Board and taking a university faculty position, Kee became a research chair in digital humanities at another university and that move jettisoned him into the world of research and scholarship in virtual, immersive environment. It is at this point in his career that he set out to pursue his interest in teaching history through augmented reality. After attending a session at a conference by a team of researchers at MIT who designed an immersive, teaching environment, Kee decided to design and produce his own videogame. He gathered a team across different disciplines, both nonindustry and industry people, to develop the game. Kee’s team consisted of an artist, a journalist, a programmer, and himself, as the historian. Together the team began *Niagara 1812 Heritage Tour*, which ultimately led to the Apple App that thousands of players use.

What dawned on Kee during the process of developing the game is that history is best experienced in situ, in the place of origin where the events took place, and that can only happen if a device is mobile and you go to the historical sites. Contemporaneously with developing the game, there was a proliferation of smartphones, so what naturally happened is that the development team produced a mobile gaming platform that is action–adventure and at the same time a learning tool. You get on the game and move to different locations where a player can simulate historic events and battles, reliving the moment on your smartphone. The videogame morphed into an easily accessible, mobile platform to present and teach history. The result was an augmented reality game called the *Niagara 1812 Heritage Tour*, a

game that allows users/players to move around different parts of Niagara with their smartphones to play games that teach historical information about the area.

Kee explained the inspiration behind the game's infrastructure was a desire to help players experience history in an unpredictable way: "what happens in these kinds of situations, is that people interact on the street with one another in ways that we cannot predict, and so there's an element of unpredictability that if you recognize it and incorporate it, can really transform the experience." And his early adoption of apps versus console-led gaming allowed Kee to exploit a design model built on the affordances of a format—a mobile device whose form dictates function and tacit practice and produces a mobile version that requires players to move around and engage with real settings.

Recognizing the success of such a game relied on a portable device with visual impact, I interviewed the artist, Anthony Perri, who developed the aesthetic for the game's visuals. He described the bumpy development behind the visual evolution of the lead avatar in the game, Isaac, who modeled after Isaac Brock, a British Army officer and administrator who was assigned to Canada in 1802:

Yeah, so at first the avatar was sort of realistic looking. It looked like an old drawing. It looked like... maybe it had Isaac if he was on a dollar bill or something and as we kept going it just felt like it wasn't working with what Isaac had turned into because the development changed drastically half way through when this became less about story and characters and more about the city. Isaac was more of an A.I. and I always thought that realistic thing was not iconic enough, so getting them to agree with me on turning him into a 'cartoony' icon required me to write up a two page document with examples and what-not and the original concept for the new look was much different. It was a lot more simple I guess. It was sort of like a Lego head. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1 Lego character's head (March 2011)

Fig. 2 Screenshot on iPhone of the Niagara 1812 Tour



In Fig. 2, there is a screenshot of the *Niagara 1812 Tour* with Isaac as a cartoony Lego head providing clues as players work their way through the game as they move through real settings associated with different parts of the game.

Once Perri worked out the game's avatar, he turned his attention to the interface, which needed to be simple, functional, and professional enough to appear alongside other iPhone apps. The key to the design was to make it small and haptic (i.e., as in designed with touch-tap screen logic). The dominant mode of the videogame is visual coupled almost equally with strong audio. The game needed to be fun and cool and not like a textbook or remotely didactic, pedagogical. The smaller surface meant that every design needed to account for form. Consequently, design teams had to try out different illustrations, particularly of Isaac, before they established the final avatar.

When Kee and his team designed the interface for the game, he wanted to keep it simple with a neutral background: browns, grays, monochromatic tones, and sepia tones that signal history and historic events and sites. A user can either roam using GPS to pinpoint your location and identify nearby heritage sites, or a user can solve a mystery in quest mode where you can access maps and pictures and decode puzzles carved into buildings. It is a functional interface, the antithesis of the *Xmen* and *Transformers* videogames because the interface does not use illustration styles and details for effects; instead it uses interface to get you somewhere and to use the outside world as the focus for game play.

In this way, the *Niagara 1812 Heritage Tour* adopts a particular historical epistemology, one that uses immersive worlds to find tangible, concrete, material historic sites. The videogame embeds simulations, role play, and strategy to compel the gamer to go out into the world to find history. The dominant mode for the videogame is mobility as opposed to a large, immersive world. The game can be

viewed on a small screen that you can transport, and this mobility is part of the tacit experience of playing the game.

What the case study illustrates is how a videogame producer adopts a philosophy of game design: keep it simple, make it portable. Unlike the panoramic view that Elton provided, Kee intellectualized the process of creating an immersive environment to make an epistemic point: “a videogame that is built for a small window” so that it can be used in everyday life and as a part of tacit practice. Kee developed the app during the nascent stages of the iPhone and iPad, before these technologies jettisoned as daily artifacts. Kee and his team developed the videogame when other game designers and producers were building consoles and even “massive structures that you enter into, like big caves.” What the Kee case study tells us about learning is that you can take a mobile device like an iPad and iPhone and use it with street sociability and as a part of social practice. Taking the immaterial nature of digital worlds and coupling them with material worlds such as a building or historic sites opens up gaming and technology to leverage real, lived worlds with virtual worlds.

Conclusion

Theory and research suggest that videogames can function as academic and social resources. For example, in addition to helping players assume roles that may be unavailable to them in conventional forums, videogames can give players an opportunity to experiment and learn without consequences that often affect academics, involve play, expand traditional constructs for learning, encourage speech genre and new syntactic structures that accompany emergent literacy, and promote interactivity. What gets less attention, however, are the strategies for creating the games and other interactive forums that can engage students in productive, enjoyable, thoughtful ways.

The two case studies in the chapter reveal ways of framing modes and modal composition that can be funneled back into the classroom. Notions such as bounded story worlds, privileging touchpoints, and even making technologies a part of the social fabric of classrooms can inform literacy teaching and learning.

No matter how much we speculate on the impact of digital texts and the practices that they invite, there is a need to figure out digital logic and epistemologies through methods of design and production. Figuring out design and production logic may not lead to a pedagogic revolution in literacy education, but it will offer new templates and models for composing and viewing texts. Listening to design and production stories introduces learning models that start to break down traditional conceptions of learning and understanding texts.

There are questions and issues that this research raises. For instance, is it really possible to apply some of these practices and thinking processes within

(continued)

more conventional notions of making meaning such as reading and writing activities in-school? Or do we know enough about design and about haptic play to harness them to theories of learning and cognition? Or, in terms of research methods, is it legitimate to claim that I captured an insider perspective by interviewing professionals and basing my analyses on their reflections? Further research can probe these issues and questions, but the chapter goes some way in presenting an alternative way of thinking about how interactive spaces shape knowledge systems.

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2.7 “Enabling” Participatory Governance in Education: A Corpus-Based Critical Analysis of Policy in the United Kingdom

Jane Mulderrig

Introduction

The idea of the “enabling state” has emerged in recent decades as a way of theoretically conceptualizing and politically enacting advanced liberal governance. At its heart lies the assumption that the primary goal of the state is international competitiveness and that this is best achieved through economic liberalism and labor market activation. The result is a growing emphasis on “productive social policy” in which the enabling state provides “workfare”¹ incentives and structural opportunities for the active citizen to work. Framed in the rhetoric of reciprocity, of “rights and responsibilities” (Giddens 1998), this brings about a new *contractual relation* between citizen and state. In an era when the state is no longer perceived to be capable of offering economic guarantees and social protections, the weight of responsibility shifts to the individual. In 1990 the OECD proposed the “Active Society” as the future for social policy, in which the primary goal of governments is no longer guaranteeing full employment but facilitating full employability. The main policy instruments to achieve this are education and training alongside (limited and contingent) income support, whereby the state “foster[s] economic opportunity and activity for everyone in order to combat poverty, dependency and social exclusion” (OECD 1990, p. 8). In terms of the *social relations of governance*,

¹Briefly, “workfare” is an alternative to traditional social welfare in which the state provides monetary protection against unemployment. Designed to stimulate some form of social contribution from recipients, workfare schemes have been operationalized in different ways. They also vary in the nature of the activities required (e.g., demonstrable efforts to seek work, interviews to determine “fitness to work” among those with disabilities, mandatory training or education, or compulsory unpaid work) and the levels of coerciveness entailed. Because the workfare principle is inherently vulnerable to exploitation, it is a controversial mechanism for social protection.

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this entails new forms of “active, participatory” citizenship coupled with a more devolved, “enabling” model of political leadership. In other words, advanced capitalist societies have, it is claimed, undergone a fundamental reconfiguration of the distribution of *social power, roles, and relations* in the state. This chapter uses critical discourse analysis to explore the extent to which this was historically brought about in the UK through education policy discourse.

Alongside these postulated changes in the relations of governance, there has been an increasing emphasis in advanced capitalist economies on educational investment *as* economic investment. This is particularly explicit in the ambitions set out in the Lisbon Agenda (2000) for the European Union to become “the most dynamic, competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world, with sustainable growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.” At the heart of this competitive economy is a new commodity: knowledge. With a postindustrial shift in primacy from physical to intellectual labor, growth is now seen to depend increasingly on the production and application of knowledge (Bell 1973; Castells 1998). It follows that in a knowledge economy individual success for the “active citizen” (and protection from social and economic exclusion) lies in the ability to acquire and market this commodity better than one’s competitors. In effect, investment in learning is now seen as a key political mechanism for achieving economic growth and social cohesion. This has inevitable consequences for the perceived value, function, and content of schooling, fundamentally challenging the educational status quo and generating structural and ideological pressures to align education more closely with economic policy goals. Here again this process relies on reshaping the roles and relations of education so as to foster the lifelong learning citizen, whose responsibility is to safeguard her future “employability” through the accumulation of skills (Brine 2006). The case study outlined therefore focuses on the historic negotiation of the roles and relations of governance in UK education policy discourse during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In particular the analysis examines how their historic reconfiguration helped shape a new policy hegemony in which an apparent consensus on, and thus legitimacy for, policy goals is construed through an inclusive governmental identity. At the same time an “enabling” and distinctly managerial model of governance progressively reconfigures the balance of power in education towards a more devolved, managerial model. A computer-aided approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used to highlight the systematic grammatical forms through which these transformations are historically enacted and naturalized in policy discourse.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. I begin by discussing CDA as a distinctive approach to interpretive analysis and its potential contribution to critical social research. A key characteristic of CDA is that it explicitly acknowledges the (normative) position of the researcher and the interpretive process in the research. In other words, CDA has an explicitly emancipatory agenda in which critical *interpretation* of empirical objects is seen as a mechanism both for explaining social phenomena and for changing them. This explicitly interventionist stance sets CDA apart from some other approaches to social science, while it is nevertheless committed to the same levels of scientific rigor. In this chapter, I therefore argue that rather than a discrete stage in the research process,

interpretation is integral to the multilayered, iterative methodology that typifies CDA. In essence this approach involves a continual movement between, and critical reflection upon, the different stages and levels of the research (formulation of the research object or “problem,” selection of appropriate data, identification of relevant conceptual and procedural tools with which to analyze them, assessment of the significance and normative implications of the findings).

CDA is inherently interdisciplinary, combing a theory of discourse and a range of (always variable) text analytical methods with social and political theories relevant to the object of inquiry in order to contextualize and interpret its findings. Thus the social context of the data under investigation is always crucial to the interpretive process. In the next section, I therefore present a more detailed account of the historical context of this case study, framed in a political economic theorization of specific transformations in the British welfare state (Jessop 2002; Hay 1996, 1999). This account of the political economic context of the case study is itself a theoretically informed *interpretation* of the social practices (of educational governance) under investigation. Moreover, this theoretical account was used as the lens through which the research questions were refined, the foci of textual analysis identified, and the significance of the findings *interpreted*. Thus at every stage of the research process, the object of inquiry was shaped through processes of theoretical and methodological *interpretation*. Reflecting this integration, I do not treat it here as a separate element of the research, but rather point to its relevance *throughout* the research process.

Following a more general account of the historical context of this study, I briefly discuss the rationale for focusing on, and questions formulated in order to do so, the changing roles and relations of neoliberal governance as constructed in education policy discourse. I begin with a description of the combined corpus-based methodology developed for this particular study, outlining the procedures this involved. I then present the findings from the research, drawing on the political economic context of the data in order to interpret their potential significance. I conclude with a brief reflection on the insights afforded by the interpretive analytical process of CDA into the reality of so-called enabling, participatory forms of educational governance and the salient role played by discourse in their enactment. In particular, I suggest that as advanced liberal democracy moves towards greater emphasis on “reflexive, participatory” governance and “active, responsible” citizenship, critical language awareness is vital for the defense of democratic freedoms and the promotion of alternative visions for education.

Critical Discourse Analysis as Interpretive Method in Educational Research

CDA is an approach to social scientific research that brings a detailed account of the role of language (and other forms of semiosis) in social life. In particular it offers a dialectical theory of discourse that recognizes its socially constitutive potential

without reducing social practices (and their analysis) to “mere signification.” Combining detailed textual analysis with theoretically informed accounts of the phenomena under investigation, CDA identifies the processes by which particular ways of using language (re)produce social practices and help privilege certain ways of doing, thinking, and being over others. The approach has its origins in Linguistics, although unlike some branches of the discipline, it is not a discrete discipline with a relatively fixed set of methods. Instead it is best seen as a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement that includes a variety of approaches, theoretical models, and research agendas (for recent overviews, see Fairclough et al. 2011; in education Rogers et al. 2005). What unites them is, broadly, a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and social change. The way I engage with CDA is mainly influenced by Fairclough’s discourse–dialectical, critical realist approach (2003, 2005; Fairclough et al. 2002) and shares with it a research interest in investigating the impact of broad processes of social and political change (here characterized in relation to advanced liberalism). Other approaches to CDA have developed in different theoretical and methodological directions depending on the foci of research. The variability in theory and method in fact stems from some important theoretical principles and ontological assumptions underpinning CDA. I begin by outlining these, as well as the analytical concepts this gives rise to, and discuss the interpretive and methodological implications for educational and other areas of social scientific research.

The Dialectics of Discourse

A key theoretical starting point for CDA is the dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between discourse and other nondiscursive elements that comprises any object of social research. It is this dialectical approach which leads CDA to engage explicitly with social scientific theory, since it seeks to correlate its close textual analyses with a view of social practice as something which people actively produce on the basis of shared norms of behavior that are partly constituted in language. Further, it seeks to interpret these practices in relation to the formation and transformation of social structures, thus making one of its research objectives the investigation of social change. In short, CDA seeks to explore the “ways in which discourse ‘(re)constructs’ social life in processes of social change” (Fairclough 2005, p. 76). A useful way to conceptualize the relationship between the discursive and nondiscursive is Harvey’s (1996) framework in which he posits six “moments” of social processes. An ontological distinction between different elements of the social world, the term “moment” is deliberately chosen to reflect their transient and contingent nature. Briefly, these moments are (1) beliefs/values/desires (our epistemology, ontology, and sense of self), (2) institutions (ways of formally organizing political and social relations on a more or less durable basis; e.g., education, religion, politics, the military, etc.), (3) material practices (the physical and built environment), (4) social relations, (5) power (internalizing

all other moments since it is a function of them), and (6) discourse.² Each of these moments has distinct properties; therefore researching them gives rise to distinctive academic disciplines. One thing that marks out CDA from other research traditions in Linguistics is its commitment to dialogue with other disciplines³ in order to understand the *relationship between* discourse and these other dimensions of social life.

Discourse is a crosscutting dimension in so far as it internalizes all other moments including values, beliefs, desires, and institutionalized ways of doing and being. The discourse moment is at its most potent as a mechanism of sociocultural reproduction when it is the most invisible and naturalized. Critically analyzing (here, policy) discourse therefore means highlighting the inconsistencies, assumptions, vested interests, values, and beliefs that sustain the relations of power it internalizes. CDA offers the analytical apparatus to do this, illuminating how different (representations and enactments of) moments of the social are textured into discourse. This “porous,” hybridizing quality of discourse (in CDA terms its “interdiscursivity”) is the conduit that allows the slippage of values, norms, practices, and power relations between different domains of social practice (e.g., from business management to education).

Key Concepts in CDA

In the previous section, we observed how the discourse moment internalizes all other moments, hence the ideological and material significance of language and why we should analyze it. Equally, because of its socially constitutive and constituted nature, it is possible and necessary to identify different levels of analytical abstraction. The analytical categories developed in CDA⁴ remind us that texts do not exist in a social vacuum but instead form part of a process through which discourse structures and enables social life. The concept of *social practices* will be familiar to many social scientists. It refers to the more or less stable, durable, *conventionalized* forms of social activity that help (re)produce our institutions and organizations.

²Here I am extrapolating from Harvey and for the sake of simplicity conflating his two-part label for this moment: “language/discourse.” The “language” aspect refers to the language system as an internally organized resource, whereas “discourse” is given a very wide definition that resembles the notion of semiosis: “the vast panoply of coded ways available to us for talking about, writing about, and representing the world.” I am using “discourse” to cover both concepts of the linguistic system and semiosis in all its forms (since the latter subsumes the former).

³Following Fairclough, this entails working in a “transdisciplinary” way incorporating where relevant the theories and methodologies of other disciplines (Fairclough 2005).

⁴The concepts I outline here are primarily associated with Fairclough’s approach to CDA (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 2003, 2005), although other approaches are similarly committed to working at different levels of abstraction and to focussing on the socially constituted and constitutive nature of discourse in its historical context.

In Fairclough's terms (2003), they mediate the possible (social structures) and the actual (social events). For example, the field of school education comprises a range of different practices like classroom teaching, assessment, professional training, financial management, policy making, curriculum and material design, and so on. Each has a discursive dimension and is partly characterized by its distinctive set of *discourse practices*. Taken together, these form the *order of discourse* of that social field or institution. These discourse practices essentially provide the conventionalized (but mutable and contestable) resources for doing, thinking, and being in a manner appropriate to participation in a particular institution or organisation. For this reason, socialization and explicit training in a particular social practice (e.g., teaching) involve learning particular ways of using language. Discourse practices can therefore be analyzed along three main dimensions: *genres* (ways of acting and interacting), *discourses*⁵ (ways of talking and thinking about the world from a particular perspective), and *styles* (ways of being or self-identifying). Different orders of discourse are characterized by their distinctive configuration of genres, discourses, and styles. Given that these are never entirely fixed, understanding change over time is about understanding changes in this configuration. More concretely discourse practices (made up of genres, discourses, and styles) are instantiated in particular *texts* (spoken or written language or other forms of semiosis).

A given text may be simultaneously analyzed in terms of genres, discourses, and styles. For example, a primary school lesson may exhibit a broadly "child-centered" educational philosophy through (1) a lesson structure that begins by presenting pupils with a problem to solve and provides the interactional space for them to do this (e.g., through group work) (*genre*), (2) explicitly representing the lesson as a discovery process in which the pupils will be "in the driving seat" (*discourse*), and (3) a less didactic, more informal style of teaching (*style*).⁶ This kind of analysis highlights the distinctive mix of genres, discourses, and styles in a given text, or its *interdiscursivity*. This important analytical concept allows us to capture the "porous" nature of discourse through which it incorporates diverse elements of its wider social context and therefore to investigate the role of discursive change in driving social change (Fairclough 2003, 2005). For example, a widely documented feature of recent change in the UK education system has been the increasing influence of market-oriented managerial practices and values. This phenomenon can be investigated through the lens of discourse by examining the interdiscursive links between these two fields and asking to what extent managerialism is enacted through new genres (appraisal, audit, league tables), articulated through particular discourses (leadership, excellence, accountability), and inculcated through

⁵Thus a distinction is made here between "discourse" as an ontological category in the general sense of language in use (and other forms of semiosis like visual images, symbols, gesture, etc.) and "discourse(s)" as an analytical category to identify the way in which language is used to talk about particular topics from a particular point of view. For example, we might distinguish between Republican and Democrat discourses on health-care provision in terms of how this policy problem is differently constructed depending on competing ideological perspectives.

⁶For an illustrative analysis of a political document using these three categories, see Farrelly (2010).

particular styles (manifest in the adjectives teachers feel obliged to use about themselves when completing their annual professional development review). We can equally examine the interdiscursive mix within a single text, exploring its hybrid mix of other genres, discourses, and styles. Interdiscursivity is an inherent feature of all discourse; in Bakhtin’s (1981) terms, texts are always “dialogical” containing traces of other texts. For this very reason, the discursive “import” of (competing) values, ideologies, and beliefs from other social fields may be readily accomplished, be routinized, and ultimately come to be accepted as common sense. Interdiscursive analysis allows us to render explicit these textual processes of “normalization” and to trace the sociocultural trajectories of the ideas and values contained in discourse practices. Our reasons for doing this may be explanatory (in order to explain social change or the persistence of certain practices) or normative (in order to question the (ethical) acceptability of the practices examined). In this sense, CDA can contribute a focus on discourse to normative or explanatory critical social science (see Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a).

Interpretive Methodology

CDA typically begins by looking at the social world in order to identify a particular topic or problem to investigate—we might call this “*stage 1*” (e.g., gendered patterns of participation in the primary classroom; the dominance of market competition in the organization of state education; the role of social class in educational attainment; the construction of cultural diversity in teaching materials; the increasing salience of “entrepreneurialism” in teachers’ professional identities; etc.). Next (“*stage 2*”) it draws on dialogue with other disciplines and theories that address the issue under investigation, incorporating their theories and methods as appropriate in order to (a) theoretically construct the object of research (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and (b) develop a model for analyzing it. The methodology, and the particular forms of detailed textual analysis, will vary from one research project to another depending on the object(s) of research. For example, analysis of political discourse in general will logically (though not exclusively) entail a particular emphasis on argumentation (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a). Thus having selected an object of research, the methodological procedure then involves identifying further discourse analytical concepts (like argumentation, transitivity, modality, metaphor, etc.) likely to support a critical exploration of the research object(s). In keeping with the dialectical–relational ontology underpinning CDA, its methodology is reflexive and abductive, continually moving back and forth between theory, method, and data in order to achieve “explanatory adequacy” in the research process. In this way the findings from the empirical analysis of text are set in dialogue with and interpreted in relation to (a theoretically informed understanding of) their social context. Part of this process involves making practical decisions about the validity and viability of the research design, as in the case study discussed below.

Case Study: Towards Neoliberalism in UK Education Policy

The following case study illustrates one way of working with the interpretive approach associated with CDA. The findings selected for discussion here focus on the New Labour government (1997–2005) but stem from a larger study exploring historical change in the representation and legitimation of the social relations of UK educational governance (Mulderrig 2009). The overall project used a corpus-based critical discourse approach to analyze education policy texts dating from the Heath government of 1972 to that of Blair in 2005, theoretically contextualizing the data with the aid of a neo-Marxist state theoretical account of the coevolution of the UK state and its regime of economic growth during this period (Hay 1996, 1999; Jessop 1999, 2002) and educational sociology to position the findings within this specific area of social policy (Dale 1989; Tomlinson 2001; Trowler 2003).

The Position of the Researcher

The motivation for this project (and the identification of the research problem) stemmed from quite personal judgments about the changing face (and language) of UK politics shaped by my own past experiences. Having spent several years abroad, I returned to Britain in 1998 to find Tony Blair at the head of the government and seemingly omnipresent in the media. I was struck by his charismatic style, which seemed to me so polished it actually drew attention to the rhetorical manipulation involved in political rule. When I later came to embark on a PhD, my aim was to try to place the “Blair phenomenon” in its wider political context by exploring the escalating use of promotional techniques used by the New Labour government in “selling” politics and policy. Returning to a long-held interest in education, my particular concern lay with the political discourse of education. I initially approached this problem, following Fairclough (1992a), through the concept of “marketization,” whereby the practices and content of education (or any other extra-economic social practice) are progressively reshaped according to (or colonized by) the practices and principles of the market and its institutions. The goal of my research would be to try to explain, through the lens of language, how this had come about. Thus having identified the social problem (“*stage 1*”), I attempted to construct a theoretical framework with which to explore this question. In the course of doing this, my research question became more defined around the concept of governance. In order to explain why marketization happens at all, one must first have an understanding of the significant role of the economy in shaping the social world. I thus arrived at a political economic understanding of the social phenomenon I wished to investigate, which took shape as the interdisciplinary framework for this case study. In turn, this shaped my understanding of the discourse practice I wished to investigate and the historical conditions of its development. Moreover, this critical inquiry into the wider context of political

discourse and its conditions, causes, and consequences refocused my line of inquiry into matters of power and legitimacy in the art of governing and the negotiation of change over time. As Rose (1999) observes, a crucial element in this is the discursive enactment of governmental identity. Thus, through social theoretical inquiry, I returned full circle to the question of self-presentation in political discourse. This time, however, my exploration of the discourse was shaped by an understanding of the historical conditions of its production. A study of historical change in government self-presentational style could now be understood in its sociopolitical context as an investigation of changes in the practice of governing. This logically suggested the textual analysis of policy discourse, which is a historically constant mechanism of educational governance through which educational leadership at a national level is enacted and legitimated. Thus my own *interpretation* informed the research at every stage: from initial perceptions about the political landscape, selection of the object of research, and its theoretical construction and refinement to the selection of data and methods and the use of political economic theory in order to historically contextualize and interpret the significance of the findings. I outline this (theoretically informed) understanding of the historical context in the next section.

The Political Economic Context

The historical context of the data examined in this study was a turbulent period of political and economic change as Britain, like other liberal western economies, instituted a range of state-restructuring strategies that enabled the progressive dominance of neoliberal, market-valORIZING principles in the exercise of state power. Key symptoms of this were progressive privatization and marketization of public services alongside labor market flexibilization and welfare retrenchment. In education, this entailed a reconfiguration in the balance and loci of power, progressively removing it from the middle tier (LEAs)⁷ and increasing it at the top (nationally imposed curricular and assessment regimes; government audits of individual and institutional performance) and at the bottom (creating a differentiated market among quasi-autonomous state schools).⁸ These interventions in the social practices of education necessarily ran alongside discursive change. As Dale (1989) has it, this period saw a change in the “vocabularies of motives”—the discourses that articulate the goals and values of education—redefining the nature and purposes of education.⁹ Thus the restructuring of UK state education was

⁷Local education authorities (the branch of local government traditionally responsible for overseeing the content and structure of state schooling).

⁸See West and Pennell (2002).

⁹See Mulderrig (2008) for an empirical study of this change in the “vocabularies of motives” in state education during the Thatcher, Major, and Blair governments (1979–2005).

in part enacted through a change in the orders of discourse of education. New genres emerged like Ofsted¹⁰ reports, league tables, and performance reviews; new discourses of accountability, competitiveness, and targets; and new entrepreneurial and competitive styles of participating in education for teachers, pupils, and parents alike (see Mulderrig 2003). This discursive restructuring was in part instituted and legitimated through policy discourse, a discursive barometer of the changing goals and values of educational governance. Thus, reflecting a progressive alignment between education and economic policy goals, from the early 1990s an insistent call to competitiveness became one of the key drivers underpinning education policy in the race to create a globally successful “knowledge economy” (Mulderrig 2008).

The focus of the proceeding discussion is the New Labour government, under which it is argued the neoliberal trajectory in education policy gained particular momentum. As observed at the outset of this chapter, at the heart of this is the assumption that education can and should be a key vehicle for productive social policy, linking economic competitiveness with an entrepreneurial and lifelong learning model of active citizenship. This core premise is reflected in the following extract: “the wealth of nations and success of individuals depend upon the imagination, creativity, skills and talents of all our people” (Department for Education and Skills 2005, p. 2). It assigns each citizen responsibility not just for her own but for the nation’s prosperity. By linking together in equal grammatical weighting national economic goals with individual well-being, it draws a relation of equivalence between the two. It also illustrates the centripetal movement of power in contemporary governance towards an “enabling” model in which the individual assumes greater levels of responsibility for their own welfare and economic prosperity, while the government assumes a more managerial and devolved form of power. I have elsewhere argued (Mulderrig 2011b) that this model of governance can be linked to the general idea of “soft power” in which political power becomes much less about coercion and much more about providing *incentives* and structural *opportunities* for others to act (Courpasson 2000; Nye 2004). This is a hegemonic form of power, attempting to secure consent for decisions rather than enforcing them. Drawing evidence from a corpus of New Labour policy discourse, I argue that such political “powers of attraction” rest heavily on a highly distinctive set of discursive strategies. Moreover I suggest that by emphasizing the importance of individual participation, this form of power also dilutes responsibility for government decisions, shielding it from criticism. Any renegotiation of power entails new roles, relations, and responsibilities for the actors involved (both individual and institutional). In the analytical terms outlined above, the power shift suggested by an “enabling” model of governance means new discursive ways of being (styles), doing/relating (genres), and thinking (discourses). The primary focus of the analysis is therefore on the way in which the government represents its own acts of governing, the institutional identity this entails, and the (power) relations this constructs.

¹⁰“Ofsted” is the abbreviation for the Office for Standards in Education. It is the government body responsible for carrying out regular inspections of schools in the UK.

Questions, Data, Methods, and Dilemmas

As explained above, the object of research in this study was progressively defined through dialogue with political economic theory. In general terms, this was a historical investigation of the (re)negotiation (through policy discourse) of power relations between state and citizen entailed by the emergence of a broadly neoliberal model of educational governance in the UK (alongside other advanced liberal economies; Peck 2001; Thrift 1997). An explanatory critique seeks to describe and understand both the significance and success of these postulated changes in their discursive dimension. Thus having identified and theoretically positioned the object (s) of research, it is necessary to formulate a set of linguistic questions through which to guide the analysis. Here again there are *methodological and practical dilemmas* posed for the researcher: What kind of and how much data will be appropriate? How do you decide which aspects of it to explore? What linguistic analytical tools will be appropriate? How do you know that your chosen focus for textual analysis isn’t biased? Some of these issues can be addressed through careful methodological decisions relating to the handling of the data (e.g., triangulation), while others call for a reflexive acknowledgement of the researcher’s interpretive role. In this study, the principal question about power and identity in educational governance was formulated in terms of the following linguistic questions:

1. Who are the prominent actors in education policy?
2. How and to what extent do grammatical patterns construct for these actors distinctive roles, relations, and differing degrees of agency?
3. Do these patterns change over time?

In this study, the decision was made to use a sociologically grounded model of textual analysis, “systemic functional grammar”¹¹ (Halliday 1994) to examine patterns of reference (construing actors and actions), agency (control over actions), and modality (commitment to propositions). The study also used Van Leeuwen’s sociosemantic model for analyzing social action (1995). In order to trace historical change, a large body of data was required. Thus all education policy documents¹²

¹¹The use of systemic functional grammar has been strongly associated with Fairclough’s work in the field (especially his earlier work, e.g., 1992b, 2003). However, as he himself points out (2005), there are no necessary ties between SFL and CDA—the decision to use it in this study was because it is particularly useful for the analysis of transitivity and agency, which were the primary focus of interest here. Other approaches draw variously on text linguistics, schema theory, pragma-dialectics, and argumentation theory (Reisigl and Wodak 2009; van Dijk 2008; Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a).

¹²Those dealing with the content and organization of schooling in England and Wales; Scotland was not included as it has a separate education system. Some policy documents not fitting the content selection criteria were also omitted (e.g., those dealing with special educational needs in nonmainstream schools or those proposing a program of repairs for school buildings). While the entire corpus contains 17 policy documents, the New Labour section contains five documents: “Excellence in Schools” (1997), “Opportunity for All in a World of Change” (2001), “Schools Achieving Success” (2001), “Twenty-First Century Skills: Realising Our Potential” (2003) and “14–19 Education and Skills” (2005). In addition to these documents the following were also consulted in a follow-up study: “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More choice for parents and pupils” (2005) and “Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances” (2006).

issued during the relevant time period (1972–2005) were collected in a digital corpus of around 0.5 million words. The decision to analyze every document in this historically constant genre had the advantage of representativeness but generated yet further *methodological dilemmas*: how to handle such a large data set? The decision was made to incorporate these textual analytical methods with corpus linguistics, a computer-based method for analyzing large bodies of textual data.¹³ Its incorporation in CDA has been a relatively recent development.¹⁴ One advantage this combined approach brings is a relatively systematic and readily replicable approach to CDA. There is also a heuristic value to this combined approach in directing the analyst's gaze in unexpected and often fruitful directions. Combining this essentially quantitative approach with the qualitative methods typically associated with CDA also, however, throws up further practical and theoretical problems.

Corpus linguistics involves using “concordancing” software (here “WordSmith” by Scott 1997) designed to perform a range of searches for various textual patterns. This software was used to search the entire corpus and its subsections and to compare against a reference corpus.¹⁵ Most corpus software tools offer the same basic functions: “keywords” (list of the most unusually frequent words in your corpus—ranked by “keyness”—compared with a reference corpus), concordances (every instance of a particular search word with its co-text), and collocate information (those words frequently co-occurring with that search word, including the statistical significance of the pairings). These search functions can serve as a useful entry point into the data, providing a principled and automated means of narrowing the analytical focus and reducing the corpus to a more manageable size. In short, they provide an “automated gaze” on the data (though not a neutral one), highlighting particular sections of it for more detailed analysis. However, there are important limitations to this procedure. Narrowing the focus of analysis in this way inevitably means that other potentially significant elements of the texts may be entirely overlooked. It is also important to remember that corpus tools present the data to the analyst in the form of short extracts removed from their context, thereby

¹³For a very accessible guide to using corpus linguistics in research and teaching, see Hunston (2002).

¹⁴For example, Mautner 2005; applied to educational research, Mulderrig 2003; 2008, 2009, 2011a, b, 2012.

¹⁵The LOB and FLOB corpora, respectively, comprise a cross section of British English texts from the 1960s and the 1990s. Each contains one million words and comprises a range of texts from informative and imaginative fiction (press, general prose, learned writing, and fiction). There exists a range of free-to-access specialist and general corpora in a range of language varieties. A general distinction is made between “stand-alone” and “in-built” corpora. The latter come with their own concordancing facilities (e.g., Mark Davies' online facility providing access to and facilities for searching and cross-comparing the BNC, COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), and a corpus of *Time* magazine; available to registered users at <http://corpus.byu>). Stand-alone corpora, by comparison, must be accessed using a separate concordancer like WordSmith or the slightly simpler but free-to-access “AntConc” <http://antconc.com>. These are useful when comparing your own corpus with a reference corpus (since the same concordancer can be used to cross-compare the two data sets).

inevitably making retrieval of all relevant discursal and contextual information virtually impossible. Any analysis of these findings must therefore be seen as a partially informed interpretation of the data.

The Corpus-Based Procedure

In the first stages of the analysis, I ran concordance searches for the most prominent (in terms of “keyness”) forms of actor representation used in the corpus (*school(s)*, *we*, and *government*).¹⁶ I then used functional grammar (Halliday 1994) to code each instance according to the type of action it performs.¹⁷ This first stage of the analysis displayed a marked trend in the New Labour section of the corpus: the government itself becomes by far the most prominent actor in the corpus and undergoes a marked shift in the way it is represented towards an increasingly personalized identity. It is this trend which I discuss in the next section.

Proximization¹⁸

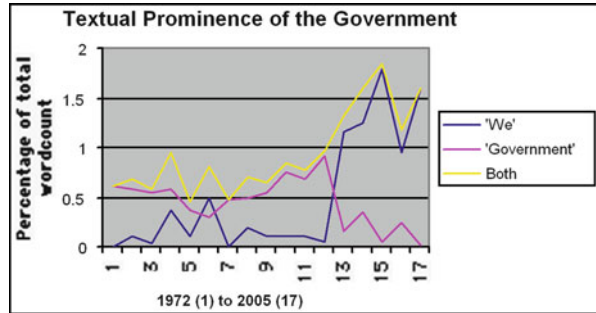
As an institutional entity, the government can refer to itself with either the third person (*the government*) or the first (*we*). The former makes a clear separation of the government from the governed; the latter does not. As Wilson (1990, p. 62) puts it, “indicating self-reference by means other than *I* or *we* is said to represent a distancing strategy on the part of the speaker, because the choice of pronoun indicates how close-distant the speaker is to the topic under discussion, or the participants involved in the discussion.” We might thus characterize the use of first-person reference in policy discourse as a “proximization” strategy, drawing the public closer to and apparently involving them in the policy-making process.

¹⁶These are the only actors that regularly rank within the top 5 keywords (in the case of *schools*, this is consistent throughout the whole corpus; in the case of *government/we*, the distribution across the corpus is significantly skewed). For an analysis of how other actors (*pupils*, *teachers*, *young people*) are represented, see Mulderrig (2003).

¹⁷Using Halliday’s functional grammar, we can classify the elements of a clause according to its participants, processes, and circumstances. Generally realized as verbs, processes are subdivided into subtypes, which map onto the three main realms of human activity: doing, being, and sensing. Thus, they can be categorized as material, existential, relational, verbal, mental, or behavioral. The representation of the government’s actions in the data is in fact frequently very complex, abstract, and metaphorical. The analysis process itself therefore fed back into the development of descriptive tools, with additional models of description overlaid onto the analysis as it progressed. Functional grammar by no means offered an unproblematic means of classifying the data; in fact failing to find an adequate grammatical model for parts of the data, I devised a new sociosemantic category I call “managing actions” (see Mulderrig 2011b).

¹⁸For a more detailed account of this trend, see Mulderrig (2012).

Fig. 1 Textual prominence of the government



One of the most striking findings in the whole corpus was a shift from third- to first-person reference under New Labour, where the pronoun *we* eventually displaces the term *government* almost entirely.¹⁹ This is illustrated in the following graph depicting the use of these two terms over the entire corpus (New Labour begins at point 13 on the graph) (Fig. 1).

The graph clearly indicates a dramatic surge in the overall textual prominence of the government (taking both forms of reference together), almost doubling the figure for the preceding period, with an average figure of 1.34 % compared with 0.74 % under Major. As shown in the graph, the use of the pronoun *we* in New Labour is not entirely without precedent, although its use is negligible until Thatcher where it is used in a limited and fairly inconsistent way. This is in fact quite surprising, given that *we* is acknowledged to be an important rhetorical resource in politics and its strategic use by Thatcher herself in speeches and interviews is well documented (Fairclough 1989; Wilson 1990). It has been shown that the increasing use of the pronoun *we*, alongside other discursive strategies, is part of a general trend in recent decades towards the “personalization” of public discourse,²⁰ removing explicit textual markers of power asymmetries in favor of a more inclusive and collective style. Sometimes referred to as “corporate we” the phenomenon is usually thought to have originated in the world of commerce, where the success of businesses may rest on their ability to project the right corporate identity to the public.

Despite its increasing salience in public discourse more generally, the findings clearly indicate that this pronoun plays a key role in constructing a distinctively different mode of self-identification (style) for the New Labour government (and its successors)²¹ from that of preceding governments. In the realm of politics, it has

¹⁹Under New Labour, the pronoun moves to a higher ranking (2) among the keywords than even *the government* had occupied in the preceding data. It should be noted that it is very unusual for a common grammatical item like a pronoun to attain a high keyness rating in a non-spoken corpus. Under New Labour, it is second only to the word *skills*.

²⁰Fairclough 1992b; Pearce 2005; Petersoo 2007.

²¹Preliminary findings from a search of four education policy documents issued subsequently under Brown (Labour government to 2010; three policy documents) and then Cameron (current Coalition government; one document) suggest that this trend, introduced under Blair, continues in this genre.

particular significance; by collapsing the distinction between the government and the people, this mode of representation draws citizens into the very processes of governing, thus implicating them in policy decisions. When adverts or commercial organizations adopt this “personalized” collective identity, the effect is not the same. It may generate greater affinity and identification with the brand or company in question (as it is doubtless intended to), but it does not draw us into the governance processes of that organization. In New Labour discourse, the pronoun *we* may have been favored over *the government*, with its inherent marking of authority, in order to create a discourse style more consonant with its claims to participatory democracy. Moreover, this pronoun plays a strategic role in the legitimization of New Labour policy decisions. It does so by systematically exploiting the semantic complexity of this pronoun (explained below). Therefore interpreting the rhetorical and sociological significance of *we* in this study involved reference to both its distinctive linguistic properties and the wider political and cultural context in which it is used and with which it is likely to resonate.

Deixis and the Meanings of We

The pronoun *we* belongs to a closed class of deictic expressions like *I, you, here, yesterday* whose meaning is not encoded intrinsically but instead depends on the context of utterance in order to “anchor” the meaning. The meanings of deictic items are anchored in terms of their relative proximity to or distance from the “deictic center.” The default or “unmarked” center is that of the speaker or writer (I) and the time (now) and place (here) of utterance. Deictic choices always entail a particular demarcation of participatory boundaries in the “discourse world” created in texts and of speakers’ and hearers’ relative positions to the events described and their involvement with them. In political discourse, roles and responsibilities are negotiated in part through the deictic system (Chilton 2004). Central to this process is the pronoun *we* which can both *include* and *exclude* participants from the deictic center. Most analyses capture this duality by drawing a distinction between “inclusive” forms whose reference includes the addressees (“we the nation”) and “exclusive” forms where it does not (“we the government”). Where inclusive forms are used in policy documents, “*we the public*” thus acquire a presence in the discourse world of policy making and its arena of accountability. Deciding which form is intended is frequently a tricky matter of context-dependent interpretation. Significantly, policy texts are widely recontextualized (Fairclough and Wodak 2008) and “repackaged” for diverse audiences, making the retrieval of such context-dependent meaning quite problematic. However, this can also be a strategic rhetorical resource. Grundy (2008, p. 28) cites this example from Salman Rushdie’s written apology for the distress caused by his “Satanic Verses,” issued after an Iranian fatwa on him had been pronounced: “living as *we* do in a world of so many faiths,

this experience has served to remind *us* that *we* must all be conscious of the sensibilities of others.” If we interpret *we* “exclusively” this statement appears more apologetic; it is more accusatory if *we* is taken to be “inclusive” and more neutral if its reference is left ambiguous. This kind of deictic vagueness is in fact exploited quite systematically in New Labour policy discourse. For this reason, I identify a third category of “ambivalent” *we* in order to assign full weight to the rhetorical significance of this “strategic vagueness.”

In the corpus *we* can variously refer to “the government,” “the nation,” “citizens of the world,” “England and Wales,” “businesses,” “the partners of government” or “those people concerned about education.” I therefore coded each instance of *we* as inclusive (I), exclusive (E), or ambivalent (?)²² and then analyzed their clausal environments throughout the data.

Functional Distribution of We

The New Labour government makes strategic use of the referential ambivalence of this pronoun to merge its identity with that of the people, thereby blurring responsibility for more contentious claims and implicating us all in the legitimization of policy by assuming, rather than building, consensus. It does this by systematically texturing the different forms of *we* with distinctive speech acts (in square brackets) and forms of propositional content and modality (underlined), as illustrated in the concordance extract below (Fig. 2).

This extract illustrates a widespread pattern in the corpus whereby there is a systematic correlation between exclusive *we* and boasts about the government’s

[Promise] Challenge and How [E] We Will Meet It. Skills for Employers, [Assertion] skilled, qualified people[?] We will not achieve a fairer, [Assertion] re inclusive society if [?] we fail to narrow the gap between the [Exhortation] term. To achieve that [?] we need to act in five key areas [Evaluation] where it is vital that [?] we identify best practice and share [Evaluation] our experiences. [I] We all know that skills [Evaluation] that skills matter. But [I] we also know that as a nation we do [Evaluation] know that as a nation [I] we do not invest as much in skills as [Evaluation] as much in skills as [I] we should. Compared with other [Comparison] with other countries [I] we perform strongly in some areas [Assertion] er education. But [I] we have major shortfalls in [Assertion] consumer demands [E] We are under no illusion about [Assertion] their contribution [?] we can make much faster progress [Exhortation] shared objective. [?] We must put employers’ needs [Exhortation] to those needs [?] We must raise ambition in the demand

Fig. 2 Concordance extract for *we* coded by speech act

²²See Mulderrig (2012) for a detailed account of how each instance of *we* was categorized.

achievements or its future intentions. Secondly, inclusive *we* is regularly textured with evaluative statements comparing the relative achievements of different actors or nations. Finally claims about the imperatives arising from economic globalization (usually realized through modalized forms) regularly collocate with cases of ambivalent *we*, so as to obscure responsibility for the claims made.

Exclusive We: Towards Managerial Governance

Instances of exclusive *we* were by far the most numerous (totaling 83 % of the 2,421 instances of *we* in the New Labour data).²³ The verbal collocates of exclusive *we* are variously past tense actions and present descriptions typically functioning as boasts (*we have already made it easy to become an academy; we have put in place major reform programs; we are on track with our reform of schools*) and irrealis,²⁴ often hedged (underlined), statements functioning as promises about future policy action (*we want to create a spectrum along which schools have the freedom to develop further*). Wilson (1990) observes that it is much safer in politics to use explicitly exclusive pronouns with future claims because such irrealis forms don't yet exist and are thus less vulnerable to attack. As we have seen under New Labour, there is a marked shift towards this more personalized and inclusive governmental self-representational *style*. Analysis of the verbal collocates of exclusive *we* also reveals a change at the level of *genre* in the actions and roles (and power relations) it constructs for itself and others. Mental and verbal processes like *consider, believe, evaluate* and *consult, discuss, ask* are a characteristic feature of the genre of policy documents because of their inherent function of presenting and weighing up arguments about policy decisions. These kinds of actions were the most frequent in the preceding governments. Under New Labour, however, there is a marked increase in the number of material processes of “doing” (*make, create*) which for the first time become the most numerous kind of action represented for the government. In fact many of these “material” processes represent quite abstract and somewhat vague managerial activities like providing leadership and delegating responsibilities. Stylistically this helps create a more dynamic image for the government and resembles strategies found in other public, promotional genres like advertising or the external communications of large corporations (Koller and Wodak 2008). There are two main kinds of material process through which the government constructs its management role. One type draws on building,

²³Of the remainder, 13 % were ambivalent and just 3 % inclusive.

²⁴Irrealis statements are those whose tense indicates that they have not yet happened. Hedged statements are those which are modified in such a way as to limit the speaker's commitment to it (e.g., through modality, “I would like to go” (suggests I might not), or premodifiers, “I'm not sure you'll like the movie”).

transportation, and sporting metaphors like *deliver, establish, build, pilot, carry forward, benchmark, target, drive*. A large number of examples draw on a managerial discourse in representing actions which are very vague and difficult to classify: *set challenging targets; tackle regeneration; bring the criteria for approval in line with one another; benchmark our progress*. The steadily increasing use of managerial discourse in policy is a key factor in explaining this apparent “materialization” of representational patterns under New Labour. Despite the often unrealistic nature of contingency planning and strategic calculation involved in the highest levels of management, its actions tend to be represented, typically through metaphors, as concrete, decisive, and dynamic-sounding actions, located in the here and now. This suggests that an inherent feature of the character of the manager is a self-promotional identity. In the rigors of the competitive neoliberal marketplace, survival demands a dynamic, “take no prisoners” social identity.²⁵ The second main kind of material process represents the government orchestrating in some way the actions of others. Often this is relatively direct through a particular category of verbs like *ensure, help, provide support, enable* which I call “managing actions” and which I discuss in more detail below. Overall then, exclusive *we* helps construct a dynamic identity and managerial role for the government.

Inclusive We and Shared (Neoliberal) Values

We are at an historic turning point: we now have an education system that is largely good, after eight years of investment. . . we are poised to become world class.

This extract²⁶ typifies the use of inclusive *we* in the data. It mainly occurs with (relational) processes that draw comparisons either between Britain and its international competitors or the Britain of today and that of the past. Many of these constitute an implicit or explicit evaluation (underlined) of some aspect of the education system. Examples include: *we now have an education system that is largely good; we are poised to become world class; we have the best ever generation of school leaders; we have a highly flexible labour market; we now have some first class schools; we have particular skills gaps; we perform strongly in some areas; we face new challenges at home and from international competitors*. These evaluations of Britain and its education system are frequently textured with ambivalent cases of *we* articulating concomitant policy imperatives. This rhetorical patterning thus helps construe the rationale for future policy initiatives in terms of

²⁵Note how the analytical concepts of *genre* (in this case the actions performed by the government) and **style** (the identity constructed through stylistic choices in discourse) intersect to create a dynamic picture of the role played by discourse in shaping this particular social practice; its forms of participation, identification, and interrelation.

²⁶From “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All” (2005).

the globally competitive landscape in which education now takes place. In this sense inclusive *we* helps internationalize the context of education: success is doing better than our international competitors. Viewed from the perspective of argumentation, these are the *circumstances* (premises) in which policy *goals* are being formulated. As Fairclough and Fairclough (2012b) observe, “the context of action restricts the range of actions that can be thought of and the choices that can be made.” Thus contextualizing education policy within the logic of global (economic) competitiveness makes it much easier to create a functional equivalence between economic and educational goals.

Inclusive *we* is also used in more explicit evaluative claims that help texture a set of shared values, which again serve as the rationale for the government’s policy decisions. For example: [education provides] *the skills and attitudes we need to make a success of our lives; we all know that skills matter; we all have a vested interest in their [pupils] success; as we, quite rightly, become a society that seeks an ever higher level of achievement.* Such examples construct a popular consensus on a broad set of social and economic needs. The nation, as the collective referent of inclusive *we*, is represented, through mental and relational processes (underlined), as having particular knowledge, desires, and needs in relation to education and society. Inclusive *we* thus allows the government to make privileged claims about shared attitudes and beliefs. These shared values appear to be relatively uncontroversial (who wouldn’t want success?). Indeed the rather generic and inherently unobjectionable nature of these claims is the source of their rhetorical power; virtually any policy initiative could be introduced in their name. Create consensus over the values underpinning policy, and consent over the policy may follow. Here again, in argumentation terms,²⁷ diverse *practical arguments* about what should be done (policy actions) are consistently presented as being in accordance with a set of *values* informing policy *goals*.

Ambivalent We and Policy Imperatives

Ambivalent *we* is most frequently used to represent exhortations with varying degrees of explicitness. Thus under New Labour, there is an increased tendency

²⁷See Fairclough and Fairclough 2012a, b for a detailed analytical model for investigating argumentation in discourse. Relevant concepts here are *practical arguments* (arguments about what should be done, as opposed to *theoretical arguments* about what should be the case), which end in some kind of recommended *action*. Such arguments are structured around a form of practical reasoning wherein action A is seen as the best way of allowing the agent to reach her *goals*, given the current *circumstances* and in accordance with her *values* (or those ascribed to her). In the current analysis, I see the different forms of *we* and the propositions they are textured with as contributing to the practical arguments that underpin the recommended policy *actions* proposed in policy documents. This operates in a rhetorically differentiated way, whereby “exclusive” *we* typically recommends the *actions* and “inclusive” *we* provides the *values* with which the recommended actions are aligned and/or the *circumstances* of the action.

to obfuscate social responsibility, in respect of the obligations and desires that constitute the rationale for policy proposals. In practical argumentation, the context for action is frequently seen as a problem that somehow threatens the agent's (shared) values. The proposed action is then seen as the solution to the problem (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012b). In fact a problem–solution logic is at the heart of the policy genre; its core function is to define the parameters of what is thinkable and doable in education in relation to a historically specific set of political economic circumstances and values. Further, it articulates a set of policy problems (or “challenges”) to which policy proposals are presented as the solution. We can therefore expect to find in policy discourse a problem–solution textual pattern. In the case of the New Labour data, the causal relation between policy problem and policy solution is represented as social necessity. Policies are thereby construed as meeting some form of shared need, where the (grammatical) subject of that need is the ambivalent *we*.

The necessity is of two main types: a duty to act in some way (*we must do X*) or a particular felt need (*we need X*). In both cases the government effectively acts as a spokesperson, making statements on behalf of an unspecified collective. In a similar pattern found with exclusive *we*, the former typically involve rather vague managerial actions steering others' agency: *we must ensure that all pupils have the skills and capabilities; people learn how to be creative; all schools deliver high standards*. The latter type of exhortation by contrast construes social necessity in evaluative statements like: *To carry out the agenda for raising standards in education we shall need a new form of government involvement*, or *we need an active industrial policy*. In a similar way to the examples of inclusive *we* discussed above, which assume shared values and needs, these examples also provide a causal impetus for policy decisions, presenting them as a *necessary* response to a set of imperatives:

In February the European Commission published its Action Plan on Skills [. . .]. This details particular areas where we need an additional emphasis at the European level to ensure we develop a labour force which has the necessary skills as well as the capacity to adapt and acquire new knowledge throughout their working lives.

This extract contains a clear intertextual link to a *discourse* of lifelong learning, a prominent feature of Third Way politics, in which the continuing acquisition of skills is construed as the solution to labor market insecurity. The reference of *we* here is unclear in both cases. The co-text suggests a European scale of inclusion, but whether this extends beyond governmental organizations depends on who are likely to be the agents responsible for developing the labor force. Presumably this also involves employers (particularly when we consider that the remit of this particular policy document extends beyond schooling to cover workplace training).

Textual Sequencing: Evaluation + Exhortation + Promise

The success of the strategy of “proximization” in legitimating policy rests on semantic slippage across the different types of *we*. Often this slippage works simply by juxtaposing various statements containing the different forms of *we*. This extract illustrates how the strategy can be used to legitimate a neoliberal model of citizenship through the assumption of a shared consensus:

Beyond these subjects, we[?] need to be confident that everyone leaving education is equipped to be an informed, responsible, active citizen. In an ever more complex, interdependent world, where an engaged population is crucial to the health of our society, we[E] continue to put citizenship at its heart too. And we[?] need real confidence that our schools and colleges really do give young people the skills they need for employability. (DFES 2005, 14–19 *Education and Skills*)

In the extract ambivalent *we* textures an hortatory evaluation about the role of education in socialization. The second sentence paints a picture of the global economic context for education policy in which individual responsibility is paramount. The next sentence juxtaposes this citizenship argument with an economic responsiveness discourse of education, where the emphasis is on the acquisition of skills to enhance individual employability. While not explicitly conflating them, this textual arrangement construes a close association between employability and citizenship. Significantly, where such workfarist discourse (more or less explicitly advocating “workfare” rather than “welfare” principles)²⁸ is evoked, the agency of the evaluation is absorbed in an ambivalent *we*. Throughout the Blair data, the semantic slipperiness of *we* helps construct an apparent consensus on the nature of the world we live in and the inescapable responsibilities this creates. In turn, this supposedly inexorable context of global economic competitiveness is used to preface and legitimate policy proposals made by the government. Through this rhetorical device, government policy decisions effectively become harder to criticize since their legitimacy rests on global economic forces apparently beyond the government’s control. The legitimation is implicit, triggered only by juxtaposing: “we (I) live in a changing world,” “we (?) must respond with X activity,” and “we (E) will provide the following policy solution.” Moreover, given the way this device exploits the semantics of the pronoun *we*, the political effect is that we are now all implicated in the rationalization and legitimation of policy. In this way, political consensus is assumed, not jointly produced.

²⁸Chief among the principles underlying “workfare” schemes is the desire to combat the fecklessness and structural dependency that state welfare benefits putatively create. Therefore a workfarist discourse will logically highlight the importance of (individual) *responsibility* and *active social/labor market participation*.

Managerialization²⁹

The preceding discussion illustrates how the traditional authority and control of the government has progressively given way to a more managerial form of institutional identity. This also extends to the activities represented for the government, which are increasingly concerned with controlling and monitoring the activities of an ever wider range of actors. Linguistically this is realized through a distinctive grammatical construction that allows the government to steer others' activities at a distance. I call this verbal construction "managing actions." As argued at the beginning of this chapter, the historical context of the New Labour government is one in which the postwar bureaucratic regime and its centrally regulated industrial economy had eventually given way to an emergent neoliberal model of "enabling, participatory" governance. A key figure in this new style of governing is the active citizen–consumer, empowered and responsabilized to make choices that further their own interests or those of the "community." Importantly, this requires a shift in power relations: citizens must have greater agency over their own actions; the government less direct control. We might posit that such an "autonomizing" model of democracy would be capable of absorbing potential conflict by instead offering choice, opportunity, possibility, and so forth. With greater reliance on individual volition, this form of "soft power" would seem to be less coercive and more intrinsically democratic. However, I will argue that the discursive forms this takes do not so much remove coercion as mask it in more subtle forms.

Managing Actions

As the name suggests, the term "managing actions" refers to a set of lexicogrammatical resources for getting people to do things. Typical examples are *ensure*, *require*, *expect*, *support*, and *help*. Their identification arose from an initial classification of the verbal collocates of *welthe government* using systemic grammar. However when it came to the New Labour data, an increasing number of them proved impossible to classify using SFL because they do not represent a simple relationship between agent, process, and object. Rather than the direct agent of processes, in these cases the government is the instigator or controller of others' actions. Thus there are two participants: the manager (X—here, the government) and the managed actor (Y). Some cases involve causative-type verbs like *enable* or *allow* followed by a managing action realized in various forms. However, not all examples involve causative structures or even verbs at all. For example, in some cases the managing action may be nominalized. In fact managing actions overlap with a variety of surface forms. Moreover, systemic functional grammar fails to

²⁹For a fuller account of this trend and a theoretical discussion of its relationship to the "soft power" of contemporary governance, see Mulderrig (2011b).

capture their sociological significance. Thus following Van Leeuwen’s approach (1999), I formulated a sociosemantic typology³⁰ for these actions, grouping them into three categories based on the type of managerial role they construct for the government and the kind of power relation implied between the manager and the managed. I then analyzed their distribution and function throughout the data. Thus, my typology attempts to move beyond the purely textual level in order to capture the important role of social power in the discursive representation and enactment of management. In the example *We will take powers to allow schools greater freedom to innovate*, power relations are semantically encoded in the lexical forms *allow* and *freedom*. In other cases, they are assumed, as in examples representing the government’s expectations of others, where the successful instigation of others’ actions is vested in its institutional authority. Thus, forms of managing vary in coerciveness and intersect with the power relations between the participants. It follows that these relations may in part be reproduced or transformed through the forms of management represented. For example, there is a tendency for more explicitly coercive forms of management, as encoded in the semantics of the verb (*expect*, *require*) to be textured with institutional actors whose power and influence we know to be in decline, namely, LEAs (Dale 1989; Trowler 2003). Conversely, actions which semantically encode greater freedom and/or less coercion (*enable*, *allow*, *encourage*) tend to be textured with schools, which accords with the principle of school autonomy in the creation of an educational market of “independent state schools” (Blair 2005).

The full typology is reproduced in the appendix and summarized in the table below. Examples of each type are included in brackets, along with the implied power relation involved in each case. To the extent that managerialism is becoming an increasingly significant aspect of the art of governing, these categories help provide a more detailed picture of the type of managerialism the government employs, in what domains and with what people.

Managing role	Implied power relation
Overseer (<i>ensure</i> , <i>make sure</i>)	“Without X, Y wouldn’t do it”
Leader (<i>require</i> , <i>expect</i>)	“Without X, Y wouldn’t do it”
Facilitator (<i>enable</i> , <i>help</i>)	“Without X, Y couldn’t ^a do it”

^aFor want of either opportunity or ability

In effect, these managing actions can be variously positioned along a cline of coercion. The Overseer is the most coercive role, where the manager is in control of the managed actor’s behavior, seeing it through to completion. In other words, they

³⁰It is important to note that this typology has been derived in order to characterize the findings in the data examined; it is not intended as a universally applicable context-free grammar. Thus, for instance, the specific power relations underlying the social practice examined here were factored into the analysis. It would, however, be interesting to “test” its interpretive capacity in other social contexts. Note also the typology only contains verbal collocates of *we* and *the government*. Thus other possible surface forms like nominalizations have been omitted.

encode the meaning “without X, Y wouldn’t do it.” Completion of the activity is assumed semantically. The Leader role assumes the manager’s authority to instigate others’ actions, but the future orientation encoded semantically means there is no assumption of their completion. Finally the least coercive is the Facilitator role. Here the manager’s authority over the managed actor is assumed, but completion of the action is not necessarily assumed. They encode the meaning “without X, Y couldn’t do it,” for want of either ability or permission/opportunity. Here, the coercion works by assuming the managed actor is willing to act and as such, although on the surface the least coercive, is nevertheless a particularly hegemonic formulation.

I argue that managing actions play an important role in constructing the type of “soft power” associated with an “enabling” model of governance. This works on two linguistic levels. Firstly these actions are semantically pre-evaluated; they subtly encode positive meanings like necessity and desirability (this being the most common). Such meanings carry their own persuasive power, conveying their own soft “power of attraction” and thus hortatory impetus. Secondly managing actions encode assumptions about the capacity and willingness of managed actors to carry out the represented activities. Compare the following:

- (A) *We will ensure that LEAs devolve more power to schools.*
 (B) *We will enable successful schools to expand further to become centers of excellence.*

The first example implies that the stated outcome would not happen without government intervention and has an equivalent speech act function of a command. By contrast the second example implies that schools want to do this and the government’s role is merely to facilitate. Here the equivalent speech act function is an offer. The second example assumes more willingness and so encodes less coerciveness than the first. Thus through “managing actions,” governmental power operates in a subtly hegemonic way, making assumptions about the desirability of the proposed policy actions and about the willingness of diverse educational actors to be managed.

General Findings

I used this typology to examine the use of these managing actions throughout the data. As illustrated in the table below, there is a huge surge in their use from just 9 instances under Thatcher, to 43 under Major, to 358 under Blair. By 2005 they account for 20 % of all verbal collocates³¹ of the government (Fig. 3).

³¹“Collocates” are words that co-occur. Thus the verb co-occurring with *we* or *the government* is a managing action in a fifth of all cases under New Labour.

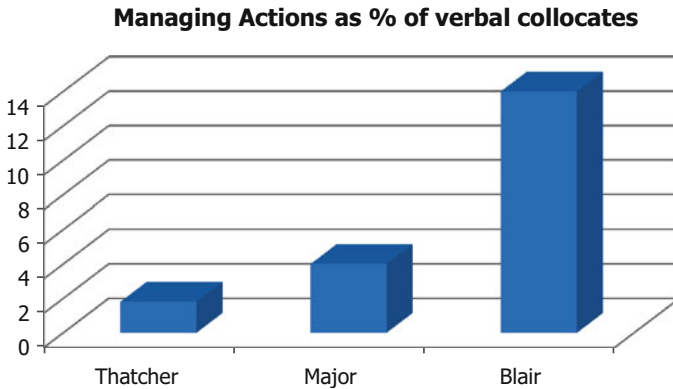


Fig. 3 The use of managing actions in policy discourse 1979–2005

Despite the New Labour government’s claims to “*offer an active, enabling government,*” it is interesting to note that this is its least prominent role in the data. Instead its most textually prominent role, and by some margin, is actually that of the traditional manager. It uses its Leader role to oversee, benchmark, and monitor others—types of activities that involve fewer freedoms for educational actors than the government makes claims to.

Blair the Overseer

The single most frequently used managing verb is *ensure*, which constructs a steering role over both economic and educational practices. It does so by guaranteeing an abstract vision of excellence and success in both spheres. In an expansive, positively affective discourse, the government offers ever-widening opportunities for improvement, access, information, and participation. The most frequently managed actors are young people who are steered into lifelong learning practices. These are construed as the keys to full participation in both work and society, underlining the central role of education (specifically skills) in New Labour’s Third Way alignment of social justice with economic participation. It is illustrated in the following extract:

We will ensure:

- *young people develop **knowledge and skills** to [take their place in society];*
- *people can obtain **the learning and skills** they need to [take on new challenges at work];*
- *learn how to be creative and enterprising to generate ideas, products and innovations*

The alignment of social justice with economic participation entails a blurring of boundaries between education and employment policy. It achieves this by merging social roles, relations, and actions from different social practices. In other words, it brings together competing ways of doing and being in such a way as to make them

appear compatible. Textually this is achieved at three levels by construing a series of relations of equivalence between different social roles, ways of doing, and ways of being. (1) Social roles: the extract construes an equivalence between (in square brackets) participation in society (their role as citizens) and participation in the labor market (their role as workers). Moreover, this relation of equivalence is emphasized through parallel textual patterning, both verbal (*take*) and nominal (*young people*) as objects of education policy and (*people*) as objects of employment policy. (2) Instrumental ways of doing: the extract brings diverse forms of activity in education and society under a single commodifying logic; the items in bold illustrate how education is reified into a product to be acquired and owned by individuals (through the verbs of possession underlined) in order to sell those educational outputs in a competitive labor market. A competing vision of education might instead see it as a process of mutual growth and empowerment. (3) Instrumental ways of being: the extract also brings the range of possible ways of being in education under a single instrumental logic oriented to particular material outcomes (in the third bullet point). The dispositions construed here typify the entrepreneurial, economically oriented discourse through which education is increasingly represented as the most direct key to economic growth. While innovation is commendable, there is a danger that the logic of entrepreneurialism will pervade education policy entirely, encouraging young people to divorce themselves from the intrinsic value of their own learning, narrowing the perceived value of education to the economic dividends it yields, and thus reinforcing a commercial “exchange-value” view of education among all those involved. This type of logic forces students to see their education as an increasingly expensive purchase and educators to see themselves as purveyors of quality-assured products. Such an arrangement discourages both from taking the kind of intellectual risks from which genuine learning and intellectual innovation can arise.

Blair the Leader: Delegating and Coordinating

In its leader role, the government is represented as institutionalizing and orchestrating joined up governance. It thus manages actors who are represented in terms of their organizational properties or functional remit. These include middle-tier governmental and nongovernmental organizations, partnerships, and other more or less abstract networks of actors (*Education Action Zones, Regional Development Agencies, Learning and Skills Council, Sector Skills Development Agency, Local Forums, Local Strategic Partnerships, and the Skills for Business Network, LEAs*). Such institutional actors are *expected, asked, and invited* to engage in predominantly semiotic middle-management activities. Under Major prominent attention was given to macro level economic goals (competitiveness), while the locus of educational power was moved towards a hollowed out model, removing powers from the middle tier (LEAs), a key pillar in the former bureaucratic governance of state education. The Blair government builds on this, elaborating a specifically

skills-based growth strategy, developing new roles, relations, and institutions of a networked or “joined up” model of governance. This extends also to LEAs who are to a degree brought back into the configuration of power and assigned new “middle manager” roles. To the extent that we can call the flows of power under Major a “hollowing out” of the state, we might therefore characterize those under Blair as “filling in.”

Blair the Facilitator: Enabling Neoliberal Change

The facilitated actors are institutions (*schools, universities, colleges*), occupationally represented actors (*learners, heads, teachers, workers, employers, parents, trainers*), or the sectorally defined *business*. The most frequent form of facilitating is *support*. While a variety of actions are managed by it, a recurrent theme is that of skills. Businesses are helped to succeed by focussing on the skills of their workforce, while learners and young people are supported in developing them, as are heads and middle managers. Thus, in what is in fact the most textually and politically prominent theme of the Blair data, the government *supports* a variety of actors to *upgrade, acquire, develop, renew* (*key, core, basic, advanced, professional, work-related*) *skills*. Meanwhile schools are helped to take on an increased range of responsibilities for securing both excellence and social inclusion. The government’s facilitation of schools is textured with both a discourse of competitive marketization and a more pastoral discourse of needs and social problems, construing a central role for schools in securing social inclusion. Thus on the one hand they will be helped to *raise the quality of teaching and learning; deliver greater flexibility; meet the needs of talented and gifted children; develop further to become centers of excellence*. While on the other hand, they will be helped to *become healthy schools* (this refers to *pressing public health problems* including smoking and drug and alcohol abuse) and *meet the needs of children with special educational needs*. Finally, *we will [P] help schools [M] deliver this [M] focused [P] support* (for *young people* who are struggling to reach, by age 14, the required standard set for them in government targets). The represented actions in this example help texture a pastoral discourse [P] with the managerial [M], so that support and social inclusion become a matter of meeting external targets, even while still at school.

Summary and Discussion

The concept of “enabling, participatory” governance, increasingly associated with advanced liberal states, logically implies greater levels of public involvement and autonomy in the relevant domain of public (and private) life. It suggests a reconfiguration of power away from the center and towards the periphery. This case

study illustrates the salient role of language in bringing about this model of governance. In particular the use of personal pronouns helps construct a more personalized, inclusive governmental identity. The devolution of power implied in the concept of “enabling” involves a dispersal of agency in the implementation of policy actions. Under New Labour this was partly enacted through grammatical innovations, implying a reconfiguration of power in educational governance towards a more devolved, managerial model. In particular *ensure* appears to be a prominent textual mechanism for coordinating increasingly complex networks of activity across larger political and social spaces. While this permits greater governing at a distance, it does not necessarily imply a weakening of power, simply a change in how it is applied, for example, by monitoring performance and emphasizing desired outcomes. Moves towards a more “participatory” democratic model (as exemplified in concepts like “the Big Society”) also require a new consensus that social life is increasingly a matter of shared responsibility between the state and its citizens. Deictic expressions like *we* potentially provide a vehicle for achieving this. Through a process of textual “proximization” we are all apparently invited into the deliberative processes of educational policy making. However, this does not necessarily entail genuine political agency. Closer scrutiny of how this pronoun is used in the data shows that its inherent semantic ambiguity is systematically exploited so as to *assume* rather than *win* consent over policy proposals, thereby legitimating de facto policy decisions and obfuscating lines of political accountability. Taken together, these two trends in New Labour discourse (“proximization” and “managerialization”) help construct a subtly hegemonic and managerial mode of governance that has all the appearances of “enabling government” and “participatory democracy” while masking the reality of limited, contingent, and unevenly distributed agency. The “soft power” of contemporary “enabling” governance relies increasingly on discourse through which we are invited to participate, deliberate, and acquire self-steering capabilities. This necessarily implies a key role for critical discourse analysis in interrogating the language through which these new relations between citizen and state are introduced, reproduced, and naturalized in society and the extent to which they afford genuine freedoms and forms of political agency.

Appendix

Typology of Managing Actions

1. Overseer

Ensure (that) – does, Make sure (that) – does

2. Leader

Require – to, Expect – to, Look to – to, Want – to, Envisage that – should, Urge – to, Encourage – to, Ask – to, Invite – to, Promote [+nominalisation meaning “the doing of X by MA”]

3. Facilitator

- (a) **Ability**
Support – (to/in doing), Help – to, Facilitate – to, Let – do, Allow – to, Enable – to, (Transform/Enhance) the capacity of – to, Make it easier (for –) to,
- (b) **Opportunity**
Free – to, Give – (greater/more) freedom(s) to, Provide/Increase/widen the opportunities for – to, Provide for – to

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2.8 Moving from “Interesting Data” to a Publishable Research Article: Some Interpretive and Representational Dilemmas in a Linguistic Ethnographic Analysis of an English Literacy Lesson

Julia Snell and Adam Lefstein

I have fundamental concerns with the match of the data episode being presented with the theoretical constructs being explored, with the presentation of data collection and analysis methods, and with the contribution being offered in this draft of the article, and so I'm recommending rejection of the manuscript. However, because I value the theoretical concepts being explored in this article and because I was intrigued by the episode, I do feel some regret about rejecting.

This quotation comes from one of the four reviews received on the first draft of an article submitted to (and later published in) *Reading Research Quarterly*.¹ The article was based on linguistic ethnographic analysis of a video-recorded literacy lesson in which an English primary school teacher invoked the televised talent show *X Factor*² as a way of organizing the class to provide feedback on pupil writing. Like the reviewer, this lesson intrigued us. In particular, we were drawn to a 7-min segment in which patterns of classroom talk shifted in line with the (sometimes conflicting) demands of *X Factor* versus the traditional classroom genre

¹Lefstein and Snell (2011a). The other three reviews were much more positive.

²*X Factor* is a highly popular British television music talent show in which would-be pop stars audition in front of a panel of celebrity judges in order to demonstrate that they have what it takes to be a successful recording artist (i.e., the allusive “X Factor”). The show was originally aired in 2004 and has been exported throughout the world, including to the USA (*American Idol*), Canada (*Canadian Idol*), France (*Nouvelle Star*), Brazil (*Ídolos*), and the Arab States Emirates (*Super Star*).

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of feedback on student writing. We spent a considerable amount of time analyzing this episode and also played it back and discussed it with teachers in the school. As indicated in the reviewer's comment, however, the move from "intriguing episode" to published article was by no means straightforward. In this chapter we discuss (1) the key concepts and principles we drew upon in our analysis of the episode and (2) the interpretive and representational dilemmas that we confronted as we moved from data analysis to academic argument, including:

- How to hook the focal case on some theoretical problem that would be of interest to readers without reducing the complexity of the episode to that one issue or making claims that overstep the data?
- How to justify—retrospectively—our case selection in a way that is both honest and acceptable?
- How to treat "context": How to cut up the data (i.e., when does the episode start and end)? What details guided our interpretation, and what information should we include in the published framing of the case?
- What should be the relationship between the different sources of data in the analysis—especially, ethnographic "lurking and soaking" vs. the video record?
- How to "protect" the dignity of the teachers and pupils involved, without compromising the integrity of the analysis?

Ultimately, investigation of these and related questions leads to reflection on the relationships between data and theory in linguistic ethnography, and on how academic institutions and genres impinge upon practices of interpretation and representation.

We begin by providing a brief overview of linguistic ethnography. Next we outline the research project that frames this particular case study (including research aims, fieldwork site, data collection, and analytic frameworks). We then provide further information about the focal episode and why it piqued our interest. Finally we share excerpts from our analysis of this episode, exemplifying some of the key principles of Linguistic Ethnography outlined in the next section, and then reflect on key interpretative and representational issues in the move from data analysis to the "theoretical contributions" reported in the final article.

Linguistic Ethnography

Linguistic ethnography refers to a body of research by scholars who share an orientation towards using linguistic and ethnographic approaches to address questions in a range of academic fields and professional contexts (education, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, health, and management, among others)³

³These researchers have joined the Linguistic Ethnography Forum (www.lingethnog.org/), and attended regular annual conferences, seminars, and colloquia. Set up in 2001, UKLEF now has over 400 members, around half of whom are UK based.

(Maybin and Tusting 2011, p. 515). Linguistic ethnographers combine powerful, precise linguistic procedures for describing patterns of communication with ethnographic commitments to particularity, participation, and holistic accounts of social practices (Rampton and U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum [UKLEF] 2004; special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Volume 11, Issue 5, 2007). In a sense, this synthesis constitutes a move to tie down ethnography, “pushing ethnography towards the analysis of clearly delimitable processes, increasing the amount of reported data that is open to falsification, looking to impregnate local description with analytical frameworks drawn from outside,” while simultaneously opening linguistics up, “inviting reflexive sensitivity to the processes involved in the production of linguistic claims and to the potential importance of what gets left out” (Rampton and U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum 2004, p. 4).

Linguistic ethnographers share a particular analytic disposition—not “method” in the sense of a set of techniques that need to be followed, but rather a more general approach to data. We summarize our own take on this approach as follows:

- *Data driven*: Viewing data as situated interaction prior to investigating it as an instance of a theoretical construct. Language and communication data are taken as the “principal point of analytic entry” (Rampton and U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum 2004, p. 11) into the issues researchers would like to address. For us this involves extensive immersion in classroom data, investigating interaction from multiple perspectives (e.g., teacher, different pupils) before homing in on any particular educational issue (e.g., interactional change, writing pedagogy, dialogue).
- *Rigorous eclecticism*: Drawing upon and combining analytic techniques from a variety of approaches to the study of language, communication, and society, including the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1972), Goffman’s theories of social interaction (Goffman 1974, 1983), interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1982), linguistic anthropology, micro-ethnography, conversation analysis, and multimodality. In the section on “[Linguistic Ethnographic Interpretation](#)” we demonstrate how we selected a range of tools/techniques for the analysis of classroom data.
- *Openness and systematicity*: Embracing openness and adventurousness in interpretation, yet also accountability to evidence, to procedural rigor, to conceptual frames, and to competing interpretations. For us, this involves beginning with relatively free, creative (and time-consuming) interpretive brainstorming before subjecting our ideas to more disciplined, systematic investigation.⁴ This process produces much more description and data than the analyst would ever eventually want to use; and in doing so it makes room for the unpredictable, ensuring that as little as possible gets left out.
- *Attention to detail*: Aware that careful investigation of small-scale phenomena is invaluable for understanding what’s going on, linguistic ethnographers work through data slowly, attending to every detail as potentially significant (the “aesthetic of smallness and slowness”—cf. Silverman (1999)).

⁴See Lehrer (2012) for an introduction to and critique of brainstorming and Berkun (2012) for a response to Lehrer.

- *Interplay of micro, multimodal, and transcontextual analyses*: Engaging in a layered and iterative analytic process that, for us, involves (a) microanalysis—attending to the way participants build up an interactional event moment-by-moment, such that each utterance (or gesture) responds to what came before, while simultaneously setting up expectations for what can follow (i.e., the notion of sequentiality within conversation analysis, see, e.g., Heritage 1997); (b) multimodal analysis—replaying and reanalyzing the video recording without audio, in order to focus on nonverbal communicative resources such as seating arrangements, body postures, dress, gesture, gaze, and writing and, in such a way, to bring into view those pupils whose participation in the lesson was less vocal (and were thus relatively absent from the verbal transcript); and (c) transcontextual analysis, examination of textual trajectories into and out of the event, attending, for example, to texts recruited by participants (e.g., student worksheets, preceding lessons, curricular frames), and to the entextualization of the interaction in the episode as it is distilled into teacher reports, our transcripts, and so forth.

We demonstrate the key principles of a linguistic ethnographic approach in sections “Linguistic Ethnographic Interpretation” and “Constructing an Argument: Issues in Interpretation and Representation” below, but first some background information on the wider study.

The Research Project: “Towards Dialogue”

The episode investigated in this chapter is drawn from a corpus of audio- and video-recorded literacy lessons collected as part of the ESRC-funded, “Towards Dialogue: A Linguistic Ethnographic Study of Classroom Interaction and Change” project (RES-061-25-0363). The background to this study is the finding that despite multiple attempts by educational researchers (see, e.g., Burbules 1993; Nystrand et al. 1997; Wells 1999; Alexander 2005), and more recently, the UK Government (DfES 2003; QCA 2005), to promote dialogic pedagogy,⁵ classroom talk has remained relatively unchanged (Lefstein 2008; Smith et al. 2004). Teachers dominate classroom interaction, talking most of the time, controlling topics, and allocation of turns; pupils talk much less than the teacher, for shorter durations and in most cases only in response to teacher prompts. The *Towards Dialogue* project aim was to advance understanding of why this pattern of classroom interaction is so resistant to reform, and how dialogic pedagogy can be fostered and sustained.

The project employed an extended case study design (cf. Burawoy 1998) that included a professional development program intended to facilitate dialogic teaching

⁵Defined broadly as “a pedagogy that exploits the power of talk to engage and shape children’s thinking and learning, and to secure and enhance their understanding” (Alexander 2008, p. 92). For further discussion, see Lefstein (2010) and Lefstein and Snell (2011c, 2014).

of literacy in one primary school, and linguistic ethnographic study of processes of continuity and change in the wake of that intervention. The fieldsite, Abbeyford Primary,⁶ is a relatively large community primary school in East London, England. We chose to work in this area because the local authority has a long-standing interest in dialogic pedagogy and a history of developing and implementing pedagogical innovations. A senior local authority advisor recommended Abbeyford Primary on account of its highly regarded, stable, and experienced teaching staff and leadership team. Furthermore, the staff had positive experiences in a previous intervention and were keen to experiment with their practice.

Data Collection

The professional development program ran from late November 2008 until mid-July 2009 and involved biweekly workshops with seven participating teachers. Roughly half of these meetings included collaborative lesson planning, while in the remaining sessions we facilitated participating teachers’ group reflection upon video-recorded excerpts of their own classroom practice.⁷ These sessions were audio-recorded and documented in field notes. Concurrent with the professional development sessions, we visited the school two to three times a week to observe and video- and/or audio-record participating teachers’ literacy lessons and also to spend time informally observing school life. For each lesson observed we wrote detailed field notes, which, together with the video/audio data, formed the basis for discussion at weekly research team meetings. During these meetings we selected extracts for use in the reflection workshops.

We augmented our participant observation with interviews with the teachers (participating teachers were interviewed at the beginning and end of the process and some also took part in one-to-one feedback sessions), pupil learning environment surveys, and collection of artifacts (such as lesson plans, pupil writing, photos of wall displays). In summary, the data collected for this project included: 73 audio- and/or video-recorded literacy lessons, audio recording of 19 professional development workshops and 15 teacher interviews, pre- and post-surveys of 150 pupils, detailed field notes based on participant observation, and related artifacts.

Data Analysis

In order to investigate continuity and change in classroom interactional patterns, we subjected a subset of lessons to computer-assisted systematic observation.

⁶A pseudonym, as are all names of teachers and pupils used in this chapter.

⁷For more details on the professional development component of the project, see Lefstein and Snell (2011b).

We sampled ten lessons each from three participating teachers, and for each whole-class segment of these lessons, we coded discourse moves for actor, function, and pedagogic activity using the systematic observation software, *The Observer XT* (Noldus 2008). We then calculated relative durations and rates of select discourse features for each of the lessons and contrasted the distributions of these features between teachers, over time, and between pedagogic activities (for in-depth discussion of this analysis, see Snell and Lefstein 2011). A subset of 19 episodes were selected on the basis of relatively high rates of features often associated with dialogic pedagogy (such as teacher open questions and probes and pupil challenges). The video recordings and field notes for these episodes were then analyzed with regard to what aspects of classroom activity did and did not change, and conditions that facilitated the emergence of dialogic patterns. To date, eight of these episodes have been transcribed in detail and subjected to linguistic ethnographic microanalysis. These episodes were selected on the basis that they: (1) included a dense clustering of dialogic features or an interesting/anomalous discourse pattern, as identified in the systematic observation and subsequent analysis, and/or (2) highlighted particularly salient phenomena that emerged in the course of the fieldwork (e.g., importing discourse genres from outside of the school context, direct challenges to pupil and teacher positions, and radical shifts in teachers' footing in whole class discussions), and which were of interest for the professional development program. The *X Factor* episode, which forms the focus of this chapter, was one of the segments selected for detailed linguistic ethnographic analysis (the reasons for this selection are discussed in the next section).

The Focal Episode: Playing *X Factor* in a Literacy Lesson

Ms. Leigh, the teacher appearing in the focal episode, had been teaching for 11 years and also served as assistant head teacher and literacy coordinator. Over a 9-month period, we visited Ms. Leigh's classroom 13 times. Her lessons were always interesting and enjoyable and often innovative in their integration of music, visual aids, noncurricular texts, and dramatic performance with the official curriculum. Class feedback on individual pupil's written work was a relatively common activity at Abbeyford Primary, part of the routine lesson sequence used to develop pupils' writing skills. In Ms. Leigh's literacy classes, feedback was usually given in the final few minutes of the lesson, in which several pupils read out their written work and received comments. Ms. Leigh typically provided detailed individual feedback and also often gave other pupils the opportunity to evaluate the work of their peers. In most cases, this peer feedback was directed by Ms. Leigh (e.g., "Spot the interesting technique that Carl has used," "Is there anything you would change about Rachel's word choices or the style she's writing in?"). Pupils were keen to provide feedback in these situations and often offered additional advice to the pupil-writer (e.g., "Can I make a suggestion for William? Because I know in his story he goes back in time, so maybe erm once he's done the

first bit – when he goes back in time he can do that little star thing [asterisk]”). In the focal episode, however, these practices and norms were momentarily disrupted following a brief reference to popular culture.

Summary Description

This event took place in a January literacy lesson, in the middle of a unit on writing short stories about a storm. Prior to this lesson the pupils wrote first drafts of “timed stories” (written under conditions of limited time to simulate the national tests), which Ms. Leigh assessed, providing pupils with their assessment levels and targets for improvement. The pupils then redrafted their stories. In the focal lesson, they shared their targets, after which one pupil, Harry, read out loud his first draft. Ms. Leigh then announced:

We’re going to be your judges now. So we’re going to have *X Factor*. We’re going to decide marks out of ten for how much Harry has improved in the second version of his story.

Harry then read his second story out loud. Ms. Leigh projected this text on the board and instructed the pupils to discuss in pairs what they thought of the second story and the extent to which it had improved upon Harry’s first draft. These consultations last about 30 s, after which the pupils all turned to face Harry and raised their hands to display their scores (see Fig. 1 below). At this



Fig. 1 Harry surveys his marks

point, almost all eyes were on Harry, and more than half the class had their backs to Ms. Leigh who was located at the front of the room (offscreen, beyond the right edge of the picture). Harry (circled in the picture) rose out of his chair and surveys his scores, commenting enthusiastically about the nines and tens.

This was the first time Ms. Leigh had introduced *X Factor* into her classroom, and we were intrigued by pupils' immediate and positive responses to the mere mention of the televised talent show. For example, one pupil, William, raised his arms above his head in the trademark "X" sign and hummed the show's theme tune. Harry removed his jumper, readying himself for the contest. Later, when Ms. Leigh asked students to decide "How many marks out of ten do you think we should give Harry for the improvement to his story?" Harry held up both hands and projected a perfect score of 10 around the room in the manner of an *X Factor* contestant pleading with the audience for telephone votes; William responded by showing Harry a nil sign. Readers are recommended to view the video clip online at <http://vimeo.com/17810542>. A full transcript of this event can be found in Lefstein and Snell (2011a). Here we provide a brief summary of the segment that followed delivery of the pupils' scores.

Harry received feedback on his second story from six pupils, three of whom were nominated by Harry, while the others were nominated by Ms. Leigh, who also offered her own evaluative comments. Most of this discussion revolved around the question of whether the description, and in particular the quantity of descriptive words, in the first story was better than that of the second, allegedly improved story. This line of reasoning began with William, who was chosen by Harry to be the first pupil judge, even though his score of five was relatively low. William and Harry were friends, but they were also keen competitors in classroom tasks, and because they were confident, outgoing students, they were at the center of most of the classroom discussions we observed (Excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1 William's assessment and explanation

132 Harry: excuse me
 133 explain why you've only give me a five
 134 William: Because
 135 Pupils: ((laughter))
 136 ((most pupils put down their hands))
 137 William: becau:se in the first story y-
 138 you had more descriptive (.) words
 139 and you didn't ex-
 140 in the second story you didn't [explai:n the:
 141 Julie: ((to neighbouring pupil) [(xxxxxxxxxxxxx)]
 142 William: man who was changing the weather
 143 and
 144 the characters (.)
 145 a:nd
 146 in the other one-
 147 because in the first one you had (.)
 148 better descriptive words
 149 in that one you had more

Excerpt 2 Level four or five vocabulary

244 Harry: why did you give me a ten out of ten Gina
 245 Gina: well because the description was really good
 246 and (.) erm
 247 instead of using like just
 248 hot a:nd sunny
 249 you actually use- used like
 250 scalding heat blazed and
 251 it was really good description
 252 and it was very very like
 253 like it was like level four or five in vocabulary
 254 because it was really really good
 255 and erm
 256 the way you described Scarlett was really really good
 257 Ms Leigh: why
 258 what did it do for you as a reader
 259 Gina: because
 260 it makes you think (.) that she like
 261 she’s really nice and pretty
 262 and erm you-
 263 you want to: know more about her
 264 because erm like you’ve described her so well

Julie (who was caught whispering during William’s turn) was selected by Ms. Leigh to give feedback following William. She quoted William (almost) directly: “yeah like because h- the better- the first one was better because he had like more descriptive words but in that one he didn’t like describe the person who was changing the weather much” (compare with lines 137–138 and 140–142). Ms. Leigh challenged this line of criticism, first by calling on a pupil, Tamara, to comment on the *quality* of the words chosen (lines 163–202), then by highlighting some words that she felt were particularly advanced (173–185). The next pupil judge, Gina, continued this more favorable assessment of Harry’s second story (Excerpt 2).

Harry was then invited by Ms. Leigh to choose a final judge. With some resignation, he selected Callum, who was enthusiastically projecting a score of 4 in Harry’s direction (Excerpt 3).

Harry acquiesced to Callum’s criticism and demonstrated orally how he might have added more description of one of the characters (lines 315–324), but Ms. Leigh challenged the idea that more description is necessarily better, demonstrating how minimal descriptive details can provide excellent characterization without slowing down plot development (Excerpt 4).

At the end of the segment Ms. Leigh summarized the discussion by asking, “Do we all generally agree [Harry’s] story improved from yesterday?” (lines 404–405). The pupils assent, and William initiated a round of applause for Harry, who asked, “Should I bow?” (line 411).

Excerpt 3 Some “honest” feedback

283 Ms Leigh: right Harry we've had
 284 a girl and a boy
 285 so now somebody else who's given you
 286 not a ten out of ten
 287 not a five out of ten
 288 [*>come< o::n who's going to give Harry some honest feedback*
 289 [*((Callum changes from six fingers to four))*
 290 Callum: me *((moves hand in Harry's direction))*
 291 Harry: er *((looks around the room))*
 292 William: four *((points to Callum's hand))*
 293 (2)
 294 Harry: Callum go on
 295 why did you give me a four
 296 Callum: er well like
 297 you never really explained as much
 298 [as like the first one
 299 [*((Rachel and William raise their hands))*
 300 Harry: I didn't get up to there [peo:ple
 301 Callum: [yeah but you c-
 302 (2)
 303 okay
 304 you could have like done the characters
 305 like you and the Ms Leigh or whatever you were
 306 [or was you even in it
 307 Harry: [*((looks back at first version of story on his desk))*
 308 oh you mean describe the Ms Leigh [and stuff
 309 Callum: [yeah
 310 Harry: aw right yeah

Excerpt 4 Minimal detail but maximum description

326 Ms Leigh okay
 327 using that simple phrase here
 328 Scarlett her simply put up hair
 329 gives me lots of details about Scarlett
 330 because now I can see Scarlett inside my head
 331 her hair's put up
 332 so maybe she's one of these people
 333 that likes to be able to
 334 run around
 335 without having to spend lots time touching her hair and
 336 checking she looks right in the reflection
 337 you know
 338 it tells me that she's a person that's
 339 maybe clean tidy organised efficient
 340 it's simply put up but she looks quite attractive
 341 so she cares about her appearance
 342 but not enough to be vain
 343 so a simple phrase like that
 344 actually helps to give you lots of character details
 345 if you'd have said erm
 346 the teacher's placid voice
 347 it tells you straight away
 348 using the word placid
 349 that actually the teacher's nice and calm
 350 just like me hey Callum

Why Did This Episode Stand Out?

Throughout the fieldwork we selected episodes that highlighted issues related to dialogic pedagogy and/or interactional change for use in stimulating individual and group feedback discussions with the participating teachers. The lesson described above was among those selected, in the first instance as basis for a one-to-one feedback conversation with Ms. Leigh in mid-March 2009; 10 weeks later, the *X Factor* episode was discussed in a session with all seven participating teachers. We were drawn to this episode for a number of reasons. First, it represents relatively positive practice—e.g., pupils are actively engaged, authority is decentered (without loss of control), and multiple perspectives on story writing are drawn out in the discussion—yet also poses pedagogical problems from which the teachers can learn (e.g., how to shift from specific focus and feedback on one pupil’s work to general principles and insights relevant to the entire class). Second, the extract captures well a set of issues related to evaluations of pupil writing, which had repeatedly emerged in our field notes and which we wished to investigate with the teachers. Third, the episode displays significant shifts in interactional patterns, including high incidences of extended pupil utterances and pupil–pupil exchanges (i.e., those not directly mediated by the teacher). Finally, we were interested in exploring the hypothesis that importing discourse genres from outside of school (including popular cultural discourse genres) can be an effective way of changing classroom interactional norms.

Our intuition (based on participant observation) was that this episode was conspicuous as the most sustained use of popular culture in the corpus of Ms. Leigh’s lessons. Systematic review of field notes confirmed this intuition. Though it was not unusual for Ms. Leigh to refer to television shows, music, and novels (and her own personal experiences of these) in her explanations, these references were mostly fleeting. The *X Factor* episode is the only case in the corpus in which this kind of reference was built into an extended activity. As such, this episode poses a critical case for exploring issues related to interactional change in the classroom: an instance “where the concatenation of events is so idiosyncratic as to throw into sharp relief the principles underlying them” (Mitchell 1983/2006, p. 37). Linguistic ethnographers often focus on such examples, instances that highlight “creative practice” that breaks away from the status quo (Rampton and U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum 2004, p. 7). In the next section, we illustrate the way we used linguistic ethnographic analyses in order to uncover the processes underlying this change.⁸

⁸For a comprehensive analysis of this episode, readers are recommended to consult the original article (Lefstein and Snell 2011a).

Linguistic Ethnographic Interpretation

Our inquiry was largely inductive, grounded in data and observations, but that does not mean that we approached the data atheoretically. The overall study and research problem (concerning processes of interactional change) were framed by the concept of discourse genre. Our use of the term is inspired primarily by Bakhtin et al. (1981), (1986) and the way his concept of speech genre has been taken up in linguistic anthropology (e.g., Briggs and Bauman 1992; Hanks 1987, 1996) and linguistic ethnography (e.g., Maybin 2006; Rampton 2006). At the heart of this approach to genre is the idea that in different spheres of social activity recurring situations give rise to relatively stable ways of using language and interacting. These relatively stable ways of communicating, or “discourse genres,” serve both as resources for fashioning utterances and as constraints upon the way those utterances are understood and judged by others.⁹

Building upon research and theory in linguistic anthropology (e.g., Hanks 1996; Wortham and Rymes 2002) and an ethnographic study conducted by one of us on the enactment of the National Literacy Strategy (Lefstein 2005), we hypothesized that classroom activity is resistant to change in part because of the inherent durability of discourse genres (such as the canonical initiation–response–feedback pattern of classroom talk), which elude direct teacher control (Lefstein 2008; Rampton 2006), and further speculated that importing and adapting generic models from extracurricular contexts might be a promising strategy for instigating change. The *X Factor* episode stood out (at least in part) because it offered an opportunity to explore this idea. It’s important to note, however, that discourse genre was for us a “sensitizing concept,” “suggest[ing] directions along which to look” rather than a “definitive” concept “provid[ing] prescriptions of what to see” (Blumer 1954, p. 7; see also Rampton and U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum 2004). This distinction is significant because simply noticing the introduction of *X Factor* into the classroom did not constitute the end of our analysis; rather it was a springboard for further study. So, having noticed what appeared to be the “importation” and enthusiastic embrace of an extra-curricular discourse genre, we then began to think systematically about the various dimensions of this and the more conventional discourse genres employed in the classroom, and how they might be expressed in the episode. The results of this exercise are produced in Table 1, which contrasts the discourse genre of conventional classroom feedback with *X Factor* in relation to a range of social, interactional, and discursive dimensions.

The juxtaposition of the two genres demonstrates a basic structural overlap—i.e., both involve the evaluation of a performance and provision of feedback for improvement—alongside important divergences: contradictions at the level of underlying purposes, differential distribution of roles and authority, differences in the way language is used, etc. The next step in our analysis was to ask: How are the tensions between the two genres managed by participants in the interaction? How, if at all, does *X Factor* shape conventional classroom feedback, and vice versa?

Different participants were oriented to different aspects of these two genres at different times. On occasions, some participants appeared to orient simultaneously to

⁹See Lefstein and Snell (2011a) for a more detailed exposition.

Table 1 Contrasting discourse genres

	Feedback in a literacy lesson	<i>X Factor</i>
Social field	Education/schooling	Entertainment/television/music
Central task	To evaluate and improve a pupil’s written work	To evaluate and improve a contestant’s stage performance
Participants and roles	Teacher and pupils	Celebrity judges/mentors, contestants, coaches, and audience
Purposes	<i>Teacher</i> : to improve an individual piece of pupil writing, to teach the rest of the class about qualities of good writing, to produce an institutionally adequate lesson, and to categorize pupils according to national standards of achievement <i>Pupils</i> : to perform well, be accepted by peers, get through the lesson	<i>Producers/judges</i> : to produce an entertaining show (as indicated in viewer ratings, which lead to advertising revenue), to organize contestants according to their relative talent, and to promote the best performers to the next level <i>Contestants</i> : to win the show and/or launch a career in the entertainment industry
Sequential structure/stages	Will typically include the following (though not necessarily in this order): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion of targets / criteria • sharing of pupil work • judgment and/or interpretation of the work • suggestions for improvement • conclusion 	Will typically include the following (usually in this order): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review of contestant’s participation in competition so far (through edited clips) • contestant’s stage performance • critique of performance by judges (with some suggestions for improvement) • interview with contestant (who then has the “right-to-reply” to the judges’ comments)
Topics/themes	Issues arising from pupil written work that are salient to the official curriculum	Contestant’s performance (but this focal point often overridden by discussion of judges’ own careers, arguments between judges, etc.)
Interactional norms	Speaking dominated by the teacher, who also allocates the floor; primarily IRE/F	Speaking dominated by judges; host allocates the floor to individual judges, but judges also assume the power to self-select; lots of interruptions and overlap
Social relationships	“Emotionally flat” (Goodlad 1984). Pupils are emotionally invested in peer relations, but these are downplayed in the public spaces of lessons	Emotionally charged. There is a competitive relationship between judges, but to their own acts, judges provide support and guidance in their role as “mentor”
Language use	Polite or at least disciplined; use of standard grammatical forms	“Brutally honest” assessments of a contestants’ potential; highly emotive responses
Evaluative criteria	National curriculum attainment levels and related learning objectives, divided into word, sentence, and text levels	Does the contestant have the “X Factor”? This encompasses musical talent, personality (e.g., genuineness, likeability), and moral character (e.g., humility, niceness)

both. William (the first pupil judge) had given Harry a score of 5 out of 10 and evaluated Harry's first story as being better than the second because he claimed it had "more descriptive words" (line 138), "better descriptive words" (line 148), and overall greater explanation of character (lines 140–144). This assessment draws upon the resources of the school feedback genre: William's comments refer to specific elements of Harry's stories (e.g., line 142) and tap into shared frameworks for assessment (which highlight the importance of descriptive vocabulary). William's rather critical assessment of Harry's second story may also draw upon his experience of *X Factor*. *X Factor* contestants who appear overly confident or arrogant (an accusation that might be levied at Harry) are usually "put back in their place" by the judges' sobering comments. By adopting the critical stance of an *X Factor* judge, while also drawing upon his knowledge of the school-based genre, William is able to orient both to the classroom task of peer assessment and to his social relationship with Harry. Note also that rather than grading Harry on the improvement he made to his story through the redrafting process (as Ms. Leigh had requested), William is actually evaluating which version of the story is better. This focus on categorical judgment rather than on the process of improvement is more in keeping with *X Factor* evaluative criteria than school assessments, and it sets the tone for the following discussion. This shift in focus threatens to undermine the school ideology of continuous improvement, according to which feedback and editing necessarily lead to better writing (and better writers)—we return to this point later.

Another consequence of *X Factor* is that it carves out a space for Harry to take on some unconventional roles and assume non-pupil interactional privileges (standing up, nominating pupils, interrupting). And Harry seems to rise to the occasion, performing for the class and winning their appreciative laughter. This is tolerated by the teacher, to a point. She shifts in and out of the *X Factor* frame according to competing pedagogical goals. For example, part way through the discussion of Harry's stories (lines 239–241), Ms. Leigh is about to select the next speaker in accordance with traditional classroom discourse norms and participant roles ("Okay Callum what did you give-"), but stops herself ("oh sorry, I shouldn't do that should I") and transfers authority to the pupil-contestant Harry ("Harry, you had two more choices for people who gave you marks"), in keeping with the "*X Factor*" rules she established (it is interesting to note that the teacher does not have a legitimate participant role in *X Factor*: she is neither contestant nor judge). At the point at which she needs to discipline a pupil who is not paying attention, she shifts into conventional teacher recitation mode: "Julie, what were you going to say, because you- I could see you ((*makes whispering noise*)) on the back there." When she can see that student interest is waning (evident through pupil gaze and body positioning), she shifts back to *X Factor* and takes it up a gear: "Come on, who's going to give Harry some *honest* feedback?" These changes mark a shift in footing (Goffman 1981), that is, "a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance" (1981, p. 128).¹⁰

¹⁰Students were also able to instigate a change in footing, though in practice only certain students (i.e., those who were often at the center of classroom discussion) took advantage of this opportunity).

In addition to using the linguistic anthropological concept of discourse genre, we also drew upon conversation analysis, multimodality, and the notion of indexicality (i.e., the social meanings that language can evoke) in our analyses. All three can be seen at work in an interpretation of Excerpt 3.¹¹

Beginning with conversation analysis, and its focus on the sequential unfolding of interaction, we note that Ms. Leigh’s utterance on line 288 clearly sets up the expectation that pupils should bid for a turn to be Harry’s final judge. More specifically, the way her utterance is phrased appears to invite a certain kind of response. Within *X Factor*, “honest” often means Simon Cowell-like harsh criticism, and there’s some evidence that this is what Ms. Leigh is trying to invoke in the stress she places on “honest” and in the elongated vowel sound of “o:n,” which makes Ms. Leigh’s “come on” sound like something of a rallying call. So the preferred response here is not simply that pupils should bid to give their evaluation but also that the resulting evaluation should be “brutally honest.” From a multimodal perspective, we see Callum (who is sitting directly opposite Harry) respond to this. He reduces his score from an original six fingers to four during Ms. Leigh’s utterance and appears eager to speak—his right hand, which displays the score, is outstretched towards Harry, and he pleads, “me” (line 290). William, who is sitting next to Callum, points to the latter’s score and exclaims, “four.” Harry surveys the room, studiously avoiding Callum’s gaze (even though Callum is sitting directly between Harry and Ms. Leigh). Having not found a socially acceptable alternative, Harry rather begrudgingly selects Callum.

Callum responds to Harry’s question on line 295 by bringing the discussion back to the issue of character description, echoing the idea originally expounded by William that more is better (lines 297–298). Callum’s utterance is marked as a “dispreferred response” (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; Levinson 1983; Schegloff 2007): Callum hesitates, uses the discourse marker “well,” and stalls with the filler “like.” Further evidence for this interpretation can be found in Harry’s next turn. He responds defensively and with more than a hint of exasperation, appealing not just to Callum but to the whole class to cut him some slack: “I didn’t get up to there, people” (line 300). As he speaks, Harry’s body tenses and he holds out his hands, palms up, in a beseeching gesture. The utterance is also marked by a “stylized” local accent (e.g., l-vocalization in “people,” a recognizable feature of London speech in which the <l> at the end of a syllable is pronounced using a sound closer to a vowel), perhaps as a way of indexing a sense of camaraderie with his peers (i.e., his *X Factor* audience) (cf. Snell 2010). These two boys are friends, but Callum has been asked to take on a role usually reserved for teachers and has also arguably been encouraged to take a more negative evaluative stance by Ms. Leigh; that this feels slightly awkward and out of the ordinary is shown here through preference organization and indexicality.

¹¹We do not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis of the episode here but rather demonstrate how our interpretation takes advantage of linguistic ethnographic key concepts and principles.

Finally, we move away from the here and now of the focal episode and begin to think “transcontextually,” about how this episode might link up with broader social structures, institutions, and ideologies. One way to do this is to focus on the movement of texts (both written and oral) into, through, and beyond the episode. In this episode, relevant texts include: the first draft of Harry’s story; the teacher’s oral and written assessments of this draft; Harry’s second, revised draft; National Literacy Strategy documents; and available assessment criteria.

Close analysis of the extract reveals that of the six pupils who offer an assessment of Harry’s stories, four follow William’s line, almost word for word. This repetition is not immediately apparent. For example, take Julie’s evaluation: “yeah, like because h- the better- the first one was better because he had like more descriptive words but in that one he didn’t like describe the person who was changing the weather much.” She does not cast her comment as building upon or agreeing with William; in fact, her relative lack of fluency, the hesitation, and use of the filler “like” give the impression of real-time processing of thought. But noticing this repetition is significant because the majority of the pupil contributions in this segment can be traced back to William’s initial utterance—going back to Goffman (1981) these other pupils act as “animators” of ideas originally authored by William (though they pretend to be the author¹²)—and this becomes important when considering to what extent these pupils are engaging in a meaningful discussion of story writing.

Based on these pupil assessments we might expect the first story to have more and better descriptive words. However, systematic comparison of the descriptive words used in the two stories (see Lefstein and Snell 2011a, Table 4) suggests that actually there were *more* adjectives in the second version. And in terms of quality, many of the word choices in the second version appear to fulfill implicit National Literacy Strategy criteria for “high-level” descriptive words—the teacher herself highlights these word choices as being “very advanced” (lines 74–86). So, if the pupils were not orienting to differences between the two stories, what were they talking about? One possibility is that pupils were attending primarily to available assessment criteria.

The pupils’ evaluations—both negative and positive—appear to be based upon an implicit set of criteria for assessment of story value, according to which (1) more character description = better story, (2) more descriptive words = better character description, and (3) more advanced words = better description/better story. This way of thinking about writing quality appears to be widespread in English primary schools and is inadvertently promoted, alongside competing approaches, in policy documents and supporting materials.

One way in which these ideas have entered the classroom is through the VCOP scheme of assessment. Within this scheme, four key aspects of “good” writing are identified—vocabulary, connectives, openers, punctuation—and in each area

¹²An additional complication that Goffman’s production format does not account for; perhaps an additional role of “plagiarizer” would be appropriate.

the items are hierarchically ordered into attainment levels (which are displayed visually in a pyramid structure). According to this scheme, for example, “exciting” and “so” are level 1 words, while “formidable” and “outstandingly” are level 5. VCOP pyramids are displayed prominently in the classroom and are often referred to by the teacher (and also by pupils themselves). Prior to the focal extract, the teacher spent 10 min discussing the written feedback she gave the pupils on their timed stories in terms of VCOP targets (e.g., asking for a show of hands to indicate who “had a V-type target... a C target”). The pupils were thus primed to judge Harry’s writing using this frame. VCOP is implicit, for example, in William’s judgment that the first story had “better descriptive words” and explicit in Gina’s later (and opposing) statement that the description in the second version “was like level four or five in vocabulary” (line 153). Ms. Leigh also orients to this framework in lines 85 and 109–115 when she refers to “advanced” word choices. Although it may have been difficult for many pupils to see or remember Harry’s stories, VCOP texts—and associated evaluative framework—were on the tips of everyone’s tongues.

Going back to William’s initial evaluation, then, it would seem that he drew from a number of resources on hand, fusing together (a) topic—character description, which was highlighted by Ms. Leigh in her initial feedback to Harry and in her instructions to the pupil—judges: “[Harry] has to make sure he was adding enough detailed description to give us some ideas about what was going on”; (b) assessment criteria—based upon VCOP, which is posted on the wall and was also flagged up by Ms. Leigh at the beginning of the lesson; and (c) a combative critical stance, based upon the *X Factor* judges, especially Simon Cowell.

In this section we’ve demonstrated some of the key concepts and methods we drew upon in our analysis of the episode, including discourse genre, footing, indexicality, and micro, multimodal, and transcontextual analyses. These concepts assisted us in interpreting what was going on in the episode. In the next section we turn to issues arising in the move from a detailed interpretation of an episode to the construction of an argument, and ultimately an academic article, and how this move in turn impinges on the interpretation and representation of the case.

Constructing an Argument: Issues in Interpretation and Representation

Pinning the Case on a Theoretical Problem

The primary criterion for the success of scholarly work—and its publication—is to make a significant contribution to knowledge in the relevant domain, usually by advancing theory. Empirical findings are significant inasmuch as they modify or otherwise inform our theoretical perspectives. Note that the priority of theory to data is also implicit in the structure conventional to academic articles: theoretical background and problems precede research method and findings. This is not at all straightforward, however, in research such as that discussed here, wherein the

construction of knowledge takes an “empirically driven trajectory” (Rampton 2011), that is, when ideas emerge inductively, grounded in the data. This “bottom-up” approach is typical of linguistic ethnography:

instead of asking, ‘top-down’, “what can linguistic analysis contribute to issues already identified by other social researchers?”, the driving question tends to be a ‘bottom-up’: “what more general issues can the description & analysis of my experience help to clarify?” (Rampton and U.K. Linguistic Ethnography Forum 2004, p. 15)

But how did we move from interesting data and observations to the reporting of theoretically and practically relevant findings?

As already noted, part of the reason for our initial interest in the *X Factor* episode were the significant shifts in interactional patterns, which appeared to be associated with the importing of a popular culture discourse genre. This was not, in and of itself, particularly newsworthy, but it prompted us to dig deeper into the research literature on popular culture in the classroom. There we found a broad consensus in favor of importing popular culture into classrooms, in order to attain a range of advantages, including: bringing the passion and energy that pupils have for popular culture into the classroom; bridging the funds of knowledge (cf. Moll et al. 1992) students bring with them from home and the relatively specialized discourse genres and knowledge they encounter in school, thus empowering disenfranchised students; and making use of everyday experiences to make sense of and build academic knowledge (Kwek *in press*; Luke et al. 2006) and moreover to see the potential relevance of school knowledge to their everyday lives (Teo 2008). For these reasons the research literature is generally very positive about the educational and emancipatory potential of discourse genre “hybridity” or “third space” (see, e.g., Barton and Tan 2009; Gutierrez 2008; Moje et al. 2004; Pahl and Kelly 2005; but cf. Moss 2000; Duff 2003)—whereby school-based discourse genres *intermix* with everyday and popular culture genres. While the *X Factor* episode exhibited some of these processes, and to a certain extent presented some cause for celebration, we saw the episode as far more complicated and problematic than existing research literature would suggest. The disparity between the enthusiasm for popular culture reported in the research literature and what we actually saw happening in the classroom can be described as the “contrastive insight” (Hymes 1996, p. 5; see also Rampton 2006, p. 32) that framed our subsequent analysis. We noted, for example, the following apparent contradictions between the *X Factor* episode and the research literature:

- The introduction of *X Factor* led to fundamental shifts in interactional patterns and new student roles, *but* appeared to lead to a narrowing rather than an expansion of learning opportunities, with *X Factor*-ish critical stance and confrontations at times distracting the class from meaningful discussion;
- The mixing of popular culture and school discourse genres led to shifts in classroom power relations, *but* these shifts did not involve empowerment of traditionally marginalized students;
- The class shifted back and forth between *X Factor*-influenced performances and more traditional forms of classroom participation, *but* on a number of occasions different participants appeared to be simultaneously participating in different generic events.

These contradictions became the theoretical “hook” upon which to hang the empirical case. We used the episode to explore the complexities of discourse genre hybridity and to highlight some of the shortcomings of current models and metaphors for describing the mixing of school and popular culture discourse genres. For example, the insight that different participants can participate in different genres at the same time has implications for how one theorises the mixing of school-based and popular culture discourse genres. Neither complete separation (script and counter script) nor integrative third space hybridity is an appropriate description for Ms. Leigh’s lesson, which seems rather to embody a contested hybridity.¹³

Justifying Our Case Selection

A challenge in building an argument on the basis of one brief episode is to demonstrate to the readers (and yourself) that this one case is worthy of attention, that it is in some way a strategically selected, “telling case” (Mitchell 1983). This episode intuitively stood out to us as participant observers in the school, but subsequent systematic discourse analysis¹⁴ confirmed the critical nature of this episode, highlighting how the *X Factor* episode stands out against other episodes in the corpus in relation to key structural indicators of dialogic interaction.¹⁵ Relative to the rest of the corpus of Ms. Leigh’s lessons, the episode exhibits a high proportion of student questions (a rate of 30 per hour, compared to an average of 5); over twice as many open questions (i.e., questions for which there is no single correct response) and many fewer closed questions, less frequent evaluation of pupil responses, and the feedback Ms. Leigh does give is “laborated” (i.e., involves an extended response); and a high rate of pupils responding directly to one another (113 per hour compared to an average of 11).

We presented this quantitative evidence in the article, but we were troubled by the retrospective nature of our “case selection,” which didn’t feel entirely honest. After all, selection of the case arose organically from the exigencies of fieldwork: specifically, the need to choose (in the middle of the data collection process) an appropriate case for conducting a feedback conversation with Ms. Leigh and subsequently a reflection workshop with all the teachers. On the other hand, the episode wasn’t selected *arbitrarily*, it intuitively stood out in our ethnographic experience. We could rely on such a claim, but where possible, why not test intuitions, moving from vague terms like “feedback in Ms. Leigh’s lesson was

¹³See Lefstein and Snell (2011a) for a full account of the phenomena that seem to us particularly noteworthy for future study of discourse genres and their interaction in classrooms.

¹⁴See Lefstein and Snell (2011a) for detailed analysis.

¹⁵We distinguish between structural, epistemic, interpersonal, substantive, and political dimensions of dialogic pedagogy (Lefstein 2010; Lefstein and Snell 2011c).

usually/generally/often. . .” to rather precise quantification. Linguistic ethnography is open to quantitative data and analyses; indeed, we might see such analyses as part of LE’s move to “tie ethnography down.”

Cutting Up the Data

One key interpretive dilemma in any case study is deciding how to demarcate the boundaries of the case. In this study, we started with the 8-min discussion of Harry’s story as a focal episode for discussion with the teachers in the school. Then, as we homed in on *X Factor* as a key reference point, we expanded the boundaries of the case: Ms. Leigh introduces *X Factor* a few minutes before the discussion, prior to Harry reading the second draft of his story out loud. Such a segmentation of the data produces a relatively coherent episode with a beginning (Ms. Leigh: “We’re going to have *X Factor*”), middle (the judges’ assessments), and end (Harry: “Should I bow?”). It especially makes sense in light of the focus on importing popular culture and *X Factor*: the beginning marks the first mention of *X Factor*, the middle the substantive content of the game, and the end evokes the closing event in a public performance.

However, given a different theoretical focus, we could have just as easily cut up the data differently, and such different segmentation would have made just as much sense. For example, if our focus had been on the ways in which assessment categories penetrate classroom discourse, our “episode” would have begun much earlier, with pupils reading out their targets for improvement. Or, alternatively, if we had studied the development of pupil writing, we would have ended the episode much later, e.g., after the final set of Harry’s revisions to his story. The important point for our current purposes is to note that the theoretical questions and analytic frame guide the segmentation of the data and help to grant the resulting episode a sense of coherence. That said, it is nevertheless useful to check to see how participants are orienting to the transitions between interactional segments, in other words, whether our segmentation of the data reflects the way they’re making sense of the activity. And, indeed, Ms. Leigh signals to the class the transitions into and out of the *X Factor* activity (see lines 1–3 and 417–8).

The significance of demarcating the case is that we devote our most systematic and thorough analysis to the resulting episode, including detailed transcription and micro-analytic brainstorming. This segment is also that which we played back to and discussed with the participating teachers. Nevertheless, over the course of the analysis, we found ourselves searching for references, clues, and contextualizing information in the rest of the lesson and indeed in the entire corpus, as discussed in the next section.

Sources of Data: Balancing the Video Record and Ethnographic Background

Having segmented the data and created an episode, we spent a lot of time with our heads in the video and audio record. Our viewing and listening is of course informed by our knowledge of the school, class, and other lessons we’ve participated in, but this latter ethnographic knowledge is often implicit and as such does not as readily find its way into the written account of our argument. Rhetorically, it’s easier to make claims on the basis of the video—pointing to transcript line numbers and specific linguistic and paralinguistic features—than on the basis of more amorphous ethnographic impressions. This tendency led to our writing an initial manuscript so narrowly focused on the episode that one reviewer questioned our ethnographic credentials:

Why do the authors seem to know so little about the classroom intertext, about the relationships among the students and the positions they typically occupy? ... I don't think that the word ethnographic should really be used to describe such a study.

We quote this review point because it highlights an important issue, namely, the relationship between different sources of data in linguistic ethnography—especially, ethnographic “lurking and soaking” vs. microanalysis of the video record. Our analysis of the video-recorded extract was informed by our understanding of what constituted a standard lesson in Ms. Leigh’s classroom and how this compared to the rest of the school, and by our knowledge of pupils’ classroom performances and social relationships. The challenge was to make this kind of *implicit* knowledge, grounded in ethnographic experience, *explicit* for the readers, thus “highlighting the primacy of direct field experience in establishing interpretative validity” Maybin and Tusting 2011, p. 517).

In later versions of the article, we drew much more explicitly on a number of different sources of data and presented these sources as evidence. For example, one of our key claims was that the introduction of *X Factor* gave more power to those pupils (such as William and Harry) who were already at the center of classroom activity rather than to those pupils who were on the periphery of classroom interaction. This was based on our observation of this classroom over the period of a school year, but could be substantiated by drawing upon evidence from field notes, which mention these two boys by name for 12 of the 13 lessons we observed in Ms. Leigh’s classroom and which document Ms. Leigh’s own concerns (raised during informal conversation and in one of the reflection meetings) about the dominance of these boys. Similarly, we bolstered our claims about pupils’ enthusiasm for *X Factor* and for Simon Cowell with evidence from outside of the event. First, the school held its own *X Factor* competition at Christmas, in which Ms. Leigh’s class participated. Second, one of the teachers commented on the pupils’ interest in and interpretations of *X Factor* (and related shows) during the reflection meeting on the episode:

I was talking about *Britain's Got Talent* in my class today, and they all could tell you that, well, Amanda's not very good, because she just says they're all quite good, and Piers¹⁶ is, sort of, like, in-between, but Simon really tells the truth, he's really mean to them. But they like Simon because he is mean and he helps them get better. So, as well, they know, sort of, the different ways of giving feedback, as well. They all want to be a Simon Cowell, because he actually does tell the truth. (Comment in workshop, June 1, 2009)

This comment is significant in that it confirms our sense that Simon Cowell, with his trademark harsh but fair criticism, was a salient figure for pupils in this school.

Protecting the Dignity of Research Subjects

We've shared project video recordings with researchers and practitioners in numerous forums and have frequently been disturbed by the speed with which observers rush to judge—often harshly—the teachers appearing in the recordings. This phenomenon is probably due in part to the fact that we have slowed down the recordings, dissecting them move by move and thereby exposing any shortcomings for all to see. It's easy to forget that there's a wide gap separating the slow analysis of a lesson from its experience in real time. In light of this experience we've been keen in our written account to protect the teachers' and pupils' dignity, especially since they and we won't be there to contest unfair reader judgments. However, we're also wary that this desire to protect the research participants not compromise the integrity of the analysis. For instance, recall that Ms. Leigh summarizes the discussion of Harry's stories by asking, "Do we all generally agree [Harry's] story improved from yesterday?" (lines 404–405). The pupils assent, and William initiates a round of applause for Harry, reintroducing *X Factor* as a salient frame. This is a curious account of the discussion, since actually the question of which story was better had been contested throughout, and if anything, most pupils had voiced the opinion that the first draft of the story was, in fact, better than the second. Since the initial response of the children was to prefer the *first* story, this could have led to a more in-depth discussion of how the different language elements contribute to the narrative effects, instead of maneuvering the children round to accepting the teacher's view that the story was improved after editing. Should we have acknowledged this point? Is this episode an example of bad teaching? Was the lesson as a whole failure? And is it the role of the researcher to make such evaluations?¹⁷

A commitment to research ethics and professional practice means that researchers should always respect the sensitivities of their participants and avoid causing any disruption or undue stress or embarrassment to their lives (see, e.g., Rampton et al. 1994). In addition to being bound by professional codes of conduct, many researchers, especially those undertaking ethnographic fieldwork,

¹⁶Amanda Holden and Piers Morgan were judges on Simon Cowell's show *Britain's Got Talent*.

¹⁷Further consideration of the relationship between linguistic ethnographic and professional cultures can be found in Lefstein and Snell (2011b).

also feel a personal commitment to research participants: teachers who make us welcome in their classrooms and open up their practice to observation deserve our respect. But professional integrity also demands that the researcher stay true to the data. So, how can the researcher protect their participants’ face without compromising the integrity of the analysis? For us, the answer in this case was to situate the lesson within the wider context.

In discussing this lesson with us and the other teachers, Ms. Leigh mentioned multiple goals, including: to encourage pupils to engage in a process of continuous editing and redrafting to improve their work, and to build enthusiasm for story writing and encourage whole-class participation. Ms. Leigh’s summary of the discussion makes sense in the context of these goals. It also makes sense within the context of the ideology embedded within the classroom feedback genre in UK schools more generally: pupils should be rewarded with praise for presenting their work, and feedback and redrafting necessarily leads to improvement. It would not have been easy for Ms. Leigh to relinquish control and explore the children’s suggestion that the first story was better than the second because the challenge to the pedagogical aims might have been too costly (i.e., the aim of demonstrating that editing improves a piece of writing).¹⁸ Ms. Leigh was also subject to institutional constraints. She was aware, for example, that the designated hour for literacy was coming to an end and that there were other tasks to complete before their time was up.

Overall, then, it’s crucial to acknowledge that most of the issues we raise with respect to the *X Factor* episode are rooted in the broader policy environment in which Ms. Leigh works and against the boundaries of which she is pushing, and moreover, Ms. Leigh was herself critical of many of these practices in discussions about the episode with us and with the other teachers. We also acknowledge in the article that Ms. Leigh was recognized by the local authority as a leading teacher for the purposes of filming exemplary lessons and that we also hold her in very high regard.

Conclusion

In this chapter we’ve explicated the linguistic ethnographic approach we adopted in investigating the mixing of school-based and popular culture discourse genres. We’ve outlined key principles of linguistic ethnographic interpretation and demonstrated how we applied them to classroom data. Finally, we have examined tensions between these principles and other academic practices and genres, and some of the interpretive and representational dilemmas that arise from these tensions. For example, the linguistic

(continued)

¹⁸Ms. Leigh may also have been as confused about these evaluations as we were—recall that most pupils followed William’s lead in orienting to available frameworks for assessment rather than to the actual stories in voicing their assessments.

ethnographic commitment to an inductive, data-driven approach is in tension with the genre of the academic journal article, which prioritizes theory over data and expects that case selection precede analysis. We have shown, however, that while inductive, our approach was by no means atheoretical: our analyses were guided by the “sensitizing concept” of discourse genre. We have further demonstrated how careful mediation between theory and data gave rise to a “contrastive insight” that framed the analysis. Our focal case emerged from our ethnographic experience: it stood out as a classroom discourse event that diverged from the status quo. We were able to demonstrate the critical nature of this episode, however, using quantitative analyses.

Throughout the process we have highlighted central dilemmas in the process of interpreting and representing the case, for instance, the consequences of the decisions we made in cutting up the data (e.g., how might this have changed given a different theoretical focus?) and in the final presentation of our analysis (e.g., how to balance microanalysis of the video data with less tangible ethnographic experience). For each dilemma we have presented the problem and described—and attempted to justify—the way in which we responded to it. Nevertheless, in closing, we should emphasize that doubts still linger and that we don’t see linguistic ethnography as necessarily providing a solution to the problems we have discussed, but rather as a methodological prism that brings them into view, and forces us as researchers to confront them. We hope that this chapter has served to underscore the importance of such reflexivity as a critical component of research and other interpretive processes.

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**Genre 3 Ethnography *of* Education:
Sociological and Anthropological
Approaches**

Introduction

Francesca Gobbo and Kathryn Anderson-Levitt

Ethnographic research is interpretive research in a double sense. One role of ethnographers is to understand the *participants*' perspectives: How do *they* interpret the world? At the same time, ethnographers themselves do interpretive work. These essays address both issues.

How Participants Interpret Their Educational Worlds

Democratic nation states have traditionally assigned to public education the double task of transmitting knowledge and forming the future citizens through the values and cultural orientations that are seen as constitutive of a given society. In doing so, policy makers and educators alike have often overlooked or ignored that many future citizens—the pupils and students of today—may only partially share the values and cultural orientations that weave together the institutional discourse and practice of education. The diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and occupational minorities has more often been the object of bureaucratic classification or redefinition than of cultural recognition, so as to translate education into assimilation and integration. It must be acknowledged that ethnography and ethnography of education in particular have long since pointed out how the meanings and practices of education can neither be taken for granted nor be considered outside the dialectics of power differentials.

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Such interpretation of educational indifference and injustice is once again brought to the foreground by several of the essays in this section.

For example, in her chapter *Francesca Gobbo* revisits the ethnographic research she conducted between 1999 and 2001 among a number of Veneto traveling attractionist families whose children's right to education was seriously impaired by the schools' inability to respond to their nomadic way of life. The researcher's first challenge consisted in interpreting the meaning and practice of occupational nomadism, the learning and teaching taking place within families, and "on the square," the families' and youths' epistemologies elaborated through the experience of nomadism and what it entails with regard to their relations with sedentary co-citizens and local administrations. Participant observation during fairs and informal and formal conversations with adults and youth were relevant for questioning a stereotypical interpretation of the nomadic life and identity and for valorizing the interpretations of work, learning, and social positioning that those families had developed themselves.

Similarly, in her chapter *Diana Milstein* demonstrates the value of attending to the interpretations offered by actors rarely listened to, schoolchildren in poor neighborhoods of a great city. Reporting on fieldwork conducted in Buenos Aires in collaboration with several children, Milstein reflects on how the child ethnographers interpreted their environment by drawing expressive maps, taking photographs, discussing and debating with each other, laughing, and gesturing. Sometimes their interpretation aligned with adult meanings and sometimes it did not.

In a discussion of her study of Disaster Education, *Mara Benadusi* points to interpretation—the making of meaning—in its most active sense as the social construction of new realities. Her research analyzes the international aid response to the 2004 tsunami that was accompanied by the launch of ad hoc educational programs in which she was both a participant and an observer. She points out how such programs aimed at establishing preparedness and resilience as overall values and outcomes of the processes of training in prevention and limitation of "natural" disasters. Disaster Education and its variants are aimed at promoting skills and knowledge in people so that they can survive catastrophes but they also offer analytical and interpretive categories whereby not only a specific culture is built but also a new, double identity: the local populations struck by the tsunami were (even some years after the catastrophe) at the same time victims and survivors. Seldom, however, were they recognized as people who could contribute to the educational programs through their own local knowledge, a point that is also underlined by educational comparativists.

Benadusi carried out her research in the tsunami struck areas at three different times and in three different locations: thus not only her involvement went from documentary research to observation and participation into some programs, but she also made use of different theoretical approaches. Of particular interest is her third field experience, during which she lived in what had become a so-called success village, where she could notice how disaster "teaches," that is, can be the consequence of a way of life that strayed away from local values, on the one hand, and on

the other, “educates” people to look for the reasons and to invest in anticipation, preparation, and resilience. With regard to this latter aspect, Benadusi highlights the need, among the village people, to balance their disaster-resilient identity accurately so as to continue to access donations and to show the positive effects of learning.

How Ethnographers Work to Interpret the Participants’ Interpretations

But if ethnographers seek to undercover the interpretive work of people in ordinary (and sometimes disastrously extraordinary) circumstances, how do they accomplish that work? What can we say about the processes through which ethnographers themselves make sense?

Observing as Outsiders Even When “at Home”

A classic response is to point out that ethnographers interpret “what is going on here” by taking the double perspective of participant observation. On the one hand, rather than pretending that research can take place without social interaction, ethnographers seek to learn by participating in ordinary conversation and everyday activities with the people whose lives they seek to understand. On the other hand, ethnographers always observe in some sense from the outside, noticing because of their distanced or comparative perspective what insiders take for granted, or are too immersed in, to see.

One way to take the distanced perspective is to come from elsewhere to conduct the research, as Benadusi does when she arrives in Sri Lanka to study disaster management, or when, as we will see below, Payet leaves France to understand educational processes in South Africa. However, even when researchers are working “at home,” they are likely to bring certain outside perspectives because of their social class and professional situation vis-à-vis the position of local people, or because they are defined as outsiders by the local people owing to their (usually more privileged) social class or professional position or ethnicity or urban location, or because they bring a comparative perspective from prior research abroad. Thus, although most of the authors in this section conducted research “at home,” many of them were not completely at home in the settings they studied.

Yuko Okubo brings the insider–outsider tension to the fore in a chapter on how her role as a “native” anthropologist doing research “at home” enhanced her understanding in some ways and inhibited it in others. In the process, she clarifies the many shades of “insider” and “outsider” status, showing how they depend on particular relationships in particular situations. (Compare Dietz and Álvarez

on ethnographers' identities.) During her fieldwork in a school and community in Japan, Dr. Okubo's status as an outsider to the local community resulted in several surprises and confusions of the kind experienced by many ethnographers. (Compare Payet.) To begin, she selected her site because it was a school serving immigrants only to discover later that it was also and importantly a school serving Buraku students, a formerly stigmatized minority. Meanwhile, again because of her unfamiliarity with the setting, she did not realize at first that she had overstayed her welcome with the local teachers, resulting in lost opportunities to grasp their point of view—although helping her to maintain her distanced researcher stance. However, Dr. Okubo's insider status as a native speaker of Japanese also inhibited her understanding in some ways by making it virtually impossible for her to ask questions asking for clarification of meaning.

In the central case of her essay, Dr. Okubo shows how her positionality led to a specific kind of "partiality" in her interpretation of school and community. Having distanced herself a bit from the school on her advisors' counsel, and having been further distanced by the teachers after staying "too long," but meanwhile finding a common bond with local activists in spite of differences in ethnicity, gender, and class, she wrote an analysis of how the school treated immigrant students that was considered much too critical by the local teachers. Perhaps the most important lesson to learn from Dr. Okubo's experience is that she did publish her research in Japanese, so the participants could read it, and did listen to their reactions and reflect seriously on what had led to her interpretation and on how it might have differed had her roles played out differently in the field.

David Doubek and Marketa Levinska were likewise working "at home" to study the "Roma." In their chapter they analyze and discuss Czech policies concerning the schooling provision for Czech Roma as well as the strategies and choices enacted by Roma families to counter the ethnic labeling and their children's negative educational experience in mainstream classrooms. An ethnographic approach combining some years of fieldwork with the comparative perspective resulting from the diversity of the research team highlights not only the tense complexity of the research endeavor but also that of the Czech Roma–non Roma relations. Their interpretive tasks were first, that the ethnographers had to clarify to themselves "who" they were going to focus on (a task not unexpected in ethnographic research) and then to clarify how the relations established with the Czech Roma in turn redefined the researchers' self-definition as professionals and as Czech.

The Meandering Road to Understanding Insiders' Perspectives

How to grasp insider perspectives? Golden uses the metaphor of wandering, while Payet refers to the openness of ethnographic research.

In her elegant, brief essay, *Deborah Golden* meditates on ethnographic research as a process of wandering or meandering. She uses as examples her work on the

socialization of newcomers to Israel and her later work on the parallel socialization of children in preschools. As she argues, “I shall suggest that the work of ethnography unfolds, quite often without preplanning and, even if preplanned, there are often unintended consequences. Hence, making sense of what has unfolded most often takes place after the fact.”

It is interesting to read Golden’s essay alongside Diana Milstein’s chapter, which describes literal wandering around the city with child ethnographers. Milstein describes several occasions when she did not ask for an explanation right away from the children, but instead came to understand through later visits to the streets, or later interaction with the children, just what they had been talking about. This is the unfolding of understanding as time passes and experiences in the field accumulate that Golden is describing.

Jean-Paul Payet reflects on his years of ethnographic research on the children of immigrants in French schools and his more recent work in South Africa to draw the lesson that “the decisive moments that moved the research forward, in terms of understanding the actions and social relations being observed, have been the moments when the act of interpreting ran into difficulty.” He illustrates by describing a difficult moment of tension with research participants in South Africa. (Okubo’s chapter likewise illustrates the difficult moments and unfolding of insights late in the game.) “Ethnography places us within such moments,” he says, “when conventional thinking is toppled.” Ethnography makes these moments of insight possible, he argues, because of its attitude of openness, a concept allied with the “wandering” and “meandering,” that Golden describes.

From Interpretation to Action

Other researchers sometimes ask ethnographers, “But when you are participating, don’t you influence what is going on?” Noting that all research engages the researcher in social action with the research participants, ethnographers answer, “Yes, to a degree, inevitably, as do you.”

In fact, the local participants may demand such engagement. The research by *Gunther Dietz* and *Aurora Álvarez Veinguer* described in their chapter analyzes and discusses the intercultural investment in a higher education project originally centered on indigenous cultural identity and its valorization. Unlike the Czech case, here the demand for innovation comes from the local communities, grassroots organizations, local activists, and intellectuals. In presenting and discussing the aims of the project, which underwent significant modifications along the process of its implementation, the two ethnographers support the native people’s and activists’ right to make themselves not only heard but also recognized as full participants and cooperators in the construction of university courses and intercultural dialogue, and point out that such fundamental political recognition affected both the theory and methodology of their research. Dietz and Aurora Álvarez Veinguer underline that in

interpreting the natives' demands and in collaborating to achieve the realization of the project, they became part of the very enterprise under study. Furthermore, in creating a course of study meaningful to students and to the social environment, they also collaborated to introduce and sustain changes that in turn promoted unexpected social, cultural, and political changes (for instance, the outing of homosexual and lesbian students). For Dietz and Aurora Álvarez Veinguer ethnography means interpreting the epistemologies of all those involved in the project, but they also stress how to collectively make sense of an ongoing enterprise such as their university requires reflecting on the processes of decision and implementation making and on the impact that power relations have on them.

Likewise, Okubo and Benadusi and many of the ethnographers here acknowledge their occasional roles as activists. The educational indifference and injustice that educational ethnographers witness as participants and observers demand, sometimes, an immediate response.

In Summary

In short, the authors in this section analyze several continua: insider–outsider, interpretation by the local participants and interpretation by the ethnographer, simply interpreting or taking action, along which ethnographers vacillate as they seek to make meaning of participants' everyday lives.

3.1 People “of Passage”: An Intercultural Educator’s Interpretation of Diversity and Cultural Identity in Italy

Francesca Gobbo

The invitation to contribute a chapter to the section on ethnography represents a good opportunity to reflect on my teaching and researching in the field of intercultural education that has always been characterized by considerable attention to Italian “everyday diversity.” On the one hand it has given me the chance to retrace my evolving interpretations of what I learned during fieldwork I conducted, between 1999 and 2001, among a number of families of Veneto *attrazionisti viaggianti*¹ (the Italian official denomination of those who are elsewhere known as *forains*, fairground; circus or show people; travellers or occupational travellers). On the other hand it demonstrates how those interpretations not only evolved but also affected what I did, how I did it, and the conclusions I drew.

The notion of interculture—and its variants, interculturalism and interculturality—originated in the 1980s from the concern of European institutions such as the Council of Europe about the climate of prejudice and even racism that a growing number of immigrants and refugees experienced after settling in various European nation states. In particular, the European legislation of the 1970s, which had acknowledged the right of migrant pupils and students to learn the language and culture of origin, was in the following decade complemented by further Council of

¹The English translation (traveling attractionist) will from now on be used throughout this chapter. Since the first presentation of fieldwork findings (Gobbo 2001a), I am aware—thanks to Michael Herzfeld’s notice—that “attractionist” is my own linguistic invention, but I intend to maintain it in order to underline the constitutive, and special, connection that this mobile occupational minority has with attractions, the “tools” of their work. This aspect is also recognized by Italian legislation (Law 337/1968) that defines the members of this occupational minority as proprietor of traveling attraction (*esercente di attrazione viaggiante*).

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Europe's recommendations that migrants be recognized as *cultural subjects* and not only as labor force, and that diversity—whether cultural, linguistic, or religious—be the focus of educational attention and the lever of a new school approach.² By inviting and supporting a reflective approach to different cultural and/or religious ways and beliefs, intercultural discourse and practice aim to contest and deconstruct stereotypes, prejudices, and racism as well as to understand and explain processes of identity construction and transformation by taking notice of the critical learning that diversity can engender, and of the cultural changes in the second generations born and growing up within the majority context.

As Italy became an immigrant-receiving nation, intercultural entered Italian educational discourse and policies from the early 1990s, characterizing both educational research at the university level and also the collaboration between the latter and teachers; it was perceived that the country and its schools were progressively changing and ready to be redefined as multicultural, while the unforeseen diversities of the new pupils and students were interpreted by educational researchers and the Ministry of Education³ as an asset and an educational resource for the education of *all* learners.⁴ Intercultural education was seen as capable of promoting processes of mutual recognition and positive interaction among culturally diverse individuals, instead of intolerance, exclusion, or racism, as well as of problematizing the meanings of diversity in the light of the Italian and European histories.

As an intercultural educator, I thought it worthwhile and relevant to connect intercultural, and its goals, to an anthropological perspective honed by the minorities' protest movements of the 1960s in the USA that I had observed as a student at the University of California, Berkeley. There, the demand for recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity and identity arose and grew among minority *citizens* and aimed to redefine the symbolic meaning and political import of cultural diversity and identity, as well as their essential connection with social and educational justice. Since then, the term "multiculturalism" (initially perceived as critical of American political and social history; see Schlesinger 1992) has become part of our everyday vocabulary. The debate on *culture* as what is taught and learned through the process of enculturation (namely, learning before, during, and even against schooling), and on *identity* (as the radical interrogation of genealogy, biology, history, and society) that in the late 1960s went on at Berkeley in and off the university campus, eventually led me first to Oakland to study a local movement for "community control" (see Gobbo 1977a) and then to the Anthropology Department where I was a student of the late John U. Ogbu and where I was encouraged to pursue my interests in Italian internal or everyday diversities (as I would later call them), by studying them through the anthropological "lens" and ethnographic fieldwork. In the USA, the protest movements of the end of the 1960s had

²See Projet n. 7a 1981–1986; Projet n. 7b 1983; Projet n. 7c 1988; Leclercq 2002; Gobbo 2004a; Council of Europe 2008.

³See http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2006/allegati/cm24_06all.pdf, or www.miur.it.

⁴See, for example, Ongini 2011; Gobbo 2011, 2008, 2000, 1992; Gobbo and Ricucci 2011; Gobbo et al. 2011; Ongini and Nosenghi 2009; and Omodeo 2002, among others.

strengthened a line of theoretical and ethnographic research—the sector of anthropology of education—that cultural anthropologists and anthropologically oriented educators had inaugurated since the mid-1950s,⁵ overturning, among other things, the prevailing interpretation of minorities’ inequality of opportunities and lack of educational success as due either to their social and/or cultural “disadvantage” or cultural “deprivation.”

The theory of *cultural discontinuity* was anthropologists’ early important contribution for interpreting the minorities’ failure and dis-investment in schooling, and for further acknowledging the latter as a form of resistance, in the name of a group’s cultural identity and diversity as it was noticed how, in contemporary societies, the processes of enculturation often compete or conflict with the cultural orientation of national education systems. In Italy, for instance,

The richly differentiated fabric of languages and cultural ways characterizing [the country] had been consistently ignored by educational authorities since the political unification of the country in 1861. (...) For almost a century, the pursuit of national unification and the construction of a national culture required that the regional and dialect differences be overcome. (Gobbo 2012b, p. 152)

The realization that an emphasis on cultural discontinuity could, on the one hand, represent the different cultures as more homogeneous and distinct than they usually are and, on the other, legitimize the belief that all minorities respond to schooling in the same way and that every minority culture breeds educational failure is at the origin of the theory elaborated by John U. Ogbu. His theory seemed to me especially suited for intercultural educators as it invites them to look at cultural differences as enmeshed in the web of social and political forces and historical relations, and minority groups’ members as “autonomous human beings who actively interpret and respond to their situation” (Ogbu and Simons 1998, p. 158). Cultural identity—be it minority’s or majority’s—is then conceptualized as the result of the (rarely balanced) intertwining of multiple cultural orientations. In my research, this theory was crucial for making me also notice the *intracultural* diversity of each minority group I studied, as well as the impact that majority’s representations and classifications of minority cultures and its members had for the latter’s school careers, and for the elaboration of groups’ emic theories on schooling and successful life prospects.

In this perspective, the pursuit and realization of intercultural dialogue (see Council of Europe 2008) could not but require that a policy approach be complemented by in-depth qualitative research on the many facets of diversity. More specifically, ethnographic research can represent an indispensable “source of, and a resource for, intercultural dialogue, especially when teachers themselves become ethnographers” (Gobbo 2012c, p. 232; see also Gobbo 2000a, 2004b) and suspend taking for granted the “culture(s) of the school(s)” and notions of identity that have in the meantime become convenient stereotypes. Appropriately dubbed as an intentional “experiment of experience” (Piasere 1997), ethnographic

⁵See Spindler 1955, 1963, 1974; Wolcott 1967; Ogbu 1978, 1982, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2003; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Gibson 1976; Gobbo 1996; and Anderson-Levitt 2012, among others.

research challenges our (and others') cultural "provincialism," the taken-for-grantedness of habitual ways, and makes the ethnographer—as well as the teacher-turned-ethnographer (see Gobbo 2004c)—recognize that they had a point of view all along from which they may now gain a critical distance.

Owing to the prevailing and understandable attention paid by intercultural education to immigrant pupils' and students' cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, I thus promoted an ethnographic approach among a number of young researchers.⁶ Their findings are innovative and often unforeseen and thus of great interest for those who work in the area of intercultural, anthropology of education, and ethnography. Yet, when diversity, the right to its recognition and its contribution in problematizing a society' identity, is almost exclusively interrogated in relation to the structural effects of immigration, ethnographers—young and old—risk making their research on social and cultural complexity less comprehensive and/or relevant, since the questioning of *our* own internal, or everyday, diversity is dimmed, or overtaken, by what is perceived as the new social and educational urgency. Furthermore, it must be recognized that the shareable concern for cultural "integration" or "inclusion," with its ad hoc educational interventions, often tends to drive the issue of diversity into the background and to shy away from questioning a social order historically and politically responsible for muffling, if not silencing, minorities' voices. For these reasons, and because of my early interest in multiculturalism, I chose to focus my ethnographic and educational research on a number of Italian minorities in order to understand the meaning that the processes of enculturation and schooling had among them.

Identifying the "Field" and Approaching It

The decision to specifically study the occupational minority of travelling attractionists, whose children's educational difficulties have often been examined together with those of other nomadic groups' children such as the Roma, the bargees, and the agricultural workers (see Schools Council Research Studies 1975; Liégeois 1992; ECOTEC 2008, among others), arose after I invited anthropologists Leonardo Piasere and Ana Maria Gomes to present their research among the Italian Roma and Sinti to students at the University of Padua, where I taught until 2001. In different ways, they interpreted the fieldwork experience not only as an instructive encounter with another worldview but also with a *new* view of *their* own worlds that they had learned from the research subjects. Ana Maria Gomes had aimed to understand the meanings that schooling had for the Sinti children and their parents, and, by making those "epistemologies" (Ogbu 2003) known to teachers, to awaken the latter's attention to the rules, expectations, social abilities, and tacit assumptions that symbolically and practically order a school's everyday organization

⁶See Gobbo and Simonicca 2014; Santoro 2014; Setti 2014; Giorgis 2013; Costa 2013, 2008, 2007; Peano 2013, 2007; Gobbo 2012b; Sansoé 2012, 2007; Pescarmona 2012, 2010a, b; Galloni 2009, 2008a, b, 2007a, b, c; Rapanà 2007; and Naclerio 2007.

and activity. By “decentering” their view (as intercultural solicits, but not always successfully realizes), teachers would become aware of alternative meaningful versions of schooling and education (Gomes 1997; see also Gomes 1998). Upon reflecting on his fieldwork “immersions” among the Roma, Leonardo Piasere had come to the conclusion that the ethnographer’s distinction between a *there* (learning in the “field”) and a *here* (writing about what has been learned) did not hold: to understand the Roma and their ways, the ethnographer “must learn to categorize anew *his* own world, because that is the world that Roma inhabit” (Piasere 1997, p. 74). As he further noticed, living with the Roma, “progressively taught me that there are multiple worlds in *my* world . . . and we are not aware of them” (*ibid.*, p. 75).

The two anthropologists’ reflective accounts and radical conclusions—both from a theoretical and methodological point of view—revived my memories of the world of traveling attractions I had been “passionate” about as a toddler, according to my parents. In my role of educator, I then wondered about the children’s schooling experience and the educational provision taken to ensure that they could participate in the classroom learning *and* learn⁷ since children attend a different school almost every week, usually for less than a week (except in winter, when families stop and park their caravans in a town for about a month and children attend the same classroom for the whole period). As an ethnographer, I was intrigued by the prospect of getting to know the cultural ways and values their mobile lives entailed (see Gobbo 2003b, 2006, 2007a, b, 2009a). What was initially a concern for educational justice developed into a set of interconnected research goals: I intended to understand the meaning and experience of schooling and education by observing what traveling attractionists did and how they did it, and listen to their narratives so as to hopefully make known their educational values, skills, and knowledge.

Notwithstanding the awareness gained from Gomes and Piasere, when I started to plan the new ethnographic research among the traveling attractionists, I seemed to expect that their world was out *there*, and such expectation was enhanced by the difficulties I encountered when I tried to figure out how to get in contact with some attractionist families. Unlike my previous research among the Arberesh and the Waldensians,⁸ teaching duties now did not allow me to go to the “field” and live there; I was instead prepared to drive to the fairs and visit the families when it would be time to interview them, but I had almost reached the point of throwing in the towel, when I eventually met Mr. Pulliero, a knowledgeable and helpful “mediator” and mentor.

Mr. Pulliero had for years worked for a small union (*Sindacato Nazionale Attrazionisti Viaggianti*/Traveling Attractionists National Union, member of the

⁷The ECOTEC study (2008) reports a very limited number of educational initiatives, but no research among Italian fairground and circus people had been carried out until 1999.

⁸Before doing fieldwork among the Veneto traveling attractionists, I was in Calabria, to study the Arberesh, an ethno-linguistic minority arrived in Italy in the fifteenth century from Albania fleeing from the Turks (Gobbo 1977b), then in Piedmont, for research among the Waldensians, a religious minority that joined Calvinism in 1531 and was granted civic rights only in 1848 (Gobbo 1999, 2000b, c, 2001b, 2003a).

powerful leftist union CGIL) that represented a number of Veneto traveling attractionists. In reminiscing his beginnings, he stressed how

taking care of their problems was an absolute novelty for me. I was a salaried worker all my life, and I knew nothing about this occupational sector. Unlike us salaried workers, these people are their own bosses, they have a different way of seeing things, of handling the problems.⁹

He did not always agree with those ways; nevertheless, he maintained that attractionists deserved to be supported. In years of dealing with them, he had come to see them as people

who must hustle and bustle because of the tight competition for the *piazze* [squares, i.e. the towns' areas assigned for attractions], because their job is not guaranteed.¹⁰ (...) We like attractions and the circus, but we seldom realize the cost they levy on these people's life and time.

Though it had not been easy to metabolize such "educational" experience, he concluded that the attractionists and their culture were part of our (i.e., the settled people's) everyday culture and had to be reckoned with.

Perhaps without knowing it, Mr. Pulliero was interpreting such experience in an intercultural vein: in fact, when I first met him to explain my research project, he had agreed to help and clear up many of the stereotypes and prejudices surrounding the traveling attractionists. Not surprisingly, the issue of stereotypes and prejudice—as will be seen—is something that deeply concerns attractionists and on which many construct the presentation of themselves, even by drawing clear-cut distinctions within their occupational group. However, Mr. Pulliero preferred to underline other characteristics ("qualities," as he defined them) of this occupational minority: the attachment, even the "love" or "veneration" for the attraction, of which good care is taken during the winter stop, the generational *continuity* in the sector of attractions, the men's acknowledgement of the work contribution of women and young people, the respect for the customers, and the feeling of ownership towards "their" fairs, "their" circuit (that, after all, are their source of income and work pride). He conveyed a picture of a world that is usually portrayed as festive and anti-routine (see Pretini 1984a, b; Vita and Rossati 1997; Zaghini 2001), but that is also framed by specific legislation (law n. 337/1968)¹¹ and a host of local and national regulations concerning taxes, criteria for

⁹All quotations that are not referenced are from my ethnographic field notes.

¹⁰Unfortunately, today this applies to many young people in more stable jobs as well.

¹¹With regard to this law, it is worth recalling some of its qualifying points: it officially defines this occupational minority as *esercenti di attrazioni viaggianti* (proprietors of traveling attractions), recognizes the "social function" of circuses and traveling shows, and indicates the consolidation and development of the sector as social and political goals. A national committee with consulting tasks was then set up to support the foreseen improvements, and a list of all the attractions – distinguished according to size – was prepared that is periodically updated. In fact, the registered size and technical characteristics of attractions provide the official basis on which the Minister of Tourism and the local administrations decide on taxes and space allocation. Local administrators, in particular, are responsible for locating and approving areas suitable as fairgrounds and for annually renewing or withdrawing approval according to suitability evaluations based on the fairs' economic returns and the residents' appreciation. The law also requires annual safety checks (see footnote 12) that have to be passed satisfactorily for approval to be granted.

attractions’ space assignment, safety rules,¹² and compliance with compulsory education rules, all of which attractionists have to follow and implement.

Furthermore, while it is true that attractionists’ everyday life and work are tightly intertwined, and that their home (a caravan or a trailer) moves with them from one “square” to another along a well-established “circuit” (*giro*), the latter might change when a local town administration agrees to support its citizens’ demand that the space allotted to the fair be instead maintained for the weekly market or as a parking area. The cancelation of a fair means not only a loss of income for the attractionists, but it also upset the parallel “school circuit” that children travel, regularly attending the same schools for a short and predictable number of days and meeting the same classmates and teachers, year after year, until they complete compulsory education. Such arrangement is intended to formally realize the right to education of the attractionists’ children,¹³ however it raises relevant questions regarding how and what the latter can learn, and how and what teachers can teach. Participant observation in the diverse classrooms attended by the attractionists’ children seemed a rather difficult enterprise. So I decided to focus on the teaching/learning process taking place in the family and in relation to the family’s work, on the one hand, and, on the other, to later contact teachers from the “school circuit” and learn how they responded to that regular sequence of arrivals and departures that tested both their professional competence and creativity as well as the children’s and the families’ educational expectations.

Background Research Literature

The introductory words of Mr. Pulliero had concisely illustrated the complexity of the attractionists’ life and work in Veneto, helping me to sketch a tentative road map that would be further problematized by observations and narratives gathered during fieldwork, as well as by the international research literature on the topic. As the latter uses the criterion of nomadism to explore and interpret the educational experience and provisions for the children of mobile minorities in Europe and in other continents, Gypsies, Travellers, bargees, pastoralists, fairground, and circus people are often grouped together in many studies. Yet, if the way of life of all these nomadic minorities continues to impact on children’s regular school attendance (see Danaher et al. 2009), the view of, and the relation to, schooling place

¹²Since the school year 2003–2004, a project titled *Seguendo fiere e sagre* (Following fairs and countryside festivals), devised by Elisa Marini and supported by the intercultural network *Rete senza confini* (Network No Borders), has been disseminated among various schools of the Padua province. It included a course on work safety rules that was highly appreciated by attractionist families and youth. See “Storia di un progetto” in www.seguendofieresagre.it.

¹³Attendance is always duly recorded in an official notebook (the *quadernino*) that every pupil has with him or her, in which to let teachers and principals know that he or she had complied with the rules.

fairground and circus families and children as different from the rest. Fairground and circus families—at least when interviewed or involved in special projects—seem to consider schooling positively, even though the mismatch between school and work calendars remains a problem and a source of frustration, as parents realize that their children can only learn very little and in a disorderly manner.

Within the literature, such persisting difficulties were interpreted through the theory of cultural discontinuity in turn tempered by the recognition of the fairground and circus people's contribution to European culture. Thus, on the one hand, Jean-Pierre Liégeois could remark that

It is difficult, when one is entrenched in a given pattern of thought and a given educational system, to see one's foundations as relative. (...) Thus, in regard to Gypsies and Traveller communities, with the weight of history so heavily disfavoring them, how is a dominant majority to question its own attitudes and actions towards such a dispersed minority? Until the present, no urgent need to do so was felt on the part of the majority. (1992, p. 8)

On the other hand, the 1994 European Commission Report underlined how:

While the reasons which make them [fairground and circus people] opt for a nomadic style of life are different, they also hold on to a lifestyle which is no less part of the European heritage. Whilst they tend to live on the fringes of society, the traveling professions represent an important element in the socio-cultural fabric of Europe, as is demonstrated by their contribution to the functioning of the economies and the cultural role they play during the festive days of the people of Europe. (1994, p. 16)

However, cultural discontinuity was again stressed some years later, when Kiddle noticed that

For some groups of Traveller children it must seem as if school and home are two totally separate and different cultures and the fact of traveling itself only exacerbates the sense of distance. (...) The lives led by children from the fairground community illustrate clearly the conflicting demands made by home and school (...) making school attendance problematic. (Kiddle 1999, p. 96)

This is so since parents need to transmit their skills “to their children, to educate them for life in the fairground business” so that they can take on “increasing responsibility” as they are considered ready for it (*ibid.*, pp. 102–103).¹⁴ Kiddle argued that discontinuity does not only refer to the Travellers' different lifeways and specific work calendars but also to the problematic relation with sedentary cultures, because

we – the sedentary society – have never quite coped with having a nomadic element in our society ... we have never accepted or accommodated ... mobility. (*ibid.*, p. 154)

The great difficulties families encounter in ensuring *educational continuity* for their children were poignantly interpreted as one of “interrupted learning” and of “interrupted learners,” as collateral effects of the European school systems, whose lack of recognition for fairground and circus families' cultural diversity nourished

¹⁴A 1975 study pointed out that schooling “complements the training [Travellers' children] receive in fairground operation with the family” (Schools Council Research Studies 1975, p. 13).

stereotyping and prejudice among teachers and sedentary co-citizens (Jordan 1997, 2000, 2001a, b). The internal heterogeneity of fairground and circus people—owing to difference in financial and cultural capital, and in the members’ agency to find solutions for their children’s future (Danaher 2000; Danaher and Danaher 2000)—was underlined in the Australian case. Furthermore, authors disclaimed that itinerancy per se (just like minority condition per se) was the unifying factor behind various nomadic groups, though they had to acknowledge that settled Australians perceived nomadic groups as “deviating” from the “norm” of fixed residence, even if a sizable portion of Australian population is relatively mobile.

As a consequence,

travellers are stereotypically assumed not to have the financial and emotional investment in a single community . . . [while] the general incapacity of schooling institutions to ‘cope’ with itinerant students . . . renders the travellers marginalized from conventional sources of power, status and wealth. (Danaher 1999, p. 26)

By failing “to fit” the conventional categories of students familiar to educational providers, “educational systems tend to ignore itinerant people as being ‘too difficult’ to accommodate” (*ibid.*, p. 28) to the schooling process (see also Danaher et al. 1999, 2000). More recent research cannot but point out how ensuring *educational continuity* for the children of fairground and circus families remains a considerable problem for them (see ECOTEC 2008; Padfield and Cameron 2009; Kiddle 2009; Moriarty 2009). The ECOTEC study confirms the fairground and circus families’ and children’s positive attitude towards schooling as well as their *agency*, when it is necessary to find alternative (but not always successful) solutions. Interestingly, in this study the cultural discontinuity interpretation is proposed as moderated by the families’ and children’s strategy of *accommodation* to sedentary life that shades their visibility—for instance, in classrooms—and allows teachers to overlook the cultural and work reasons at the root of the children’s fragmentary attendance. It follows that ECOTEC educational indications are towards

Customization and experimentation, as well as flexibility in provision. A move towards individual, tailored learning pathways, with a focus on ‘learning outcomes’ rather than attendance at school, seems to present the most suitable approach towards developing provision for occupational traveller children. (2008, p. vii)

This is especially the case since institutional policies such as “Traveller education” might engender differential integration and educational marginalization (Kiddle 2009; Danaher and Danaher 2009).

Before going into the “field,” I had also hypothesized a certain degree of cultural discontinuity—between learning from the family members and from other attractionists, and learning in school—that could explain the schooling difficulties of attractionists’ children. In education, ethnography has a major role to play, not so much in terms of applied anthropology but rather as a way to problematize the meanings of diversity and identity within minorities and majorities; in the “field” it allows or compels the researcher to critically reflect on his or her initial assumptions and research questions and to learn a different, perhaps unforeseen, perspective. However, as I wrote, the fieldwork experience:

Indicated that the process of enculturation could explain only partly the relatively gratifying schooling experience among children of attractionist families. A nuanced interpretation was needed that would take into account the traveling families' sophisticated knowledge of the sedentary population's habits and values, and the schools' inability to acknowledge the attractionist cultural experience in any fashion. (Gobbo 2009a, p. 14)

Attractionists' way of life and work might not fit the social order, so that they are *marginalized* rather than marginal to sedentary society (see Gobbo 2006), but as *marginalized pedagogues* they do teach their children and do so through educational manners that emphasize self-reliance, responsibility, independence, ingenuity, and family cooperation. The "separate participation in ongoing sedentary life" (Gobbo 2009a)—be it in a school or in a town—is well represented by their *cyclical presence* that comes strongly to the attention of their co-citizens for some of the reasons that will be illustrated in the next paragraph, but also because it provides them with the occasion for imagining other ways of living and working.

In the "Field"

Initially, fieldwork¹⁵ consisted in going to the fairs almost always accompanied and introduced by Mr. Pulliero, presenting the reasons why I was there, asking for permission to watch the task of pulling up (*tirar su*) an attraction and starting informal conversations with those who had the time to do so. Even before interviewing began towards the end of fieldwork, the narratives I listened to were alternatively focused on the changes affecting the world of attractionists and the decrease of group's solidarity, the pride and satisfaction deriving from their occupation, and the care for the attractions, the relations with the local people and attractionists' children's upsetting experience of being "mistaken" as Gypsies. The relevance of exploring the school issue against the background of the families' work patterns and concerns was provisionally confirmed.

According to Mr. Pulliero, traveling attractionists "sell a moment of fleeting enjoyment, just a ride on the merry-go-round"¹⁶ or the roller coaster. If they are a familiar, eagerly awaited, presence in urban and countryside environments, their mobile lives cannot but make them (and their children) only a recurrent, or seasonal presence. Thus they are aware of both the appreciation they raise and of the caution and sense of cultural distance with which their sedentary co-citizens, and customers, receive, and interact with, them. It is a deeply felt and somewhat contradictory life experience that is well illustrated by two different narratives collected during fieldwork: on the one hand, there was the surprise of a woman

¹⁵Fieldwork was carried out between fall of 1999 and the end of 2001 among a group of 25 families whose annual fairs' circuits call at many towns and villages in the Veneto provinces of Padua, Venice, Treviso, and Vicenza.

¹⁶Immediately after this remark, Mr Pulliero hastened to remind me the economic and technological importance of the attraction industry sector. About it, and specifically about the town of Bergantino and its post-World War II manufacturing "tradition," see Silvestrini 2000.

attractionist—Ms. Forani¹⁷—when she drove through a town that at first looked foreign, even inhospitable. Almost immediately, however, she realized that the unfamiliar looking town was one of her circuit’s regular stops, where she had “pulled up” the attraction two weeks earlier. She had not recognized the quiet, somber, and empty urban center because, during the fair, the place was filled with lights, music, noise, the children’s delighted cries, and the young people’s excited shouts, and she had concluded that “we bring life to towns, we make them change, and when we leave, everything disappears” (Gobbo 2007a, b, p. 481).

It was a proud awareness that I had heard from her brother too, when he recollected the magic of the summer fairs, created by the music he always chose with great attention. In the 1970s, and even in the 1980s, fairs were a big social event: he would invariably play the same records for the young women whom he had seen enjoying his attraction, and its music, the year before. It was a *present* to them because, in those years, “as a *giostraio*¹⁸ you were someone . . . you felt [great], and every night was a big night, no dead nights back then.”

Young man Tassi revealed that while his mother pressed him to find a salaried, i.e., secure, work position, his father thought that “without the attractions one cannot live well.” Agreeing with him, he stressed that

At the fair there is music, people, it is not like factory work! I did not go on with school, I love this work. With my younger sister, we always talk of music, trucks, fairs, attractions. Instead, those of our age talk of school, computers, cell phones. We are really different. . .

However, there also was the disenchanting picture of traveling attractionism drawn by Mr. Casati: for whom it was crucial to draw (and to make *me* understand) the symbolic boundary that keeps the “law-abiding” attractionists apart from the “others,” the “criminals,” whose bad actions strengthen the sedentary hosts’ prejudicial wariness towards the whole occupational minority.¹⁹ He seemed to share such an attitude, since he described those “others” in negative stereotypical terms, pointing out how “those people don’t care for honest work,” and disclaimed any relationship between them and the “law-abiding” attractionists such as himself. The distinction between the two “groups” thus results from the interpretation of how the respective members *relate* to their co-citizens and define themselves: the “law-abiding” ones claim that, unlike the “others,” they respect their hosts and the rules that concern them all as responsible citizens,²⁰ namely, that they are not, nor intend to be, outside civil society.

¹⁷This name, as all the others, is a pseudonym to protect the privacy of my interlocutors. The exception is the name of the leftist union secretary, Mr Pulliero, who gave me permission to mention his real name.

¹⁸*Giostraio* (sing. m., *giostraia*, sing. f.) is the word with which attractionists nominate themselves, especially when there is familiarity with the interlocutor. It denotes the relationship between a person and the attraction, that is, the *giostra*. However *giostraio* (pl. *giostrai*) often has a negative connotation, and when newspapers report crimes attributed to, or done by attractionists, the word used is usually *giostraio/giostrai*. In Medieval times, *giostra* was the joust or tournament of knights.

¹⁹For further elaboration of this point by attractionists, see Gobbo 2007b.

²⁰It is quite possible that this point was emphasized in relation to me and to maintain a dignified image of attractionists.

Other attractionists shared Mr. Casati's black-and-white perspective and the complaints about the multifaceted (and questionable) character of attractionists' lifestyles. For instance, Mr. Torrasi—a keen observer of his own world and somewhat disenchanted about it like Mr. Casati—argued that the work and generational continuity was nourished by the belief (that I repeatedly heard during fieldwork) that owning and managing an attraction meant to be “an independent, autonomous person,” “who is *sul suo*,”²¹ and to escape working *sotto padrone* (under the boss), as a salaried worker who “has to punch the clock” every day. Thus, being the proprietor of a traveling attraction²² entails some hard work, yet, after “pulling up” the attraction, “he can sit at the cashier desk and lean back more or less in peace.” Nevertheless Mr. Torrasi was critical of any interpretation of fairs and attractionists that underestimated the decrease in earnings brought about by the growing number of attractions, the tight competition for the “squares,” and customers with less money to spend or attracted by “too many other places of entertainment, besides fairs.” Unfortunately—he complained—the prevailing, contemporary trend among attractionists was “to live from one day to the next,” disregarding, even belittling, any effort to take a collective political stance against some of the rules unfair to these people's working interests. These bitter remarks should not be overlooked, as they highlight some of the social changes that had already taken place: Mr. Forani had switched to a well-lighted videogame installation remarking how, thanks to the sexual “revolution” (*sic*) of the 1970s, young lovers no longer needed the relative darkness of a circus tent or the confusion of a fair to display their affection. To stay successfully in business, circuses might have to host popular TV personalities during the show or cancel “animal shows” because of animal rights activists' opposition (see Gobbo 2006). Additional, and negative, changes were related to local administrations' decisions regarding space allocation or entitlement, as already mentioned.

For my interlocutors, being or becoming an attractionist meant not only (relative) economic and work independence,²³ but especially being able to use all their transmitted and acquired skills at work. Thus, parents taught their children that this mobile occupation required everyone to have (and to have learned) as many competences as possible:

To be flexible and double up as truck drivers when it's time to move from one place to the other, as labourers when the attraction must be put up and taken down, as secretaries when forms are to be filled in and paperwork taken care of and as ‘public relations experts’ . . . when they must bid for a *piazza* and deal with local administrators. (Gobbo 2006, p. 795)

²¹The expression is difficult to translate, but it is exemplary of a certain cultural attitude that some define typical of the Veneto region: *essere* [to be] *sul suo* alludes to property rights, but also to the value of “being one's own master” and “being able to keep one's own ground.”

²²It must be noticed that many *fermi e ferme* (“still,” i.e., settled men and women) have become part of traveling attractionist families, often (but not exclusively) through marriage.

²³Because traveling attractionists must arrive to the fairground within a certain time and leave it within a given time to avoid a ticket, it could be said that they also have “to punch the clock,” at least twice, at the beginning and at the end of a fair.

An interesting example is provided by Mr. Gappi, a “still” man by birth who had turned attractionist in his youth (see Gobbo 2009a). He was the son of a farm tenant who gave hospitality to an attractionist family in his backyard during the winter stop. After his father’s death during World War II, he chose “to move his life” instead of staying in the small village and grow vegetables and fruits to be sold on the market. His wife shared his “still” origin. He underlined how, as a young attraction laborer, he had learned that the important values in this occupation were thrift, hard work, and self-control, and had passed them on to younger laborers when he eventually bought his own attraction. When his older son told him that he would drop out of higher secondary school in view of joining the family enterprise, Mr. Gappi was very happy to teach him all there was to know about the family business and took him along when he went to local administrators’ offices, because “practical training would teach his son how to handle negotiations to secure a *piazza* for his own attraction” (Gobbo 2009a, p. 19). His two granddaughters had also learned many of the attractionists’ skills, even though, in order to attend school until the high school diploma, they had to go and live with their father’s parents in Bergantino, the “capital of the attractions,” as the sign at the entrance of that small town claims proudly. The two girls would join their parents during weekends, and by watching and listening to them, they learned how important it was to sharpen their communicative skills, to speak nicely to customers and engage people passing by the attraction by having them, or their child, talk into a microphone. They emphasized that no other attractionist had ever used a microphone to attract and entertain customers, adding that it was a bonus for the family enterprise. Mrs. Capari, the girls’ mother (and daughter of Mr. Gappi), paid special attention to the linguistic proficiency of her customers²⁴ and would switch from Italian to dialect if she felt that they would be more comfortable with the latter. It was a kind gesture that certainly gained her the customers’ affection (and make them return to her attraction), while it indicates how social knowledge is indispensable for running a successfully mobile enterprise.

Success, among traveling attractionists, is not exclusively measured by income but also by what they can “save” when the attraction or the trucks need to be repaired. It was pointed out that this could be achieved through learning by watching and listening. The older Bertini son explained to me that whenever he had to seek the help of an electrician or a mechanic, he would also respectfully ask how he went about solving it, because “if you do it kindly and without hassling the man, he’ll tell you what you need to know.” For him, and other attractionists, the goal was being able to tackle a future problem by himself, thanks to what he could learn from an expert well-disposed to give a hand: “to know what works,” to get

²⁴In Veneto, the local dialect (that I speak fluently) is widely used in social interaction. From the early contacts on, I always interpreted my interlocutors’ use of dialect as a specific choice meant to establish a climate of intimacy during the interviews, on the one hand, but on the other as a way to signal that I was expected to adapt to the language “rules” of the exchange, as was clear the time I greeted a family in dialect only to be answered in a neat Italian that was then used by my hosts for the whole interview, obviously obliging me to do the same.

“into the ‘mechanics’ of a problem,” and to solve it independently were the young man’s goals and a good example of agency, self-reliance, and disposition to learn that were repeatedly presented as values and indicators of attractionists.

Attractionists as Teachers and Learners

My emphasis on attractionists’ *disposition to learn* ensues certainly from an anthropological formation that oriented me towards interpreting education as not limited to schooling but as inclusive of the teaching and learning processes taking place in the family, the cultural group, the peers, and, today, in the “electronic” youth community (see Setti 2014). Along the process of enculturation, cultural beliefs, habits, and values are consciously or unconsciously transmitted that are considered of crucial relevance for the continuity of a way of life, on the one hand, and on the other, different or new ones may be actively sought and learned by children and young people who thus set in motion a process of cultural transformation and/or change that, particularly, but not exclusively, in this research, concerns those who became attractionists from a farming or a factory background.

The decision to learn a new way of life, or “to move my life” as Mr. Gappi did (Gobbo 2009a, p. 18), was often explained by the older men as related to the difficult work and economic conditions of postwar Italy and of the Veneto region in particular. A few tenant farmers realized that, while they had to wait a whole year before being paid, they could instead raise some money—albeit little—on the spot, if they had an attraction. The best known attractionists from Bergantino—among the “founders” of the local occupational and industrial enterprise—left the fields or a bicycle workshop to realize their creative innovations (often constructed with parts of planes that had been shot down during the war and laid scattered around in the countryside) and take them to the fairs (see Silvestrini 2000). One of the Gioietti brothers recalled how, during the war, his father (another man of “still” origin) had built a small horse-drawn trailer by using parts of trucks left behind after the war, and only after a while he had been able to buy a motor truck, also left behind by the Allied troops, but evidently still running. Several of the stories I collected bear witness to the difficult conditions, if not poverty, of many in Veneto who originally were craftsmen, factory workers, or tenant farmers, but also to the possibility of eking a more decent life by choosing the road and providing other countryside people and workers with some affordable entertainment.

Those men had to learn how to be, and work as, an attractionist: then, they undertook teaching the indispensable “love” and “veneration,” if not even “passion” (according to Mr. Forani), for the “craft” (*mestiere*, as the attraction is colloquially called) to their children, just like the families who had been mobile for generations. Furthermore, they taught that “this is a kind of work—Mr. Forani pointed out—that one learns *by living it*, by being on the ‘square,’” or “by intently watching,” according to Mr. Gappi. It thus was understandable that the former claimed how “the most important thing in my life is learning”: learning coincided

with his life on the road and on the “square.” I may add how, from the educator’s point of view, the confident expectation that children will learn (as in fact they do) by watching and listening is a meaningful lesson, since it tells us that attractionists’ children were seen, and dealt with as reliable, trustworthy persons, whose responsible, and affective, investment in the enterprise could be counted on.

The attractionists’ life and work not only demand physical exertion when “pulling up” (*tirar su*) and “pulling down” (*tirar giù*) the craft, as well as financial risk when a very expensive one is bought, but also an intense, emotional investment in the enterprise. Mr. Forani reminisced how

Our parents taught us to care for the attraction . . . We chose fashionable colors and painted it with great accuracy . . . [After all] an attraction is not just a working tool, it is rather an image [of one’s care for it].

On its part, the younger generation recognized that their fathers were knowledgeable and had passed their knowledge on to the children who learned to have “ambition” for, to be proud of the family attraction, as Mrs. Capari’s daughters testified. The importance of keeping attractions and fairgrounds clean and in order so as to please and reassure the customers was infallibly mentioned, while some stressed that attractionists (or, perhaps, the “good” attractionists) had “a different way to make and keep order.”

The knowledge taught and learn centered on *how* things are done—be they the attraction, the customers’ interaction, the sedentary co-citizens’ relations, and the respect of regulations. The educational relevance of “knowing how” over “knowing that” was not only interesting for the intercultural educator but also visible to the ethnographer during observations at fairgrounds. There, I was repeatedly impressed by the quiet, competent professionalism with which attractionists performed tasks: when, in one case, the adults were busy placing the attraction floor level with the pavement, the young ones collaborated firstly gauging the results by sight and then with a bubble level in order to give appropriate indications. Since trucks have to be precisely parked within the space allotted by the administration, it was possible to see a boy at its wheel who steered it according to the directions his father gave him from the street, while his mother and the little sister held a measuring tape to make sure that no mistakes were made. Or, when it was time to “pull down” an attraction, a little, dignified girl followed her mother closely holding a little beach bucket where the nuts and bolts the former was releasing were collected. One of the Gioietti teenagers, who was in charge of “pulling up” the family’s roller coaster together with a laborer’s help, went swiftly up the steel structure, keeping his balance and deftly moving from one beam to the next—under the admiring eyes of the local children. Later on, when the fair was fully under way, he beckoned me to stand by him, at the cashier desk, to appreciate how through jokes, loud music, even a raffle he enticed potential customers to come and test their driving (and bumping) ability.

Through the fieldwork and narratives’ collection, my early research questions came out somewhat modified: now, I would rather ask—with respect to the manners of teaching and learning I had observed and listened to, and to the attractionists’ awareness that it was the most effective way to pursue cultural and occupational

continuity—how relevant was the overall schooling experience for these children and their families, how meaningful was their classroom participation, and if their cultural and educational ways had ever been taken into consideration.

The older daughter of Mr. Casati was the first with whom I had a conversation²⁵ about her school experience: she had mixed feelings about it, because she remembered how in primary school some of her classmates did not associate with her, believing she was a “Gypsy,” while relations were so much more satisfactory in lower secondary school that, at the time of our conversation, she still exchanged visits and phone calls with some of those classmates. She recalled how the first grade had been the most difficult school year, because, owing to the family’s fair circuit, she met new children every week. During the years, classmates could “adore” her or keep cautiously to themselves, and she soon realized that she either had already learned what the class was being taught or, on the contrary, she didn’t have a clue about what the teacher was saying (a point made by almost every other attractionist). Thus, in one school she could have “top grades” and even be able to help her classmates in a difficult math exercise, while in the next one she could find herself “down to zero” and aware that there were things she would “never have a chance to learn.” Nevertheless, she was a good student and her arts teacher suggested that she could enroll in the university. However, as other young people narrated, she never enrolled in higher secondary school: it would have meant moving in with her grandparents, and her father could not imagine her leaving the family.²⁶ Meanwhile, her younger brother had stayed in school longer because he had been enrolled in a boarding school (that had been closed at the time of my research), a decision that had been difficult to make for his family. The younger daughter of Mr. Casati remembered how she would hit those classmates who treated her with hostility and, just like her sister, how she would either be “ahead of her class” since she had learned a specific curricular topic in another school, or “behind,” actually “discombobulated” by the disconnected learning path she and her sister had to trudge.

The narratives of the Casati sisters well illustrate the schooling experience attractionists’ children usually underwent and the “ahead/behind” curricular alternation they had encountered. The parents’ available alternatives were to leave the children with grandparents or relatives and reunite with them during weekends and vacations²⁷; to have children attend fewer schools which entailed long driving trips between the fairground and the school, four times a day, every day, until a next fair’s location made this impracticable; to enroll them in a boarding school—an option no longer possible in 1999; and to settle down and have the family man

²⁵It took place on December 26, 1999.

²⁶Her mother instead remembered that “the family needed [her] help.”

²⁷The mixed marriages between “still” young women or young men and traveling attractionists bring some practical advantages (a “still” relative caring for the children’s school education, fewer intragroup conflicts, and less revengeful competition, just to remember the positive consequences most often mentioned by the interviewees).

either bear total responsibility for taking the attraction along the “fairs’ circuit” (as Mr. Torrasi did) or for managing one at the town park, like Mr. Gappi (see Gobbo 2009a). His daughter had attended schools in the provincial town where the Gappi family had taken residence and had a very positive memory of those years; however, eager to follow on his father’s steps, she had her two daughters stay with her husband’s parents so she could work as a *traveling* attractionist while they studied to achieve the high school diploma.

Parents in their 40s were aware that the occupational sector no longer gave those economic and relational gratifications they, and their parents before them, had been used to; so they all expressed concern for the difficulties their children encountered, demonstrating their awareness that education was going to be more than necessary with the new century. As the younger Gioietti brother said:

This is the year 2000, it’s high time that the traveling attractionist be educated, so that he will know what to say to a person he must talk to.

He regretted that he had not completed compulsory education, and regardless of his success, he worried that lack of education could make an attractionists dependent on his interlocutor and less able to get along with his sedentary co-citizens.

As for the children who were still in school, they were open and proud of the little help they could give the family, because of their age, while they shied away from talking about their classmates, teachers, and school tasks, as if those were painful or embarrassing topics for discussion, and made me imagine that they had met prejudices or indifference their teachers had not been able to fend off.

Interpreting Diversity: The Teachers’ View

As mentioned earlier, at the end of fieldwork I contacted two primary schools and a lower secondary one²⁸ that had attractionists’ children among their pupils and students: my aim was to understand how teachers perceived their educational engagement with the attractionists’ children²⁹ and how familiar they were with their culture. In previous articles (Gobbo 2007a, b), I pointed out how in both schools³⁰ the teachers’ narratives developed through some relevant categories of the school culture that had characteristically shaped their perception of the “parceled school attendance” of attractionists’ children. The latter were firstly narrated as *pupils*, whose positive social attitude and good school behavior teachers praised, underlining how much more self-confident they were in comparison to their

²⁸On this occasion, only the focus groups organized in the primary schools will be taken into account.

²⁹My questions were as unstructured as possible so as to let teachers guide the conversation and put forward the themes, or the difficulties, that they saw as most relevant to their work.

³⁰The two primary schools were in two different Veneto provinces and the teachers did not know each other.

classmates (“they turn the page of the reading book without asking me first!” sighed one of the teachers), who usually welcomed them warmly when they arrived, “unlike [what happens with] Sinti or Roma children.” Possibly, what made the attractionists’ children appreciated as *pupils* and classmates was that they were in fact eager to be treated as such and participate in the class work: the teachers noticed that most of them showed an interest in what was being taught, even though they could not always follow the lessons or complete the assignments. In fact, the teachers’ narratives about the strategies enacted in class by those pupils made me hypothesize that

These children’s eagerness for school tasks is not only evidence of their goodwill, but also of knowing that if they cannot do as the other pupils do, without any problem, at least they can *try to show that they also share such an expectation*. (Gobbo 2007b, p. 495)

Still, those good pupils were “interrupted *learners*,” notwithstanding their socio-educational know-how. The teachers stated that the attractionists’ children could certainly learn but that they had considerable learning “gaps” (*buchi*), which impaired both their working with the rest of the class and their ability to follow what the teacher was doing—as the young attractionists had already admitted to me. The teachers’ narratives, and educational expectations, made clear that involvement with and success in learning required *continuity* in school attendance in order for all *learners* to proceed together, at more or less the same pace, through the curriculum. Teachers felt frustrated by their own inability to make such well-disposed pupils (*bravi alunni*, as they were unanimously represented) into *learners*, but they complained that their stay was too brief to give teachers enough time to prepare ad hoc assignments or pay a greater attention to what the “interrupted *learners*” already knew or needed to know. Then, when those pupils, and interrupted learners, went home for the day, they returned to be the attractionists’ *children* in the perception of teachers. The latter recognized that they knew very little of those families’ life and work, but they imagined the *children* confronted by “hardships everyday” since a life on the road could not provide the same comforts of a sedentary one. In the narratives, the school threshold those *children* crossed everyday became the metaphorical *limen* between a culture of freedom and daring actions and that of school life and sedentary society. Attractionists’ *children* were thus depicted by emphasizing the latter’s cultural diversity and interpreting it as resulting from a nomadic life and an occupation that set traveling families and children sharply apart from their “still” co-citizens. On the contrary, fieldwork findings encouraged an interpretation of traveling attractionists, and their children, as people who have developed a complex cultural framework able to accommodate the features and meanings of mobile as well as of sedentary lives.

Conclusions and a Proposal

On this occasion, after looking back at the fieldwork experience, and reading anew my published and unpublished material on the cultural and educational aspects of this occupational mobile minority, I chose to qualify the title of the chapter with a

metaphor that, some years ago, closed a text of mine devoted to the teachers’ narratives (Gobbo 2007a). In listening to them describing how they had to grapple with those pupils’ arrivals, departures, and returns taking place every year until completion of compulsory education, and firmly regulated by the fairs’ calendar, I was reminded of birds’ cyclical migration. Could the metaphor³¹ of people and children “of passage” suggest not only a problematizing interpretation of the minority’s occupation and social participation but also a different, more positive, educational attitude?

The metaphor did not intend to minimize the hardships the traveling attractionists go through which were too often compounded by the stereotypical and prejudicial perceptions and interactions on the part of their sedentary co-citizens. However, another facet of the metaphor stresses the expectation of a cyclical renewal that in nature is, for instance, announced by the spring return of the swallows, and highlights the positive meaning our culture assigns to an awaited *discontinuity*. The teachers testified that the arrival of the attractionists’ children does in fact announce an intermission in the daily and weekly routines of a town, to which both their classroom peers and the adults look forward to.

Obviously, the metaphor can neither quell teachers’ feelings of uneasiness, nor make the attractionists’ children learn more or better: however, it points to the complexity of cultural diversity and gives us all (and not just the teachers) the opportunity to place *our* own cultural identity and continuity—in everyday life and in school—into a critical perspective that valorizes creativity. Consider, for instance, the invention of innovative attractions by some of the Bergantino inhabitants at the end of World War II or the decision of other countrymen and women to move their lives and take the road (see Silvestrini 2000). In either case, cultural discontinuity was chosen as a positive step, so that building attractions from remnants of the war can be imagined as a way to signal the awaited overcoming of fear, famine, and death and announce peace. Italian writer Luigi Meneghello (and a member of the Resistance) is aware of this in remembering (1988) that when peace was at last attained, the “crafts” had not by chance returned to the main Padua square. Back then, the discontinuity of attractionists’ life at the same time warranted continuity in everyday life and hope for its renewal.

Looking at attractionists’ ways and work from this perspective suggests that their diverse identity has continually intertwined and enriched another diverse identity—the “still” one we call ours. Again consider, for instance, how the lives and performances of the “people of passage” (and especially those of the circus—the acrobats and the clowns) fire the imagination of artists and allow them to play with identity and representation by either highlighting those people’s discontinuity with everyday reality or ironically presenting themselves as critical both of bourgeois honorability and of the artistic call, while claiming their own freedom in the celebration of levity and challenge of gravity (Starobinski 1984; di Genova 2008). Thus, if with the circus “the noble steeds become riding horses” (Starobinski 1984,

³¹For the relevance of metaphors in education, see Gobbo 2009b.

p. 43) that mock the military parades, the same arena, by being circular, “offers multiple points of view [to the audience]” (di Genova 2008, p. 19) and to Alexander Calder the joy of playing with different roles and identifications (Painlevé 1955). Travelling attractions, circuses, and circus characters have appealed to an array of culturally and temporally diverse writers and artists.³² Their works indicate—as I propose—that cultural discontinuity is (t)here to be interpreted and make us see the world from other vantage points, rather than subscribed as a self-sufficient, “scripted,” and neatly bounded reality. To this end, the exercise of interpretation through social imagination (Greene 1978, 1995; Hanson 1988; Appiah 1996; Nussbaum 1997; Griffiths et al. 2007) is as indispensable as ethnographic findings and interpretations for promoting a reflective and critical view of cultural differences among teachers and intercultural educators.

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³²Examples include Hector Malot, Heinrich Böll, Dario Fo, John Irving, Jáchym Topol, and Norman Manea; movie directors as Charlie Chaplin, Federico Fellini, Bo Widerberg, and Cecil B. DeMille; choreographer George Balanchine (Schubert 2006); and painters as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pablo Picasso, Georges Seurat, Ernst Kirchner, Fernand Léger, Paul Klee, Marc Chagall, Georges Rouault, René Magritte, and the Italian Antonio Donghi.

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3.2 Constructing Collaborative Interpretations: Children as Co-researchers in an Ethnographic Study in Argentina

Diana Milstein

Introduction

The fieldwork characteristic of ethnographic research includes a wide range of tasks that put the researcher in contact with and in relation to places, subjects, and objects, and originate what, towards the end of the research process, can be called the course of an experience. Ethnographic research, and the *experience of fieldwork* that it entails, always implies a researcher challenging social and cultural prejudices and making efforts to put one's own culture in perspective. It is about overcoming limitations and distortions that impose categories, classifications, and understandings, visions that are always partial and restricted. One strives to appreciate that those who live in those places in which one is conducting fieldwork have agency, interpret the world, and act in it according to their own categories, classifications, and understandings. Among those who live in these worlds are *children*, though they are not often incorporated in ethnographic research as interlocutors with *agency*. For those of us who study the educational processes in which children participate, not including them restricts our possibilities of understanding phenomena.

The importance of incorporating the perspectives of children in ethnographies was realized early on by ethnographers who included children as guides in the "exotic" worlds where they carried out their research. This did not, however, lead them to incorporate their perspectives and points of view because they were not considered "key informants" for the understanding of societies and cultures.

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Considering them “informants” was a process whose beginnings date back to the decade of the 1920s. The most cited example, though not the only, is that of Margaret Mead and her study of adolescence among the inhabitants of Samoa.¹ Recently, in the 1980s and as part of a worldwide movement of the affirmation of the rights of children, sociologists, anthropologists, and other social researchers began to discuss the problem in social and cultural research of not recognizing children as social actors. Underestimating them was a problem because it implied ignoring that in any context, in one way or another, children were part of the productive and reproductive activities as well as the educational, religious, health, labor, etc., practices. Ignoring them implied silencing practices and locating in secondary or marginal places social groups who were critical for understanding these practices and minimizing analytical categories such as age and generation. Strategies for opposing ways of silencing children multiplied in social research from diverse disciplinary traditions and paradigms, but that generally coincided and some aspects: children are not incomplete human beings but rather active in the *socialization* processes. It is interesting to engage in dialogue with them and, above all, listen to them as they can teach “things” to adults. Furthermore, there is a certain consensus around the idea that ethnography, as a research focus, is particularly appropriate in terms of incorporating children when giving them a voice and an active participation—in the same way as other interlocutors or “informants”—in the processes of the production of knowledge. In this work, I am interested in going deeper into the question of the active participation of children in the processes of knowledge production inherent in ethnographic research. I also reflect on the possibilities that *ethnography with children* offers in order to enrich the processes of interpretation in educational research.

More concretely, I’ll discuss these questions through a report of experiences of co-research with children, done as part of a research project that I carried out in Argentina in 2004 and 2006. I was doing fieldwork for my doctoral thesis in an elementary school in Villa La Florida, located 25 km. from the city of Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina. I wondered about school practices in their political dimension in the context of the disorganization and destructuralization produced by the economic, political, and social crises of the 1990s in Argentina. Since the research centered on examining school practices from a political standpoint, this meant considering the school as a social environment within which to analyze political processes without restricting analysis to pedagogical, administrative, and/or legislative issues. It also meant placing these practices within general processes developing both inside and outside of the school. “My aim was to avoid limiting the political dimension to State policies or to the political use of education by governments and parties, thus allowing me to research the political tensions and social dynamics that evolve in schools and affect every day school life.

¹ “Anthropological pioneers like Malinowski, Mead, and Sapir identified ways in which childhood was worthy of ethnographic attention, and the literature grew at an increasing pace from the 1920s to the present” (Levine 2007, p. 155).

Indeed, the research focused on the politics of daily school life and showed the diversity of social roles that come together and play a part in this routine, as well as profiling a variety of political aspects, tensions, and disputes” (Milstein 2010a, p. 1). With the children, I did an important part of my field work outside the **school** that was linked, primarily, to the urban life in this community. I developed these experiences with a group of students of a local elementary school. In 2004, the participants were Fabian, a 13-year-old who was in the eighth grade; Yanina, Daniela, and Rodrigo who were 11 and were in the sixth grade; and Ezequiel who was 12 and Micaela and Marisol who were 11 were all in the sixth grade. The following year Yanina, Daniela, and Rodrigo were there again, and Patricia and Leonor, their classmates, joined us, as well as Camila who was in the fifth grade and was the sister of Leonor. All of them lived close to the school, between 2 and 9 blocks away. The houses they lived in, the composition of the families with whom they lived, the jobs of those who maintained the homes, the time of residency there, and their performance in school all varied, as I will describe further on. Each of these children had a prominent role as interlocutor in my work process. Likewise, as members of the collaborative group, they participated in activities that involved moments of fieldwork—collection of data and analysis—and in the writing, as coauthors of the texts. In both texts that we wrote and organized as a group, their own testimonies and those of the others were organized through the transcription of interviews, fragments of commentaries, plans designed by them, as well as photographed images. In this way, I was able to get to know and register versions and interpretations of life in the local and in the school from the perception that they had of the social world dominated by the feeling, saying, and acting of the adults, as well as to rethink aspects linked to questions such as *reflexivity*, the ways of constructing experiences, authorship, and writing.² The analysis that I am proposing requires two fundamental and unavoidable theoretical frameworks. The first is relative to children as categories that are socially and culturally marked and the other to the consideration of every space in terms of its social dimension. The former, as can be seen by the incorporation of the plural and the gender difference, I consider as settled—in the sense that in this work I do not discuss it—a still open process and fully developing debate on the *denaturalization* of the notion of infancy as biological, natural, relatively homogeneous, and historic. Children, in this work, refer to social subjects with positions in the social structure according to the intersecting variables of class, ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, age, and generation. A fundamental aspect of their identities as children is constituted in their relationship with adults. There is a recognition, just as in all the other social actors, of the capacity of agency and relative autonomy, which includes the capacity for reflection and interpretation and to change and have influence in the events and situations in the life in which they participate.

When I refer to the *space* in terms of its social dimensions, I am not thinking of social phenomena exactly as they flow about the space but rather of the social phenomena and the space, both constituted from a base of social relations. In this

² Some of these topics are developed in Milstein (2006, 2008, and 2010a).

sense, the spatial organization of the society is integral to the production of what is social and not simply a result of it. This is implied in terms of geography, history, and politics (Massey 2007, p. 2). Henri Lefebvre posed space as a conceptual triad that includes spatial practice, production and reproduction of places and spatial groupings characteristic of each social formation; the representation of space, the order imposed by spatial relations and the knowledge of the order and of the relations; and the spaces of representation, containers of the most complex symbolisms (1991, p. 33). These three dimensions shed light on the ways in which the spatial organized the narrative of children. It is also relevant for the analysis that I am suggesting here, the distinction between space and place in as much as we consider that “space is a practiced place” (de Certeau 2007, p. 129):

A place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which the elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. (...) A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. (De Certeau 2007, p. 129/1984, p. 117)

In this way, De Certeau—inspired by the differentiation made by *Merleau Ponty* between “geometric space” and “anthropological space”—argues that spatiality is constituted by the collection of practices of those who live, move in, and experience urban life. And these practices are those which give movement to the places and create the space as to link it to actions that give it the present and past existence. In this sense, de Certeau adds that stories also produce transformations of places into spaces and spaces into places. They animate and reanimate and can even invent them. In a way, what I experienced in my work with the children was, in part, this process of the “fabrication of spaces.”

The Place and the Children Co-researchers

Villa La Florida has 30,000 residents. It is located around 25 km. from the city of Buenos Aires, 2½ h in public transportation and more than an hour by car. It is part of Partido de Quilmes, one of the most populated and extended areas in the south of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. Its urbanization had its origin in real estate between the 1940s and 1950s, a period of industrial development and intense internal migration that also meant changes in the life of the population and that included the installation of businesses, schools, health centers, churches, etc. The first industries—brick, ceramics, glass, and iron—were fundamentally linked to the process of rapid urbanization. Along with population growth, housing increased, and in the central zone drainage, sewage lines, electricity, and gas were installed and some streets were paved. If up until the 1950s this zone was considered rural, in the 1970s it was, as the residents called it, “*a prosperous laborer neighborhood*.” In the 1990s, there were very abrupt and unexpected changes in this area that had become accustomed to work-based growth and development. The biggest factories that employed a large population of men and women who lived there closed. Small

businesses and shops reduced their activities and, in some cases, closed. For the first time, the region experienced massive unemployment about which, to this day, there are no precise records; the estimates correspond in that unemployment and reduced employment at the end of the 1990s affected 40 % of the economically active sector of the population.³ Many of the residents lived through this situation as an end to a progressive growth of opportunities and possibilities and the beginning of a social descent with an uncertain and discouraging future. At several points in time, sectors of the local society protested in the streets against the closing of factories and demanded work. On the other hand, some women were incorporated into an assistance program that was organized by the government of the province of Buenos Aires as the distributors of the so-called Life Plan,⁴ which not only guaranteed food for their children but also gave them other benefits. As time passed, some of them became involved in neighborhood political work. There was also, in this work, the presence of distinct local leaders who divided and disputed the zones over whom they were trying to exercise their influence through the delivering of subsidiaries and social plans. This division of zones included the health center and the schools.

The school attended by the kids I worked with was school N° 40 and was called *Islas Malvinas*. I did bulk of my fieldwork research there. It was the first school in La Florida in 1947 and was opened through the initiative of a group of residents. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the enrollment experienced constant growth in keeping with the increase in the population that lived in the zone and which resulted, furthermore, in the creation of more elementary schools. The majority of the students who went to this school were from the closest neighborhood and were generally children of local factory workers and merchants from the area. A significant percentage of graduates—compared to other similar schools—enrolled in junior high schools; some of them completed it and everyone knew the names of those who had gone to the university.

This stage lasted through the middle of the 1980s. The situation of this school, just as is the case of the majority of the public elementary schools of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, changed radically in the decade of the 1990s. The school was impacted by the economic and social changes suffered in the area and by the negative changes in the school system itself.⁵ Public funding for the repair and

³ In order to have an idea of the dimensions of this percentage, one must consider that during the same period, the national average of unemployment and underemployment oscillated between 25 % and 30 %.

⁴ The *Plan Vida* (the Life Plan) was organized and subsidized by the Provincial Council of the Family and Human Development of the province of Buenos Aires designed to distribute milk and cereals to pregnant women and children younger than 5 years old.

⁵ In 1996, this elementary school was transformed into a general basic school by a law passed 2 years before, a law meeting resistance by the majority of teachers' unions. This implied the incorporation of teaching and non-teaching personnel and of students who up to this point attended junior high schools that worked in other buildings. In order to accommodate these students, there was a precarious and hurried expansion of the building that did not meet the basic necessities for the institution.

maintenance of school buildings was reduced, teachers' salaries were disregarded, the number of students of unemployed parents and who came from the poorest parts of the region grew, and the number of students whose families had work diminished. This situation blurred the almost homelike atmosphere that the school had had among the neighbors' locals, especially those who lived near the building, and the perception outside the school was that the links between the school and the neighborhood had eroded. This experience of the fracturing of links was, in part, what led me to bring together a group of students to work with me on my research. Briefly narrating how I arrived at this decision is no minor detail. Originally I had planned that my tour of the area, visits to the other scholastic and non-scholastic institutions, and the interviews of the residents would be made with the orientation and accompaniment of teachers, auxiliary workers, and relatives of the students from the school.

During the third month of my fieldwork while I reread my notes, I noticed the importance of certain conversations that, on various occasions and casually, I had had with different children. In my research project I had defined the adults—teachers, helpers, technicians, relatives, authorities, and neighbors—as the privileged interlocutors because I had assumed that they were the ones involved and interested in the political framework of daily life. But while reading attentively my exchanges with the children, I noticed that they allowed me to establish connections with topics that were of great interest to my study. In addition to this discovery of the children in my notes was added my difficulty connecting with residents and the enthusiasm of the principal and some teachers when I presented them with the idea of organizing a group of children as a team to work with me on my research. The first team took about 3 weeks to form with its seven permanent members. The teachers and I called the first meeting, and eight girls, two boys, four mothers, and two fathers attended. On that first occasion, we had conversations primarily among adults. After this first encounter, some of the children came back and others did not. The fathers did not visit us again and some mothers came for their children at the end. Finally, the day that we organized for our first outing, the group had three girls and a boy. On the next occasion, four more members joined us. Yanina, Daniela, Rodrigo, and Ezequiel were accompanied by a relative and came on a regular basis, while Fabián, Marisol, and Micaela participated sporadically. The following year, when I convoked them in order to organize the second group, Yanina, Daniela, and Rodrigo attended. Ezequiel and Marisol were no longer in the school and had moved. Micaela was busy a few afternoons in the church so that she could come only sporadically. Fabián preferred not to join because the previous year his father and brothers had made fun of him for his participation: they considered it to be “an activity for women.” Yanina and Daniela decided to call two classmates and thus Patricia and Leonor joined us. Camila—the younger sister of Leonor—came to me during a recess when activities had already begun and asked to join the group. Fabián lived with his father, mother, brothers, and an uncle in an old, slightly deteriorated house that had belonged to his grandfather, an Italian immigrant who had passed away. His house was across the street from a bar frequented by men where his father, who worked sporadically,

went daily. His mother worked as a domestic worker and his brothers participated in activities linked to “*choreo*”.⁶ Both his father and his brothers made their disapproval clear in different ways over what Fabián did with the group. Yanina lived with her mother and father, natives of Corrientes—a province situated along the coast of the country and with two old sisters and one younger. Her father worked as a graphics laborer in a press and her sisters worked in a beauty salon. Her mother attended to the domestic chores and her brother was in the fifth grade, also in the School No. 40. Both the mother and the father expressed, in different moments, their enthusiasm for the activities that Yanina was involved in with me and, on several occasions, we used their house as a meeting and work space. Daniela lived in the same house as Rodrigo. She was the sister of Rodrigo’s father, his aunt. Both of them liked to introduce themselves that way. Under the same roof lived the father and mother of Daniela—Rodrigo’s grandparents—and Rodrigo’s parents. Daniela’s mother kept busy raising both of them and her other children; we met up with her in different moments and she was always attentive to what we were doing. Daniela’s father fixed refrigeration apparatuses; Rodrigo’s was a volunteer fireman and worked doing odd jobs or “*changas*”.⁷ Ezequiel lived in a rented house with his mother, father, and three older siblings. They had all been born in Santiago del Estero, a province situated in the center of the country, and his mother was very happy living in this area because she thought that it provided more and better opportunities for her children. Marisol was born nearby, and when she was 2 years old, she moved to a house that was loaned to them by a relative in La Florida. She lived with her mother, father, and one older brother and one older sister. Those who maintained the home were her mother, who “worked in a beauty salon”; her father, who “worked in a mechanic’s shop”; and her brother, who helped her father. The oldest sister took care of the house and of Marisol. Micaela had arrived with her family to La Florida 2 years before. There were five children and they lived with their father, mother, and an uncle who “worked in politics.”⁸ Patricia lived with her father and mother in a small rented house. Her family’s nationality was Paraguayan which was for her a source of pride. She was always sorry that she only saw her mother on the weekends because she worked as a domestic employee and slept in the house where she worked. Her father worked in a “junk store” that was very close to the house and he took care of her. It was always difficult for her to get her father to let her participate in the activities of the group. I went personally several times to guarantee that I would take care of his daughter. Leonor and Camila lived in a room of a house with their mother and a younger brother. The mother sometimes was employed in domestic work and had a partner who always visited

⁶ In the colloquial language of the River Plate area, the term “*choreo*” is a lower kind of theft, done in a stealthily, without violence and on a low scale.

⁷ The word “*changa*” means temporary manual work that was sporadic and informal, done by a worker in exchange for a modest sum, with no permanent connection to the contractor.

⁸ This expression originated in the 1990s in Argentina among poor and unemployed sectors in order to describe the work that some people did for governing politicians on the national, provincial, and municipal levels.

her and who worked as a “*cartonero*”.⁹ On some weekends, Leonor and Camila collaborated with their mother on the work of classifying the refuse. On other weekends, they went to the house of her father, who lived with his spouse and more of her siblings in an area closer to the city of Buenos Aires.

Fieldwork with Groups of Children

The fieldwork that I did with groups of children included a number of activities that we did both in and outside of the school building. The school backed up what we did and some teachers and assistants collaborated, but the majority of the activities occurred outside school hours. We got together once or twice a week, sometimes for 2 h; other times, the activities lasted up to 4 and 5 h. We used a day of the weekend and afternoon hours, after school had been dismissed.

“During the first encounters with both groups, I proposed activities aimed at achieving an exchange of ideas with the group of children, in order to decide what we would do together, who would participate and how we would organize our activities. The topic that integrated the collective preoccupations with both groups was getting to know the place in which they lived through what people from Villa La Florida could tell them. I told them the topic of my research; however, it wasn’t that story which enthused them but rather the concrete activities- visiting places that they had chosen, interviewing and recording, photographing- which they assimilated with those television journalists who do reports in the street. They liked to be in the school outside of normal school hours: “*we have the school to ourselves,*” they would say. We did practically all of our activities outside of school hours using spaces that were not used typically for school activities. During this first period, we were establishing the roles of each one of us. This was fundamental for me because I had to find concrete ways of preventing my position from becoming what “naturally” was produced in interactions: teacher, caregiver” (Milstein 2010b, p. 72).

Both groups carried out activities of observation, participant observation, recorded interviewing, photographic registry, the design of plans of the area, readings and analysis of the recorded registers and of the photographs, text selection tasks, and writing for the creation and edition of their texts.

The group of activities of the first group was oriented towards finding out what the adult neighbors thought about the place they lived in and of the School No. 40, as it was before and as it was now. The second group centered its work on finding out what children like them who attended their school and those who had stopped attending thought of the neighborhood, the schools, their parents, and families and their work. The development of the project, for both groups, was designed in three stages. The first stage was dedicated to the training of the group

⁹The term “*cartonero*” alludes to the job of collecting cardboard, paper, and other urban residuals for recycling, done by one’s own initiative at the margins of the work of collectors of refuse and in which were involved families, including children.

for fieldwork; the next, information collection; and; the third, processing the information and written production. I use the term training in the sense of preparation and rehearsal: preparing for the development of a task in a group, becoming integrated as a team, bringing interests together, and finding appropriate means of communication. The rehearsal of activities was aimed at learning to look and to take pictures, ask questions, respond, tell, and listen. Collecting information involved a series of activities which included visiting places, drawing, photographing, interviewing and recording the interviews, and getting together to talk about it and give an account. In order to process the information, the activities that I proposed consisted in listening to recordings and commenting on them, reading the transcripts of the recordings and pointing out what most interested them, looking at photographs, exchanging anecdotes, and proposing a selection of images.¹⁰ The first meetings, both with the first and the second groups, were held in the school building. We used them to talk about the places we would visit, the people we would interview, and the tasks that each of us would carry out. Also as a group, the children drew a map of the neighborhood. Both groups took up the drawing of the map again at various moments and they finished it during our last meetings. These drawn maps, along with everything the children had talked about and told while they drew, enriched our communication and my possibilities for capturing what they perceived and interpreted in terms of the lived space.

I understood that every space referred to was important in that it was recognized as a “place,” that is, as a space that the people of the area and these children had charged with meaning because, in one way or another, they were linking the people and producing a senses of belonging (Cresswell in Den Besten 2010, p. 182).

- Camila: What I like the most is interviewing people
 Diana (researcher): And you?
 Patricia: I don't know. . .
 Leonor: I like visiting a lot of places and being with people. Because I'm not allowed to go out much.
 Camila: The furthest that we've been is the house of my uncle Miguel
 Yanina: Which is really close
 Patricia: I almost never go out of my house because now that my mom is working and it's just my dad there, he doesn't let me and he's afraid of the streets
 Daniela: Me, I go out along the streets alone
 Yanina: And sometimes to the house of a friend or Daniela's.
 Diana: You two don't visit each other much?
 Yanina: No, not much.
 Patricia: It's because our parents won't let us.
 Yanina: My mom and dad don't like it much because of the things that happen in the house.

¹⁰ A more detailed account of these experiences is published in Milstein 2008 and 2009a.

Camila: My mom doesn't like it much either.
 Yanina: They let me come here because we came out with you
 (Transcript of fieldnotes on a work meeting with the group
 of children. 10/30/2005)

Thus, I tried to understand their ways of being in the world in the complementarity of what they did, said, and drew. At the same time—following the reflections of *Johannes Fabian* (1983, 2007) on the “denial of co-temporality (*coevalness*)” as a critique of ethnographic work—I asked myself: How to avoid that these drawn maps become sealed off as objects of representation? How to understand these drawings without reducing them to “infantile” performances? How to access to what their authors, subjects of my research, were teaching me? How to incorporate what I learned from them? I understood that a path towards responding to this questioning consisted of treating them as documents that, far from being “independent” or enjoying certain “autonomy” as such, ought to be understood within the social relationship in which they had been produced, that is, as part of our *ethnographic encounters*. The trips we had taken around the area included planned visits to some places—the health center, the site of the volunteer fire fighters, shopping centers, the plaza, and among others—and walks along the streets and green areas. During these trips, with both groups, I experienced the point at which the *dialogic interaction* with the children went beyond the verbal and even the gestural:

United to the temporal variable, space introduces a movement variable. The distance that separates object bodies or areas is overcome by means of movement. This refers us to the cultural and social modalities that every act of displacement in space implies: trips, trajectories, itineraries and the networks that enervate space convert it into an element of great plasticity but also into instruments of measurement among groups, individuals and differentially situated topos. (Provansal 2000, p. 6 my translation)

I understood the relevance of following them in their ways of getting around places, both in their manners of moving and the direction and sense that they gave to their trajectories because it was this moving through space that revealed ways of living the space, as de Certeau (2007) said. And these ways later were articulated in the task of selecting photographs that they had taken.

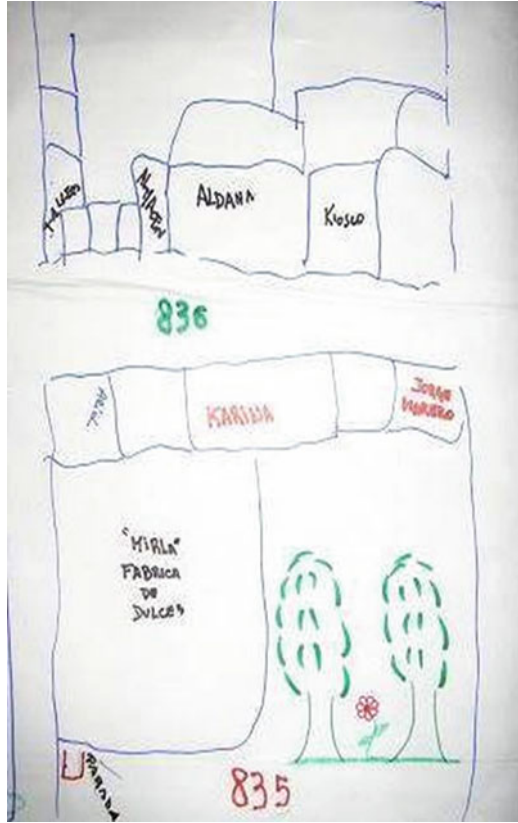
As I indicated above, the last stage of work with the children consisted in processing the information. Concretely, both groups produced texts that they elaborated with fragments of the interviews they had conducted and the photographs they had taken. The process of selecting photographs was also important for understanding the place that spatiality had as an organizer of experience which they related in the texts.

Places, Spaces, and Stories

As I mentioned previously, both groups drew a map, which was done throughout various encounters with the discontinuous participation of the members. In both cases, the idea of making drawings was mine and carried out by the groups happily

and with dedication. The materials that they used were very few and quite limited. The medium they used was rag paper (unprocessed paper that is used for wrapping, donated by the paper factory close to the school) and drawing materials; thick felt-tipped pens in green, black, blue, and red; fine felt-tipped pens in a variety of other colors; black pencils; and colored pencils. In both cases, the children took the paper from the roll and extended it over several tables placed together. Each of the maps, in its natural size, measures around 2 m long by 1.5 m wide. The first group began this activity during our third meeting. The idea came up when they suggested that we begin fieldwork in the plaza. By their gestures, way of speaking and explaining, I felt that this beginning had an unquestionable logic: the plaza was the heart of Villa La Florida. Later, I discovered that it was a perspective common to many of the residents, in spite of the information to the contrary that I had previously gathered from the adults of the school. And so, I suggested that they draw a plan of the zone in which the plaza was located so that I could orient myself on the walks that we would take together. They drew for two afternoons, for about 2½ h each time. The locations of the constructions, the directions, and the orientations of buildings all corresponded with reality. It was a useful plan for getting around in the zone they had drawn. Nevertheless, not all the streets and blocks were detailed in the same way, and the sizes of the various drawings were not proportional in relation to the actual sizes. I recorded the conversations we had while they drew and I also took notes, which helped me not lose perspective on the context in which it all was done. Several times in the recording, there were various comments registered by the girls who were worried about my disorientation in this place, asking me to look at how they were drawing the places furthest away, for example, the location of the middle school No. 11 and the candy factory. It could also note that the plan drawn by the first group did not include drawings of people. This decision was made while they drew when one girl saw another drawing a little boy playing in the plaza and told her not to because if she did, there wouldn't be room to see *what the plaza is like*. The girl erased what she had been drawing and there were no other representations of people. I understood that the implicit agreement that they had made was that they would only draw that which was permanent that which does not move. This was very interesting to me because without resorting to drawings of people, activities and relationships could, nonetheless, "be seen" in this drawing. Without modifying the broadly shared idea that a plan of an urban zone has streets, green areas, and important buildings, these children were able to animate the space. This occurred, for example, with labels on the houses that were drawn, particularly those that had proper names, the names of the children drawing—Nicolás, Aldana, etc. In the conversations that we held while they drew, they explained to me that the map extended towards the four sides of the plaza in accordance with the place in which each of them lived. It was the zone known by them animated by the presence of other houses, businesses, factories, schools, clubs, and society of promotion. In the plan, the size of the space that each of these places occupied, the ways in which the children highlighted them in colors and what surrounded each one, constituted a story of the place, a "fabrication" of it.

Photo 1 A view of two downtown blocks (drawing done by the first group)



As one can appreciate in Photo 1, on both sides of the street 836, the houses of several of the children are drawn and a rectangular figure that indicates the land that the candy factory occupies, as the only building on the block, with trees on one side. Some of these children, as they placed their names on their respective houses, discovered that some of the others lived very close by. They did not all know they were neighbors. But all of them had played at some time on the candy factory's land that, though it was private property, sometimes functioned as a plaza. Behind the candy factory, they drew the street 835, one of the most important streets in the neighborhood because of the circulation of public transportation. This is why the *bus stop* figures in as the place where the residents waited for the bus. During our walks along these places, we never went down the street 835 because “*there is nothing to see,*” “*they could rob you there,*” “*we don't know anyone, they're not from this neighborhood,*” and “*my mom doesn't let me.*” These commentaries converged with indications that some teachers had given me on my first days doing fieldwork. One of the members of the psycho-pedagogical department of the school had told me categorically:

I know because I am the principal of an in-home special education school and my teachers always go and I know the problems that they have. You have to be careful with even what street you take. If you take 835 even the taxi drivers warn you that, no matter what, they do not stop. You always have to think of how to go, along which route. Going in your car is a problem, you are exposing yourself to robbery. We don't drive alone in certain areas, the teachers know well that it's better to have a good relationship with the leaders, and then you can go peacefully through certain areas and know that you are protected.

This general criterion had already been assimilated by the children; for that reason, that is where the zone possible for visiting ended. However, on the other side of 835 street, they also drew two buildings—the middle school that many of the graduates of School No. 40 attended and the promotion society, an old neighborhood association—and a house with the name of one of the children. The drawing of this house was very suggestive for me in terms of thinking about how the knowledge of order and relationships imposed upon ways of representing space. But, at the same time, on the journeys that I took with the children, I learned the importance of differentiating positions since this block was the limit of our walks, but not the border of what was known by the children.

The parts of the plans illustrated by Photos 2 and 3 show houses of the children and also some businesses: stands, an ice-cream shop, a lumberyard, the “Bar poker,” a beauty salon, and a bar “La mendocina.”

“Bar poker” grabbed my attention because there was no visible sign with that name. It was the place where some men got together to play poker, among them, relatives of some of the children. Many stories around this bar and the lives of some relatives came up later. It was not the only bar that was open in the area, but it formed part of the daily social life of some men and of the families of these



Photo 2 View of the intersection of the street of the school with the route that connects with Buenos Aires (drawing done by the first group)

Photo 3 View of an intersection and the location of businesses and bars (drawing done by the first group)



children. And for them it was a reference point for finding their family members, and, at the same time, as children, they did not yet belong. This place clearly differentiated the adult masculine world. Thus, we can also underscore another bar: “La mendocina.” This place was different; it was prohibited. The one who put its name there was a girl and several of the children laughed. I registered the laughter but did not understand it. I also did not ask them why they laughed. But I had already seen it because it was just across the street from where I would get out of the bus, two and a half blocks from the school, and it had always been closed. After awhile, I found out that it was a bar that opened at night and was much frequented by prostitutes. That this reference had been included caught my attention. A few days later, when we went on our first outing and walked around the plaza, they indicated a place to me that I should not go near, and this indication was the key to understanding the reference on the map. One girl told me: “*We aren’t going there where those kids are smoking because that is the red-light district.*” “La mendocina” undoubtedly operated as a space of representation of we think of the triad proposed by Lefebvre (1991): spatial practice, representations of space, and lived spaces. I have tried to show how the “indicators of *outings* and indicators of *maps*” have been relating to one another (De Certeau 2007, p. 131) during these ethnographic encounters with the children. The doing and saying became coordinated through spatial organizational axes that marked the limits and borders. The marks of the inside and of the zones that should not be mixed, both in the area in general and in the plaza specifically, were those that the children, just as the adolescents, young people, and we adults use as rules that differentiate what is dirty from what is clean, pure from impure, order from disorder. Here we recall the attentive and detailed treatment that Mary Douglas (2003 [1966]) gave to these differentiations in order to understand the relevance of the reflexive contribution with my interlocutors. This had a critical influence on the analytical and argumentative development of the monograph that I wrote as a result of all the research.

The Children as Coauthors

The books that I invited the children to produce were printed on half an $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ page on common paper and in color. The first, “Looking for something more. Reading the story of our neighborhood and our school,” has 48 pages. The second, “How we see la Florida”, has 40. The cover of the first has the design of the plaza taken from the plan drawn by the group of children, above it, the title of the book, and below it, the names of each of the authors, including myself as coordinator. In the case of the second book, the design covers the front and back covers and includes explicatory notes. On the first page, there is a photo of the entire group and the names of each one of them. The next page in both books is the table of contents. The first book is divided into seven brief chapters: Introduction, Acknowledgments, We know the plaza, Anecdotes from the firemen, Fernando: our “patriarch,” Our school, and How does the neighborhood feel? The other book has eight sections: Introduction, The Schools, The Plazas, The Families, The Parents’ work, Politics, Legends of Fear, and Closing.

The short chapters are organized with fragments of transcribed conversations, parts of the drawn plan which is presented at the beginning and some photos. These images, in addition to illustrating the written part, added an aspect of what was lived and imagined by the group. Keep in mind the dialogue that I transcribed above in which Rodrigo said that they were looking for *something more that they did not know*. This phrase is very significant for me in terms of the collaboration in the authorship of the books because it makes the shared position explicit in that social world that we went out to explore and about which, above all, we decided to tell.

The most descriptive/narrative of this *something more* appears especially in the written part; the lived part showed up particularly in the photos and the imagined, above all, in the drawn design. The final chapter of the first book—How does the neighborhood feel?—is composed of seven fragments of narrations of interviewees, three photos, and four images of parts of the drawn plan. The fragments narrate brief stories in first person related to the arrival to the area, the process of urbanization, the health center, the river “when its water was crystal clear,” and the neighborhood community of those adults who were interviewed. In the four images, the zone in which several of them live is represented, with their houses drawn, the stands where they often buy things and the small candy factory, and the adjoining space that the adults call a “vacant lot” (see Photo 1). This space, as can be appreciated in the image, is represented by two trees and a flower. We went through there twice with the children and on both occasions; they ran and jumped there in the same way that they did in the plaza and then they told me it was a place to play.

Photo 4 Micaela, a girl researcher, at the front door of Medical Center of Villa La Florida



The photograph that they chose of the health center abounds in life (Photo 4). We recall that during this visit the most important activity was to play doctor and patient, and in the image is Micaela—the doctor—saying goodbye to Yanina, her patient. Although this game is not mentioned in the book, the image of this girl in the door of the sanitary unit is revealing in that it is an eruption of play and a redefinition of the habitual image of a sanitary space.

The meaning that the children give to the situations, spaces, and people is sometimes similar to that of the adults. In these cases, their perspectives tend to be relatively conventional. But on occasions, as in the case of the “vacant lot,” it is presented as a spontaneous contraposition to the naturalized sense of adults.

Vacant lot means empty space, and in the common sense of the word, it is a land where there is nothing meaningful, of value, useful. It is a place that is not even good for recreation, and, in urban areas, it is hoped that it becomes productive. It is precisely this space, thus defined, that the children experience as a meaningful, productive, and pleasurable place. This is why this drawing (see Photo 1) provokes a perception of enjoyment that being in that place produced. When we perceive, we understand or enjoy a representation. It is as if we were perceiving, comprehending, or enjoying the represented object (Sperber 1992, p. 26). This confirms that this way of representing the space contiguous to the factory was appropriate in the way that it

was felt and meant. At the same time, it denotes a frank opposition of meanings between the perspective of the adults and that of these children who, far from being derived from some infantile distortion, emanated the way in which the space is perceived and lived. Something similar probably had a bearing on the fact that the children discarded all references to the river as a place that was polluted, dirty, and ruined and chose the only adult voice that talked about it from a childhood memory, as a place of pleasure and play:

An anecdote from when I was Little, but that was many years ago: I was six or seven years old and I had a friend next door who was nine or ten and another who was eleven. One day we went for a walk with her parents. We got to the river with all the grass cut which was beautiful, a park, gorgeous. And we began to walk along the banks. The parents walked on one side and we walked on the other. And the river got wider and wider and deeper and we couldn't find each other. And along there we saw a horse in the river and we looked and the river was clean, clean as drinking water, and so you could see all the rocks and fish and a horse. And so when we saw that a horse was there it occurred to us that we could cross. And we crossed the river.

Former student and assistant of the School No. 40 (Milstein coord. 2004, p. 46)

The selection of the written fragments, images, and titles was done, as I mentioned in the previous section, without me intervening for explanations of the reasons for the selections or rejections. But, as can be seen by this example, it was neither random nor whimsical. As the children selected fragments and images, I noticed a coincidence, a sort of implicit logic that they did not express with arguments. How was this coincidence, this coherence, these memories, possible? These questions are not easy to answer. It is helpful to refer to ways of organizing experience, emotion, and affection intimately anchored in the body. Merleau Ponty (1984) very clearly explained the conclusive relationship between our bodies, daily experiences, and our perception processes which include the apprehension of what he called the lived space. Bryan Turner (2001, p. 13), building on this idea, suggested that the perception of external reality includes corporal experiences of the physical world and the capacity to manipulate the daily world through motor activities. Furthermore, he considered language as necessarily embodied in these material forms of the potentiality of the body. Based on that, thinking, doing, and feeling should be considered practical activities that require our bodily presence. The case of this physical space that the adults represent as vacant lot and the children with a drawing of two trees and a flower evidence opposite experiences, criteria, and perceptions. The adults have embodied a predisposition to see urban spaces with utilitarian and instrumental criteria. The children, in this case, anchored their perception and their language in their capacities to manipulate and apprehend the daily world from and with their bodies. As Peter McLaren would point out, their bodies incorporated and generated ideas (1994, p. 91). We could even accept that, in a major part of these books, it is a representation of an *embodied* reality or, in other words, the embodied apprehension of aspects of reality. This reveals the potential of the reflexive nature of exchange with children when we accept the challenge that is implied in thinking, orienting ourselves and questioning ourselves, with their frames of reference, in a process of interaction, differentiation, and reciprocity between our reflexivity and theirs (Guber 2001, p. 53). The processes of interaction stimulated and fostered the ways of intersubjective relating,

fundamental for producing anthropological knowledge. And in both texts, this communicative experience of fieldwork is inscribed, interwoven with the narrations. Thus, that which is perceived, lived, thought, and represented in the books through their distinct moments and actions confirms the children's agency in their capacity for symbolic production and in the organized constitution of their representations and beliefs. And at the same time, the idea that this elaboration of meanings is part of a symbolic system shared with adults is strengthened.

Reflexivity, Children, and Researcher

Children tend to be social actors whose reflexive capacity is subject to diverse polemics that are not often made explicit. Simply speaking, in the same way that other subjects belonging to subordinated social groups, their interpretations are not valued or are less valued for the simple fact that they belong to the community of children.

This belief is closely linked to a way of conceiving socialization as a stage that lasts from birth up to adulthood, in the best of cases. From this perspective, children are considered subjects in the process of, or on the way to, or simply incomplete beings. It is clear that this conception contains, without completely stating it, an imaginary of a finished process and a point of arrival and completeness, which is the adult. Not just any adult, but we won't go into that here. What I am interested in pointing out is that one of the most prominent aspects of what children lack, from this perspective, is the abilities associated with intellectual activity. This belief is at the base of every discussion about what and how children think—including their capacity for abstraction, the use of languages, the limits of their interpretations, etc.

Conflicting with the idea that children, and only children, are still being completed by socialization, I began to conceive of socialization as a process that covers the entire life span of individuals. This does not mean that we are permanently in the process of socialization—children aren't either—but rather that we sustain, during diverse periods of our lives, actively, distinct socialization processes. This process is very close to us, as ethnographers, who, as part of our work as researchers, intentionally submit ourselves to socialization processes during our fieldwork in order to study and understand diverse social worlds. And during these processes of socialization, we are intentionally very attentive to the possible distortions that can affect our comprehension—distortions derived from *ethnocentricities*, epistemo-centricities, gender-centricities, adult-centricities, etc. Of course, this is not our attitude when in daily life we pass through socialization processes in which we are reflexive and, at the same time, we embody distortions that we are appropriating.

In the same way, children, human beings who are very interested in participating actively in socialization processes, develop reflexive thought. Just as in the case of the adults, it has perceptive distortions that do not take away the value of their interpretations. On the contrary, just as I tried to show through my work with them,

their reflexive thought can shed light on the notions, ideas, feelings, and perceptions common to the social world to which they belong. We can also approach categories that give visibility to phenomena that are unexpected by others, including researchers themselves. And finally, these categories can help us understand how we organize narratives and make sense of our experiences. In the analysis that I am developing in this chapter, what became evident is the role that spatiality plays as an organizer of experiences and how the distinct ways of appropriating places and representing places, while “telling” us about social relations, also model them. It also became clear how children participate quite actively in the laborious social task of “fabricating” places. Undoubtedly, this cannot be understood as an infantile way of organizing experiences. This is a social mode that crosses age and generation barriers and can open up a panorama for us to think about reflexivity in our ethnographic encounters and also with children.

In this sense, I am reconsidering the way that the group used the categories inside and outside to show the relevance that it had in the ethnography I wrote. We recall that the group rebaptized the residential area *Villa La Florida*: instead of using the name “park,” they called it “those from the inside.” They took the fact that the children who lived in this neighborhood had never seen another neighborhood as the principal fact that the term “inside” was used as an indicating social marker that should not be confused with *those from the inside*, and as an indicator of those “others” who differentiate themselves from “us.” They considered this to be the case because in contrast to their own case, these children were not allowed to leave their homes by themselves and walk or hang out along the streets. Interestingly, when applying this classificatory rule, the children placed themselves outside and it was the “others” who remained in an inside marked by enclosure. This was very different from how they used the outside when they represented *what they call the villa*. In this case, the outside remained fixed by the inexistence of human and social marker: they did not draw human figures, houses, businesses, schools, streets, and automobiles. And with respect to this outside, they remained inside conforming to an “us,” those from Villa La Florida, also made up of *those from the inside*. The writing of my ethnography included continuous reflections that sent me again and again to the moments and ways in which the inside/outside dichotomy emerged in these shared experiences of shared processes of the production of knowledge with these groups of children. It also appeared, of course, in my readings of academic works that supported the ideas that I was sketching and in my dialogues with myself, trying to control my so-called expert common sense about these ways of classifying socially. The categories outside and inside were very useful for me to describe, to analyze, and even to speculate with. Thinking about these categories enabled me to show that the school cannot be defined as an inside opposite of the world outside—street, family, government, etc.; I described through various scenes different ways of interpenetration between inside and outside the school, and I organized part of my argument around the presence and incidence of distinct political fronts in daily school life. Being there alongside my collaborators and going back with my imagination, I could achieve every time “the passage from the reflexivity of the researcher-member of another society, to the reflexivity of the inhabitants” (Guber 2001, p. 53), vital for producing anthropological knowledge.

The ethnography that I developed with children should be understood as a collective and cooperative knowledge practice. The anthropological work of co-research with children demands as a first condition acceptance that children are generators and bearers of valuable knowledges for anthropological knowledge and as a second condition that they make full and creative use of the reflexive quality characteristic of language. This implies recognizing and potentiating their **agency**, once again confirmed in the experiences of our work. Adults participate, intervene, lead, share, obligate, allow, etc., but they are definitely not the agents of the learning processes of the children. With this final affirmation, I distance myself categorically from the concept of “educative agents” commonly used in academic, political, and media discourses. In its place, I would emphasize the fact that children act as agents of their own learning processes, including when these processes occur in interactions with adults. The processes generated during distinct moments of fieldwork, reading, and writing with the children can be understood as situations of mutual learning. Here we transform the indispensable cooperation between researchers and interlocutors into an effort to create situations in which we all learn together and we make explicitly conscious—though it be partial—our learning. In this way, in our experience, when children have an influence in their own learning process, they see themselves as authorized in the sphere of knowledge, in their dialogue with adults. We are reminded that it would be highly improbable that these same children as students in their schools would have been able to experience a similar position in a learning process within the conventional and traditional parameters and conditions of the educational institution. And in this sense, *ethnography with children* creates the conditions for an anthropological reconsideration of scholastic education in general.

To conclude, I would like to consider reflection and interpretive work. The surprise and dislocation that were provoked in me by the affirmations, questions, comments, explanations, drawings, photographs, gestures, and the children’s ways of being and interacting have been recuperated in this article in order to show the contrast of the reflexivity that was connected throughout my ethnographic fieldwork. I call these encounters contrasts between my reflexivity and those of the children in order to underscore the logic of what happened with us in the field and from which, therefore, we could learn (Guber et al. 2012). When analyzing my reflexivity, I discovered which paths I might explore and how I might carry out this exploration without knowing exactly where it might lead me. My certainty consisted in that while discovering these inquiry paths, I was discovering the field, discovering myself within its context, and thus opening productive routes for interpretive processes.

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3.3 Learning to Survive in Sri Lanka: Education and Training in Times of Catastrophe

Mara Benadusi

The Role of Disaster Risk Reduction Education

There is a story in Sri Lanka taken from Theravada Buddhist literature (specifically the *Samudda-Vaniya Jataka*) that tells of a natural disaster in the form of series of tidal waves striking down on a beautiful island. According to the story, only half of the population drowns during the first tsunami. Taking no notice of the warnings issued by the other half of the residents, the island's new arrivals begin to drink alcohol, fill the land with refuse, and defecate all over without cleaning up after themselves. The Gods are offended by this rampant pollution and decay, and together they conspire to have the ocean wash everything away. One deity, more compassionate than his fellows, warns the residents, while a rival God tells the humans to ignore the warning. The islanders thus divide into two groups: some follow an improvident leader who wants to ignore the advice, whereas others cast their lot with a more judicious guide, who decides to build a boat and equip it with provisions in case the first God's warning turns out to be true. At this point a second tidal wave strikes the island. The improvident chief initially believes that his followers can save themselves because the waves only reach as high as their knees. Little by little, however, the tsunami gains strength until every person who did not seek refuge on the boat is entirely submerged (Crosby 2008).

This story highlights the chain of causality linking the explanations most frequently used to interpret the disaster: responsibility for the events is attributed to the deities, nature, and mankind. Tidal waves are natural occurrences (*utu-niyama*), yet the damage they cause varies depending on the behavior that humans adopt. The destruction they produce thus depends on *kamma-niyama*, that is, the individual

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and/or collective actions of the people struck by the catastrophe. If humans enrage the Gods, they might unleash the forces of nature; at the same time, however, people are alerted by messages of forewarning (which in the story come from both other men and the deities) and given the opportunity to take preventive measures. They have the ability, for instance, to put their trust in capable and diligent guides. In practice, the two groups' good or bad *kamma* affects their eventual fates as does the behavior of the leaders, one sensible and the other foolish.

I was immediately struck by the educational aspects of the story when I heard it from a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka. An event as exceptional as a series of tidal waves bringing death and destruction in their wake produces a critical situation (commonly designated "emergency"), the magnitude of which depends on the local capacity for prevention, mitigation, and effective response. In cases of disaster, knowing ahead of time the probability that something will occur, predicting its effects, and circulating this information through alarm systems turn out to be vital factors. This implies that one might prevent the destructive force from striking down (by not triggering the rage of the Gods with one's behavior, for instance). However, preparation also plays a fundamental role, representing the last hope for salvation from a threat that can at least be mitigated through awareness, sensibility, and proactive measures even if it can no longer be avoided. Disaster is therefore selective, discriminating against those who do not develop their own skills and taking the protection of the stars away from them (from the Latin *dis-astrum*).

The educative value of the story allows me to introduce the topic of this chapter: disaster education (DE). This expression is generally used inclusively to refer to instances of teaching/learning aimed at spreading a culture of preparedness and resilience in responding to fresh outbreaks of the so-called natural disaster. Education is seen as a tool for promoting skills and forms of knowledge that help people survive in cases of catastrophe. A case in point is the third priority of the 2005–2015 Hyogo Framework for Action¹: "*Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels: disasters can be substantially reduced if people are well informed and motivated to adopt a culture of disaster prevention and resilience, which in turn requires the collection, compilation and dissemination of relevant knowledge and information on hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities*" (UNISDR 2005: p. 9).

This explains the success and widespread dissemination of educational projects/programs aimed at developing public awareness and disaster risk reduction skills, as well as strengthening existing capacities for coping with calamities and environmental threats. There is no lack of examples. We might note the proliferation

¹The *Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* was adopted during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held from January 18 to 22, 2005, in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan. The document was subsequently adopted, discussed, and presented in detail during various international encounters. For instance, the Asia Pacific Regional Workshop on School Education and Disaster Risk Reduction held in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2007 focused on priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action and further developed the theme of disaster education. See UNISDR 2007.

of natural hazard education initiatives in schools or the extensive use of drills, simulations, and the so-called scenario exercises as a form of practical training for preparedness, not to mention the success of participatory learning techniques used to stimulate resilient behaviors among disaster survivors. It is no stretch to argue that education represents a sort of universal passkey or panacean solution within current strategies of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster management (DM): from formal to non-formal and informal learning settings, from local contexts to national and international arenas; at both the grassroots and policy levels, and in community-based projects as well as capacity building for NGO practitioners, schoolteachers, or government officials.² Furthermore, education plays a strategic role not only in the emergency phase (which generally consists of relief, reconstruction, and rehabilitation) but also in the activities of preparation and risk mitigation preceding the disaster. Indeed, at least at the programmatic level, it is precisely these latter activities that are taking on a more central role in international DRR policies. The International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), led by UNESCO, provided a long-term focus for moving this agenda forward.

Catastrophe Through the Lens of Educational Ethnography

When a significantly large tsunami struck the coasts of numerous countries facing the Bay of Bengal and beyond (Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Republic of Maldives, the Nicobar Islands, and as far as Somalia)³ on December 26, 2004, the international community's response was remarkable. Media images of the catastrophe and the fundraising campaign enabled by the “disaster-media-relief” nexus (Benthall 2010) played a fundamental role in activating civil society's “distant suffering” (Boltanski 1999) and the outpouring of humanitarian generosity

²It is only in the last decade that DE has taken on this strategic importance. As a matter of fact, DM policies and practices from the 1980s to 1990s addressed their training activities almost exclusively to relief and government personnel and hazard managers and scientists. Topics such as capacity building for civil society at large and teaching resilience at the community level had not yet attracted such emphatic attention. National governments and first aid organizations still held the lion's share of responsibility for disaster response. Even when the supportive role carried out by local communities was acknowledged, the focus was still on garnering the involvement of individual volunteers and community representatives with specific expertise in this area. In addition, training was characterized by a technical-type orientation and was provided by experts in a top-down manner. There was not yet significant discussion about experiential learning, practical training, real-life teaching, or community-based participatory techniques. See the special 1983 issue of the periodical *Disasters*, vol 7. n. 1, in particular Carter, Taylor, and Thompson's articles.

³The tidal wave that the media unanimously described as one of the most “exceptional” events of modern times—an “unimaginable catastrophe” with “unforeseen” consequences (Tozzi 2005)—was caused by a level 9 earthquake originating north of the island of Sumatra.

that followed.⁴ Their role was so decisive as to transform some countries, such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka in particular, into staging grounds for an incredible number of aid and reconstruction operations (Benadusi 2011; de Alwis and Hedman 2009; Uyangoda 2009; Korf 2007; Stirrat 2006).⁵

In those winter months, the mediatic reverberation of the event, the economic resources, professional expertise, and social engineering techniques targeting the tsunami-affected areas were not the only elements that attracted my attention to the disaster as a potential research site. I was also struck by the impact that the Indian Ocean tsunami was having on international DM actors and DRR policies on a global scale. In fact, less than a month after the tidal wave, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe (Hyogo, Japan) significantly contributed to modifying the agenda and methods of intervention to be adopted in cases of catastrophe (Revet 2011). There was a gradual shift from technology-based solutions for disaster prevention, usually entrusted to governments and legitimized by the expertise of globally recognized research institutes, to solutions revolving around local communities' endogenous mitigation and response capacities; likewise, traditional DM strategies based on ex post reparatory intervention were joined and sometimes even substituted by adaptive strategies founded on the construction of a widespread culture of preparation and resilience at a grassroots level. "Making people more aware of the threat of natural hazards and of the need and possibility to become better prepared before disasters strike" (BRI and GRIPS 2007) was becoming an unavoidable imperative in DRR policies and practices internationally.

Given these circumstances, the newly significant role of education in the increasingly developed sector of DM attracted my attention. Previously I had been investigating educational processes from an anthropological perspective and through ethnographic methods (Benadusi 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009). Although the field known as the "anthropology of catastrophe" had been gradually expanding at the international level since the beginning of the 1980s (Torry 1979; Signorelli 1992; Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 1999, 2002; Revet 2007; Langumier 2008), I had neither studied disaster nor personally approached that particular branch of the discipline. My new research project therefore represented a challenge, difficult yet promising at the same time. It had clear potential thanks to the applied anthropological implications it might have had as well as its transversal character, balanced between two contemporary spheres of inquiry, the anthropology of education, and the anthropology of disaster. Furthermore, the particular perspective I had adopted

⁴It is sufficient to note that, while an average of 7,000 US dollar total was distributed for each person in the countries struck by the Indian Ocean tsunami, only 3 dollars a head was spent after the floods in Bangladesh and Mozambique (according to an online report by the Tsunami Evaluation Commission).

⁵North of Sumatra, in contrast, the restrictions imposed by the government on the number and kind of NGOs allowed to operate in the disaster sites made the intervention context less rich and multi-vocal. Additionally, given my nationality, I also chose to work in Sri Lanka because the situation of Sri Lankan survivors had such heavy repercussions on Italian civil society, due to the large number of Sinhalese immigrants working in Italy.

that of the experience of catastrophe through the lens of educational ethnography was at that moment and still remains rare in this field of research.

I therefore chose to maneuver through the extended time of catastrophe in which educational interventions unfold. This particular form of temporality develops around two distinct periods, “before” and “after” the event: the time of the emergency and of the subsequent reconstruction and rehabilitation and the preceding time characterized by preventing and mitigating a possible future disaster. This processual and wide-ranging temporal dimension lent itself so well to the intensive and long-term methods of anthropological inquiry. In addition, the simultaneously local and global arena of catastrophe appeared to represent a good setting for observing how knowledge and belief systems, as well as divergent teaching and training techniques, come together on the scene of disaster.

Through what educational experiences do individuals and social groups exposed to the risk of “natural” threats learn to protect themselves and respond in cases of disaster? What are the primary forms and systems of knowledge that interact and/or come into conflict on the site of catastrophe? How does education contribute to shaping, strengthening, and modifying the way people interpret the traumatic event they have undergone? What symbolic and poetic devices are thereby activated? And how do these devices, incited by teaching/learning processes, affect the survivors’ responses?

I approached the fieldwork experience in post-tsunami Sri Lanka with this set of questions, which presupposed my positioning in diversified settings: the formal and non-formal systems that more conventionally host DE were joined by the ethnographically dense and diffused field of the so-called informal or accidental learning that occurs in the course of daily life. I was required to render the multiplicity of forms through which disaster is processed and domesticated from an educational standpoint in both organized learning contexts and the more commonplace sites where learning becomes spontaneously and unintentionally incorporated.

This involved engaging with highly varied interlocutors, from the “experts,” both local and international, entrusted with a training and tutoring role in DE projects to the figures selected to convey the so-called indigenous or local knowledge. I might find myself face-to-face with a technical personnel from the in situ emergency or civil protection offices or NGO operators engaged in DM activities, all of them trained to respond to states of alert and emergency and who went on to share this training with others. At the same time, I might be dealing with both groups of survivors involved in community-based disaster education (CBDE) and with charismatic local leaders: monks, clergy, teachers, and public administrators who contributed to the diffusion of the practical and spiritual knowledge required to survive and make sense of the disaster.

In order to choose a site for my ethnographic inquiry, it should be noted that in the fall of 2005, I went to both Banda Aceh and Sri Lanka (the site of Italy’s most significant humanitarian investment), where I stayed for 2 months to conduct some exploratory investigations. Based on logistical and scientific assessments, I opted for the second location. As a matter of fact, humanitarian interventions in Sri Lanka had attracted governments and multilateral and bilateral agencies as well as

numerous international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), which for the most part acted in partnership with local NGOs. This convergence rendered the context of observation highly articulated, increasing the number and typology of actors involved in educational initiatives.

The diversity of methods, approaches, and pedagogical tools used to conduct DE in the various learning settings was also significant, from actual training programs (ranging from school teaching to on-the-job training) to awareness and public information campaigns (frequently supplemented by exhibitions, newsletters, publications, posters, etc.). The contexts of post-catastrophe daily life were pervaded in countless ways by education, in the form of workshops, seminars, real-life experiences, drills, simulations, participatory learning exercises, and capacity building initiatives. As much as I sought to maintain a holistic approach, I found myself compelled to delimit the field of research.

Eclectic Empiricism: On Sources, Data, and Collection Techniques

According to J-P. Olivier De Sardan (1995), a scholar who is particularly attentive to methodological issues, “fieldwork takes advantage of every available means. Its empiricism is resolutely eclectic and based on all possible modes of data collection.” It should come as no surprise that the ethnographer is prepared to use disparate resources to grant interpretive density to the experience of fieldwork. Let us also recall that methodological eclecticism, especially when combined with the indeterminacy that often characterizes data production in the field, has contributed to making anthropology one of the social sciences’ most fascinating yet contested disciplines. This is why “indeterminacy must be dissipated as much as possible” (Olivier De Sardan 1995).

Following the tidal wave, my eclectic tendencies were justified thanks in part to the multi-scale (simultaneously local, national, and global) and congested character of the humanitarian intervention in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the interference between diverse educational opportunities required me to make use of highly differentiated sources, data collection techniques, and research strategies. In the following table I have tried to outline the various levels of analysis that have characterized my ethnographic project since 2005. In the table there are multiple intersecting educational systems, from the formal to non-formal and informal settings. Although the separation may be artificial given the frequent overlap among different systems, I chose to offer this tripartite classification here because it remains useful for purposes of illustration.⁶

⁶The categorization of learning systems into formal, non-formal, and informal education mainly owes its popularity to the UNESCO shift towards lifelong learning, which culminated in *Learning to Be* (Faure et al. 1972). See also Mocker and Spear 1982.

Educational systems	Learning contexts	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Types of data
Formal	DE at the institutional level (DE initiatives targeting schools in the form of teaching units and/or training laboratories)	Policy statements, educational guidelines, and technical reports as well as didactic materials related to teaching/learning activities (training exercises, illustrated manuals, educational videos, interactive games, ⁷ etc.)	Documentary research methods (relevant documents are obtained and analyzed)	Documentary data collected from the Internet: webpages, online library resources ⁸ (from the websites of both governmental and nongovernmental organizations: USAID, Red Cross, Care, Save the Children, etc.)
Non-formal	Community-based education (training courses, workshops, and participatory learning exercises at national and community levels)	Policy statements, educational guidelines, and technical reports as well as didactic materials related to teaching/learning activities (training exercises, illustrated manuals, educational videos, interactive games, etc.)	Documentary research methods (relevant documents are obtained and analyzed)	Documentary data collected from the Internet: webpages, online library resources (from the websites of both governmental and nongovernmental organizations: USAID, Red Cross, Care, Save the Children, etc.)
		In-depth/unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, informal colloquia, group discussions, observational and reflective field notes, photographs	Overt participant observation	Dialogical data collected in the course of on-site ethnographic encounters
Informal	Accidental learning in everyday life: daily practice based (conversation and informal communication in family, temple, work, and social life spheres)	In-depth/unstructured interviews, informal colloquia, group discussions, observational and reflective field notes, photographs	Overt participant observation	Dialogical data collected in the course of on-site ethnographic encounters

⁷Virtual games are widely used in disaster education. See *Children in disasters: Games and Guidelines to Engage Youth in Risk Reduction* for a relatively comprehensive list (IFRC 2010). This report includes information on DRR-related board games, online activities, printable educational kits, and work sheets, as well as supporting material for teachers, instructors, and youth leaders.

⁸The thematic platform “Knowledge and Education” created by UNISDR with UNESCO support is the most information-rich digital environment on this topic; it hosts the DREAM Collection (Global online Disaster Reduction Education Materials Library Collection), a comprehensive catalogue and digital library specifically dedicated to this issue.

Whereas the first grouping refers to educational experiences carried out in formal contexts such as schools or universities, the second grouping indicates teaching/learning activities conducted outside recognized institutions. Although they are still organized activities, the experience of non-formal education can be recognized as being more flexible and, at times, having a democratic and participatory character (involving less prescriptive content and a comprehensive, community level approach). Non-formal educational activities can range from awareness and information campaigns targeting the public at large (civil society, decision makers, public servants, etc.) to highly structured activities such as workshops or experiential learning exercises for target groups. What is conventionally excluded are the range of informal and accidental experiences that occur in everyday life without necessarily involving a conscious educational agenda and lacking in organized structure. This set of activities has always attracted the attention of the anthropologist, who is more inclined than other social researchers to grasp the situated and embodied character of human learning: in family settings, at the workplace, during ritual and ceremonial practices, or as part of public life and leisure time.

The table also displays the main educational contexts where I conducted research along with the multiplicity of sources, data, and collection techniques I used in each one. It is clear that priority was granted to informal and non-formal educational systems. Indeed, I addressed the setting of so-called formal education only obliquely, using documentary research⁹ rather than including these learning contexts in my own direct observation. This choice was mainly dictated by the characteristics of the research object itself. With the exception of a few rare cases,¹⁰ there is not yet a real correspondence between the numerous programmatic documents at the international level highlighting the importance of DE in schools¹¹

⁹For more information about the use of documentary analysis in the social sciences, see Prior (2003), Scott (2006), and McCulloch (2004).

¹⁰Australia may represent the most illustrative example. As a matter of fact, numerous initiatives of disaster education are carried out in schools through both curricular and extracurricular activities, in the form of Internet programs, teaching/learning units, fun initiatives (cartoon books, puzzles, games, etc.), simulations, and much more (Dufty 2009). Furthermore, considerable space is dedicated to training packages aimed at diffusing forms of knowledge that would be useful in the case of a future tsunami (AusAID 2005).

¹¹The most exemplary text is called *Let the Children Teach Us: A Review of the Role of Education and Knowledge in DRR* and was written in 2006 by the UNISDR secretariat (together with other partners) to address priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action (Wisner 2006). After the Kobe conference, the importance of integrating DRR education into school curricula was also reaffirmed in multiple other planning meetings: for instance, during the second and third editions of the *Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction*, held, respectively, in India and Malaysia, and during the *Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on School Education and DRR*. Moreover, the *Regional Analysis on DRR Education in the Asia Pacific Region* published in 2009 presents an assessment (though non-comprehensive) of the region's efforts carried out in this area (Tran Phuong 2009). The Building Research Institute and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies also produced another central document about DE in 2007 (BRI and GRIPS 2007). See also UNICEF 2011. At any rate, in all of these cases, the topic of DRR education in schools is approached as part of a larger focus on DE in the various contexts where it is applied. For sources that instead deal exclusively with formal education, see Sinha et al. (2007).

and an effective incorporation of curricular training courses in specific national contexts. Sri Lanka is no exception: the DRR education initiatives conducted in schools were no more than occasional and fragmentary rather than coherently structured and systematic.¹²

What did exist in Sri Lanka, especially in the post-disaster phase, were a myriad of educational activities in non-formal settings. These initiatives primarily targeted the populations struck by the tidal wave but also addressed the personnel of NGOs and other organizations involved in the emergency, local administrators, institutional staff tasked with managing the reconstruction, and civil society at large. The most frequent examples of such activities were those directed at CBDE.¹³ These were autonomously planned as independent projects or incorporated into larger programs (aimed at reconstructing villages, homes, and infrastructure or reestablishing the economic and social life disrupted by the tsunami) and shared several key factors: at least in their formal guise, they employed an approach defined as participatory or, in other words, based on trainees' direct involvement from the bottom up; they were conceptualized as simultaneously collaboratively constructed and directed at the "community," despite the lack of a common, shared definition for this term (Benadusi 2012b; Heijmans 2009); and finally, they were aimed at constructing or reinforcing a culture of *resilience* among participants, which was understood as the capacity of affected communities to adopt the positive adaptive behaviors that would allow them to recover and absorb shocks after being struck by a disaster (Benadusi 2013).

¹²More consolidated educational opportunities can instead be found in the graduate and postgraduate sector. Natural disaster management courses were introduced in many universities throughout the country after the 2004 tsunami, especially in the form of specializations within geography, natural sciences, engineering, and geology degree programs (Nianthi 2008).

¹³A special division for "training, education, and public awareness" was created within the disaster management center that was established in Sri Lanka at the ministerial level. This unit's aims include the diffusion of CBDE initiatives in the country "to help people to protect themselves from disasters" through capacity building and pre-disaster planning actions and the promotion of relief, recovery, and rehabilitation capabilities (Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act n. 13, 2005). With technical support from UNDP, the department has published various DRR instructional materials on its website, mainly targeting a young audience. Additionally, in partnership with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and the national Red Cross (SLRCS), the department has organized a series of simulations in the island's coastal areas aimed at strengthening institutional and local responses to possible future disasters. Beginning in 2006, the US Forest Service initiated a campaign of simulative exercises in Sri Lanka as part of a US program called the *Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System*. These simulations were based on catastrophic scenarios and were conducted even in schools thanks to a decision by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education (NIE). The Asian Disaster Reaction Center also published a tsunami awareness booklet titled *Inamura-no-hi* ("fire of rice sheaves") that was circulated in eight countries; the booklet stresses the importance of narration and popular anecdote as educational tools for DRR (see <http://www.adrc.asia/publications/inamura/top.html>). The book was translated and promoted locally in Sri Lanka by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

It was easier at this second level of analysis to compare the content planned and promoted in policies, programs, and guidelines to what was actually implemented on the ground, that is to say, to triangulate documentary data with results produced dialogically through the ethnographic encounter. As a matter of fact, documentary research preceded, accompanied, and followed field-based investigation. During my longest stay in the country, an 8-month period between 2006 and 2007, I was able to participate regularly in several educational initiatives that Italian Cooperation (IC) and Italian NGOs promoted in Sri Lanka together with local agencies and organizations. I concentrated primarily on those projects that most consistently employed participatory approaches aimed at developing the resilience of disaster victims. I also took part as an overt researcher in training activities directed at the IC office's technical personnel and the operators of local NGOs. These took the form of on-the-job training, workshops, and seminars and were aimed at providing instruction in the participatory learning techniques that should be used at the community level. In the same role, I also took part in monthly encounters organized by the GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) in Sri Lanka to exchange and share community-based disaster management best practices; these targeted the various donors, humanitarian agencies, and institutional actors involved in post-catastrophe reconstruction.

I spent three different periods in the country, the initial scouting mission in 2005, a long research phase (2006–2007), and a subsequent 3-month period in 2010. During this time, I did not limit myself to participant observation in non-formal educational settings such as those listed above. Rather, I lived in contact with the affected populations, seeking to capture as much as possible the dynamics of daily life that gradually began to get back on track following the tidal wave. I was particularly invested in understanding how the disaster was progressively processed in both poetic and symbolic senses through informal educational activities scattered throughout daily life. My first and third fieldwork periods were characterized by this more intimate, demanding, and pervasive research topic, whereas it was more difficult to gain access to this dimension of learning during the middle phase of fieldwork. As a matter of fact, the reconstruction phase in Sri Lanka was characterized by a sort of “hypertrophic gifting”: the survivors were so caught up in the exchange networks linked to the humanitarian network and so dazed by the crowd of organizations that had arrived on the disaster sites that they quite commonly mistook me for one of the many volunteers or operators who had come to offer help. In a setting so crowded with experts, journalists, cameramen, volunteers, and political activists, not to mention the nascent phenomenon of disaster tourism, traveling across the country's coasts as a foreigner required a constant effort to protect myself from being identified as part of the extravagant range of aid relationships.

In the intermediate fieldwork phase, I thus opted to concentrate on the circumscribed and regulated activities of non-formal education, giving more attention to the informal sphere in the other two periods. During my first research phase,

in fact, the experience of the disaster was still fresh and initial aid operations were taking place. This might explain why people were more inclined to openly express their emotions. In my perception, they appeared less conditioned by the humanitarian assistance machine. The same was true of the last period as well. In 2010, nearly 6 years after the tidal wave, the disaster sites were less heavily congested by international actors, and the passage of time had allowed life to regain its course without requiring that people be so wholly invested in tsunami aid. Nonetheless, the detonation effect that the humanitarian apparatus had produced continued to affect, if to a lesser extent, the politics of identity in the field (Benadusi 2012a).

As the table indicates, this last level of investigation did not involve any specific documentary research. The material concerning DE that is produced at both international and national levels (that is to say, related to Sri Lanka) does not explicitly reference the informal setting. Only the first two systems are addressed. At the most, a few documents specify that the indirect effects of actions carried out in the formal and non-formal systems will in the long term work to influence individual communities' behaviors and attitudes towards resilience and preparation, thus becoming a kind of "embodied culture": a culture capable of almost spontaneously predisposing individuals and social groups to protect and strengthen themselves in case of disaster, a "new culture" (defined as a culture "of resilience" or "of security" depending on the case) that will make use of endogenous characteristics to respond more effectively to catastrophe. The so-called indigenous or traditional forms of knowledge are thus brought into play, although—as we will see—in a somewhat controversial way. If updated, properly revitalized, and (above all) linked to "expert knowledge" gained through DE, these forms of knowledge are considered useful in reducing disaster risk, but it is never well specified either where or how they ought to be used.

The Uses and Effects of Triangulation: Comparison and Validation

Triangulation (among different sources, data collection techniques, researchers, and phases of investigation) is widely considered to be a fundamental element of ethnographic research (Hammersley and Hatkinson 1983; Denzin 1989). Although there are periodic debates surrounding its use (Flick 2009: pp. 443–453, 2007: pp. 37–121), ethnographers and especially those working in the field of educational anthropology (Allwright and Bailey 1991: p. 73; Bailey 2006: pp. 131–132; Greenman 2005: pp. 263–306) use triangulation quite frequently in order to convey the density of reality to their readers, to render the process of understanding more multifaceted and, above all, as a means of validation. In the

words of Olivier De Sardan (1995), “be it criminal or ethnographic,” a good investigation must employ triangulation. Indeed, it is necessary to “countercheck” the collected data.

To cite the most common examples, triangulation procedures are used “to test the quality of information [. . .], to understand more completely the part an actor plays in the social drama, to put the whole situation into perspective” (Fetterman 2010: p. 94). Scholars have also attempted to distinguish among different forms of triangulation, producing the following categories: *theoretical triangulation*, when the ethnographer “approach[es] data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses in mind” (Denzin 1989: pp. 237–241); *methodological triangulation*, when diverse quali-/quantitative methodologies are used; and *data collection triangulation*, when the sources and types of data significantly vary over the course of the research.

Triangulation has lost much of its relevance as a technique of validation in anthropology due to deconstructionism and postmodern ethnography; nonetheless, analyzing data from multiple sources, collected through diverse methods and supported by a range of theories, does not simply serve to provide the reader with an artificial sense of reliability. It also allows the ethnographer to imbue his or her research and subsequent writing with the dialogical, multivocal, and open style that most anthropologists currently consider a mark of quality. Indeed, this is what I sought to achieve by using it in my research project. In the long term, moreover, triangulation proved to be a precious tool in other senses as well: to provide interpretive depth to the hypotheses that gradually emerged in the field, to compare different (and, in many cases, opposing) perspectives on disaster in subsequent phases of fieldwork, and to retrospectively evaluate my ethnographic positioning, considering that I was progressively forced to adapt to changes in the situation and research participants involved. Due to space constraints, I will provide only a few brief examples here.

The circulation of knowledge is never separable from the contexts it moves through and its “chains of translation” (Czarniawska and Sevón 2005). Many of the issues addressed in my study revolve around this process of transferring forms of knowledge, educational approaches, and teaching/learning experiences from one context to another: from the local arena to national and international ones and vice versa or from formal educational settings to non-formal and informal ones and vice versa. For instance, I sought to understand what concrete actions were used to enact visions and practices of CBDE that had been borrowed from international discourses in the specific context of post-tsunami Sri Lanka. Triangulation and an eclectic approach turned out to be the most effective strategy for retracing these trajectories and the dynamics they gave rise to. Cross-checking among multiple sources was the only mechanism that allowed me to understand how “expert knowledge” (medical, logistical, technical, geological, climatological, etc.) about disasters ran the risk of obscuring the experiences, interpretations, and solutions to disaster response that did not receive as much legitimization, either because they were improperly relegated to the status of “local, indigenous, or traditional knowledge” or because they were considered irrational, emotional, and

nonscientific. Triangulation was an important tool to explain, interpret, and restore substance to the numerous pedagogical and epistemological viewpoints that permeated the disaster scene.

Likewise, it was the triangulation of data collected in different research phases that allowed me to ethnographically identify a fundamental aspect of current DM policies and practices: their anticipatory nature. According to DE documents, human skills aimed at “present-ifying” the catastrophe are necessary to make societies as prepared and responsive as possible before the next disaster strikes (Lakoff 2006, 2008). Contemporary DE is increasingly based on the assumption that resilience is a fundamental strategy not only in the post-disaster phase but also in the period before the catastrophe that has yet to come but is imagined as unavoidable and unpredictable. The emergency is thus no longer perceived as an anomalous event that momentarily upsets life under normal conditions. From an extraordinary experience, emergency is transformed into a “state of things” that is part of the very nature of the social (Agamben 2005).

The triangulation of different research phases also allowed me to understand the fundamental causes of the catastrophe, deeply rooted in national political history, and its long-term consequences. When I returned to Sri Lanka 6 years after the tidal wave, I had the opportunity to observe how the tsunami functioned as a learning laboratory of “social drama.” Used as the foundation of a new post-disaster temporality, the tsunami entered into a regime of sacrifices, prohibitions, and taboos that transformed it into something sacred and removed from historical traceability. However, in exchange for its gifts, it forced victims to remain bound to the propitiatory cults of the humanitarian industry, requiring that they continuously stage the catastrophe and perform the rituals of a resilient, disaster-surviving community. As I clarified when presenting my research results (Benadusi 2012a, 2013), the most effective tools that empowered and educated survivors had at their disposal to compete in the arena of international aid, 6 years after the tidal wave, were their strategies of claiming a common descent from the tsunami and continuing to perform their own “capacity for resilience.”

Recursiveness and Ethnographic Positioning

The “recursiveness” of the research process, or in other words the effort of recurrently subjecting the same grounds of analysis to multiple instances of investigation, gradually reshaped my positioning in the field, that is, the way I interacted with the various informants I encountered throughout the fieldwork. During my first brief visit to the country, shortly after the tidal wave, my positioning was cautious and relatively noninvasive: instead of asking questions myself, I opted for looking around and allowing others to approach me, if they wished, and recount their stories. In such a painful and yet frenetic period, I was concerned that a hasty

step, an uncomfortable question, or an excessive demand for attention might have upset the people engaged in relief activities. My most formal interviews were conducted with the personnel in charge of humanitarian operations at the headquarters of the main international agencies in the country. For all the rest, I mainly listened and assumed a position of receptiveness.

In this phase, as I traveled along the coasts struck by the tsunami and visited refugee camps or the first sites under construction, I tried not to limit myself to a preestablished itinerary. Rather than initiating a structured project of observation, I let my gaze roam in order to catch suggestions and randomly intercept conversation and interactions, noting everything down in my notebook. This positioning was also necessitated by my unfamiliarity with both the context and the language, although the prevalent use of English to communicate among international and local operators in these humanitarian contexts rendered the latter issue less significant. Whenever there were foreign colleagues present, many local experts used translation even to communicate with the population. The monks, who I was in contact with because of their involvement in aid operations, also spoke fluent English. I was thus able to follow most conversations without difficulty, and whenever I could not resort to English, I sought to “go beyond words” in the sense suggested by Unni Wikan’s description of her ethnographic experience in a poor neighborhood in Cairo: “they opened their hearts to me as if I could understand every word they were saying [. . .], taking for granted that I was able to understand even though I had not mastered the *language*” (Wikan 1992: pp. 460–482). Facing the urgency common among my interlocutors to express desperation or hope, to find an outlet for their rage and frustration, I allowed some form of “resonance” to accomplish what words alone were not able to do.

In contrast, I gradually took on a more proactive position in the intermediate phase of my fieldwork. I returned to Sri Lanka with the project to participate, as a researcher, in a series of activities associated with the humanitarian initiatives IC was promoting in the country. The majority were participatory learning exercises directed at groups of beneficiaries of varying sizes (from workshops of 6–7 participants to meetings of 30–40 people) supported by technical personnel from local or Italian NGOs or the experts of international agencies such as UN-HABITAT and FAO. The objectives of these activities were “practical tasks” such as the creation of a risk map and the drafting of a village evacuation plan or more classical participatory rural appraisal¹⁴; alternately, they were simulated exercises in which

¹⁴Originating in the 1980s, the *participatory rural appraisal* methodology has been used mainly by NGOs and, currently, by development agencies as well because it is faster to carry out than traditional fieldwork. This approach aims to incorporate the rural population’s knowledge and opinions into the planning and management of developmental projects and programs. See Chambers (1994).

participants were required to take on a specific role in responding to a given scenario (such as the arrival of a tidal wave or unexpected flood). It was not unusual, however, for more conventional instructional initiatives to be organized in which an expert explained to a group how to develop community leadership skills, how to effectively coordinate collective reconstruction activities, and how to outfit the village or individual houses in order to make them more secure in cases of disaster or the geophysical causes of the tsunami.

My background in the field of educational anthropology in Italy turned out to be useful in these situations. I was already accustomed to experiencing and observing mine and others' co-participation in group learning activities or what Tedlock (1991: p. 69) calls the "observation of participation." I also felt myself on familiar ground because I had already carried out research in learning sites focused on the sharing of practices and the development of a strong sense of belonging among participants (Benadusi 2010a, b). The majority of these initiatives likewise sought to use a common undertaking (that of trying to survive and come out of the disaster stronger than before) to strengthen a "sense of community" that would stimulate behaviors of collaboration, mutual learning, and resourcefulness (Benadusi 2012b).

When I returned to Sri Lanka nearly 4 years later in 2010, my aim was to broaden the focus of analysis beyond the exceptional post-disaster experience in order to gain a perspective on the traces of catastrophe that remained in the long term, the forms of knowledge, memorialization, and cultural learning that were still present on the disaster scene and/or had reemerged with the passage of time. I thus sought to spend the research period in a village on the country's southern coast that had been reconstructed thanks to IC tsunami funds. In the eyes of many, this site represented an example of success both in terms of its quality infrastructural standards and the "sense of resilient community" that had been so effectively instilled there during the reconstruction phase (Benadusi 2012a, 2013).

Under these circumstances, I was obliged to rapidly adapt my positioning to two new phenomena that in the meantime had affected the country. The last stage of the long and bloody war between governmental forces and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) had recently concluded, and the ruling family had consolidated its political power, adopting a harsh policy in relation to Western international observers while opening Sri Lanka to cooperative relations with the Asian countries (India, China, Japan). In this context, unlike the other two research periods, I found myself one of very few White people in the area. My presence thus provoked a great deal of curiosity among the population. In addition, as I was located on the edge of a forested zone that had been the stage of armed incursions and conflicts, the region was still guarded by military forces. Although on one hand the absence of humanitarian operators made it easier for me to perceive endogenous educational dynamics, on the other hand the security measures I was forced to adopt served to complicate identity politics on the ground. Whereas I had previously moved around the country with relative ease, feeling free to choose where and when to conduct my research, in

2010 I had to undergo a laborious process of negotiation with local actors to carve out an autonomous space for myself.

Disaster as Interpretive Catalyst

Following the interpretive turn in anthropology, it is nearly unanimously recognized that the ethnographer's epistemological enterprise consists of reading cultural meanings rather than a simple collection of empirical data. In the famous Weberian expression so dear to Clifford Geertz (1973: p. 5), "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun"; cultural analysis is therefore "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (*ibidem*).

In my case, the character of the research object itself rendered the task of interpretation even more significant. As a matter of fact, over the course of my fieldwork, the disaster unfolded as an event/process capable of causing a variety of meanings (technical–scientific, political, spiritual, identitarian, etc.) to develop and emerge, thus functioning as a kind of "interpretive catalyst." This particularity revealed the important educational significance of catastrophe. Thanks to its capacity for activating a kaleidoscope of hermeneutic refraction, catastrophe *uncovers*, *reveals*, and *displays* something significant about the life of humans in society. It *educates* in the broadest sense of the word. It mobilizes our "concepts of social and cosmic justice" (Oliver-Smith 2002) and can significantly transform them; it raises questions about "human supernatural relations"; it brings out locally prevalent "perceptions of uncertainty, safety, fortune and fate" (*ibidem*) and, as Mary Douglas has taught us, can trigger risky blaming processes (Douglas 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). Furthermore, while on one hand catastrophe offers a precious lens for reading the social, on the other hand it provides insights about the juncture of man/environment/technology, thus revealing the embodied nature of human symbolic orientation and how connected it is to our actions in the world (Ligi 2011).

This face of catastrophe, which allows it to function as an interpretive catalyst with enormous paideutic potential, is what makes disaster so attractive to anthropologists and other social analysts. As Oliver-Smith reminds us in *Catastrophe and Culture*, "disasters force researchers to confront the many and shifting faces of socially imagined realities" (Oliver-Smith 2002: pp. 25–26). "Disasters are good to think with" (Kroll-Smith and Gunter 1998) and as such they invite anyone called on to explain them to employ a variety of theoretical, philosophical, humanistic, and political perspectives (Hoffman 2002).

The interpretive framework that I used to approach the Indian Ocean tsunami was shaped by the particular perspective that anthropology brings to bear on disaster. As a matter of fact, anthropological research has productively focused on the historical, social, and economic dynamics that affect catastrophe's reoccurrence and, indeed, constitute its most fundamental causes (O'Keefe et al. 1976; Cuny 1983; Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 1999, 2002). Following

Kenneth Hewitt's *Interpretations of Calamity* (1983), this approach rejects a vision of the disaster as simply a collapse of social order brought on by accidental geophysical factors. Even a catastrophe as "natural" as a tsunami is no more than the result of a long chain of events produced by the unfolding of social life. Disaster can therefore only be fully interpreted through long-term analysis that takes into account political-economic choices and the more broadly "cultural" features of the affected contexts.

This perspective was also driven by my background in educational anthropology. I have in mind the role that John Ogbu (1978) attributes to "ecological factors" such as political, economic, and social forces in producing segregated schooling, for instance, or the importance of "cultural models" in shaping the educational choices of US ethnic minorities (Ogbu 1987; Gobbo 1996). The theoretical reference points I brought to the field prompted me to adopt an approach that was simultaneously situational and diachronic in order to draw out the various symbolic and operational schemes that shaped local DE experiences.

Using this perspective, I sought over the course of my ethnography to longitudinally identify the interpretative "scenarios"—to borrow a term from Sandrine Revet (2007)—that guided actors in responding to the tsunami: what long-term experiences contributed to shaping these scenarios? What political and historical factors affected their production and development? How had more recent DE policies modified these interpretations? As space constraints prevent me from detailing research results in depth, I will offer some brief highlights.

The majority of popular material about the Indian Ocean tsunami (available mainly online) employs a "naturalistic" scenario to interpret the tidal wave as a geophysical occurrence produced solely by the forces of nature. DRR education, on the other hand, is guided by programmatic and technical documents that integrate the naturalistic scenario with a so-called risk scenario (*ibidem*): educational tools are used to improve people's understanding of the natural causes of disaster, but these are accompanied by exercises designed to promote the specific behaviors that are considered suitable for effective prevention and mitigation. In this way catastrophe is conceptualized as the effect of a potentially destructive force in a context deemed "vulnerable" as a result of bad human management, which exacerbates risk factors. In the majority of cases, this material is produced and circulated by international agencies and organizations (the most well-known include International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, World Vision Care, Save the Children, and UNICEF¹⁵) and thus tends to emphasize the

¹⁵DRR educational initiatives have also been promoted by training and research agencies such as UNITAR (the United Nations Institute for Training and Research) or by governmental institutions such as FIMA (the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration of the US Department of Homeland Security), which provides technical assistance in mitigating tsunami risk in the USA. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center and DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness ECHO—European Commission Humanitarian Office) also assumed an equally important role.

life-saving role of aid workers and to promote fundraising for the survivors.¹⁶ These latter are depicted as either “vulnerable victims” (especially when they are women or children) in need of help and protection or as “resilient survivors” who rally to provide support to the humanitarian agencies. Whenever there is a focus on local “knowledge” (including culture, heritage, and local traditions) in formulating an effective response to disaster, the result is a juxtaposition (if only implicit) between tradition and modernity, science and superstition, and technical and nontechnical expertise.¹⁷

A clear example of this last point is the Tsunami Education Project (TEP), one of the largest DE initiatives promoted in Sri Lanka.¹⁸ According to Sandra Laskowski, the second geographer of the TEP team, the project was aimed at dissipating “superstitious fear about the ocean” and “rumors about new tsunamis in the near future” through the diffusion of geographical expertise. In a context such as Sri Lanka, which external experts saw as dominated by irrational beliefs, priority was given to explaining telluric movements, distributing maps showing the frequency and potency of sea and earthquakes, and providing additional scientific information about disasters.¹⁹

The presentation of different interpretive scenarios as mutually independent and even oppositional, however, fails to account for the complexity of reality. In their efforts to interpret, render narratable, and thereby “domesticate” the disaster, the people experiencing a catastrophe find themselves facing multiple interpretations that can be creatively and contextually used at need. Humans move through highly stratified interpretive universes where it is easier to combine and hybridize than to make unequivocal and definitive choices, whether they are facing technical or

¹⁶Many educational exercises ask students to put themselves in the shoes of aid workers or journalists to describe the aid operations that humanitarian agencies are involved in or to draw the logos of the different organizations that provide aid to the victims, identifying each one’s contribution in reducing the risk of disaster (see Discovery Education 2005; World Vision International 2005; AusAID 2005).

¹⁷The integration of professional and local knowledge in DE policies and practices is discussed in the guides and manuals targeting teachers, local governmental officers, NGO personnel, volunteers, etc. See, for example, Shaw and Takeuchi (2009) and Shaw et al. (2009a, b). In relation to the regional setting, I recommend Shaw et al. (2008). For a retrospective and critical treatment of the divide between indigenous and scientific knowledge, see Agrawal 1995; Sillitoe 1998; Dekens 2007; Mercer et al. 2010.

¹⁸By 2007 TEP had completed 84 geographical workshops reaching a total of 2,300 people in Sri Lanka. Of these, 611 were teachers of O- and A-level schools in the country (Tsunami Education Project (TEP)—Newsletter). TEP extended a similar project initiated by the Global Education Network (GLEN) in 2005 to all the districts of Ampara, on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka.

¹⁹Almost all the DE instructional units designed to be integrated with scholastic programs have a clear tendency to privilege geographical expertise above other forms of knowledge. This is illustrated by the fact that, in the majority of cases, the educational packets in question are included in geography or natural science curricula. Sociocultural materials are rarely included, and when they are, they tend to emphasize folkloristic or otherwise stereotypical aspects of the affected countries’ “cultures” and “religions.” See, for instance, the exercise included in the AusAID guide (2005), where students are asked to compare “the” culture of Indonesia to that of Australia, identifying differences and similarities in terms of religious buildings, clothing, food, physical appearance, and tools/equipment.

nonexpert knowledge, strategies of response produced from above or below, or information conveyed through institutional or informal contexts.

People struck by the tidal wave in Sri Lanka made use of different interpretations of the calamity depending on the circumstances, demonstrating how different scenarios, including the “religious” one, were able to mutually coexist. As other studies on the topic also show (Crosby 2008), the doctrinal explanations prevailing among the Buddhist clergy interacted with less canonical religious explanations, expressed by monks or magic–witchcraft practitioners, that referenced the vast array of local demons and deities. Early on, these kinds of interpretations circulated in public discourse. They were later pushed to positions of marginal visibility by more technical explanations in the media or by local and international DM experts, though without affecting their social influence. Additionally, the locals with whom I had the most significant contact appeared to share the implicit lesson represented by the story I told at the beginning: the natural, supernatural, and human all contribute to the production of catastrophic events. To them, rigidly choosing one alternative over the others in responding to the disaster did not seem to be an effective solution.

The suffering produced by the tsunami might be explained through reference to diverse responsibilities in different moments or circumstances within the same community. Explanatory factors included having good or bad *kamma* (collective responsibility), having participated in a religious function or not, belonging to one ethnic group versus another, working as a fisherman or farmer, or supporting a specific political leader rather than his rival. And yet this did not prevent technical knowledge about the disaster from circulating and even representing a form of prestige in the public sphere, either to demonstrate skills gained through training or to teach young people to respond quickly when facing a second tsunami. This technical knowledge was also displayed in claiming a role of leadership over other group members or other affected communities. The catastrophe thus became a cognitive artifact that activated multiple interpretations, generating contradictory versions of the event itself as well as its causes and dramatic consequences.

Disaster Resilience in the Local Arena of Humanitarian Intervention

Even 6 years after the tsunami, it was not unusual for the local monk in the village where I carried out my third fieldwork to remind the faithful that the tidal wave was not an “impartial” act of nature. The 2004 tsunami was interpreted as a sign of national moral decay caused by the peoples’ straying from Buddhist principles, a trend that was exacerbated by the massive distribution of international aid in the country.

The monk provided the community with instruction that underlined the importance of collective responsibility (*kamma*) in order to foster more religious behavior in the future. He did not seek to instill a sense of guilt or shame, but rather a positive attitude that would help these families make use of their own social agency in

developing mutual collaboration and a supportive stance regarding the less fortunate. Although they were not directly struck by the tidal wave, village members did in fact benefit significantly from humanitarian aid, using it to elevate themselves both socially and economically further than other nearby communities (see Benadusi 2013 for further details).

Given the sheer volume of training the village was subjected to, it is no exaggeration to say that education was the most concrete way that these families experienced the catastrophe. In the effort of promoting a resilient attitude at the community level, however, the beneficiaries of training activities ended up creating a “social drama” with ambiguous and controversial implications. Paradoxically, the most important lesson they received during the emergency phase was how to retain their position as a “good product of the tsunami,” despite lacking a direct connection with the tidal wave. In order to remain suitable for gifting, they were instructed to live in the continuous present of a model disaster-resilient village and perform this identity for any donor who might visit. In this way resilience changed its shape and purpose once introduced to the local arena. Humanitarian propaganda described it as the outcome of a difficult empowerment process aimed at improving local capacities for disaster adaptation. In reality, resilience had become an instrument for providing access to international resources, an instrument, however, that was not easy to use. Indeed, to attract additional aid packages, the villagers had to carefully weigh the level of resilience they had reached through training; they had to appear “just resilient enough” to be eligible for gifting but not so resilient as to tarnish the image of vulnerability still required to intercept aid. As other ethnographic investigations of resilience have shown, “local communities must appear both resourceful and in need of resources in order to receive assistance [. . .]; and they must balance the two in such a way that they live up to donor imaginations to benefit from resilience building projects within DRR” (Olwig 2010).

Furthermore, ethnographic investigation reveals that the meaning attributed to the concept of resilience varied considerably according to the actors involved and the circumstances of social life. The name the villagers chose for their representative organ (literally meaning “enriched by its own *pin*”) clearly illustrates this. *Pin* in Therevada Buddhism refers to the “merit” accrued through one’s actions in this or past life. It was therefore relatively close to the idea of resilience that humanitarian actors are expected to find blooming among the villagers because the community itself was assigned responsibility for “responding productively to significant change” and “implementing positive adaptive behaviors.” Nonetheless, in the village there were at least two different ways of construing this idea. The federation leaders and the UN-Habitat technical personnel supervising DM operations explained this name through reference to the positive qualities that beneficiaries had learned in the course of DE: their ability to cooperate in a spirit of voluntarism, the resourcefulness they gained through hard work, and the commitment they displayed in carrying out empowerment and other training activities. The secret of such a promising village emphasized the participatory learning approach

and community-based techniques adopted by UN-Habitat over almost 40 years of work in Sri Lanka (following prevailing trends in the humanitarian emergency sector).

However, there was also a second level of interpretation that justified choosing this name. Instead of referring to the current life, the causality of the group's collective *kamma* could refer to the Buddhist reincarnation cycle that all living beings pass through. Only a truly incredible merit, apparently accrued in a forgotten past, could explain such a surprising and apparently unearned tsunami gift. Rather than referencing human agency in the post-disaster period, this second interpretation associated the concept of resilience with the ability to accrue a reservoir of *pin* for the future through meritorious behavior in former lives. As I have shown elsewhere (Benadusi 2013), although these explanations were embodied by two contrasting factions, they ended up producing the same result: by explaining villagers' agency as the basis of casual relations, they effectively concealed the political dimensions of a clientelistic gift that was inextricably bound up with the central role this village plays in current nationalistic propaganda. In fact, the resilience that villagers were called on to display in order to maintain the support of local and national actors presupposed a very different type of adaptation: rather than managing the states of uncertainty produced by an untamable nature, they had to adapt to the fluctuating outcomes of national political struggle. To do so, they needed to be unscrupulous enough to maintain the village's connection with central political power, not the capacity of self-governance promoted in humanitarian rhetoric. This third meaning of resilience, which bound the villagers' "capacity for survival" to the clientelistic relations characterizing national history, was intended for "internal" use only, that is, outside the more canonical circuits of humanitarian activity.

This case shows the importance of an ethnographic approach in understanding how the learning experiences that take place on the disaster scene are translated into practice. As a matter of fact, manuals written for DE practitioners have come to use the term resilience in a nearly excessive way.²⁰ As we have seen, resilience is considered the most appropriate survival strategy to use in responding and preparing in cases of catastrophe. This apparent consensus of definition, however, conceals divergent interpretations and applications that further multiply when we consider how the concept is "operationalized" at a local level.

In a 2006 article in the periodical *Disasters*, Bernard Manyena lists some of the best known definitions of resilience, from Wildavsky's 1991 definition to the 2005 one produced by UNISDR. The list includes definitions from Holling et al. (1995), Horne and Orr (1998), Comfort (1999), Paton et al. (2000), and Cardona (2003) and, naturally, also mentions the Resilience Alliance's definition (2005). Whether it refers to ecosystems or individuals and social groups, resilience is interpreted as an *intrinsic* capacity, in the sense of being essential, internal, endogenous, naturally emergent, and context oriented. At the same time, however, it is recognized as a

²⁰The most well-known examples include Roman and Johnston (2005), Paton and Johnson (2006), Gow and Paton (2008), and Comfort et al. (2010).

potential resource that predisposes people towards behaviors and attitudes that are considered positive but require suitable refinement. Three definitions out of twelve, in fact, explicitly reference learning: “*learning* to bounce back,” “*learning* resourcefulness,” and “*learning* from past disasters for better future protection.” The “resilience paradigm” (Manyena 2006: p. 435) thus implies an educational effort of valorization and cultivation (“building resilience”) that is considered the forerunner of learning.²¹ This entails an effort of care and assistance that, however participatory and community based it may be, requires the external intervention of competent outsiders to activate such a socially strategic quality.

Furthermore, if the process of defining the concept of resilience already provokes disagreement and ambiguity, as soon as it becomes part of the local context, resilience gives rise to a refraction of interpretations, thus demonstrating its ambiguous and problematic character. This tendency should encourage its promoters to reflect more carefully on the use of this paradigm. And yet only a limited group of scholars have begun to treat resilience as an operational strategy of DM with caution and some criticism. I believe the most illustrative case to be the 2011 article by Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper, in which the authors trace the trajectory of resilience from systemic ecology to current economic policies of crisis adaptation and caution of its becoming a new and insidious “methodology of power.”²²

Anthropological research on catastrophe must take certain unavoidable steps: ethnographically following DE initiatives and studying the various shapes resilience takes at the local level as well as the interpretations that are associated with it by the resilient actors themselves. In fact, the academic literature in this sector uses a primarily pedagogical and psychosocial approach, which leads to a disproportionate ratio of studies conducted in formal and non-formal educational settings. This overrepresentation is heightened by the scarcity of research in informal learning contexts. Furthermore, the available publications²³ provide only normative instructions, acritically outlining the intervention methodologies that should be used to promote disaster resilience and indicators for measuring it (Maguire and

²¹There has also been an attempt to organize this learning in terms of phases: “learn how to maintain preparation; learn what to do before, during, and after disaster; learn how to change and build community competencies to minimize the impact of natural hazards, and learn how to improve after” (Dufty 2008).

²²The most insidious aspect of resilience as a DRR strategy might be the way it is used to compensate for shortfalls in institutional response. As a matter of fact, resilience is presented as an endogenous capacity that allows individual communities to “bounce back with little or no external assistance following a disaster” (Manyena 2006). It thereby capitalizes on the ability of individuals and social groups “to use their internal resources and competencies [. . .], as well as their learned resourcefulness” (McBean and Rodgers 2010: p. 878) to respond to an event understood as unavoidable and difficult to manage. By thus removing responsibility from governments, civil society is subjected to an atmosphere of insecurity that requires an ongoing effort of adaptation and preparation. In this way resilience runs the risk of becoming a new paternalistic device aimed at preserving the status quo (Benadusi 2014).

²³See note n. 20.

Hagan 2007). There is thus a risk that the anthropological and political considerations connected to DE will remain obscured. Ethnography can aid in bringing them to the surface, reconstructing the social life that these approaches lead in their contexts of use. This can help, as it did in my case, to uncover the undemocratic and non-inclusive experiences that are concealed behind the communitarian and participatory façade of DE projects (Benadusi 2012b). The emphasis on community in the interventions aimed at developing disaster resilience presents these learning situations as if they were self-governing, not preset, and chosen by the participants. However, field research can reveal the extent to which CBDE must adapt to politicized and elite-centered contexts. In addition, the supposed consultation that is taken to guarantee its participatory character is in reality limited to adopting standardized training content and methodologies, which are widely used by aid organizations at the international level and appropriated by the survivors themselves to carve out a space of visibility in both the local political arena and circuits of humanitarian action.

Conclusions

Because of its great impact on so extensive a geographical area and the global scale of media coverage surrounding the event, the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami has significantly contributed to transforming disaster management policies and prevention practices at the international level. There is an increasing belief that, faced with events of this magnitude that are both unpredictable and difficult to control, it is essential to invest in local communities and spread a “culture of preparedness” and an attitude of “resilience” as instruments of protection and response. As this article shows, in seeking to reduce the impact of disasters through educational projects, both local and global actors are involved in a common (though not peaceful) effort to interpret, shape, and represent “the” disaster. A single disaster is thus fragmented into different and conflicting sets of interpretations according to the experiences and identities of those affected and those who intervene. The ethnographer, with her aptitude for reflexivity and immersion in the research context, is no exception. By repositioning the disaster into its progressive and diachronic dimensions, retracing the play of refractions between different sources of knowledge about the catastrophe, and participating actively in the learning laboratories that shape the emergency arena, the ethnographer contributes to making the disaster “real.” The experience of the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka shows how, in the current DRR scenario, a heterogeneous arena of actors (local and global, national and transnational, nonexperts and experts) compete on the scene of disaster, often working to congest operations instead of facilitating a real exchange of knowledge and good practices. The tensions and misunderstandings that emerge between these actors are at the root of many of DE’s failures.

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3.4 Negotiating the Boundaries Within: An Anthropologist at Home in a Multiethnic Neighborhood in Urban Japan

Yuko Okubo

In this chapter, I revisit my field experience of living in a multiethnic neighborhood in urban Japan, where people of different historical, sociocultural, and political backgrounds reside, taking an *autoethnographic* approach. I take this perspective to re-examine my research findings to add another layer of analysis to understand the role of interpretation throughout my ethnographic study, which was constructed by an anthropologist studying one's own culture.

Autoethnography is defined by Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997) as “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context” (p. 9). It reflects a changing conception of the self and society in the postmodern condition of the late twentieth century by addressing the following questions: the question of identity and selfhood—such as the auto-/ethnographer as a boundary crosser and as a dual identity, foregrounding the multiple nature of selfhood; the question of voice and authenticity—who represents whose life, and whether *autoethnography* is more “authentic” than other ethnographies, calling into question the insider–outsider dichotomy, and lastly, the question of cultural displacement or situation of exile, the fact that a *native anthropologist* cannot completely be “at home” due to the breakdown of the dualisms of identity (self and society) and of insider–outsider status caused by rapid sociocultural change, globalization, etc. (pp. 3–4). In this chapter, I take an *autoethnographic* approach to my study to shed light on the experience of a *native anthropologist* or an *anthropologist “at home.”*

Although anthropology has traditionally studied cultural “others” in distant places, anthropological notions and theories developed in the past few decades, such as the epistemological questions regarding anthropological self and objectivity/subjectivity, have redressed this tradition (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford

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and Marcus 1986). Anthropologists' inherent hybridity also adds another layer of complexity to this discussion (Narayan 1993). Narayan (1993) argues that an anthropologist merely studying the culture that they are from does not necessarily make him/her a *native anthropologist*. Anthropologists' ascriptive backgrounds determine the relationships with the people they study. Even though a *native anthropologist* may feel "at home," the community who are the object of their study may not feel that way. All scholars, including *native* ones, strive to negotiate legitimacy to gain trust in the field. By sharing the language and cultural rules, however, *native anthropologists* may negotiate this legitimacy in different ways (Jacobs-Huey 2002).

Born and raised in Japan, I conducted research as a "native" or an "insider" of the society. While my background in education and sociology made my research subjects a natural choice, I later realized that my research would invite questions regarding the objectivity of my study, as speaking as a "*native*" *anthropologist*, or being an "insider," which was a controversial topic in anthropology. However, as I explain below, I was also an "outsider" to the communities I studied. As a positioned subject, an ethnographer "occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision," and any ethnographic findings are "subjective" in addition to being "*partial*" (Rosaldo 1993; Clifford 1986; Kondo 1986). Thus, multiple levels of contextualization are required to examine my positioning towards each community in the neighborhood (my field site), which also helps destabilize the boundary between "insider" and "outsider." I take an *autoethnographic* approach to my field experience and findings in order to contextualize my study from various perspectives. What does being a "native" mean, in particular, in ethnographic research in education? How does the environment that appears "at home" shape the interactions of ethnographers and the communities they study "at home"? How does being a "*native*" *anthropologist* "at home" influence the processes of interpretation in educational research?

Since the neighborhood I studied was a *minority* community due to multiple factors (historical origin, social class, ethnic backgrounds, legal citizenship, etc.), the space of my field site has been formed by the historical and sociocultural forces of modernizing Japan. By first contextualizing each group's structural location in Japanese society, I will present the multiple contexts that existed in my field site. Second, I will add and describe my main field site, the public elementary school, into this picture, and third, I will analyze the implication of my encounters with teachers, children, and community members to discuss the influence of these multiple contexts on my interpretation of ethnographic data and the role of interpretation in this study. By situating myself in an ethnographic description and by analyzing my interaction with the people I met, I revisit my field experience to examine my *positionality* in this study. The purpose of these steps and procedures is to consider the role of interpretation in this study, taking an *autoethnographic* approach to my *fieldwork* and research outcomes. At the end, I hope to examine the contribution that a "*native*" *anthropologist* or an anthropologist "at home" can make towards a *national anthropology* (of Japan), through the analysis of multiple contexts and my *positionality* in my study as well.

Research Report

Research Trajectory

I have been conducting research on educational policy and practice for *minority* and *immigrant* children in Osaka, Japan, since the mid-1990s. During my initial *field-work*, from 1998 to 2000, I examined the educational program and practice for recently arrived *immigrant* children in a multiethnic neighborhood. I chose this neighborhood as my field site due to the fact that (1) it was multiethnic, with a history of bottom-up empowerment and that (2) the communities worked together with the school. For these two reasons, I thought the school was a good place to examine how the newly arrived *immigrant* children were being accommodated and “integrated.” The focus of my research has broadened since then, from understanding the actual practices in school and community to examining the configuration of Japan’s emerging “*multiculturalism*.”

The goal of conducting an ethnographic study of a particular school in a neighborhood was to find out how new *immigrants* are incorporated in a multiethnic neighborhood in a relatively homogeneous Japan. I started from the school because documents, both published and unpublished, were available and because the school was one of the meeting points for the people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the neighborhood. In the broader space outside of the educational arena, I wanted to examine the incorporation or integration patterns of Japanese society, which was slowly becoming more mixed. I asked questions such as: What kind of incorporation occurs? How does the cultural and ethnic homogeneity in Japan affect educational practices for incorporating new *immigrants*? How do other social groups (ethnic groups, social classes, social actors) understand the whole experience of developing a *multicultural* education program in Japan? Later on I asked, how do former informants/children remember these experiences?

As a Japanese national trained and working in the USA, bringing certain “international” traits to Japanese educational communities, I was treated as a “somewhat” different researcher in my home country. This might have been because of my affiliation with an institution outside Japan (most of the time I was affiliated with a university in the USA, but for 2 years with a university in Singapore); however, it may have been due to my being a researcher and anthropologist, studying my own culture by means of observing the interactions of people and everyday life and by interviewing them. In order to examine the cultural implications of what I observed, I sometimes had to ask questions that a nonnative researcher would not have asked. As the Japanese language is context dependent, it allows listeners to interpret the meaning according to the situation where the conversation takes place. Questioning, even for clarification, is not regarded positively, for this puts the communicators as equals, which disturbs the hierarchy between the two when there is clear status or age difference between the two. Due to my training in anthropology, or due to my exposure to the American culture, at the teachers’ meeting in my field site I found myself clarifying the

meaning of each phrase or word more than other participants. For example, when a teacher in charge of the education of foreign residents in my field site spoke about the educational philosophy behind the education, he used the phrase, “the education that nurtures ethnic identity of foreign children,” I had to clarify this by asking, “What do you mean by ethnic identity?” “It means an ethnic background,” he said. I continued, “Then, is it similar to the education that cherishes ethnic identity of foreign children?” “Yes, it is.” “What specifically do you mean by ‘cherishing one’s ethnic identity?’” I asked again. And the teacher would say, “When Ms. Okubo is participating, our meeting is disturbed. The discussion does not move forward.” My interpretation of this communication was as follows: If I were a researcher with a non-Japanese cultural background, the Japanese participants that I interacted with would not take me as somewhat different, but due to my role as a researcher doing anthropology of the culture that was regarded as my own, some thought I was strange or annoying, for I was someone who paused during the conversation or raised questions that would interrupt the fluidity of conversations.

On the other hand, as I was also studying *minority* and *immigrant* communities, or children of mixed cultures, I was following linguistic and cultural “others” as well. To these communities, I was also a cultural “other.” There was more space for me to ask questions or pause. The traits that I exhibited via my ethnographic inquiry did not invite much suspicion, for there was a larger divide between our cultures. Despite taking the interactions with me as being asked annoying questions, the participants would conclude that this was because I was Japanese, or because I have not been living in Japan. When I conducted an ethnographic study in the USA, I was allowed to ask questions more freely as a “non-American” researcher.

In light of these experiences, I discuss the impact of a *native anthropologist* doing research on multiethnic communities in this paper. What does it mean to conduct research as a native *anthropologist*, to negotiate the boundaries within a multiethnic neighborhood as both an *insider and outsider* to the cultures? How does this experience of negotiation affect the processes of the interpretation of ethnographic data and research outcomes?

Field Site: Miyako Neighborhood Seen Through an “Objective” Lens

Miyako, my field site, is a multiethnic neighborhood in urban Japan. It is located in Osaka Prefecture, which is in the midwest region of Japan. Almost half of the residents in Miyako are regarded as members of a former outcaste people (Burakumin), whose status goes back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Japanese society went through a process of modernization and transformation in the last century, but discrimination against Burakumin still continues in employment and marriages, even after their civil rights movement in the mid-1960s (Davis 2000). Since successful members of the Buraku have been moving out of the

community, in 2000, only 30 % of the residents in Miyako were members of that community, while the rest were non-Buraku(min) who had moved into the community for economic reasons. As a result, less than half of the residents, including those who moved into the community for economic reasons, shared a consciousness of being members of the Buraku community. But residents who had been living there for generations were attached to Miyako, and some of those who had left the community in their early 20s were returning to Miyako after experiencing the outside world. Some returned for economic reasons, while others came back to seek the comfort of living with their families. Those who moved into Miyako in the 1970s and 1980s were referred to as “in-migrants” (*ryūnyūsha*). In a sense, Miyako Buraku was closed to outsiders, although there was no physical barrier between the community and the outside world.

Ten percent of the residents (about 300) of Miyako Buraku had a Korean background. Some were North or South Korean nationals with special permanent residency status. Some were legalized Japanese citizens, and others were Japanese by virtue of having been born after 1985 and of having one Japanese parent. Their ancestors migrated (and some were even forced to migrate) some time between 1910 and 1945 to Japan during the annexation of the Korean peninsula. The Koreans I met in my field site were second-generation Koreans, who had actually heard of their parents’ hardships after migrating to Japan; third-generation Koreans, who shared a memory of Japan’s colonial past through talking with their parents and grandparents; and fourth-generation Koreans, who did not necessarily have a personal connection with Korea, besides the fact that it was their ancestors’ homeland.

Adding another layer of complexity to this were Vietnamese refugees, who began residing in this neighborhood in the late 1980s. Many of them were refugees and their family members. The refugees, most of them from South Vietnam, had left Vietnam after the fall of Saigon in 1975 and arrived in Japan after spending a few years in refugee camps in Southeast Asian countries. Their family members joined them through the ODP (Orderly Departure Program, a family reunification immigration program) between 1980 and 2003. Some of them have legally naturalized and become Japanese nationals, and their children were born in Japan.

Chinese *immigrants* were children and grandchildren of the Japanese who had migrated in the prewar years to Manchuria, the northeast part of China that was under Japan’s control. They began returning to Japan, due to their Japanese ancestry, mainly after the normalization of Japan–China relations in 1972. Although they were regarded as Chinese, in terms of biological ancestry, they were either Japanese, half-Japanese (children), or quarter-Japanese (grandchildren). However, only a few families were naturalized Japanese citizens, and most of them had permanent resident status (different from Korean residents) and kept their Chinese nationality at the time of my research in 2000.

Miyako, with its Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese populations, thus has been created by the global flow of people under the influence of geopolitical effects and globalization. Children in the neighborhood attended Miyako Elementary School, a public elementary school which was founded in the mid-1970s as an outcome of the Buraku movement. Since I was conducting an ethnographic study of their school

life, I met their parents through them at school, which was one of my main field sites. Most of the teachers at Miyako were Japanese, commuting from outside the neighborhood. Two third-generation resident Koreans were working as teachers at school, and other resident Koreans were working as instructors at the Korean education center in the neighborhood. Some of the instructors working for the Community Youth Center were from Miyako Buraku in the neighborhood or from other Buraku. My *fieldwork* unfolded within this space created by people of different structural locations in Japanese society.

Autoethnographic Description of My Positionality

Miyako Elementary School: Main Field Site

Unlike many scholars who visited Miyako Elementary School knowing that it was a Buraku school, I only discovered this fact after I selected my field site. I visited Miyako during my preliminary research in 1997 because I had heard that so-called “newcomer” Vietnamese children were studying at Miyako. Unless you were from the area or studying about *minority* education/education for the Buraku, the fact that the neighborhood was a Buraku community was not obvious. Since the school had an office for the teachers’ association for the education for resident foreigners in the prefecture, I visited the office to inquire about the current situation of *immigrant* children and to ask them if they knew of any possible schools that could accept me as a field researcher. The office suggested that I ask Miyako, and I then had meetings with the principal and a headteacher of the school. The headteacher told me, “I heard you would be doing research at our school next year. As you know, this school is assigned as a special school for promoting Dowa education (education for the Buraku), so I hope you will understand this and cooperate with us.” I did not fully understand what he meant. What did he want me to “understand” and what kind of “cooperation” was he asking for? (Okubo 2005), this was my initial reaction. Gradually I came to realize the implications of his words after I started my *fieldwork* in Miyako the following year, and I had to readjust my research project from a study of recently arriving *immigrant* children in urban Japan to a study of *immigrant* children in a “Buraku” neighborhood. Despite human rights education and other enlightenment efforts, some Japanese tried to avoid any association with them. This was exemplified by a Japanese senior scholar’s advice, during my *fieldwork*, not to emphasize the Buraku in my study, for I would be referred to as a researcher of a particular type. Under these circumstances, I later realized that the “cooperation” he mentioned had more meaning than I was initially able to absorb.

In addition, being a Buraku school, Miyako was also used to having guests and even researchers for a day or a short period of time. Guests and researchers were there to learn the school’s programs and activities as part of Dowa education, i.e., the education for the Buraku community, as it was one of the two Buraku schools in

the city. The education for resident Koreans and *immigrant* children and the education for physically and mentally challenged children were added to Dowa education, under the framework of *multicultural* education based on “human rights” education, which was another name for the Buraku education. Being a Buraku neighborhood was a decisive factor that differentiated the experiences of these *immigrant* children from those living in other parts of Japan.

Since Miyako was a school for promoting *minority* education, teachers at Miyako Elementary School were divided into two categories—a smaller number of teachers who had been active in promoting and developing education for the Buraku and foreign residents (resident Koreans), and a larger number of teachers who were reluctantly teaching there as a result of regular transfers that happen every 5–10 years. Among the former group, some of the teachers had taken the positions out of an ambition to become a vice principal or principal in the future, rather than out of their concern and passion for these children’s education. Thus, for the teachers working at Miyako, the school was a site of contested meanings. The school was also a site of another contestation—on the one hand, the school functioned as Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser 1971) and produced Japanese national subjects (Balibar 1991), and on the other hand, the school institutionalized (with some distortion) a localized idea of *minority* education that originated in grassroots educational activities for *minority* children. Moreover, the teachers had personal lives and beliefs that influenced their decision-making regarding their support and participation in community events, such as the Vietnamese New Year’s Festival, organized by an outside school association in the neighborhood.

My Encounter with the People/Research Participants

Since my point of entry in my field site was Miyako Elementary School, my encounter with community members, neighbors, and teachers was mainly through the school and its teachers. On the first day of my *fieldwork*, I was introduced to the teachers at Miyako at a teachers’ meeting as a graduate student of a Japanese university who had studied abroad in the USA and was doing research on Vietnamese children and their education. Not knowing that the number of Chinese children was increasing in Miyako, I had addressed only Vietnamese and their after-school educational activities at school in my initial research proposal. Although I have rarely visited the university in Japan where I finished my master’s, teachers in Miyako thought of me as a graduate student studying in Japan, rather than in the USA. This perception continued throughout my *fieldwork*, and even held currency when I went back to Miyako after my *fieldwork*. This might have been because teachers were more familiar with my university in Japan, or it might have been because they could not imagine that I was doing research for my dissertation for a US school. Whenever I was introduced to other people, I added that my research at Miyako was for my dissertation research for Berkeley, and not for my Japanese university.

Compared with foreign researchers who did not share the language or cultural rules of Japan, I was an “insider” (native) of the society at Miyako Elementary School, but I was not completely one of them. In addition, being a graduate student

did not have any professional implication in the Japanese context. Thus, being a “young,” “female” (graduate) “student,” it was difficult for me to establish a professional relationship with some teachers. One teacher even suggested that I should not live in the neighborhood due to my middle-class background. All these events made me question the meaning of the *fieldwork*, and by the end of my 18 months of *fieldwork* I had come to realize that, in contrast to their initial openness, they actually did not want anyone in school for more than one semester (3–4 months). The more I tried to engage with them as a researcher, the more I felt as if I was being alienated. The teachers were not used to long-term *fieldwork*, either, although they had frequent visitors to the school. In accepting visitors, the school and teachers expected the researchers to give positive reviews and feedback of their educational programs. This is probably because of the nature of teachers working with *minority* students; in a larger educational system, these teachers were doing extra work that other teachers would not have volunteered to do. I was aware of this fact as well; however, as a researcher, I gave my opinions and feedback based on the interpretation of my ethnographic data and experience.

To the children at Miyako, I was introduced by the principal as a “trainee,” but the students were told to refer to me as a “teacher.” In order to separate myself from teachers and to keep my position as a researcher in school, I told the teachers that I would prefer not to be called a “teacher”; however, they said that it would be awkward if an adult who was not a teacher was present in the school site on a daily basis. Thus, I had to accept my title as a “teacher” (*sensei*) from teachers and children at Miyako, but the children looked at me slightly differently from other teachers, because I was not teaching. There were a few other teachers who did not teach in regular classrooms in Miyako, such as teachers in charge of the Japanese language classes for new *immigrants*, teachers in the school infirmary, teachers taking care of children in the after-school daycare center in school, and teachers/helpers in charge of mentally challenged children.

My *positionality* of being an “insider–outsider” was further complicated outside school—in the neighborhood, when meeting neighbors who had different social locations, languages, discourse styles, and cultural rules. Japanese nationals who had lived in Japan throughout their lives have experienced the same complications of their positionalities in interacting with communities; however, the fact that I was not closely affiliated with a Japanese institution made me appear to be not rooted in Japan. Although the sense of self is constructed and shaped interactively with society in Japan as in many other societies, I would say that belonging to or being a member of organizations is one of the larger factors that constitutes one’s social identity in Japan, as many anthropologists have discussed (Nakane 1970; Rosenberger 1994).

Before I conducted my research in Miyako, a researcher who had been studying the Buraku in another area for several decades said that it would usually take 5–10 years to “understand” the community. The difficulty of entering the Buraku community was known to the scholars doing research among them. The second day of my field work, the vice principal of Miyako took me to the Community Youth Center and the Community Center. The close relationship between the school and the community was a unique feature of Miyako as a Buraku school. With the

assistance of the principal, I was able to live in one of the apartment complexes for the Buraku. When I visited the community leader with the principal regarding this, the community leader accepted my request to move into one of the community apartment complexes, saying, "We have many young men in our neighborhood. You should consider marrying one." Whether it was a test or a challenge to me as a member of the dominant group entering their community, I am not sure. But from his words, I realized that I was entering their territory. Although the Buraku were marginalized in the larger society, the Buraku community had a certain power within Miyako, the neighborhood; however, by phrasing it that way, I may be undermining the discrimination against the Buraku in contemporary Japan.

While I was doing my *fieldwork*, the Buraku community was facing the abolishment of special measures for the community which had been in effect since 1969. Facing this change, each community was trying to educate community members with the goal of "self-help" so that the community as a whole could be self-sufficient. However, it turned out that Miyako was regarded as a failure case for this Buraku reform. When I told other scholars familiar with the Buraku issue that I conducted research in Miyako, their responses were that my experience must have been tough. The more "successful" Buraku communities, according to the scholars familiar with the Buraku communities in Osaka, seemed to have had a more positive and collaborative relationship with schools, teachers, and researchers. If Miyako's efforts towards the change as a whole were functioning as well as other more successful communities, the greetings of the Miyako community leader may have been different. Or was it the expression of their true feelings towards outsiders to the neighborhood?

The resident Koreans had their own center for after-school educational activities for children of a Korean background. This was expanded to include Chinese and Vietnamese in the second year of my research. They also assisted the activities of the school's Korean ethnic club and Vietnamese ethnic club. Thus, at the early stage of my research in following Chinese and Vietnamese *immigrant* children in school and the neighborhood, I met with the Korean instructors. During my stay in Miyako, I also encountered more people interested in the education of foreign children, including children with Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese backgrounds through teachers at Miyako Elementary School and at a research institute for *minority* issues. They were Japanese teachers, and Korean and Buraku activists and parents. With them, I was a "researcher" interested in the history and current situation of *minority* education of the neighborhood, and I was also someone who cared about their empowerment. In this sense, I was an "insider" for those who were interested in *minority* issues and their education, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or occupations.

My encounters with Chinese and Vietnamese parents and community members, who did not necessarily share the same languages and cultural rules as I did, had another implication. Since I met them through the children and teachers at Miyako, for them I was a "teacher" at Miyako helping out in Japanese language classes for their children. Since I lived in Miyako, I also ran into them at stores, stations, neighbors' places, and community events such as after-school classes for children and the Vietnamese New Year's Festival. Due to my limited Vietnamese ability and inability to understand Chinese, our conversations were in either limited Japanese

or Vietnamese, or occurred with the assistance of the children or a teacher who understood the language. Despite this language barrier, as a “teacher” living in Miyako and as someone who helped out at community events, I was able to interact with some of them. Similar to my interactions with Korean and Buraku neighbors, the way in which I developed my rapport was not necessarily a direct result of my ethnicity, gender, or social class background, although I do not deny that these factors influenced my research and limited my purview. Living in Miyako, participating in community events, and visiting my neighbor’s houses, I met with Chinese and Vietnamese parents whom I had not known through schools.

Research Approach: Ethnography

Ethnography, Qualitative Methods, and Long-Term Research

During my initial *fieldwork* between 1998 and 2000, I lived in my field site and conducted participant observations of everyday practices. In particular, I examined the educational practices directed towards 1.5-generation Chinese and second-generation Vietnamese children in school and within their local community, where *minority* groups with different historical, cultural, and political locations reside. I conducted participant observations of class activities of the public primary school in my field site and in the neighborhood where I lived, as well as formal and informal interviews with teachers, children, parents, and other residents both in and out of school. Between 1998 and 2008, I conducted formal interviews from 30 to 120 min with more than 120 individuals in person and phone interviews with four others. Between 2009 and 2010, I conducted about 70 informal and formal interviews including 24 recorded ones. In 2011, I visited my field site to collect reports and newsletters, as well as libraries to gather the information on educational and immigration policies in Japan, but no interviews were conducted. I interpreted my ethnographic data by employing “triangulation” of other data obtained from other qualitative research methods, official statistics and reports, and literature.

In July 2008, 10 years after I conducted my initial *fieldwork*, I went back to my field site, Miyako, in order to find out how these Chinese and Vietnamese children were doing. I had a chance to return to Miyako briefly in 2001 and 2004, but I had not had a chance to meet most of the children in Japanese Language Classes at Miyako Elementary School. During this follow-up, the purpose of my study was to update the situation of the Chinese and Vietnamese children from the Japanese Language Classes. In addition, I wanted to document how these children remember their experiences at Miyako, which I described as the “production of ethnic others” in my dissertation project. In particular, I wanted to ask them what they remembered about Japanese Language Class activities, and what they actually “learned” about Japanese culture/society and about themselves from these experiences.

Miyako, the neighborhood, had gone through much transition. The special measures for the Buraku community, which had supported the development of the community since 1969, were abolished in March 2002. As a result, the name of the community center had been changed from Miyako Liberation Center to Miyako Human Rights Community Center, following the trend of other buildings that were associated with the Buraku community. Now, “human rights” have taken over “liberation.” Before the end of these measures, incidents regarding the embezzlement by community leaders of funding allocated for the Buraku communities were reported. Miyako was one of these communities covered in the media. Due to this incident, the branch office of Miyako had been put under the custody of Buraku Liberation League (BLL) Osaka Federation to promote a democratic reform of the Miyako BLL branch. A couple of people in the leading positions of a branch office of Miyako BLL had disappeared when I went back to Miyako in July 2008. The leader of the community, who had voiced his complaints to schools and teachers about the school’s interest in the conscious-raising aspect of Dowa education and not in the achievement of students in the community, had also left Miyako.

I was interested in understanding how this policy change towards the Buraku had affected the neighborhood as a whole, and the cultural and local politics among different groups, and thus, educational programs for Chinese and Vietnamese *immigrant* children in the area. As I was revisiting my dissertation materials for publication during this visit, my perspective was more “objective” than it was as an ethnographer. A noticeable change was that the neighborhood’s education center organized by Korean residents, which had been a branch of the Buraku center, had split into two sections; the center for the education for “internationalization” became the city’s official center for *multicultural* education, while the center for community education (for ethnic minorities in Miyako) turned into a nonprofit organization. The city’s system for supporting human rights has also shifted from being based on human rights issues centered around the Buraku to falling under the framework of “*multiculturalism*” (*tabunka kyōsei*).

Framework for Ethnographic Research Methods

My research was theoretically influenced by two anthropologists doing research on education and learning. The late John Ogbu, my advisor during the dissertation project, suggested that I should not stay in classrooms to understand education. He conducted a comparative study of the academic achievement of *minority* communities using the concepts of identity, “cultural frame of reference,” and “*minority* status” in society as analytical lenses. He classified minorities into “involuntary” minorities, those who find themselves in the country against their will, and “voluntary” minorities, i.e., *immigrants*. He recommended that I go out into the community and talk with parents, not only teachers and children, and observe them at home to discover educational practice and people’s attitudes and behavior towards education. Jean Lave was another person who inspired me during my *fieldwork* and writing.

Her approach was the *ethnography* of learning as a social practice, not only in school but also outside school to understand educational practice and discourse. She advised me not to be associated with teachers during my *fieldwork* in school, which was difficult as I was introduced to the children as a “teacher” at the school, conducting research for my graduate study. She also suggested following a small number of people, children, all day to understand them in depth, rather than staying in school. Due to their advice, although my *fieldwork* started in the school, my study expanded beyond the school to the children, communities, and teachers outside school.

Accordingly, the frameworks for my research were mainly the macro-study of education (Ogbu) and situated learning (Lave) to understand learning and everyday practice in the larger cultural–historical, social, and political contexts, with a focus on the social and cultural formation of subjectivities (Ogbu 1987; Lave and Wenger 1991). Based on these frameworks, I designed my research project and employed ethnographic research methods during my *fieldwork* to understand educational phenomenon in my field site. In order to get a holistic picture of the educational phenomenon in Miyako, a series of ethnographic studies and follow-ups from multiple angles were necessary. However, as I did not limit this study to the school site, I may have diverted my attention from educational practice within school per se. This could have been another reason why my assessment of educational practices was more critical, compared with other researchers back then.

Re-examining the Research Findings from an Autoethnographic Perspective

Here I re-examine my research findings by adding myself and my interaction with the people in my analysis in order to understand the *partiality* of my perspective and the ways in which my anthropological knowledge was constructed. As Narayan (1993) says, not only our *fieldwork* interaction, but our scholarly texts are also influenced by our locations in our field site and in a larger society. It is our responsibility to understand the process of the construction of anthropological knowledge by analyzing our ethnographic descriptions.

In my article published in *Intercultural Education* in 2006, I argued that the Chinese and Vietnamese children were further marginalized by the educational programs in the school community in Miyako, despite the school’s enthusiasm and commitment for “*multicultural* education based on human rights education” and despite the teachers’ efforts and hard work. Marginalization was due to the transition that the Buraku and resident Korean communities experienced in the late-1990s, along with the local government’s interest in promoting “internationalization” and exchange with foreign residents. This conclusion was based on my ethnographic research in Miyako, from analyzing the data collected through negotiating multiple contexts and boundaries in Miyako (Okubo 2006). Although I acknowledged the efforts and hard work of the teachers at Miyako, my analysis was rather critical of their educational practices. How were the processes of interpretation shaped in this research?

Revisiting my time spent in Miyako and talking with a few teachers who became close during my subsequent *fieldwork*, I realized that, as mentioned, I was unwanted by Miyako Elementary School as a long-term field researcher. They were used to having short-term visitors, but not a researcher for more than a semester. I had been able to attend teachers' meetings in school for half a year, but in the following academic year, not all the information of the meetings had been shared with me. This had made me more of an "outsider," who also happened to be a "native" of the culture I studied. I was constantly struggling to find a way to create a more professional relationship with teachers after the initial phase of interviewing them about the educational activities and children at Miyako. Although other so-called "native" *anthropologists* have experienced an identity crisis as a result of not being able to distance themselves from a familiar culture, I did not have to go through this process (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984; Kondo 1986; Rosaldo 1993; Jacobs-Huey 2002). I emotionally and cognitively shared the language and cultural rules with the people/research participants, but I had a certain distance from some of the teachers at Miyako, and thus, I was able to keep a sense of reflexive perspective.

The issue of losing one's identity as a researcher, which many "native" *anthropologists* also experience, did occur to me at the early stage of my research; however, I was able to regain my identity as a researcher in interacting with teachers as a way to resist their denial at school. This emotional detachment from Miyako Elementary School is reflected both positively and negatively in my analysis of the educational program for Chinese and Vietnamese children. I was able to connect the events outside the school with educational activities in school. This may partly be due to the advice I received during my dissertation project, which was to conduct a macro-analysis of schooling and not to be associated with the school and teachers by children and parents. At the same time, however, I might have missed the details inside school, despite my awareness of the time and effort that teachers spent for the children. I did not examine the pedagogy of the school nor the curriculum of the school as an educational designer would have done. Thus, my knowledge is constructed more by the data I gathered outside school in order to make sense of what was happening inside school. Moreover, since I had more interaction with certain teachers and community activists, who tended to be critical of school, my perspective may have been influenced by their views. This point will require further attention to examine the limitations of my project.

The Role of Interpretation

Interpretation in This Chapter

I presented my results through conferences and publications, including my dissertation, based on my field study conducting *ethnography* of Miyako. As I employed a "triangulation" as a method, juxtaposing my ethnographic data with publications and data from other sources, I did not resort solely to my ethnographic data in my analysis although *ethnography* played a significant role in my study.

After publication in a Japanese edited volume in 2008, a teacher who was a leader of the association for the education for foreign residents in Osaka questioned my intention for writing my chapter and wanted to have a meeting with other teachers. When I mentioned that incident to a teacher whom I trust, she said he probably does not want anyone to criticize their educational practice. The meeting did not occur due to a scheduling conflict during my stay in Japan, but I sensed that my work was not received favorably by the Japanese teachers who are working for *immigrant* children with the association. It was because I argued that the educational efforts of the school and teachers did not necessarily lead to the full integration of the *immigrant* children. I argued that *immigrant* children were marginalized in school and community, which I interpreted as an initial phase of integration.

Some scholars have given a positive evaluation of these educational efforts, for they compare them with the past, when there was little educational support for *immigrant* children, and they seem to have grounded these practices based on the ideal of *multiculturalism*, human rights education, and philosophy inspired by scholars (Paulo Freire, James Banks). Observing a gap between the school's understanding of what *immigrant* children should be like and the children's and communities' understanding, however, I could not simply say that the school's attempt was successful. The culture of positive evaluation of educational practices and policies among academic scholars probably originates in (1) the general tendency in Japan not to critique others and (2) the difficulty of the collaboration between researchers and teachers and schools. Academics regard school teachers as practitioners and not scholars, and teachers look at researchers as scholars who do not understand actual practices. Due to this twisted relationship, the two cannot create a mature relationship that could allow both sides to freely express themselves, which includes critical assessment of each other's work. And lastly, (3) there is little criticism because Japanese scholars and the public are aware that teaching is a very challenging job, and that only a small number of teachers will actually dedicate themselves to nonmainstream populations such as *immigrants* (Lewis 2011; Ota 2000; Gordon 2011).

In my publication in 2008, I presented the suggestion that a different conceptual schema is necessary for solving this issue (Okubo 2008). Due to criticism from Japanese teachers, I wonder whether I should have followed the lead of other Japanese scholars and produced more supportive documents for teachers, and included more positive evaluation of their educational practice. I also question what my role was as a *native anthropologist* negotiating multiple boundaries within the field site. Although I wanted to examine the effects and implications of the educational program, I sensed that what I wrote, based on my long-term ethnographic study, was not welcomed by school teachers. This partially resulted from my relationship with teachers and community activists, which was influenced and shaped by my ethnographic research methods to situate the school as one of my field sites to understand how *immigrant* children were integrated into Japanese society.

The difference of my perspective from that of teachers in my field site was also illuminated by another event. The year 2000 was the first year that the national anthem and flag became mandatory in school ceremonies. Activists and a small

number of teachers held study groups for teachers to examine the implication of the government's decision on resident Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese communities from a historical context of Japan's invasion of these countries during World War II.

The tension around the change of the national state policy was further complicated by another tension in the neighborhood. During my *fieldwork*, the resident Korean community in the neighborhood was split into two—one that had official support from schools and the city and the other that was more based on the activism of ethnic minorities, including new *immigrants* in the area. Their split impacted the Miyako Elementary School's and the Vietnamese community's decisions regarding which Korean group to ask for support in organizing the neighborhood's Vietnamese community festival in 2000 (Okubo 2005). Knowing the internal conflict of the resident Korean community in Miyako, a scholar conducting research on resident Koreans in another neighborhood in Osaka understood my predicament and even advised me to find another field site.

If Miyako Elementary School took pride in itself for its "*multicultural*" education based on "human rights" education in a true sense, there should have been some discussion among teachers regarding the two incidents; however, the school and teachers stayed detached from these political issues that impacted the children and parents in Miyako, as if nothing had happened. Not living in the neighborhood, many teachers were not aware of details of the tensions and conflicts in the area. They learned about the events from the principal and the teachers in administrative positions at school.

Further discussion of my *positionality* towards each community is necessary to contextualize and examine the role of interpretation in my ethnographic study. The fact that I was a graduate student affiliated with the US institution was more favorably taken by resident Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities than by teachers. The children of some resident Koreans were studying in the USA or have studied in the USA. Some Vietnamese had relatives in the USA and mentioned that their siblings or parents were in the USA. I did not meet with any Chinese in Miyako with relatives in the USA as they were mainly from the northeastern part of China, but they were curious about my experience as a foreigner in the USA. To these communities, I was a Japanese national who had experienced being a cultural "other" from living in a foreign country, as they did at the time of my research. But I should not forget that my cultural and linguistic background as being a member of the dominant culture in Japan must have put me in a more powerful position towards them.

My *positionality* towards the Buraku community was more complex. The discrimination against the group is said to be still present although its form has become more subtle. To them, I was a member of the dominant Japanese living in their community. As they are culturally and ethnically the same as Japanese, the only factor that divided us was whether our ancestors were community members or not. Being a member of the dominant Japanese culture, I was in a position of power vis-à-vis/compared to them in society; however, as I explained in my study, they had a certain power within Miyako. In addition, my association with the community was through my research, and the members that assisted me with my research were

those who were not reluctant to share their experiences with me. As many ethnographers may have experienced, I sometimes felt that I was at their mercy to continue my research.

This was true not only for my association with the members of the Buraku for my project, but continued throughout my *fieldwork* in Miyako. In this sense, the *positionality* of an ethnographer towards the people in the field in collecting field data is vulnerable. The interpretation of ethnographic data is influenced by whether we meet someone who can assist us in the field and by who they are.

Anthropology “At Home” and National Anthropology (of Japan)

Through the discussion in this paper, I demonstrated that no anthropologist is “at home” in a strict sense. I was an “insider” simply because I shared language and cultural knowledge with the teachers and some children, but at the same time, my gender, age, class background, and most importantly, the fact that I was an unwanted long-term fieldworker created a certain barrier between the Japanese teachers and myself, which was different from the one I experienced with my neighbors, who had different ethnic backgrounds. My research findings could have been different if I had been able to develop a different kind of rapport with the teachers. However, at the same time, my positionality gave me a fresh perspective in analyzing the *multicultural* education program, contextualizing it with events happening outside school. In this sense, our interpretations are embedded in particular cultural settings of our field sites.

The concept of the “*native*” anthropologist has been questioned due to an anthropologist’s multiple identities, hybridity, or being a “virtual” construction as a *native ethnographer*, which leads me to conclude that only the difference between ethnographic Self and native Other remains, and not the difference between “insider” and “outsider” (Narayan 1993; Kondo 1986; Weston 1997; Rosaldo 1986; Bunzl 2004). The effort to bridge the difference between the Self and Other can be made by being conscious of this epistemological divide and by sharing and returning our research findings to the field, which is also important for the professional ethics of anthropologists. To this, I would like to add that studying the culture “at home” puts one in the position of the privileged for understanding the contexts better than those who do not share the culture, but can create other power dynamics—different from the ones that result from one’s background. Being an insider within Japanese culture and a native speaker of the Japanese language, I was expected to rely on contextual meaning in speaking Japanese, which placed limits on my ability to interpret what others were saying.

From my experience as an anthropologist “at home,” I second Sonia Ryang (2004)’s suggestion that anthropology of Japan, which has been studied as a “national” cultural entity, needs to be de-territorialized and denationalized, and a

critical understanding of Japan's colonialist role in Asia must be developed (Ryang 2004: p. 199, p. 203; Appadurai 1996). The events I experienced in Miyako captured these moments, which enabled teachers to choose or not to choose to practice this understanding. Although the current state of Japan's "national" anthropology is said to be a product of a two-way, unequal, and asymmetrical communication between Western and Japanese researchers, partially due to the peripheral position that Japan holds in the hegemonic structure of anthropology as an academic discipline, I would encourage more researchers from these countries to publish their studies to the world (Ryang 2004: p. 2, p. 203; Ota 1998; Kuwayama 2004). If the power relationship that exists within the production of anthropological knowledge defines communication with researchers from a peripheral position as they argue, the digital revolution, which is creating more opportunities for communication to anyone with internet access, may make a difference in the future.

With a hope to denationalize Japan's anthropology without reinforcing the "national" culture of Japan, I demonstrated the *partiality* of my interpretation from an *autoethnographic* study of my field research and research findings of multiethnic Miyako and from the understanding of the role of interpretation in my study. I hope that I was able to illuminate the complexity that exists in Japanese society, demonstrate the *partiality* of my interpretation by examining my *positionality* as a *native anthropologist* from multiple angles, and present a nuanced portrait of Japanese culture and society. The ways in which my interpretation of ethnographic data unfolded in educational research were foreshadowed in these discussions.

Conclusion

Adding myself by using an *autoethnographic* lens was a way for me to rediscover my "positioned" knowledge and "*partial*" perspectives and how I conducted my research as an anthropologist. This process also de-constructed the division between being an "insider" and "outsider" of one's culture. As the *fieldwork* is shaped by the people we meet, a person studying a "home culture" may not necessarily feel "*at home*." Sharing similar beliefs and ideas may affect our interaction with the people more than our backgrounds do. Using an *autoethnographic ethnography* and examining my interaction with my research participants, I revisited and re-examined my research findings. Through this process, I have realized that being an *anthropologist "at home"* was beneficial, but at the same time, it also re-enforced a distinction between ethnographic Self and Other. At the end, I discussed the role interpretation played in this study, why my analysis produced a more critical assessment of educational programs back then, and the possible contribution that I, as a Japan anthropologist (not necessarily as an *anthropologist "at home"*) can make, in denationalizing the field of Japan anthropology. I hope that these discussions have contextualized my analysis of the role of interpretation in ethnographic educational research.

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3.5 Us and Them: What Categories Reveal About Roma and Non-Roma in the Czech Republic

David Doubek and Markéta Levínská

Introduction: Interpretation and Categorization

In this text, we focus on one aspect of our research, which investigates in detail the topic of education in the context of relationships between the Roma minority and the non-Roma majority. The aspect we would like to address in this paper is the identification of the “object” of our research—the Roma minority. The scope of our research is much broader and is not limited solely to the questions of ethnicity or identity; however, the clarification of this particular topic has turned out to be of extreme importance to us and it provided an important insight.

Apart from the need to understand whom our research involves and what is its actual subject, it is also important to mention that the Roma identity is not only a neutral delimitation of a certain part of social reality, but also a factor playing an important role in a number of other aspects of the relationship or the conflict between the minority and the majority.

Determining who Roma actually are is not trivial at all, although it might seem so. Even though every Czech citizen imagines a relatively concrete picture when someone says Roma or Gypsy, there are a number of Roma who do not fit at all into that image. The word Roma is not printed on their foreheads, they do not have any “Roma identity card,” and they often do not even know that they are Roma and they learn of this fact only after they start attending school. Roma are a certain social

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category and belonging to this category is not something given, complete and final. Partly, people belong to this category because someone designates them as Roma and partly because they themselves identify with this category; however, in both cases it is a result of a particular interpretation of various features.

Similarly, also the categorization done by a researcher is not a mere theoretical or logical game, the main purpose of which would be to put things in order or to define the studied subject—it can involve another, hidden agenda. As the disputes between the advocates of the “cultural” and “social” concepts of Roma identity dominating the Czech academic world show (the hidden theme of these disputes is whether investments should be made in Roma cultural activities or in social programs trying to offset the consequences of social exclusion), categorization has consequences for the category as such. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to reflect on the consequences of categorization and on its other dimensions.

Context and Outline of Our Research

The Czech Republic has been criticized by the EU for the fact that a large proportion of Roma children obtain their education at elementary practical schools. The elementary practical schools are a relic from the communist era, they are a separate branch of the educational system which is primarily intended for mild mentally disabled children and from which it is difficult to progress to higher levels of the educational system.

Poor school performance and the resulting limited access to the labor market is a serious social problem. Also, the relationship between the Roma minority and the non-Roma majority is problematic and often painful. These issues are in the center of attention, and the elimination of poor school performance is seen as one of the tools that could help to eliminate the poverty and marginalization in which a large number of the members of the minority find themselves.

Our research focuses on the topic of Roma students' poor school performance. However, we do not understand this failure only as an issue of narrowly defined school performance, “intelligence,” or “adequate developmental maturity for school attendance.” Due to the fact that poor school performance is associated with a certain, not neutral, social classification, and that our previous research (long-term research performed by the Prague Group of School Ethnography) shows that the school is a space where a number of other things, apart from giving instructions to students with the aim of educating them, take place, which can also contribute to poor performance, we are interested in social factors contributing to Roma students' poor school performance. We focus on the perspectives of the actors, in particular Roma, but also of the members of the majority contributing to the situation in which Roma currently find themselves. As anthropologists, we base our approach on the assumption that social reality develops as a process and through interactions between individual participants, who always base their actions on their understanding of the world, and these interactions are thus a result—sometimes intentional and

sometimes unintentional—of this understanding. In order to understand what happens between the actors involved, it is essential to investigate the meaning which the individuals give to their actions, how they interpret their situation. Also, the interpretations of the actors are not static—they change depending on the context and on the situations in which the persons find themselves. For these reasons, it is necessary to study the actions of the actors in context and over the long term. It is necessary to spend time with the actors, to talk with them, and to ask about their interpretations. In the case of Roma, there is also the factor of a certain cultural difference and isolation from the social mainstream. For these reasons, we choose the traditional anthropological approach of “participant observation” in its broad sense (Malinowski 1922, pp. 2–22).

In the first, 3-year research project entitled “The Value of Education from the Perspective of Romany People (Education as Seen by Romany Mothers),”¹ we sought to understand what value do Roma attribute to education. The second project entitled “Function of Cultural Models in Education” focused, based on the experience from the previous research, on further investigation of cultural concepts which Roma use in relation to school and education within a broader context of education, and on research of social impacts influencing the attitudes and approaches of the involved actors. In both cases, the research was conducted as anthropological field research whereby the researchers stayed in the field and interviewed the actors, and their primary intention was to capture the perspectives of individual participants as well as the context and local social processes. This text discusses the outputs of both researches.

Initial Questions

We investigated the reasons of Roma students’ poor school performance for the first time in the 1990s when we performed a longitudinal research study at elementary schools in collaboration with the “Prague Group of School Ethnography.” The research took 9 years over which we observed the development of students in one class from the 1st through the 9th grade. During the interviews, teachers occasionally mentioned that school attendance should be adapted, shortened for Roma students, because they, for some reason, possibly because of reaching sexual

¹ The first 3-year project (2005–2007) took place in the East-Bohemia region, mainly in town communities, and its title was “The Value of Education from the Perspective of Romany People (Education as Seen by Romany Mothers).” The second project entitled “Function of Cultural Models in Education” (2008–2010) was conducted in the West-Bohemia region, where there are scattered rural socially marginalized localities in the surroundings of two cities. Both research projects were supported by the Czech Science Foundation (Grant No. 4 06/05/P560 and Grant No. 406/08/0805). Currently, we are starting a third, 4-year project (2012–2015) entitled “Decision-Making Processes of Assistance Professions in the Area of Intercultural Relationships” (GACR, Grant No. P407/12/0547).

maturity earlier, cease to attend school regularly starting from the 7th to 8th grade, which results in their poor school performance.²

Initially, we assumed that the possible reason behind the poor performance of Roma children at school might be a different approach to education or the failure to understand the value of education and the opportunities it provides, which, we presumed, could be explained by a different set of values ingrained in a different culture. More or less unconsciously or automatically, we presumed that education has its undeniable transparent value that goes beyond dispute. Apart from that, we knew about insufficient preschool preparation of Roma children (e.g., the Roma children in the Czech Republic are not used to draw the way children from the majority are), about the absence of colored pencils in Roma households, and about the language barrier which is caused by the fact that Roma children do not speak Czech competently. We suspected that there is some turning point during elementary school attendance when Roma children are transferred to the special school and we wanted to find out under what conditions and why this happens.

We also regularly, as volunteers, attended open-air school stays of one of the “special schools” based in Prague (basically a school for children with mild mental retardation), where a large part of students belonged to the Roma community. As students, we were surprised to see that these were definitely not mentally handicapped children. Of course, their level of literacy could be disputed, but they were able to play strategic board games (checkers) with any trouble at all. This amateur observation in combination with later observations from elementary schools motivated us to investigate the issues of Roma and their education in greater detail.

Based on these indications, pop-cultural (promoted by the Roma studies) image of Roma, according to which Roma are basically nomads who were forced to settle down and in whom there is still dormant “restless blood,” we assumed that there may exist some core of the Roma culture that is incompatible with the majority’s culture of professional career and that this conflict is the reason behind poor school performance and other phenomena accompanying education.

Our initial broad question was thus as follows: what role can Roma culture play in school performance? If the teachers say that the Roma students are “different,” what is this difference? Can we ask such questions at all? And who are actually Roma?

The Roma Minority in the Czech Republic

While it is probably not necessary to explain the context to Czech readers, we should provide some basic information about the situation and position of Roma in the Czech Republic for foreign readers.

² The opinion that Roma children mature earlier, or that they are sexually mature earlier, is a myth derived from the fact that Roma girls often become pregnant earlier than the girls from the majority. However, this has nothing to do with the alleged earlier onset of pubescence. To the contrary, some studies even suggest that sexual maturity begins later in Roma children (Sivakova 1992, p. 40).

According to various sources and also according to our field experience—the majority of Roma living currently in the Czech Republic are Roma who moved from Slovakia after World War II in several migratory waves (Janků 2007). These are people who had lived a settled way of life in Slovakia from the thirteenth to fourteenth century (Daniel 1994). They moved to the Czech Lands in search of work, mainly to the border areas from which the German population had been deported and where there was a demand for labor (Davidová 1995). There were also smaller groups of Hungarian, Romanian, and German (Sinthi) Roma and a specific group of migrating Olah Roma which lived nomadically (Davidová 1995, p. 10). However, providing any exact numbers is impossible.

After World War II the Roma were referred to as citizens of gypsy origin and the state declared its intention to improve their standard of living, in particular in the areas of social conditions, health, and hygiene. The state did not take into consideration specific features of Roma culture; more precisely speaking the migratory Roma were forced to settle, their horses and carriage wheels were confiscated (by the law), and they were forbidden to use their mother tongue. The state pursued mainly a policy of assimilation (Davidová 1995, pp. 190–214). Assimilation tendencies were enforced also by the Act on Common Educational System adopted in 1948 introduced by Otakar Chlup, which stipulated Czech as the only official teaching language for the Czech Republic.

The “cultural backwardness of Gypsies” was emphasized in the 1970s and 1980s and stress was put on acculturation and later on social integration. As the Czech educational system became more differentiated during the communist Czechoslovakia era, Roma were routinely sent to the so-called special schools. Special schools were primarily intended for educating children with mild mental retardation. A transfer to a special school was proposed either immediately during registration to the elementary school or during the first grade after it became apparent that the pupil was not able to keep up with the pace at the regular school. Starting from 2005, based on the new Education Act,³ special schools were renamed to practical schools. They use the same curriculum as other elementary schools, and, theoretically, it is possible to submit an application to a secondary school offering education with a school-leaving examination. In the past, students who studied at a special school were able to continue their studies only at a vocational training school, and any other education path was thus blocked. There were only a few exceptions who achieved university education (see Davidová 1995).

The employment policy of the communist regime focused on creating artificial employment. Because even unskilled people had the duty of holding a job, Roma became a source of cheap labor for which, however, there was no use in the newly established market economy. The state controlled the educational structure of the population by regulating the number of available positions at secondary vocational schools and vocational training schools and universities, and it did not focus on supporting cultural minorities.

³New Education Act No. 561/2004.

After the revolution in 1989, the law adopted in 1991⁴ recognized Roma as a nationality and they formally acquired equal rights. The end of artificial employment was not dealt with in a systematic way and a large part of the Roma population never found a new job after the state enterprises and farms disintegrated. The state, which had been until then assimilating and patronizing Roma, in fact resigned from any intervention, it gave Roma “freedom,” which practically meant it gave up all responsibility for them, leaving them at ground zero. In general, “Roma failure” is interpreted by claiming that “Roma were not ready to deal with the changes in society.” The fact that the grounds for this failure had been very well prepared is usually completely omitted. In fact, some Czech intellectuals led by V. Havel or L. Hejdiánek were aware of the desperate situation of the Roma minority as early as 1978, predicting the consequences of assimilation accompanied by segregation in special schools and elsewhere. They also pointed out the negative impact of prejudices in Czech society which incline to nationalism (Davidová 1995, pp. 211–212). The practice of educating a significant part of Roma children in special schools continued after 1989.

Open and hidden xenophobic attitudes caused Roma to start seeking asylum in Canada and Great Britain, the countries they considered to be free of prejudices, on a massive scale starting from 1997.⁵ This politic scandal attracted attention to Roma issues and the government established the Governmental Commission for the Roma Community Issues acting as its advisory body.⁶

As has been already mentioned, the New Education Act enacted in 2004 formally guarantees equal access to education to all citizens regardless of their nationality. Formally, the Act abolished special basic schools, but there now exist the so-called basic practical schools in the section of special schools, instead. According to the Education Act,⁷ Roma children may or may not fall under the regime of education of children, students, and students with special needs due to sociocultural disadvantage.⁸ School directors have no methodology available to

⁴No. 153/1991 SR.

⁵This can be very well illustrated by a story which the author experienced when he met his friend (white) at the Helsinki airport who was just returning back to the Czech Republic from Canada where he had visited his sister who had moved there. The friend described the shock he had experienced in Canada where, during a trip to the wilderness, he encountered a SUV driven by a Roma family by one of the lakes who welcomed him warmly by saying how happy they were they met a Czech person here in a foreign country and in the wilderness.

⁶In this same year this situation resulted in the drafting of the so-called Bratinka report (which became Government Resolution No. 686/97 adopted on 29.10.1997) “Report on Situation of Roma Communities.”

⁷Section 16(1) of the new Education Act No. 561/2004.

⁸Social disadvantage means a family environment with low social and cultural status, threat of pathological social phenomena, institutional education ordered or protective education imposed, the status of asylum seeker, and a party to asylum proceedings in the Czech Republic under a special legal regulation (Section 16(4), Act No. 561/2004).

determine which students come from socioculturally disadvantaged environments, even though when there is a larger number of students with special needs, the directors can apply for an assistant teacher.

Another scandal, which caused panic in Czech governmental circles, happened in 2007, when the Czech state lost a lawsuit where 18 Ostrava children filed a petition accusing the Czech Republic of violating their right to education (Čánová 2007). These events led to increased interest by Czech politicians in Roma issues, mainly because they wanted to avoid criticism from the European Union. However, it must be said that in spite of this attention, the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic continues to be poor, mainly due to the stigmatization attached to the Roma identity and due to a combination of economic and political factors such as ill-conceived privatization of state and municipal apartment houses, which created socially excluded locations (ghettoes), a lack of job opportunities in certain regions, poor legal environment, the related boom of predator loan providers, etc.

Roma in the Czech Republic often do not have an official job and live only on social allowances and various unofficial sources of income. Many Roma children do not finish even the elementary education. If they get a job, they usually do manual unskilled work. They are often pushed to town peripheries. Despite their difficult economic situation, the majority views them as parasites who abuse the social system, do not work, and live on allowances.

Research: Design and Reality

The first part of the research conducted solely by Markéta Levínská was broadly a school ethnography-inspired research aimed at question of “values.” While sensitive to the context, it was mainly about attitudes Roma mothers expressed towards education. The research design was aimed at obtaining as much narratives from Roma mothers in a setting as possible. Since these narratives needed to be put in a context, a setting consisting of one small town was selected where the researcher could compare a contextualize. The context played an important role but the focus was mainly on the narratives about values.

The second part conducted by the team of Markéta Levínská, David Doubek, and Dana Bittnerova built directly on the first research. It was designed from the beginning as holistic anthropological fieldwork where the researcher spends time in the field collecting all kinds of data and as much as possible speaks with all involved participants. While we tried to pursue the question of “values” further by means of the search of “cultural models” (a rather specialized concept taken from the cognitive anthropology), we also systematically observed all other things that we had the luck to witness. So besides interviews with Roma participants, we also mapped genealogies and cemeteries, talked to people from the majority, took part in fairs, joined some communal works, were just hanging out, and so on. We tried to get the sense of the field in the broadest meaning. For such a complex issue as the Roma success in schools, we believe there is no better approach than this.

Possible cultural differences, many unclear sources of misunderstandings between majority and minority, effects of the context of the intercultural conflict, and permanent intrusion of nonschool factors into almost every situation a Roma child experiences in the school make any narrow research approach bound to failure.

We need to note here some conventions in the text below. We sometimes quote directly the actors and for that purpose we use italics. When we mention “cultural models” which are basically structures of interpretation that actors share and routinely use in their lives, we use small capitals. One more “convention” needs to be noted: whenever we use “*white*” or “*black*” we use these terms as native terms. That means they are used as native actors would use them to designate members of majority (white) or minority (black).

Starting Points

Based on our current experience and on our studies, we now know that 6 years ago, we took a very naïve approach to research of the reasons behind Roma children’s poor school performance. Most importantly, we believed that it would not be a problem to identify who belongs to the Roma community, i.e., who is and who is not Roma, because we thought this is a question generally publicly discussed. We expected that the teachers would be interested in our work, that they would be willing to collaborate, and that they would benefit from the results of our research. We also expected, that from the perspective of Roma, poor school performance is a kind of “revolt” against the majority. A comparison with adolescent children trying to liberate themselves from the authority of their parents was something that offered itself. We saw this “revolt” as one of the reasons why education “has no value for them.” We also presumed that the institution of school has basically no place in Roma culture and that we are therefore dealing with fundamental opposition. We believed that Roma children, due to the very nature of their culture, are not interested in school, because their culture is oral, not literal. At the same time, we were not able to conceive that school could be “something so alien to someone,” because going to school is “so easy.” It was difficult for us to understand why Roma in fact are “not keen on” school. Before we started the field research, also Roma identity was a non-problematic constant for us.

Initial Problems: Seeking Direction from Official Institutions and Their Position on the Roma Category

The first problems appeared very early, in the initial phases of the first research by Markéta Levínská. At the beginning of the first project, she thought that she would run the statistics for one region on how many students are transferred during

compulsory school attendance and how many actually study at elementary school and how many at practical school. Marketa assumed that her work would be based on these data and she would specifically monitor the causes and circumstances of transfers, which she also viewed as the key problem. However, the idea of running the statistics proved to be completely unrealistic. Marketa found it absolutely impossible to access any data on transfers because schools doggedly refused to comment on the number or identity of students.⁹

Schools' "fear of speaking out" was obvious. Marketa had already encountered it during her initial search for a suitable locality for long-term research. This "fear" was essentially manifested in two ways: in better cases it took the form of very politically correct communication, where the researcher was very cautiously informed about the school and its Roma students, while in other cases the very "existence" of Roma children was totally denied. The absence of Roma children at a given school was expressed in a politically correct way: "*We don't differentiate between children and they do not officially declare their nationality.*" School representatives explained that no one has declared Roma nationality at the school and that it is not the school's responsibility to collect information of this kind.¹⁰

Some schools identified themselves as "white," arguing that they would not permit themselves to be suspected of having Roma students. We believe that schools with a "sufficient number of Roma children" which refused to participate in the research study were concerned that their school may be identified as "Roma," which would lower its prestige. In principle it was the special/practical schools that were not "ashamed" of their Roma students and their representatives spoke openly with us about their professional careers. One special/practical school which refused to classify children as either Czech or Roma and provided information in summary form was the exception. Several schools agreed to participate after some persuasion on our part, but it was evident that the school management was uncomfortable with participating. It may have been fear that the school would be accused of racism or provision of personal information, despite the fact that the research survey was strictly anonymous. One of the main arguments was that no official records exist, that the school does not collect information on the ethnicity of its students.¹¹

The absence of declarations of Roma nationality that we commonly encountered on an official level led us to doubt the existence of cultural selfhood and pride,

⁹ We lacked sufficient "political" support for collection of data that could be statistically processed. We were not a well-known agency conducting a statistical survey, nor did we give the impression that someone "powerful" was backing us, which would make it unwise to refuse our requests. Repeated rejections and excuses deterred us from conducting a statistical survey because the low number of respondents would not render a representative sample.

¹⁰ Prior to the revolution in 1989 it was common practice among schools to collect all information about students' family background.

¹¹ Refusals were also justified by the Act on Protection of Personal Data 101/2000 Coll., which forbids transfer of information to third parties. When we mentioned the Ministry of Education's interest in these data, schools replied that they are responsible to the school's founding authority (usually the municipality), not the Ministry.

which we had assumed people have when they belong to an ethnic group. We had viewed belonging to a nationality as an automatic, unquestionable cultural value and it was unfathomable to us why someone would voluntarily give up this value. It must be noted that Roma in the Czech Republic are not persecuted by the government and declaring oneself as Roma can result in many benefits.¹² We had automatically assumed some degree of ethnocentrism and the lack thereof, or rather denial thereof, confused us.

Marketa was also disappointed when a successful Roma family, which cooperated with the school and whose children continued on to study at high school, refused to speak with her.¹³ Marketa did not understand the reasons but it was clear that the family did not wish to be associated with research on Roma.

But this attitude does correspond to official figures. The preliminary results of the 2011 census show that “More people in the CR declare affiliation to George Lucas’ Star Wars Jedi knights than to the Roma nationality” (Herger and Kašpar 2011). Officially, a total of 5,199 people declared Roma nationality which is barely half compared to the previous census in 2001.¹⁴

Unofficial estimates, however, range in the hundreds of thousands. Declaration of ethnic identity leads to some advantages, but in the eyes of Roma themselves, that is apparently not the case. The explanation may be sought, e.g., in the fact that being Roma in the Czech Republic means, for example, difficulty finding work.¹⁵ It is not surprising that Roma do not officially declare “their” nationality and it is necessary to recognize that they may perceive Roma identity in relation to their position in the community (Bittnerová and Moravcová et al. 2005). The authors state that being Roma may mean belonging to a specific community that is connected by family ties, secondly Roma identity may be perceived as a cohesive community of Roma in the Czech Republic, and thirdly Roma perceive themselves as citizens of the Czech Republic (Bittnerová and Moravcová et al. 2005, p. 233). One’s self-perception is then influenced by which boxes are checked off on the census form. It is above all members of the Roma elite—i.e., those adhering to the second form of perception stated above—who declare Roma identity

¹² In some places, declaration of Roma nationality would open up the possibility that the municipality would establish a committee for ethnic minorities through which Roma could advocate for some rights on the basis of legislation. There would be a hypothetical possibility that children would be taught in Roma language in school. That would naturally give rise to questions such as whether to speak Roma, what is the potential of Roma as a language, etc.

¹³ The family was addressed by the deputy director, who had an excellent relationship with the family.

¹⁴ See <http://www.scitani.cz/slodb2011/eng/redakce.nsf/i/home>.

¹⁵ Our Roma informants said that when they arrange a meeting with a potential employer by phone, they are told that the position is available. When they go to the company office, the employer, based on the applicant’s appearance, states that the position has been filled. Sometimes they are identified as Roma because of their names and are rejected immediately. Roma who cannot be discerned as Roma by the majority speak of the shame they feel when members of the majority tell disparaging stories about Roma.

(Bittnerová and Moravcová et al. 2005, p. 228). But most of the issues our research focuses on do not affect these people and official figures do not provide any guidance as to their identity.

Looking for a Locality, Gatekeepers and Actors' Point of View

It proved impossible to find Roma through official avenues; the researcher sensed that it was a kind of hidden identity that she would have to search for among the actors themselves. She did not want to give up as she felt that the Roman identity constant remained indisputable, it was just that official institutions pushed it aside for various reasons relating to political tactics.¹⁶

The fact that official institutions hinder researchers' access and use various strategies to obfuscate issues as a way to survive in the world of government administration is not uncommon and should not surprise experienced school ethnography researchers such as we are. Nonetheless we could not but notice the conformity among denials of the Roma category, combined with the chronic lack of success of these purportedly nonexistent students.

As typical to fieldwork, we had to go through many failed attempts to gain access to actors in both localities as it was clear that we would not gain any ground through official avenues.

In the first case of a locality in Eastern Bohemia, it was a journey of gradual entry and rejection by schools, where, e.g., a researcher discovered a school that was open to cooperation while in the proximity of one of the town's Roma communities. She conducted regular monitoring for a period of 3 months, but unfortunately after the first conflict that occurred between parents, a teacher, and the school management and which resulted in transfer of one Roma student to a practical school (Levínská 2008, p. 44), the director asked the researcher to discontinue her monitoring and in fact tried to check her field notes. Fear of a public scandal, despite assurances of the anonymity of results and explanations of the reasons for regular monitoring and of how the focus is on interaction between the teacher and children, led to the conclusion of this research stay. This experience taught us that contrary to the participant observation plan, the researcher cannot participate in some situations without consequences, and the manner in which we used to conduct school ethnographic research (where the researcher sits in the classroom and observes interactions) cannot be used in the context of this sensitive issue.¹⁷ But remote investigation or use of secondhand data was also impracticable owing to the aforementioned "official" approach of

¹⁶ It was much easier to conduct research in schools before the EU criticism and enactment of the law on protection of personal data; institutions' fear of "problems" is much greater now.

¹⁷ The situation has changed dramatically from the 1990s. Teachers are now very careful when speaking with strangers, emphasizing anonymity of the school and the teacher.

brushing aside or ignoring the issue. It was clear that we would have to gain the trust of the actors themselves from the “bottom up,” outside of official institutions and primarily in nonconfrontational situations. Based on the series of failures with “testing out” schools, the researcher finally decided to work primarily with social fieldworkers, one Roma and the other from the majority, owing to whom she managed to gain the trust of local Roma actors and attain research results.

However, a shocking finding from the aforementioned failed research stay at the school was that the Roma student mentioned above was not forced to transfer to the special school; her parents chose this school. And it was not the only case of Roma parents who requested that their child be transferred to a practical school; in interviews the parents gave the justification that their child had an older sibling there, that the child was afraid of the teacher. In other cases they expressed satisfaction that their child earns top marks at the practical school. Roma children expressed similar satisfaction, stating that the practical school is better, easier, that they did not understand the material at the basic school. These arguments seem understandable with some children who could be characterized as socially disadvantaged, but other children seemed to be “average” in terms of success at the normal school and would clearly fit in there. The first research project paradoxically showed that the practical school, contrary to the fact that it is essentially a tool of segregation, is very popular among Roma. How to understand this popularity alongside lawsuits against the government?¹⁸ How to understand that the actors showed no signs of animosity or contempt for the school?

The selected approach definitely led the researchers to view reality through the actors’ eyes, but instead of a simple revelation of “differing values,” this perspective led to further questions. At the same time methodological and practical limitations, which arise when the researcher works alone and the development of trust goes too far and the actors use the researcher to attain their own goals, came to light. This type of developed trust and alliance also tends to cement the view that the actors’ needs and views are a given, which severely limits the possibility of delving more deeply into the studied issue.

For this reason our next research project was designed as a team effort. Drawing on experiences from the previous field study, we chose a noninvasive form of participant observation based on a very relaxed approach to actors; we interviewed actors in environments in which they felt safe, and we observed them where we were allowed to do so and our results are derived from a comparative review of actors’ responses and a critical approach to the data obtained. The key to the critical approach is comparative review of several researchers’ views, a type of “Rashomon strategy” (compare Rodseth 1998, p. 60), where two or three researchers participated in most situations and interviews and they reflected together on every interview and situation. We suspected that contradictions and discrepancies that appeared in the data required an unbiased approach and comparatively reviewing

¹⁸ If we disregard the fact that the lawsuit against the government was politically and externally motivated by a human rights advocacy organization.

different viewpoints allows for multiple paths from which to view a given situation. Of course the team view has its risks, i.e., a shared error seems more likely. The goal of the Rashomon strategy is not to unify but rather to compare and therefore we tolerate deviations in interpretation. The idea is that the reader pieces together the resultant image, similarly to the way that viewers do with films where the same story is gradually presented through the eyes of different narrators, like in the famous film *Rashomon* by Kurosawa.

We chose the locality for the second research project because it was “officially” recognized as a marginalized locality and we also had some informal contacts at the local school and local town council. But even here we went through an initial phase, which took up the first year of the research project, during which we were rejected and we wasted a great deal of time in meetings to which no one came and in visits to Roma actors who were data-poor as they either would not talk to us or responded to all of our questions in an uncertain, evasive way. However, this phase is unavoidable and important as the researcher can become familiar with the area, conduct interviews with members of the majority, and situate himself in the context. The actors also have time to observe the researcher and get used to his presence.

It was not until the second year in the field that we managed to penetrate the circle of Roma actors. The gatekeeper, once again a Roma social worker, played a key role here as well as she was able to view many things from both Roma and non-Roma perspectives and she acted as a sort of interpreter for us as well as a translator (metaphorically speaking, because all of our actors speak Czech perfectly).

Two or all three of us attended most of the interviews and situations, and often we were unable to reach complete agreement on what it was we had actually experienced and how to interpret these situations. We took notes about the same situation (although not all of us remembered specific details equally well) and we compiled all of the data in the end, so that the work of all three researchers was based on the same notes. But our intuitive reading, given by the differing experiences and orientation of each researcher, occasionally diverged. Sometimes we had doubts about the extent to which we were viewing the same issue and to what extent we were capable of coming to a shared conclusion and what to do about variations in notes and observations and in the researchers themselves because the data cannot be considered merely as the notes on paper or in the dictaphone; in social research the researcher himself is a “tool par excellence” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 18). But we consider some retention of differing viewpoints methodologically desirable. That which we are observing is not just one objective reality but human interaction with everything that helps form it in every individual situation, interaction based on a particular interpretation of the world. Reduction of contradictions to “errors” or “marginal deviations” would give way to abstraction, which is always based on some hidden theoretical assumption, and that we sought to avoid. We must always retain data that may refute our conceptualization. In our case, it is precisely a certain level of variation between viewpoints that could provide more information than subordination to one authoritative idea (Barth 2001, p. 435).

But the field stay and the selected methodological strategy continued to disrupt our original naïve image of authentic Roma culture, which professes its own values, which run contrary to the norms and values of the majority. For one because we had

trouble clearly delineating this “culture.” We recall frequent discussions in the kitchen of our “base camp,” where we discussed how we should consider our informants, who is and who is not Roma, whether it plays any role, and what parts of their stories are “authentic” and which are not.

Categorization as Means and Object of Analysis

Research and common sense all build on categorization. Human thought, perception, and action are based on categorization. We never deal in our thinking an perception with purely singular instances of things. We always categorize, and whenever we call something “a shoe” or “a roof,” we put that particular thing into a category and all other intellectual or practical activity like comparison, sentence making, roof repair, or shopping for shoes employ the categorization. Categorization is mainly automatic and unconscious as it draws from language and culture or language and culture build on categorization (Lakoff 1990, p. 6). Categorization concerns things of the world as well as social categories. All categorization is in fact human creation even though there are deep philosophical issues of why and if it actually “fits” the world.

When we build any theory we also categorize. Either we make some formal categorization system from the ground up (as in mathematics or physics) or we use common sense categories (as in social sciences); however we do it in more systematic and reflected fashion.

Names like “Czech,” “blacks,” “whites,” and “Roma” designate social categories that are used routinely by actors, actors are also subsumed under these categories. This categorization is thus part of their world that needs to be studied. However, the researcher needs to be cautious when using a social category in her analysis as the category cannot be just taken as a formal intellectual device. It is important to be aware of how actors use the category and what that category is composed of. Failing to do that can lead to severe confusion.

Exactly to that confusion we induced ourselves initially when we took the category of “Roma” for granted. During the fieldwork and during our discussions it was made more and more clear that the easy delineation of Roma as simple cultural and social entity based on shared culture and distinctive physical appearance that we took for granted is far from unproblematic.

The First Paradoxes in Categorization: A Confrontation with Fieldwork

One very telling example that we encountered at the very beginning of our second fieldwork is the story of Mr. Železný. It is a well-known story, one might say a fundamental story, and although at first it may look out of place in a text about

education, it will take us straight to the heart of the confusion surrounding categorization. Mr. *Železný* was a Roma, a *tattooed, flat-headed gypsy, who had had several stints in prison, who along with several Roma friends raised a ruckus in local restaurants during the 1990s, which meant that he didn't pay his bills and made threats to the wait staff. The police took no action in the matter and so local restaurateurs came up with their own vendetta scare tactic, dressing up in white hoods and making threats in front of one of the buildings in which Železný lived at the time.* This alleged scare tactic or vendetta truly scared the families which were in the buildings and they purportedly ran off into the forest and were afraid to return home... *it probably wasn't much fun.* . . . In this atmosphere of intensified emotions, this mutual terrorizing led to an incident in one of the restaurants in which *that Hryzal, who allegedly represented the intimidated Roma community, stabbed that Vikář, because Vikář was the bartender at the hotel, and the people who had gone after the gypsies with sticks and chains were there. In this act of revenge for the Ku Klux Klan scare tactic, the vengeful attacker Hryzal, representative of the gypsies, was white (brother-in-law to a Roma family), while Vikář, the stabbed bartender, was black.* A man nicknamed *Kámoš* (friend), also a pub owner at the time, was identified by the judicial system as the individual behind the Ku Klux Klan attack though it is difficult to say whether he actually led it. The victims reported that the attack had been racially motivated and following an investigation *Kámoš* was sent to prison for 6 months. Our informants talk about the paradox of *Kámoš: his mother is a gypsy and he only finished elementary school.*

The example tells about the confusing nature of the category *Roma* as reflected by speakers from the local majority group and also frames the whole situation in the locality as being somehow upside down.

When you sit in front of a “marginalized building” talking with its inhabitants, it is clear that they form a community that belongs together, which shares experiences and a world view. Perhaps it would be logical (and polite) to speak of them simply as Roma. But on what grounds can one base such classification, when they themselves avoid this classification to some degree? By phenotypic characteristics? Many of those of whom we speak have darker skin (with great variability in the distinctness of hue) and black hair, but some do not, some are completely “white,” and we would probably not classify them as Roma out of context. By language? Practically all of them speak Czech without a notable accent, and aside from a few exceptions, they can't speak the Roma language, although some families also speak an “ethnodialect” (Bořkovicová 2004, p. 292). By family origin? But how to determine which family is Roma and which is not? By social patterns, i.e., by some assumed family relationship norms, number of children per household, access to money, or to work? By adherence to particular traditions, such as avoiding reheated food? By a preference for special schools over regular schools? By functional illiteracy level? By unemployment level? By crime level?

The first attempt to address the diversity we observed was to not define the studied group ethnically, but rather spatially or socially, through the marginalized locality. Even teachers with whom we spoke stated that they identify Roma children by appearance, sometimes by name, and above all they “know them” because they grow up in a given locality.

It was also a practical measure because as mentioned above, it was impossible to begin by investigating an officially declared “Roma ethnicity.” Such an attempt would be utterly counterproductive because setting out among Roma actors by saying, we’re looking for Roma, tell us who they are, would be ridiculous. Beginning generally and socially from the marginalized locality seemed sensible because in the eyes of the majority, they are “gypsy buildings” and in any case the emergence and functioning of these localities is closely linked to the Roma ethnicity. As stated above we encountered many paradoxes here that did not fit into established assumptions and we often caught ourselves in embarrassment speaking of our participants in terms of *Roma* behavior or *Roma* concepts.

But using the local aspect as a defining principle does not work very well either because the localities that we researched became marginalized during the process or as a result of gradual settlement by *Roma* families in connection with broader economic changes during the 1990s. Thus it does not suffice to consider locality. On the practical level of local discourse, they are *gypsy buildings*, teachers, pediatrician, and employers; neighbors talk about *Gypsies/Roma/those black people*, etc. The problems that the residents of these ghettos face (*booze, slot machines, prison, shark loans, not working*) are contextualized in speech by their connection to the people at hand—Roma—and, thus contextualized, they are connected again and again to Roma. People are not viewed as Roma because they live in these buildings; rather they end up here because they are Roma. Roma identity or categorization must therefore take priority over the local aspect. We needed to find the key to the categorization issue.

We faced an unusual situation where, on the one hand, we had a particular hypothetical Roma culture and identity built on this culture, an indisputable problem in schooling of the purported carriers of this culture and, on the other hand, these same actors, who do not declare affiliation to this culture and official institution that deny their existence. There are huge ambiguities should we attempt to define this culture and identity ourselves. And at the same time if we were to tell anyone on the street that Roma do not exist, they would take us for crazy because *Gypsies are everywhere* and the problems of Roma communities are considered one of the most pressing issues in society (owing to massive media coverage).

Jenkins’ Theory of Ethnicity and Categorization

According to Jenkins (Jenkins 1994, pp. 198–218) who builds on Fredrik Barth’s transactionalism, ethnicity may be viewed as social identity, which is defined in two ways.

The first way is via internal definition, meaning identity is determined by the way it is internally formulated and declared by members of a particular group or community. This identity is experienced subjectively, as the subject feels s/he is someone and the particular classification provides some vital meaning and place in life. Even though it is experienced subjectively it is derived socially. The subject professes membership in a given group, which may also require the subject to fulfill

particular things to be a member. Jenkins calls this definition the group perspective. This is the way ethnicity is mainly seen and studied by anthropology.

The other way is external definition, where a particular group is defined by an external observer or actor, typically on the basis of some criteria, which may or may not be recognized or internalized by the group, and which is selected by the observer in respect to the goal towards which his definition is directed. Jenkins calls a group defined in this manner a social category. A typical example is social class and other ascriptive categories (gender, race, age, etc.). While the validity of internal definition depends on consent and sharing amidst members of the group, validity of external categorization depends either on some authority or the categorizer or his power to enforce the categorization.

According to Jenkins this division internal–external is primarily useful for analytical purposes because in practical life every social identity is the result of permanent friction between self-definition and social categorization (am I a woman at all, if I don’t clean or cook or speak with other women?). Self-definition must be understood as a process that stems from continual transactions (interactions) with others—with members of one’s own group as well as “external” transactions, which categorize us as a group in some way—and where external categorization may be internalized by the group. External categorization may also be derived from internal definition criteria.

While group identity draws its strength and permanency and validity from relationships within the group, the validity of a particular categorization stems from the power or authority wielded by the external categorizer in relation to the categorized circle of individuals. Ideally external categorization and internal categorization coincide and then the categorizer has a position of authority within the group. In the opposite extreme case, external categorization is in sharp contradiction to internally built identity and its validity and “acknowledgement” depend on the power of the categorizer.

Roma Identity: Internal Definition and External Categorization

From the perspective of practical language (i.e., how they are discussed locally), they are sometimes called *Roma*, other times *Gypsies* or *Gipsies*, depending on the situation. Speakers from the majority use the term “*Roma*” when they don’t want to appear as racists, and they use “*Gypsies/Gipsies*” when they want to give the impression that they speak to the point. Roma also call themselves Roma or Gypsies/Gipsies. They use “*Gypsies/Gipsies*” when speaking of a conflict with the “white” majority. They also commonly use Roma in a similar, but less derogatory context. Thus “*Roma*” is seen as the polite or proper variation of that which is identified by the word Gipsy. This relates to a particular effect that is produced by the speaker’s game between “hypocrisy” and “sincerity.” An apparently neutral

term is “*our people*,” which is used by our actors when they speak of particular goals, requirements, etc. or is used by more eloquent or enlightened members of these communities. It is sometimes said that Roma reserve the right to use the word *Gipsy* for themselves, and that the majority should not be entitled to use it. Pragmatics, then, testify that there is a reflected element of group identity, which, however, is not uniform and is charged with tension.

If we were to address the issue of how Roma define themselves internally within their own community, we soon encounter problems. Rather than seeing a coherent community which shares an “agenda” or clear ideology, we see a broad spectrum of diverse identities. The identity defined by belonging to a particular family is always the strongest—Roma agree on that point. But this identity does not lead to any broader community identity and on the contrary: although marginalized buildings are deemed Roma communities, in reality they are much closer to an aggregation of isolated families, which *as a group* are not connected by any factor other than the fact that fate has brought them together in one building. From many field cases we are aware of the difficulty with which this aggregation works as a group, as demonstrated in an inability to reach agreement or care for the common areas of the building. One odd bit of evidence is, e.g., an incident in which someone from one of our buildings—no one knows who—took off the metal roof from the entire apartment building and sold it to the material salvage center; no one tried to prevent him from doing so, no one could, help from outside had to be called in. When rain started to leak in, the residents appealed to the town agency in charge of managing the building to come and repair it. The town leadership was naturally angered by the Roma residents’ behavior and placed the blame on all of the building residents. No one realized that the residents are practically unable to forbid each other from doing something. Each resident does as she/he pleases and the only accepted authority is the external authority. When we asked our informant about this issue, she gave us an answer that was very confusing to us in that she can’t imagine which of the residents would act as a “leader” or “head,” she said “*Roma don’t know how to govern themselves.*”

If we take the external definition, Roma as a category, we face the issue of what to categorize them by. And must we define them, or can we use a field definition, a categorization that will not be a completely ad hoc construction, a categorization that will resonate with what they truly are, that will be ethnographically real? For we are aware that this is not an entirely artificial social category; on the contrary, the opposite is true.

Looking at Roma as a category based on the internal characteristics of this category is pointless and frustrating in regard to the fact that it is difficult to determine which features the category should have and which requisite and sufficient conditions it should meet. Unquestionably the fact that this is not a theoretical category, but a “natural” social category, which exists regardless of the ideas and plans of researchers needing to define a particular group of people simply and definitively, plays a role here.

Category as a Schema (Cultural Model)

Nonetheless we are concerned with Roma and not with some spatially determined entity of “residents of a marginalized locality.” Since the marginalization and poor school performance seen in all of our participants is closely related to the fact that these people are, on a symbolic level of reality (which is read and interpreted by the majority and the minority), GIPSIES. We use capital letters here to emphasize that by this label we mean a particular web of associated meanings, a “schema,” i.e., cultural category that develops in a historical process of symbolic communication between actors and groups of actors, which we are accustomed to call culture (Strauss and Quinn 2003). Therefore we do not mean the truest reality of what each person is like “really,” inside, but what others consider him to be (and what he considers himself to be). In practical social discourse, which influences their lives and which they shape through their lives, they *are* GIPSIES. In principle it makes no difference whether they are called Roma or Gipsies.¹⁹ The significant point is that this fact complicates their lives in the social context, whether externally or internally, consciously or unconsciously. They are (in the sense of a race over hurdles, which they have to run) that which their environment considers them to be. Whether they protest or whether they identify with this label is another matter. But in the sense of a hurdle, a social mirror, they are. They may not be aware of it immediately; they may become aware of it once they start school, as some of our Roma mothers stated (with some bitterness).

Connecting particular physiological characteristics with cultural categorization or ethnic identity is naturally questionable and smacks of racism. But the subjective experience of a different body, where this difference is granted some social meaning that the subject continually faces, is decidedly not irrelevant.

Our Roma are therefore *externally* categorized as GIPSIES and this categorization affects their lives *internally* in significant ways. But what kind of categorization and definition is it? What is the importance of such a category? Being a Roma in this sense means being a member of a category that is not determined by any one clear criterion, but a category like “family resemblance,” a category that is formed by a chain of overlapping subgroups, which have common features but are not unambiguously connected by any one criterion (Wittgenstein 1993, p. 46, par. 67; Lakoff 1990, p. 16). Wittgenstein used “games” as the famous example of the family resemblance type of category (Wittgenstein 1993, p. 45, par. 66).

Jenkins does not directly express his views on categorization in his work, but it seems that by categorization he means creating a certain class based on a certain criterion. This is basically the traditional approach to categorization whereby a category is determined by sufficient and necessary conditions that must be shared by all members of the category (Lakoff 1990, p. 16). Within such category, none of the members is privileged. All of the members are basically identical and the category has clearly defined boundaries. The GIPSIES category evidently does not

¹⁹ We feel it is more polite to use the word Roma and our informants have never objected to it.

meet the criteria of this kind of categorization. On the contrary, it shows features typical for family resemblance-type categories where the question is not whether someone belongs or does not belong to a category (either has or lacks a common feature), but where members belong to the category to a greater or lesser extent and where the category is defined more by means of prototypes or good examples.

One example of such prototype may be thinking along the white–black axis, that is, one of the generative principles of the GIPSY schema where GIPSIES are considered “black” and ethnic Czechs “white.” The reality is in fact much more colorful and the color of the skin often cannot be used for deciding who is “black” (Roma) or “white” (non-Roma)—see the above story with Mr. Železný. It is only a conceptual model, a prototype, to which someone conforms to a greater and someone to a lesser extent. A model that evidently relates to the racism of “whites,” which can be hidden to a varying degree. However, this model is not limited only to the categorizers from the majority.

For instance, one of our Roma informants, when describing how her mother prepared her and her sister for life, reflects along the lines of exactly the same model:

Because my mother probably knew that Roma have these complexes, that a woman must first of all know how to cook and take care of children, she taught my sister this, who was darker than me and who would probably marry someone darker. . . in my case, she taught me mainly those letters.

The informant seems to be supporting the theory that the darker the skin of the potential groom, the stronger his traditional stances, which is, in our opinion, a typical example of metonymical thinking associated with the GIPSY cultural model or scheme. In this case, the thinking is taking place internally and speculatively, from the position of a “native theoretician.”

The internal verbalized definition of the group called Roma is neither clear nor unambiguous. We encountered a clear internal definition from the perspective of the family, family membership. In several cases, we encountered an identification in the sense of “we, people from this house.” Occasionally, there was a reference to the fact that “we, Roma, do it differently” (mainly in connection with children, family life, cooking). In fact, we suspect that the entire internal–external distinction might be misleading. The membership and its meaning is not clear even to the members themselves—they raise questions, doubts, contemplate, theorize, simply put they categorize the same way as those on the outside of the group. The internal–external dichotomy in thinking is misleading also because concepts and meanings are not stuck to one side or the other, but are rather communicated.

Distanciation and Categorization

There is one powerful definition besides the inside-family identity mentioned above. It is the rather paradoxical shared self-defining/self-categorizing perspective we call “distanciation.” Distanciation is a special phenomenon that can be

encountered among Roma very often. It is quite common that during interviews the interviewed distanciate themselves from other neighbors in the house, who are some way “worse” than the interviewed. This is typical mainly for discourse relating to how “white” see them or how they might appear “from the outside”—A Roma mother (about her son’s schoolmate):

He has Gipsy parents and they are backwards, they simply do not go with the times and still live somewhere in the communism era. No even communism, even further, they are simply buried in the past and they just... they just leave the kid, there is the first day when kids go to school and they’re carrying a bag, the kid feels ashamed, that’s obvious, and then when you see these parents, you just see it, they are not normal. Well, it is not good to say that, but I just think that people like this just should not have kids at all

(*Sára, our informant quoted from an interview in July 2009*). There is a permanent reference to distance: we do not want to be those they tend to consider us to be.

In romological and Roma studies literature, there is an effect similar to the above-mentioned distanciation described on two levels (Sekyt 2004, p. 196; Jakoubek 2004, p. 50). The first is the “institute of ritual impurity,” a type of discourse whereby different families (using relatively flexible keys and variable symbolic means) talk about other families as “impure.” The second is the discourse of “the chosen one” whereby “Roma” is the chosen in contrast to “Gadjo.” Both these schemes show strong structural resemblances with the above-described distance—in both cases we are dealing with a kind of distanciation. The first case is practically identical to the examples described above. In this case, “ritually impure” are allegedly the items, people, or activities that are somehow related to traditions, whose origin can be traced back to the values of purity and impurity carried to the present by traditions from the ancient Indian system of castes (working with fire, theft, dog eating, etc.). The second case is allegedly a kind of extension of the first one, where the “caste system” among Roma families is extended to the non-Roma “white” surrounding. As “unequal” it can then be subject to theft, fraud, or derision without loss of face.

The resistance some local municipalities meet when some Roma do not want to take the job of street cleaner may very well be a part of exactly the same distanciation discourse. In our opinion, it is not that they do not want to touch cigarette butts lying on the street due to their ancient caste traditions (of which they are aware through invisible instincts and unwritten laws). More likely, they do not want to be seen in public doing the job that has the lowest prestige in the eyes of the majority. The aversion to being seen sweeping streets belongs to the same concept shared both by the majority and the minority. Interpreting of this aversion by the majority as pure laziness is a mistake. In fact, it is an aversion to being seen as a DIRTY GIPSY. (Maybe, one could pose the question what is more important—whether it is being seen by relatives, by other Roma, or by anyone in general).

The discourse of being the “chosen one,” which is considered to be the instance of a group instinct where only one’s own group is considered to be “people,” while all the others are barbarians (Allport 2004), is, in our opinion, merely an inversion of stigmatization as understood by Goffman (1963). The “inequality,” which is attributed to

Roma families as their inherent core value; the concept, according to Jakoubek (Jakoubek 2004, p. 149), that PEOPLE ARE IN PRINCIPLE NOT EQUAL is just an extension of another concept, namely, that GIPSIES ARE IN PRINCIPLE NOT EQUAL TO WHITE PEOPLE. Statements such as “*Gypsies are a people for which there are no solutions,*” “*The only people in the world that will steal from you after knowing you for seven years,*” “*Gypsies will never work,*” and others circulate in Czech and Slovak popular discourse as sayings and pearls of wisdom, and together with fragmental experience they contribute to the shared schema (as specified above) of the GYPSY. Everyone who is in some way synecdochically labeled as a GYPSY (through the heterogeneous family resemblance category where the decisive role can be played by anything ranging from family ties, location, skin color to other “features”) is in the end confronted with this concept, and this concept defines the relationship between the “majority” and the “minority.” We think there are very few “*white people*” who can imagine the experience when you *learn for the first time that you are a Gypsy*. And when you learn this, you usually also learn that you are worthless, unusable, and excluded in one way or another. In this context (maybe) the idea that it is not immoral to steal from someone who denies you of dignity does not sound that foreign. We consider the structural resemblance between distancing inside marginalized locations and contempt shown in front of outsiders to be identical to the way the majority sees the minority. Distancing is an example of self-definition which is fully based on the adoption of an external categorization.

In connection with the explanation of the “institution of ritual impurity” and the “Indian trace,” it is surprising that nobody specifically mentions, for instance, the associations that dog eating brings to mind among the majority. As if these “Indian traditions” have a more immediate discourse connection to what white neighbors consider pure and impure. At the same time, Jakoubek himself (Jakoubek 2005, p. 168–169) shows how transient and manipulatable the determination of who “the superior one” is, along with the basis for that superiority, can be; why shouldn’t what is considered “impure” be of the same transient nature? What is important is the discourse or concept PURE-IMPURE, which, however, can in our opinion be directly translated into dichotomies accompanying Roma, i.e., backward/not backward, acceptable/unacceptable, or adaptable/non-adaptable. What is important here is that Roma, which are divided into one group or another, are seen through the eyes of a third person (figuratively speaking).

Anyone can raise the objection that this kind of differentiation is made without being actually seen by the majority—that they occur as gossip between Roma themselves. However, this is not a valid argument. Decidedly, the massive nature of the symbolic contact between the majority and minority is absolutely apparent among our actors: their children watch the same adolescent movies, they listen to the same hip-hop music, the mothers cook the same meals, and their fathers share nostalgic memories of their military service. Forests of satellite dishes in apartment windows embody the fact that they are not alien to this world, but they are, however, somewhat distant from it.

Conclusion

An authentic Roma identity cannot be found in the field. Our research shows that differentiating between an authentic community of “natives” and the external world is false, because the “natives” are in many aspects defined through concepts that are not authentic and are taken over from the majority’s categorizations.

This shows that for the identity of a group, the process and history of transactions between two groups can be more important than the traditional origin. This is true especially where there is a very long history of conflict and where the identities may be formed directly and precisely by this conflict. Therefore differentiation between the minority and the majority need not be based on the clear existence of a minority or on its desire for self-determination. Regardless of the fact that we believe that the right to self-determination is an undeniable human right, Roma self-determination is in our case closely related to a number of non-Roma agendas, often of academic origin, whereby Roma studies scholars/folklorists need Roma as their romantic dream, anthropologists need Roma as “their” natives and primitives, and racists need an enemy. A number of actors is in clear opposition to such self-determination; they do not want to see themselves or be seen as a specific minority.

This fact, however, does not mean that it would not be possible to investigate the impact which culture, let’s say Roma culture, has on education and other things. We only need to dismiss the idea that this culture is something shared by all Roma, the ideal common denominator that forms a basis for all Roma and which makes them fundamentally different from the majority. If we reject this traditional, classic idea of culture as replication of uniformity (Wallace 1967, p. 26), which in fact is a kind of traditional categorization, and if we accept, for instance, the “distributive model of culture” (Schwartz 1978, p. 423; Sperber 1985, pp. 77–78) which understands culture as a certain population of meanings which are historically shared by certain people, which can change and are not fixed to a certain identity, we have room for theoretical conceptualization of deviations and variability, which are unthinkable under the traditional common denominator model. This also opens up the possibility of seeing Roma as a community, which is different in certain aspects because it shares some different meanings, but which is also absolutely identical to the majority in other aspects. However, we have the opportunity to see this difference also as something nonuniform, which gives us room to investigate and respect things that are exceptional inside the community. How is it possible, for instance, that in one of the researched localities, where we might expect some cultural norms to apply requiring girls to marry early and take a position in a family, there is a young woman who is 26 years old, single, has completed her education, is a vegetarian, has a job, is self-sufficient, yet is not ostracized despite all of that. And when she wants to leave the building to look for a new life, she has nowhere to go?

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3.6 Working Backwards: A Methodological Autobiography

Deborah Golden

Introduction

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words ‘EAT ME’ were beautifully marked in currants. (Alice’s adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll)

In this paper I set out what I call a methodological autobiography, based on a reflective account of ethnographic work in which I have been engaged over the last two decades. Throughout, I will attend to the texture of doing ethnographic work—what it feels like on the ground and in the mind—as a means of shedding light on the nature of the ethnographic enterprise. In particular I shall focus on the quality of purposeful wandering that accompanies the process of ethnographic research. The choice of this focus reflects a personal way of working, but also, perhaps more importantly, it is an emphasis that has evolved over many years of teaching ethnographic research methodology, as a counterbalance to students’ desire to put everything in order very quickly, sort it all out, and provide answers according to what they already know. Rather, in the following, I shall suggest that the work of ethnography unfolds, quite often without preplanning, and, even if preplanned, there are often unintended consequences. Hence, making sense of what has unfolded most often takes place after the fact. In this regard, the “methodological autobiography” that this essay shares with the act of research itself is the same characteristic of working backwards.

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A Word of Caution: The Confessional Turn

The recent confessional turn in qualitative research writing requires that researchers reveal personal sources of possible bias, in the same way that they reveal scholarly sources and the backstage of the work. It is suggested that such revelations may give readers more insight into the makings of the research, thereby providing them with enhanced possibilities of evaluating the work. But how are we to know what must be revealed and what kept hidden? What are the limits, if any, to our self-confessions? In responding to this question, it seems to me to be vital to keep our focus on what it is that really interests us out there in the world outside of ourselves. If we keep that focus, then the choice of what is to be said and what not becomes clearer—only what may shed light on the people and lives about whom and which we seek to learn. In this essay too, a word of caution, any autobiographical material is only of interest if it serves to shed light on the issue at hand, namely, the ways in which research turns out to be what it is.

Purposeful Wandering

As part of my master's degree in social anthropology at University College London, I wrote a short thesis based on a textual analysis of Jewish circumcision, in an endeavor to ask why radical interference in the integrity of the body is considered to be a prerequisite for belonging to a community. Subsequently, I submitted a proposal for doctoral work that was to look into the meaning and use of circumcision among Jews in Israel, including the ultra-orthodox. I arrived in Israel towards the end of 1990, with a view to doing my fieldwork in one of the ultraorthodox neighborhoods of Jerusalem. I took to wandering around some of these neighborhoods, so as to get the feel for where I thought I wanted to be. But I hesitated in renting a room, could not seem to find my place, or imagine myself being able to do so. It was the time of the mass influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and outside of the orthodox neighborhoods, the Jerusalem streets were very different from how I had seen them some years before:

All of a sudden there seemed to be no time and no place free of the presence of the newcomers. You could hear Russian at every turn, the central pedestrian mall in the city was filled with Russian professional musicians playing classical music to the passers-by in the hope of a bit of money, there were crowds of people outside the Ministry of Absorption, new delicatessen shops selling sausage and dark bread, Russian-language instructions at cast points, Russian-speaking employees at bank, offices and shops, and handwritten ads in Russian for every possible service stuck onto trees, bus-stops and electricity poles. Newcomers always seemed to be stopping you in the street to ask you how to get somewhere or other. Sometimes they'd talk in halting Hebrew; sometimes they'd dig into their pockets and haul out some scrappy piece of paper on which somebody else had scrawled a name and address. Israelis seemed continually to be talking about the newcomers: excitedly relating stories of meetings with relatives they never knew they had, complaining about the dogs they had brought with them, wondering at the blonde

beauty of some of the women and the elegance of others, airing suspicions about their motives for coming, or certain that this sudden, massive influx of people was a sure sign of divine intervention. An acquaintance said at the time: "If you want to witness a miracle, all you have to do is to go to Ben-Gurion airport. There's one happening there at least once a day." (Golden 1997, pp. 28–29)

In the event, the dramatic presence of the newcomers took over and shaped my research agenda in ways unplanned—the eventual study, based on participation observation carried out in Jerusalem over the years 1990–1992 in a variety of encounters between locals and newcomers, addressed the ways in which Israeli Jews saw fit to prepare the new arrivals for life in Israel. What came to interest me was the cultural rationale behind the ways and means by which Israelis sought to render changes in the newcomers, so that these latter might come to be seen, in the eyes of Israelis, as worthy of belonging. The study looked at notions expressed by Israelis concerning what sort of people the newcomers had to be, or become, in order to belong: what qualities, biographies, and ways of being were considered proof of moral worthiness, and what transformations the newcomers had to undergo in order to be seen to incorporate these appropriate qualities, biographies, and ways of being. The intense drama of the presence of the newcomers had lured me in, but again, in the process of research things turned out differently, as the last paragraph of the study, entitled "The beginning seen from the end," makes clear:

At the time of my arrival in Israel for fieldwork in September 1990, I had the sense that Israel was in the throes of radical change, about to happen before my very eyes. During my twenty months of fieldwork, however, I was not witness to any such dramatic enactment of "before" and "after". That is not to say that enormous changes to Israel were not being wrought by this massive movement of people from one part of the earth to another. On the contrary, there will be, and already have been, significant changes. This study is about what Israeli Jews did during those first unnerving moments when they glimpsed the possibility of powerful, unknown, impending change. It is about their endeavors to maintain some sense of control over what they sensed to be beyond control; about their hanging on for dear life onto what they already knew. (Golden 1997, p. 296)

What I wish to highlight in this story is that dimension of fieldwork that is a sort of purposeful wandering—a meandering alertness—on the ground and in the mind, which makes possible the recognition of the direction to be taken, without there being any explicit indication of this beforehand but, rather, as this presents itself. Going back to the classic methodological appendix penned by William F. Whyte (still today so useful for teaching purposes), attached to his ethnography "Streetcorner society," we see that the same mode of being in the field characterizes the initial stages of Whyte's fieldwork in Boston. He describes how he wanders around the neighborhood trying to find his way into local Italian society, during the course of which he has various encounters along the way. It is only when he meets Doc that he recognizes him as vital to his research, although he was not in any explicit sense actually looking for him. This quality of wandering—by which people and the things they do and say are recognized as worthy of attention—resonates in each and every aspect of ethnographic work: observation, interviewing, and analysis. That is not to say that it exhausts ethnographic work; rather it underpins and serves as its necessary condition.

Sighs, Cracks, and Crevices

Last summer my son and I spent many hours watching the television series *Mad Men*. Because he is not quite a native English speaker, he prefers to watch with the English subtitles, so as to make sure he is not missing any of the dialogue. Watching this way, what becomes apparent is the abundance of sighing that goes on as the protagonists converse with each other or are alone, sighs brought to the viewer's attention by the word placed in brackets at the appropriate moments—(sighs). In our line of work, the sort of wandering that I describe above allows for sighs to make themselves heard and for us to pay attention to the things said and done which, in the daily run of life, are so often overlooked. This mode of work makes manifest a substantial point: the understanding that crucial cultural ideas quite often inhere in the seemingly trivial acts and words that make up daily life. This understanding is analogous to Bourdieu's insight that the body is such a potent and effective site of cultural learning precisely because it is not seen to be such:

The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, made body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand'. (1977, p. 94)

Hence, it is of the essence that we remain in that state of meandering alertness, so as to allow these implicit notions to make themselves known to us.

During my fieldwork in Jerusalem I invited one of my friends/informants round. In the local Israeli way of doing things, tea or coffee is always prepared with the appropriate amount of sugar already stirred in, rather than providing guests with a bowl of sugar for them to help themselves. Accordingly I asked my friend how much sugar he takes. He laughed and said that there were two questions Israelis always asked newcomers: "How much sugar do you take?" and "How long have you been in Israel?". (*kama zman ata ba'aretz?*)

That chance remark, duly noted down at the end of the day, subsequently became the crux of the entire study:

"How long have you been in Israel?" was the ubiquitous mode of opening a conversation with a newcomer. Countless casual encounters between newcomers and Israelis were prefaced by this seemingly trivial question. In more formal settings too, at which the newcomers were called upon to introduce themselves, they were almost invariably asked to state, along with their name, how long they had been in Israel. The experience of being thus questioned was so pervasive among the newcomers that it received special attention in the Russian-language satirical paper *Beseder?* where, parodying a Red Army 1920s poster, it covered the front-page of one of the issue. Now was the question "How long have you been in Israel?" anything other than a social tactic for smoothing over those potentially embarrassing moments of meeting a stranger? In fact, there are a myriad ways of smoothing over such moments – no end of questions could have been asked of the newcomers – and the very ubiquity of the question, by which it was rendered seemingly trivial, served to

obscure an act of social, and sociological, import. At the focus of this enquiry, then, is the endeavor to elucidate the sociological import of the question “How long have you been in Israel?” – so often asked of the newcomers – and to examine the ways by which Israeli Jews worked to link the lives of the newcomers with the life of the Israeli nation-state by having them partake in a “shared vision of social time, past and future”. [Lewis 1985, p. 149] (Golden 1997, pp. 7–8)

Forgetfulness

What emerged out of the first study of the processes of endeavoring to transform the newcomers was what I called a “developmental model of belonging,” according to which the newcomers were to follow a certain sequence of coming to belong. First and foremost in this developmental model was the mandate that the newcomers—no matter how old, wise, opinionated, educated, cynical, adept at working the system—were to first imbibe a sort of sentimental Israeli childhood, through singing, hiking, participating in skits, and eating festive food, before they could participate in the life of the country as what they already were, that is, as old, wise, opinionated, educated, cynical, etc. In other words, in the eyes of Israelis, participation in the country as adults was to be underpinned by, and made conditional upon, a more sentimental, childlike, sensory sense of belonging (Golden 2001). At the time, I viewed this through a critical lens. Was this not paternalistic? Surely one could indeed be a full member of the new society—have a deep sense of belonging—without being a child there first. But now, from another vantage point altogether, I think that that is indeed impossible. I myself was born in South Africa and grew up in London, child of South African-Jewish immigrants. It was an entirely secular home, with friends and family around, but no links to a wider more formalized community of any sort. We did not celebrate any festivals at all—no candles on a Friday night, no going to synagogue on *Yom Kippur*, no eating one thing but not another. Nor were these Jewish festivals replaced by the Christian festivals around us or by anything that might be recognized as English or South African culture. Looking back, I think that I grew up in a sort of social-sensory vacuum. Even my mother’s cooking did not serve to attach us to any clearly defined wider community because she drew inspiration from a variety of culinary sources. Now, as a mother myself, I have tried to create a more sensory home for my child—one filled with smells, tastes, light, or festive songs—and I see that I too am not very good at this. None of this is deeply part of myself, so that I may indeed light the candles on a Friday night because it crossed my mind, or there are guests, and then indeed I enjoy the light, but really and truly I can take it or leave it. There is nothing that really feels missing if I forget about the candles—only an afterthought “Oh, I forgot to light the candles” serves as a belated reminder. This social-sensory vacuum in which I myself grew up means that I neither long for nor deeply belong to that particular dimension of Jewish life.

What is it that I am trying to say? Simply, as argued by a long line of anthropologists, that the deepest learning takes place through the body and it is

only by virtue of embodied exposure to, and experience of, sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and textures that the abstract principles of social life come to adhere in our innermost selves. Hence, the anthropological mandate to know a culture means becoming familiar with it, and becoming familiar means, first and foremost, like children, getting to know it through our senses. Just as the Israelis were right in that if they really did want to extend a real invitation to the newcomers, it meant inventing and imagining an Israeli childhood for them, as prerequisite for adulthood; in the same way, the anthropological quest to understand another culture must, first and foremost, be based on sensory immersion. In this latter enterprise, what is important is not that we be reflexive but, quite the opposite, that we be forgetful of ourselves so as to allow ourselves to be washed over by what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Even the intensive, disciplined writing that takes place at the end of every day in the field and produces a rough description approximates a stream of consciousness—a wandering in the mind and across the page by means of which everything that we can remember is noted, without premeditated ordering or selection or censoring. This first instant of noting what we remember is, paradoxically, making note of the forgetting that is a precondition for the sort of sensory immersion described above. It is “putting into words that which is not language” (Hirschauer 2006, p. 415), not only because, as Hirschauer eloquently argues, much of social life is itself “silent” but because immersion in the field is itself, as described above, a sort of meandering in the mind and on the ground that resists, or endeavors to resist, rigorous verbal formulation.

Missing the Point?

Some years later, newly employed in an academic department of education, I was looking to do some research in a formal educational setting. At the time, my son was himself at preschool and my decision to carry out an ethnographic study of a preschool in a neighboring town was perhaps a way to “eavesdrop” and to study what might be going on when I left him at the door every morning. There the children really were children and did not need to be made so. Theirs was a real, not imagined, childhood. Still, this second study was accompanied by similar questions to the first, with a change only in the *dramatis personae*:

The study addressed the ways in which early education teachers saw fit to prepare the children for life in Israel. What came to interest me was the cultural rationale behind the ways and means by which teachers sought to render changes in the children, so that these latter might come to be seen, in the eyes of the teachers, as worthy of belonging. The study looked at notions expressed by the teachers concerning what sort of people the children had to be, or become, in order to belong: what qualities, biographies and ways of being were considered proof of moral worthiness, and what transformations the children had to undergo in order to be seen to incorporate them.

Again, only in retrospect, when called upon to write a coherent account of my scholarly research for the promotion committee at my university, did I realize that

there were fundamental similarities between the two populations with which I had chosen to work. They were both groups of newcomers to the society—being a child and being an immigrant both constitute ways of entering a new society. They were both regarded by the veterans as culturally “speechless” and hence, as legitimate targets for intensive processes of cultural teaching. Some of this cultural work is explicit—what people do and say in the explicit endeavors to make over the newcomers, immigrants and children—as they see fit. But, as I have said, much of this cultural work—and perhaps that which reaches deeper—is implicit and happens, as it were, through the senses and by the way. Although the teacher in the preschool in which I did my fieldwork was keen to show me her purposeful educational work, I ended up writing a series of papers on other things altogether: the girls’ practice of hugging the teacher, the uses of food in the kindergarten, the way in which the day was routinely structured and unstructured. So that much of our work is dedicated to reading between the lines, attending to the cultural work that goes on in the sighs, cracks, and crevices.

It may be that from the point of view of the people in the field—certainly those who dedicate themselves to educational enterprises—research in this mode is missing the point. From the point of view of those whose daily professional practice is made up of intentional and explicit instruction, this side glance at things, this undue attention to the sighs that intersperse conversation, may be silly or even disrespectful. However, given the understanding that crucial cultural learning takes place precisely in the sighs, cracks, and crevices, then the task of research in calling educators’ attention to this aspect of their work would seem to be particularly important. This is even more the case in studies of settings and interactions involving children or others without mastery of verbal speech. Paul Willis (1975), in a study of motorbike culture, makes the point that the cultural codes of minority groups are primarily expressed through the use of the body and other concrete modes of articulation. In his understanding, minority cultures are unlikely to express their innermost meanings in verbal mode because to do so would be to risk destruction or incorporation by representatives of mainstream culture who have mastery of, and strive to exert power through, language and the manipulation of other highly visible “key symbols” (Ortner 1973). Given the lack of mastery of language, then more obscure modes of articulation may come to serve as prime means by which children and other newcomers endeavor to make themselves seen and heard. The children in the preschool which I studied might not be able to say to the teacher that they had had enough of her teaching endeavors during “circle time” and that they were bored and hungry, but they could seize a slight pause in her stream of words to hurl themselves across the room—sometimes seven or eight girls—and hug the teacher, thereby, in their own way, bringing the tedious proceedings to a halt (Golden 2004). Adopting Willis’s insight for research into educational endeavors (broadly understood), it would seem of particular importance to attend to what goes on in the margins, particularly from the point of view of those who wield less power to shape events.

Juxtapositions

‘Well, I’ll eat it,’ said Alice, ‘and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I’ll get into the garden, and I don’t care which happens!’ (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll)

As I have described above, the time in which we are in the field is a time of loosened hold over the chain of events. Like Alice in Wonderland, we are open to persuasion. Later, in the analytic endeavor of making sense of the materials gathered in a way that gives these a beginning, middle, and end or, in academic parlance, a claim or a thesis, or an answer to a question, we seek to take greater charge over the direction of our work. That is, less prone to distraction, our work becomes more purposeful and less wandering. Still, even now, this more focused dimension of our work—the disciplined, rigorous, line-by-line fragmenting of the text into themes and categories—is always accompanied, and complemented by, that more meandering mode. In the act of sitting back and reading and re-reading the notes we have made, we let people, ideas, words, images, colors, and textures wash over and make themselves seen, felt, and heard. Now too, as in the field itself, we are open to the possibility of what may emerge out of unexpected encounters. As Schmidt (2008, p. 358) argues, in an illuminating account of comparison, “comparing is not dependent on shared properties of objects, in which case, paradoxically, these properties would have to be known in advance . . . Comparison ought instead to make use of contrasts and differences, to gain insights from incomparability and inadequacy.” In this act of juxtaposition—sometimes purposeful, sometimes happenstance—the placing of bits and pieces of data side by side may draw our attention to things that would otherwise go unnoticed.

The Last Word

Ethnographic work is multifaceted—dependent upon multiple and complementary ways of gathering, reading, and analyzing data and upon the interweaving of different textures of being, doing, and thinking. In this essay I have chosen to focus on one aspect of this work because, in my understanding, in its unfolding, tolerance, celebration of inadvertence, and chance, of sighs cracks and crevices, not to speak of its making sense after the fact, ethnographic work is a close replica of life itself. Hence, it is so beautifully and eminently suited to the study of people as they go about living their lives.

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3.7 Observing Schools in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods in France

Jean-Paul Payet

I would like, in this chapter, to develop the following idea: *ethnography* permits a renewal of interpretive frameworks as they have been defined and fixed at any given moment by a dominant ideology that saturates both public debate and the scientific community. Ethnography can change the conventional way of explaining some social situations or issues. It holds this power because it puts researchers in touch with the lived world of actors. In other words, provided that researchers are ready and willing to question their pre-established views, they find themselves facing a complex, ambivalent, multiple, partly indeterminate, and shifting reality (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934; Simmel 1999; Strauss 1959, 1978). Conventional interpretive frameworks therefore seem to them inadequate, reductionist, and simplistic. The ethnographic experience challenges researchers to refresh their tools for describing and understanding, and that is what I would like to illustrate through my own research on disadvantaged urban schools in France.

The Dominant Ideology About Schooling in France

In French policy, schools are framed/understood within the so-called “Republican” model. Its origins lie in the political model developed in *France* at the end of the nineteenth century, when schooling contributed in crucial ways to the construction of a unified and secular nation. According to this model, schooling must produce

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enlightened citizens, freed from control by the Church and from the influence of the particular traits of the citizens' social classes, cultures, or families. Schooling is, in its universalistic aim, "indifferent to differences." Schooling is secular, which means that whatever belongs to culture and religion have no right to recognition there and are relegated to the private domain. The school of the Republic aims to create a direct link between the individual and the nation, and all of an individual's ties to primary groups appear as obstacles to the construction of this privileged link, which must permit and at the same time guarantee the construction of the individual (freed from those ties) and of the nation (made up of equal individuals).

Within this framework, the characteristics of pupils' family milieu are not taken into account (for the sake of equality, defined as formal equality before the law and not as real equality of situations in life). In the 1960s, critical sociology demonstrated the mystification behind such a notion of equality. Schooling, rather than establishing equality of opportunity, is an institution whose cultural contents belong to the middle and upper classes, an institution that divides up and sorts students by social class at a very early age (Baudelot and Establet 1971), but that does so in an insidious manner under the guise of neutral evaluation (Bourdieu et al. 1965). The school of the Republic is a school that reproduces an inequitable social structure (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970).

Within critical sociology, social class is the ultimate variable that explains social inequalities. The cultural/ethnic origin of pupils does not appear as a relevant variable, because it is seen as secondary to the disadvantaged social position of the pupils' parents. However, the emergence, in public debates of the 1980s, of the question of second-generation immigrants (primarily North African) led certain researchers to take the variable of ethnic origin into account in various social fields (employment, housing). My works, beginning in the middle of the 1980s and continuing through the 1990s (Payet 1985, 1992, 1995, 1997), took place during the pioneering phase of studying schooling from the point of view of *ethnicity*. Along with other works (Debarbieux 1996; Henry-Lorcerie 1986; Lepoutre 1997; Lorcerie 1996; Poiret 1996; Trancart 1998; Tribalat 1995; Zirotti 1980; Zirotti and Akers-Porrini 1992), they helped eliminate the taboo on talking about ethnicity at school in the social sciences in France.

Publication of my research on middle schools of the disadvantaged urban periphery (Payet 1995) provoked, in public debate as in the scientific community, two kinds of negative reactions, both framed as defending secular and egalitarian schooling (Payet and Giuliani 2010). One reaction was to refuse the ethnicized description of schooling, which questioned an (idealized) image of the school of the Republic. The other was to challenge the use of ethnic categories, arguing that it was the very act of looking (by the researcher) that created the reality. Without denying the danger of a superficial reading of works of research, my position and that of a number of researchers was that one couldn't describe the process of ethnic discrimination without naming it.

However, my research work has also been widely disseminated to the public and to the scientific community, thus helping to validate the issue within the public debate (HCI 1998; Hébrard 2002; Toulemonde 1997) and to pave the way for works

on the processes of ethnic segregation in French schools (Felouzis et al. 2005; van Zanten 2001). This public visibility was due essentially to media attention given to one research result concerning micro ethnic *segregation* within disadvantaged schools. I showed the existence, within middle schools serving a large proportion of children from immigrant families, of practices for sorting pupils into different classes at the same level of the curriculum, which contradicted the official principle of a supposedly “common” school, that is, one without tracks or streams. A statistical study of class composition showed what I called a “fabrication of classes,” that is, construction of small-scale segregation among students by age, academic level, sex, social class, and ethnic origin. These micro segregations had the major effect of stigmatizing pupils relegated to the “bad classes” (Payet 1992; van Zanten 2001). They produced a systematic association between weak academic level, bad behavior, and foreign origin, which led to a process of ethnicization, both among the teachers in their perceptions of academic difficulties and among the pupils, who appropriated the ethnic stigmas for defensive purposes.

On the basis of this study of class composition, people saw the research as essentially an attack on unofficial practices of social, ethnic, and sexual differentiation, all of which contradict the principle of the equalitarian school of the Republic. However, these segregating practices of classifying students made up only one part of the research, and even interpreting them depended on a broader ethnographic context. In fact, the research aimed to show the everyday functioning of schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods, what local ideologies they produced, how teachers and administrators and other educational professionals worked within them, and how relationships with parents were constructed. It was across the entirety of these spheres of activity that the research demonstrated the institutional production of ethnicity. To a certain extent, focus on the ethnic fabrication of classes obscured the multiplicity of settings and issues within these academic worlds, thus keeping people from grasping the real logic of ethnicization.

In the first place, the goal of the research was not to lay blame but rather to understand (in the sense used by Weber 1975). Discrimination produced by the school did not result so much from unethical behavior, as a simplistic defense of the school of the Republic would have it, but from contradictions actors face within which ethnicity appears as a resource for managing in difficult situations. In the end, the research showed how ethnic and racial stereotypes are actually maintained for the sake of a doctrine and at the very core of an egalitarian “indifference to difference” in the school of the Republic. Such a paradox was brought to light thanks to the way in which an ethnographic perspective opened our eyes and invited multiple interpretations.

Opening One’s Eyes

One of the hardest things to convey—to teach, to explain, to share—about ethnography is its epistemological and practical posture of openness. Concretely, this means letting the research questions build little by little over the course of the study,

and letting the field suggest and shape what will be interesting to study (Becker 1998; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Schatzman and Strauss 1973).

In my studies, I have been guided by big questions that give meaning and coherence to my research work: inequality, injustice, othering, and violence. But these major issues can be addressed from different methodological and epistemological perspectives. The choice of ethnography flows from a perspective that is at once theoretical and concrete. What interests me, as an ethnographer, is to see and understand how these big questions are interpreted in everyday life, in the course of ordinary action. In this I subscribe to Simmel's vision of a society that constructs itself through reciprocal actions between and among individuals (Simmel 1999). Seen from below, from within, and not from above, society is much less neat and simple than institutions, media, or policy represent it. Goffman (1983) said that what justified an interest in sociology was its ability to bring to light versions of reality other than official versions, and ethnography is a good method for doing that.

When starting a study, researchers see reality through the filters of generalities and official versions. In France, schools in the poor peripheries of big cities serve mostly children from immigrant families—postcolonial immigrants (North African and sub-Saharan African, to which Caribbean populations, technically “nationals” but marked by colonial relations, get added) and more recent other immigrants (Portuguese, Turkish, Asian, ex-Yugoslavian). Teachers are, for their part, almost all “white,” meaning that their parents are French or in a few cases European immigrants (Italian, Spanish). The academic level is lower in more disadvantaged neighborhoods, acts of violence more common, and turnover of teachers more frequent. These schools belong to an administrative category (“educational priority zones”) that steers a bit more financial resources their way. These schools are perceived negatively as much in public opinion (media reports emphasize stories of aggression by their pupils) as by teachers, pupils, and their parents. Families who have the social or financial means prefer to avoid these schools, whether by obtaining waivers for other public schools or by registering their children in private schools (which nonetheless remains a minority practice, involving only the highest stratum of families in these working-class neighborhoods and not the majority, who remain captives of schools with bad reputations).

Schools that serve disadvantaged neighborhoods, with a large proportion of children and adolescents from immigrant families, are thus the objects of very powerful social representations: academic failure, violence, (Muslim) religious fundamentalism, etc. These images represent places “seen from afar.” When one gets close, the phenomena that these images capture do not disappear from view, but they take their place within a seamless reality made up of varied activities, exchanges, and relationships. The ethnographic perspective denaturalizes and de-essentializes oversimplifying categories embodied in words used in public discussion but also in scholarly discourse—identity, integration, socialization, origin, and violence.

Multiplying the Observational Categories

An ethnographic study, which implies presence in sites for a long time (from several months to several years in the studies I have conducted), lets one complicate simplistic media images and commonsense representations. The first reason is that, even if they all belong to the same category—i.e., disadvantaged—schools differ from one another. Each school is characterized by a unique history, a specific environment, a particular administrative style, and so on. Comparing the configurations of different schools stimulates reflection on the boundaries between categories and illuminates the internal dynamics of each category of schools studied.

I always took care in planning my study to put together a sample of more than one school (two to four, in general). In schools facing fairly similar problems, one sees varied strategies for solving them. But it is also because the problems are not completely similar, because there are little differences, that the schools' constraints and room to maneuver are fairly large. To observe several schools is also to become aware of a global scale that encompasses them all, for each school occupies a place that is certainly its own but is also interdependent with the places occupied by other schools. Thus, in their reputations with families, schools are ranked. To a certain point, there is an academic market—even if, in France, thanks to strong state control, it would be more appropriate to speak of an unofficial academic market. By comparing several schools, one can link what happens inside a school with what happens outside it, at the level of a larger system—a neighborhood, a city, a regional academic administrative unit, teachers' unions, and parents' associations—that is, with social environments, educational policies, and actors' strategies.

Ethnography lets one complicate a simplistic vision in a second way by providing access to multiple actors. From a distance, one sees only a principal and teachers. Up close, the educational community of a secondary school includes, besides the principal and the collective body of teachers, a multiplicity of statuses and roles: the assistant principal, the academic counselor, the guidance counselor, the academic social worker, the school nurse, the playground and study-hall supervisors, the technical staff, and the concierge. As one gets closer, the non-teaching positions loom larger—whereas they are forgotten in a general discourse that remembers only the teaching function of schooling to the detriment of its functions of moral education and administrative and technical management. Actors are also multiple at the level of the individual. Each actor embodies his or her principal status, but can also hold several roles in different registers—categorical, structural, and personal (Hannerz 1980). Formal groups and networks—groupings by discipline taught, grade level, project, and union membership—and informal groupings, by ideological affinity, by generation, by seniority, by gender, and by social class, turn out to be important in the daily functioning of the school. From up close, categories do not disappear, but rather multiply, intersect, and pluralize. Ethnography permits observation of these identity dynamics, which furnish precious keys to the interpretation of the processes of resistance and change at work in schools (Franchi and Payet 2010).

The life of a school is institutionalized: there are laws, rules, procedures, status, specifications, and mandates. But not all is prescribed or foreseen by texts. And not all that is prescribed is implemented. Ethnography permits us to see the “negotiated order” that Anselm Strauss described so well for hospitals (Strauss et al. 1963). What ethnography observes is how problems specific to a small social organization are defined, constructed, and solved—provisionally, through agreements that can always be revisited. This is not to forget that small organizations are connected to a big organization (particularly in France, where the academic system is very centralized), and that the work of interpretation consists of understanding the patterns that are constructed in the interdependence, or the partial autonomy, of the local and the global (Geertz 1983).

Thus, when one gets close to sites, their unique traits appear: the configurations of spaces, the personalities of individuals, and the dynamics of *interactions*. Time, space, and power take on a lived dimension. Emotions and sentiments weave proximities and distances between individuals on a delicate loom. Relationship with the law, the formal, and the prescribed appears as a constant preoccupation among actors, but it is a preoccupation not so much with complying as with coping. This *phenomenological approach* to sociology (Schütz 1962) does not assume that everything is constructed in the here and now of the situation, for it postulates the existence of preexisting, “taken-for-granted” categories. But it does pay attention to the ways in which stereotypes get activated differentially, the relevance of stereotypes can get suspended, or categories with local meanings can emerge. It also pays as much attention to routines of roles as to events and to adaptations produced by actors in the situation.

Ethnography Versus a Policy Model Based on Cartesian Rationality

Scholarly epistemologies are not universal; they are born and develop in historical, cultural, and political context. I must make this point in order to better explain the status of academic ethnography in France. As I have just shown, the ethnographic perspective tends to emphasize the differences among contexts, combinations of formal and personal characteristics making up a person’s status (Hughes 1971), and logics of rule appropriation and of negotiation. Now, this perspective contradicts the official vision of the egalitarian school of the Republic, which is said to be uniform across the entire nation—the same curriculum taught by undifferentiated teachers to undifferentiated pupils.

One could even go further and add that ethnography, because it captures social organizations “in the flesh,” pulls emotions and affects into the scope of the study. Now, the Western political model draws its framework from the Enlightenment, from the rational order, constructed as the opposite of **emotions** (Lynch and Payet 2011; Nussbaum 1995). Particularly in France, knowledge is represented in its

most noble meaning, as abstraction, reason, and universality. Teachers transmit knowledge; they do not educate the whole child. The ideal model of schooling and of the teacher's role rests, in the French context, on a strong division of labor between school and family: it falls to the family to provide moral education and to guarantee the prerequisites for academic teaching. The notion of a connection between the two spheres of socialization of the child, as in the concept of the educational community in the English-speaking world, is strongly rejected by French schools and teachers.

In fact, the ethnography of schooling as I have practiced it is iconoclastic in France because it doesn't study what happens in classrooms, because it does not focus on the teaching-learning relationship, but rather on other places within schools, on other relationships than those defined by teaching and learning. If one identifies the classroom as the symbolic center stage for the grand French narrative on schooling, then my studies are interested in the backstages. In terms of places, these backstages are the principal's office, the meeting rooms, the playground, the corridors, etc. In terms of statuses, these backstages are occupied by non-teachers—administrative staff, educational aides, social aides, and health aides.

Teachers and pupils are there, too, but they are there in their interindividual *relationships* (outside the classroom), and their roles are not framed in a strictly instructional register. Again, one must note the specific French cultural context: instructional relationships between teachers and pupils outside the classroom rarely take place. Thus, teachers do not oversee clubs or sports activities as in other school systems in Northern Europe or the English-speaking world. As a result, teacher-pupil interactions outside the classroom almost always take place in a register of conflict—punishments, calling in the parents, and other practices—as continuations of conflicts that developed in the classroom or as resolution of classroom incidents or problems.

In these spaces peripheral to the classroom, one also finds parents. They appear in a formal role when they are elected by other parents to various joint councils (administrative council, disciplinary council). Their place in these spaces has gradually grown over the course of the last three decades, as the law has recognized their rights and given them a voice in school management. They are also present in individual or group meetings with school staff, when they are called in, when they visit, or when they intrude. In schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods, social workers in charge of following children and families meet regularly with parents who are in socially precarious situations.

The Lived World of Teachers in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

What are the problems that everyday living in these schools poses for actors, especially for those who work in them? What are these problems as actors “define” them? Note that this is not about problems rationally described in response to

explicit questions such as “What are the problems you encounter in *everyday life* in schools?,” questions typical of a research method using a questionnaire or interviews. This is about problems as individuals shape them in the course of their activities. Thus observation of the ordinary flow of activities in schools furnishes material to the researcher, whose role is to formulate these problems “as people see them.” This is very much a work of interpretation: even if categories are constructed as closely as possible to the ongoing action, they have been developed by the researcher (Schütz 1962).

I have identified three major problems of actors in their daily work in these schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods. I differentiate them to make them clear, but in reality these different problems overlap. The first problem is that of academic failure and more specifically of the low level of a large part of the pupils, which gets translated into a practical question: how to motivate the pupils? (This main question is declined into secondary questions: how to evaluate the pupils? What work to give them? How to organize the curriculum? etc.) The second problem is that of pupils’ deviance: how to maintain discipline? How to (re)establish order in the classroom and the school? The third problem is the most difficult, given the first two: how to make the school look good? There’s a risk, in fact, that the school’s image is not good or is deteriorating; that the school is losing its best pupils, who enroll in other public or private schools; and that this can worsen the first two problems, feeding a hellish spiral of failure.

These three problems—motivating the pupils, maintaining discipline, and making the school look good—are first-order problems for the actors in these schools. But let us not forget that they operate within the egalitarian framework of the Republic, which forbids taking differences into account and adapting instruction to the social particularities of the local context. The gaze of French teachers must be indifferent to differences (in the sense of being “color-blind” or “class-blind”), for this indifference is supposed to guarantee neutrality, and neutrality produces equality. Yet everything converges, in the daily lives of these schools, to identify the pupils’ social and especially ethnic origin as a principal cause of the difficulties faced by teachers and administrators. Families’ weak social and cultural capital is seen as a handicap difficult to overcome and as the obvious explanation of these pupils’ academic failure. Pupils’ disobedience, incivility, and transgressive and violent actions are, in the “just-between-us” conversations among colleagues, blamed on inadequate childrearing at home and on a culture that cannot be assimilated by French society. (For example, teachers attribute boys’ lack of respect for women to Arab culture.) The significant number of children from immigrant families in these schools is seen as the main reason that French families in the neighborhood, as well as the “most integrated” immigrant families, avoid the school. All other explanations, especially those that would blame the school and its agents (e.g., the concentration of children from families in precarious socioeconomic situations or the higher rate of teacher absenteeism in these schools), are thus removed from consideration.

The attitude of indifference to differences (color- and class-blindness) is certainly made more difficult when the pupils themselves and some of the parents

invoke the category of residential membership (the “housing project,” the disadvantaged urban “periphery,” the “hood”) and of ethnicity. Pupils bring into the school all the signs and codes—in dress, objects, language, music, etc.—of a vernacular culture: a youth culture that hybridizes elements imported from North American ghettos with elements of a traditional culture, themselves the objects of re-appropriation into a new ethnicity. Ethnicity is likewise activated as a defensive tactic by certain pupils or parents to accuse the school of racism, or to reclaim identity, taking the school as a field for self-expression and media attention (regarding wearing of the Islamic veil).

But what research shows is that the ethnic variable, which ought to be banished from the gaze and the actions of school agents in the framework of the Republic, is on the contrary activated in an institutional manner within these schools. Ethnicity is in fact produced not only by pupils and parents; it is also mobilized by teachers, non-teaching staff, and administrators, who use ethnic categorization in their talk and their actions. Thus, in teachers’ ways of seeing the world, foreign origin often calls forth stereotypes and negative judgments. This *stigmatization* particularly affects boys, especially boys of North African origin, who embody in the French imaginary the image of the “unassimilatable.” In fact, boys of North African origin are overrepresented among pupils disciplined for bad behavior and are concentrated in classes for pupils with low academic level and/or little academic motivation.

Study of the composition of classes—what we presented at the beginning of this chapter—demonstrates that school practice an illegal differentiation in a system that officially tracks pupils only after the first cycle of secondary education (the end of middle school). Our study unveiled this taboo practice. But this practice makes sense within a continuum of activities, within a local configuration where problems of instruction, moral education, and management must all be solved at the same time. It is this combination of issues that produces ethnicization and racialization. The construction of ethnically differentiated classes can be reinforced by the ethnicized judgments made by teachers. However, this practice, contradicting the ethic of the school of the Republic, becomes acceptable where it permits the construction of “good classes” which seem to the eyes of those in power in the school to offer a magic solution to their problems. These classes enable, in effect, schools to guarantee more comfortable work to teachers (in reality, to those in dominant positions in the school), on the one hand, and, on the other, to keep in the school the most socioeconomically well-off families of the neighborhood, who are often French (to the detriment of the weakest foreign families) while guaranteeing them socially and ethnically homogenous (“white”) classes (Payet 2002).

Thus, the construction of ethnic and racial frontiers inside the school does not come from lack of the Republican ethic, as those who see themselves as defenders of the school of the Republic want to believe. It is rather, in most cases, the opposite: in the name of maintaining social and ethnic integration in the school, segregation inside the institution seems to the school the most effective solution.

If it is good from the perspective of the heterogeneity of the school population at the level of the school as a whole, this strategy is paid for at the high price of excessive deviance by pupils concentrated in the bad classes, the racialized classes.

Thus pupils pay back the school that segregates them with reciprocal behaviors (Woods 1983) in the form of increased violence. The latter leads to professional burnout of the teachers assigned to these classes. The maintenance of a “safety barrier,” defense of a border between good and bad pupils, implies increasing activities to control pupils, which is translated in turn into secondary deviance (Becker 1963), and decline of teacher morale and school climate. Even more than construction of classes for weak and unmotivated pupils, it is the denial of the ethnic character that makes pupils uncontrollable. Denial of racialization—pupils speak of “classes where they grouped all the Arabs,” but academic agents counter by citing random assignment or the unique criterion of academic level—adds to the pupils’ humiliation and leaves them no source of pride but to turn the stigma on its head. Pupils ethnicize and accentuate their deviance, thus making the initial prediction of failure and violence come true, and masking the fact that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What ethnographic work shows is not only the process of institutional ethnicization and racialization by the school. What it shows is the accomplishment of this process and at the same time its denial. Ethnicity is the object of a continual back-and-forth between its emphasis and its censure, between its enactment and its denial. In front of pupils and parents, school actors hold to the official, secular discourse of the Republic; in their professional “just-between-us,” they abandon the politically correct discourse for ethnicized talk.

This double language shows how academic actors’ belief in the egalitarian school of the Republic gets put to the test. Locked inside a framework that makes no distinctions, they find no way out except to blame its failure on the populations claimed to be holding back from integration into French society (Franchi 2004). They maintain an abstract discourse on the integrating virtues of French schooling, but legitimize ethnicizing discourse about and discriminatory practices towards pupils and parents who are immigrants or from immigrant families. This contradiction is little recognized by some academic actors, while it makes others unhappy. It is as much the denial as a troubled conscience that creates exhaustion among professionals on the ground. They feel overwhelmed by the situation, constrained to act against their values. They slide down the slippery slope of ethnicization, but they cannot admit it. The essentialist perception of the other thus operates as a defense against weariness and self-reproach. Exhaustion, produced by denial, feeds latent racism; that in turn makes the paradox grow and requires reinforcement of denial. And so on and so on, in an infernal spiral.

Ethnographic Interpretation

In what ways is ethnography a good tool for capturing this contradictory, unstable reality of the institutional production of ethnicity through alternating methods of censure and emphasis—this paradox of racialization and denial of racialization?

In the first place, ethnographers move within different spaces of the social organization they observe (Becker 1983), between what Goffman (1972) calls the “stages” and the “backstages” of the actors’ worlds. At school, teachers are on stage when they are in contact with pupils or parents; their back stages are spaces protected from contact, where they find themselves with peers, among themselves. On the stage of the school of the Republic, they play the official role of the neutral teacher, “indifferent to differences” (Bourdieu 1966), evaluating only the academic competencies of pupils and guarding against judging their capacities in light of their social milieus. Back stage, actors relax, let the mask fall: in the teachers’ lounge, a discourse of complaint stigmatizes the culture of children from immigrant families.

Is this a lie or denial on the actors’ parts? Therein lies an important challenge to interpretation. From a distance, as mentioned, the reading of school practices of ethnicization/racialization is one of indignation vis-à-vis institutional actors who are judged as unethical. Up close, observing professionals at work, it is striking that most of them are acting in their official role with strong convictions. They defend the ability of the school of the Republic to integrate and believe in the neutrality of their position. They try to convince themselves that classes are segregated only because of the low level of the pupils, and not through deliberate sorting. They deny the racial nature of the classes, contradicting the pupils and the parents who accuse them of being discriminatory. But the ethnographer sees the effects of denial on the actors themselves in the form of moral and emotional exhaustion.

In the second place, ethnographers gain access to a different reality than researchers who conduct interviews, a reality that contradicts both the ideal of the professional self and the interactional nature of their work. On the one hand, in a research interview, the moral stakes of presenting an acceptable face are paramount. One thus sees professionals insisting on the rewarding aspects of their profession and obscuring the “dirty work” (Hughes 1971). On the other hand, the interview reconstructs, instills an order, produces a rationality centered on the individual—it creates a coherence of the “self.” Now, this consistency in a line of behavior, which Goffman (1972) calls face, is put to the test by action. In real situations, individuals are in interaction and the ethnographer can capture the work of individual interpretations one in relation to another—work that leads to agreements, misunderstandings, or conflicts between interpretations.

Watching actors behave within a situation, they grasp the complex nature of challenges to fairness. Actors hesitate over which line of behavior to follow, they contradict themselves, sometimes they fail.

That is what happened in this encounter between a (female) counselor¹ and a pupil’s father. The counselor has called in the parents without explaining why, and the (North African) father has come straight from work. It is the beginning of the afternoon, the father having worked since early morning; he is tired, but he apologizes anyway for being a little late. The counselor explains to him that his (adolescent) son insulted a (male) mathematics professor. The father says that he disapproves of his son’s behavior. The counselor adds: “If that had

¹ *Conseillère d’éducation*, a woman who fell within the academic rather than social work category, but did not teach and did not necessarily participate in the class councils mentioned later.

happened with my son, I would have given him two slaps. But of course, I'd prefer that it's handled by the parents. To me, it's not a school problem, but a life problem." The father answers that she could have given those slaps to his son.

The counselor phones a study-hall supervisor to find the pupil. While waiting for several long minutes, silence settles on the counselor and the father, interrupted by one short exchange:

Counselor: And how are things at home?

Father: No problem, not a problem.

Counselor: So you have to believe that he's taking advantage of that at school.

It is only at this moment that the father asks about the situation that led to the insult. The counselor replies that the teacher asked him to change his seat.

The pupil enters the office. His father, in a cold rage, reprimands him: "You say 'fuck you' for a seat? And if your professor gives you a slap, what are you going to do then, hit him?" Then, moving toward him: "You piece of dirt! I'm the one who will give you a slap!" and he strikes him violently.

The pupil holds back his tears with difficulty. The father looks at his son with disdain. The counselor says to the pupil: "Fine, I think that you have understood that neither your father nor we agree to your use of such language." The father orders his son to apologize to the professor. The pupil leaves the office, followed after a while by the father, who says to the counselor: "The next time..." The counselor cuts him off, "But I don't think there will be a next time." The father then adds, "The next time, you will give him a slap." The father having left, the counselor lets drop, "That's what I call a badly resolved conflict."

Later in the day, the (female) homeroom professor visits her. The counselor tells her about the meeting with the father and says with bitterness, "He told me that we should have given him a slap ourselves." The homeroom professor, who then listens to the entire story, is surprised by the insulting behavior of the pupil, who is usually very well behaved. She asks if the incident is not related to an event that happened the prior day: rejection of the pupil's program plan, due to mathematics grades that were too low.

By staying in the counselor's office after her interaction with the pupil's father, the ethnographer could witness this second interaction between the counselor and the homeroom professor. He thus learned that the counselor had not been informed of the larger context in which the incident of the insult took place. The mathematics professor had simply asked her to punish the pupil. Neither the professor nor the counselor had sought to understand the reasons for the pupil's behavior. The mathematics professor had not informed the counselor about the class council,² which had turned down, the day before, the pupil's program plan, and the counselor had not asked for further explanation about why the professor asked for punishment beyond what he had said: "I asked him to change his seat." The ethnographer linked these observations to other bits of information gathered during his long presence in the institution, notably bits of information that revealed a moral division of labor between the teachers and the counseling staff (Payet 1997). Many teachers (such as the mathematics professor) refused any interaction with pupils that touched on moral education, limiting their role to

² In France, a "conseil de classe" is a meeting in which teachers, in the presence of and under the authority of the principal, share their evaluations of each pupil in their class and make decisions about future placement. Student representatives and elected parents are present.

instruction in their discipline. They left to the counseling staff the task of applying sanctions and seeing parents. They delegated that part of the “dirty work” (Hughes 1971) of a profession that they saw ideally as within the sole sphere of transmission of disciplinary knowledge.

Nonetheless, in her story about her interaction with the pupil’s father, which she later repeated for the homeroom teacher, the counselor made the variable of ethnicity salient. She blamed the father for the meeting’s failure, on the grounds of an ethnicized characteristic—North African fathers’ violent approach to child rearing. She thus activated and reinforced the stereotype of the inadequacy of Arab culture vis-à-vis the values of French society. She admitted certainly a “badly managed conflict,” emphasizing through this expression the typical register (counseling, mediation) of her professional role. But, unable to explain the reasons (delegation of the “dirty work” by the mathematics professor) that she lacked the resources to behave well, she opted for the conventional and stereotyped explanation of the “violent” culture of North African families. This explanation also had another advantage, in that it let her hide from herself her own role in the reproduction of the stereotype.

Ethnography has a unique ability to capture situations in which action is maladjusted. But the ethnographer does not interpret this maladjustment as simply a trait of the actor. He does not look down on the actor to blame her lack of professionalism or ethics. Rather, he analyzes the way in which the action is shaped by a series of institutional constraints that weigh on the actor and on her capacity to determine a coherent, effective, and ethical way of acting (Payet et al. 2011). He highlights the paradoxical injunctions, the contradictory norms that deprive the actor of resources she needs to act (Payet et al. 2008).

Interpretation that comes from a process based on observation and on understanding of the *actors’ perspectives* is not about blaming. It does not use conventional categories that seem too general and simplistic. Thus racism is not a relevant category for describing and analyzing the process of ethnicization and racialization at work in the schools observed. Asked about their values, the school professionals emphasize their commitment to tolerance and rejection of racism. On the ground, they nevertheless invoke categorizations that devalue the culture of origin of a segment of their students. They adopt attitudes that are interpreted as a form of distancing and sometimes of disdain by pupils and their parents who suffer the objective consequences (precariousness) and subjective consequences (humiliation) of school failure and social exclusion. These attitudes lead pupils and their families to ethnicize their own behaviors (as in the case of the father whose actions match the stereotype of the Arab father who beats his children), according to a process of self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

The categories that interpretation proposes in the context of ethnographic research are the opposite of a moralizing perspective. They reflect the multiplicity of registers of action and instability of meanings produced by actors in the ordinary course of their activities (Payet et al. 2010). When it does not guarantee this understanding of the issues and constraints within which actors act, actors reject the interpretation. This is often a sign that the interpretation remains incomplete,

that the process of interpretation has stopped at too superficial a level, not penetrating to the reasons that make people act.

I will illustrate this point with an example in the context of another study, conducted in South Africa on the transformation of schooling since the end of apartheid. Our study took place in four schools, most of which were in the former black or mixed townships of Johannesburg, mainly in Soweto. Within an essentially ethnographic study, we administered a questionnaire to the pupils. Several questions addressed corporal punishment at school. The results showed that this practice still very much continued, despite its official abolition. They also showed that this practices persisted all the more where the school was disadvantaged and situated in environments that had not benefited from racial desegregation.

This finding was particularly troubling to the teachers of these schools, who thus were made to look incapable of adapting to change, incapable of transforming their pedagogical practices. It likewise posed problems of interpretation to us, for we had trouble understanding why it was precisely in black schools, between black teachers and black pupils, who embodied the struggle against apartheid and the winning of new rights, that the practice of corporal punishment persisted to such an extent.

We reported back the results during workshops with the pupils and during workshops with the teachers (the two conducted separately). I would like here to evoke the reporting back to the teachers at the most disadvantaged school of the study sample, which was also the only school in the sample that had seen no racial desegregation (all the teachers and pupils were black). Although the study had been conducted in a convivial way in this school, this moment of reporting back provoked latent aggressivity in the form of anger, disappointment, or uneasy silence towards us from the teachers. There was not a unified block opposing us; reactions were varied: some openly showed their lack of interest, others added to the stereotype of the “hitting” teaching, others justified the recourse to force in order to maintain order in class and constrain the pupils to work in a social environment that supported learning very little, and finally others called on us for practical solutions—solutions we did not have.

At that moment, the experience was uncomfortable and a disappointment. We had, whatever our intentions of being understanding, the feeling of being labeled and assigned to the status of white, Western researchers, strangers to the local situation who were taking a moralizing position. We appeared without realizing it as supporters of a self-righteous discourse, blaming bad practices in the name of a universal value, the “rights of the child.” Afterwards, the situation turned out to be rich in terms of understanding things beyond the theme of corporal punishment. Symbolic re-creation of a dominating/dominated, White/Black relationship in the situation of reporting back led us to expand on interpretation through the lens of the lasting effects of apartheid on individuals, especially on members of those groups that had suffered the most. The perverse overlap between violence and education was brought to light; it affected even progressive actors, who had suffered psychologically from a divided (and violent) educational system under apartheid (Payet and Franchi 2008, 2009). Faced with the challenge of adapting to democratic change, the cognitive frameworks inherited from apartheid constituted both obstacles and defensive resources (Franchi 2003).

This new interpretation was provoked in particular by a surprising, unexpected event: the “confession” of a school principal during the workshop described above. This embodiment of the antiapartheid struggle, this actor who was daily engaged in improving his school in the heart of Soweto, had opened his doors wide to us, hoping that our research would

contribute to the transformation of his teachers towards embrace of the democratic education advocated in the new postapartheid South Africa—especially of abandoning corporal punishment. Yet, this actor took the floor to describe his childhood, which had been at the same time academically brilliant and also rebellious against white authority, to say, “When the teacher hit me, that helped me to behave better. Without that, who knows what I would have become? Perhaps I would not be who I am today?”

The visible divisions among teachers during our reporting back (between groups of men who favored corporal punishment and groups of women or mainly women who were more open to changing practices) led us to take into account relationships of power and inequality other than racial inequality, such as inequality between the sexes. But, even more, these were internal divisions within each individual, linked to identity dynamics in a context of political and social transformation, which we were able to grasp thanks to ethnographic observation (and participation) and the process of interpretation.

Conclusion

Looking back at the studies I have conducted, I realize that the decisive moments that moved the research forward, in terms of understanding the actions and social relations being observed, have been the moments when the act of interpreting ran into difficulty. What I mean is that what makes for an original insight in a piece of research is to be thrown off balance, to experience a lack of fit between conventional interpretive models and some incident. Something happens that you have trouble understanding.

Ethnography places us within such moments, when conventional thinking is toppled. It has the power, because it gets us involved and up close, to provide the researcher with a “question mark” that spans the entire human experience—moral experience, emotional experience, sense of identity, and practical experience. These particular moments are rich in potential meaning; they call forth multiple interpretations. A single reading cannot exhaust their significance. It is possible to discover new layers of meaning, whether by continuing the study or by subjecting the material to other interpretive grids. To be honest, I must say that there are certain situations that I have far from finished interpreting. When rereading them, when presenting them to colleagues or to students, I realize that other interpretations are possible. The basic question to ask is why this action? Why did actors behave as they did? What were their own particular reasons? What were the constraints that weighed on them? What were the available resources? How did one actor’s definition of the situation interact with others’ definitions of the situation?

This concern with getting close to actors’ lived experiences, to offer an account of the complexity of action through direct observation, does not fit with a moral posture of blaming. An attitude of blaming dominated sociology of education for a long time in France, thanks to its double heritage from

(continued)

Durkheim and Bourdieu. Schooling was understood as the privileged counterpoint to individualist tendencies and the risk of social anomie (Durkheim 1968) and/or as the ideal framework for producing equality that is ruined through its implementation by the dominant classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). This normative vision led several generations of French researchers to obscure the organizational and individual dimensions of the academic world. The ethnographic approach permits us to once again see the “institution in the flesh,” to reinstate the lived world of schools, to recognize the multiplicity of interpretations produced by actors in interaction. In this sense, ethnography is particularly well placed to account for and analyze the dynamics that connect the global and the local, the macro and the micro, by linking actors’ moral and emotional struggles with the contexts in which they take place.

Its refusal to blame does not mean the ethnographic perspective is not critical. By observing the concrete conditions of schooling up close, by immersing us in the ordinary life of underprivileged schools, and by assessing the reality lived by different actors involved in these schools, ethnography demonstrates the gap, which is usually large, between educational reforms and their practical application, between the perspectives of political and institutional elites and those of administrators, teachers, pupils, and parents on the ground. But it does not stop at pointing out this disconnect between intentions and actual achievements, between policies and real life. Building on an understanding of the logics and perspectives of *ordinary actors* and of what they have at stake, ethnography captures the reasons why meaning as lived by “frontline” professionals cannot be understood by managers who are closer to political power. It reveals in the end the perverse mechanisms which, at different levels and in a variety of ways, weaken actors—especially the most vulnerable academic staff members, pupils, and parents—by making them bear the contradictions of the system and by making them responsible for their own failures.

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3.8 Doubly Reflexive Ethnography for Collaborative Research in Mexico

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Despite their success and importance in educational research, interpretive approaches still reflect the heritage of a western-biased hermeneutics, which often overemphasizes the role of the “hermeneutist” and of the interpreter, thus neglecting the self-reflexive role of the “object” of interpretation and her/his active participation in the act of interpretation itself. In this contribution, we aim at highlighting the necessary complementarity of hermeneutically inspired ethnographic research traditions, on the one hand, and collaborative, dialogic, and/or participatory approaches, on the other hand.

Accordingly, after a short conceptual introduction on the role played by diversity as a research topic, in the following we first develop the methodological reasons which lead us to combine and integrate interpretive ethnography and collaborative research. Then, we detail our own hybrid methodology through ethnographic example from an ongoing project we are carrying out in Mexico, before we finally sum up the role played by interpretation in a reflexive and dialogical ethnography.

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Diversity and Interculturality in the Anthropology of Education

As the key concepts in the contemporary anthropology of education (Levinson and Pollack 2011; Anderson-Levitt 2012) are, the recognition of cultural diversity, the development of culturally pertinent educational programs, and interculturality as a new form of initiating relations between diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic groups, these are the anthropological principles which shaped a new kind of university, the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI). The team of mainly anthropologists and educators that designed this program had the explicit general purpose of

favouring democratic coexistence in Veracruz society, as well as the processes of generating knowledge in the localities of the Intercultural Regions, through the training of professionals and intellectuals committed to the economic and cultural development of community, regional and national territories, whose activities contribute to promoting a process of revaluing and revitalising the native cultures and languages. These will be attained by privileging cultural diversity and the participation of communities under the principles of sustainability of the regions of interest, a sense of belonging in the communities to avoid out-migration and protection of the environment. (UVI 2007: n.p.)

These objectives and their underlying proposals have developed since the program was created in 2005. Originally, the UVI was principally promoted from an anthropological–academic field, when lecturers and researchers from a predominantly European school of “Intercultural Studies” (Gundara 2001; Aguado Odina 2003) generated new spaces for research and teaching within the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), the conventional university (Ávila Pardo and Mateos Cortés 2008). Strongly influenced by the contemporary anthropologies of ethnicity and of education, the team that promoted this pilot project opted for a mainstreaming, not minority-centered focus on interculturality (Dietz and Mateos Cortés 2011). A special emphasis was placed on the development of new “intercultural competences”, understood as the students’ future key competences for mediating and translating between different linguistic and cultural traditions—such as interpreters in the Mexican justice system, mediators between traditional healers and the public health system, translators between peasant maize cultivators and agronomical engineers, etc., thus equipping them for future interaction in an ever more diverse and complex society.

However, this western-trained team of promoters quickly established close and fruitful relationships with indigenous activists and intellectuals for whom interculturality must be understood as a strategy of ethnic empowerment in contexts of cultural and ethnic differences and as a key tool for reacting against racist discrimination, which evidently persists in the indigenous regions of Mexico and Veracruz. This encounter between urban academics and indigenous activists has deepened and transformed their exchange of knowledge and their intercultural discourses, as has their close collaboration with NGOs stemming from social and/or environmental movements which are rather strong inside these regions (Mateos Cortés 2009). The

protagonists of these NGOs emphasize the need to initiate more sustainable relationships with the environment. They promote a recovery of local, rural, and/or indigenous knowledge which is traditionally related to the management of natural as well as cultural resources which may support indigenous ecosystems facing the inequalities of global power structures. Under the political impact of the Zapatista movement and the claimed redefinition of the relationship between the neoliberal nation-state and the country's indigenous peoples (Dietz 2004), these three types of actors—the academics involved in the teaching program, the indigenous activists participating in the consultative bodies and the NGOs in which the students carry out their projects—start to mutually fertilize their intercultural discourses and their respective educational proposals, such as those specified in the UVI programs: teachers and students share community development experiences through their NGO participation, indigenous organizations learn from continuous education courses, and NGOs enter the university through “expert” teaching and student supervision activities.

Accordingly, more emphasis is placed on processes of negotiation, intermediation, and translation of heterogeneous kinds of knowledge between these diverse groups participating in the UVI—the mentioned academics, professionals, development agents, and “local experts”. Thus, three dimensions through which interculturality is conceived emerge from this encounter of different perspectives:

- An “intercultural” dimension, centered on complex expressions and links of cultural and educational practices such as intangible cultural heritage, community-rooted socialization and learning practices, as well as locally developed organizational cultures of community self-management and intercommunity relations, which respond to different cultural logics, such as the community culture of common Mesoamerican roots, threatened by many waves of colonization and globalization, but still in use in the indigenous regions; the organizational culture of the social movements that struggle to defend the regions’ cultural and/or biological diversity; and the western academic culture—presently in transition from a rigid, mono-logical, “industrial,” and “Fordist” paradigm of higher education to a more flexible, dialogic, “postindustrial,” or “post-Fordist” one, as will be illustrated in the flexible and modularized UV educational model.
- An “inter-actor” dimension that values and profits from the negotiations and mutual transference between diverse forms of knowledge between UV academics participating in the different orientations, providing anthropological, educational, sociological, linguistic, historical, and agrobiological knowledge, generated in the western epistemic canons; indigenous organization activists and NGOs present in the regions that contribute with professional, contextual, and strategic knowledge; and local experts and knowledgeable sabios who provide collective memoirs and local and contextual knowledge on cultural and biological diversity of the immediate environment.
- An “interlingual” dimension that—reflecting the great ethnolinguistic diversity that characterizes the indigenous regions of Veracruz—overcomes the conventional bilingual focus of classic indigenismo, the traditional integration program for indigenous peoples, and profits from nonessentialized but relational

and contextual interlingual competences that make the translation between such diverse linguistic and cultural horizons possible; this interlingual focus does not aim to provide the complete set of UVI educational programs in various languages but centers on the development of key communicative and translation skills provided by the student and teacher bodies in each of the regions.

Relating these different dimensions of interculturality and their different academic-anthropological as well as ethno-regional and activist sources, the UVI presently pursues both “empowerment” objectives of the (future) indigenous professionals, on the one hand, and crosscutting key competences required for professional and organizational performance, on the other hand.

Reasons for Choosing a Collaborative Approach: The Implications of Reflexivity

Interpretive anthropology has since the 1970s tried to describe and interpret what the discipline considered made sense for the “natives” of a certain context or bearers of a “culture.” To put it in a very schematic way, the interpretivists thought a “dialogue” took place between the natives, the anthropologists, and the readers, and from this dialogue emerged the “transcultural” understanding. But who is the main character of this dialogue? From which point of view and who directs, organizes, and arranges this dialogue? What kind of role have researchers and the traditionally called “informants” played in this research process?

A turning point took place in all social sciences during the 1980s, which can be summarized in two “times.” This clearly marks a transformation in the anthropological “rhythms” (or tendencies) incorporating: (i) the processes of subjectification of the researchers involved (self-referential reflexivity) and (ii) the subjectification processes of the subjects taking part in the research. In this chapter, we would like to focus on this double reflexivity and collaborative ethnography inserted in this last context. Generally, when we talk about reflexivity, it is in association with the process through which the researcher thinks herself or himself in the research process. Her/his thoughts are incorporated in the ethnography. There is a risk of entering a vicious circle (Callejo 1999) since the self-referential reflexivity’s main focus of attention is based on the “researchers” and the view of the “participants” remain silenced and frequently ignored in the dynamic of self-referentiality (Álvarez Veinguer 2011).

In the second “time,” we conceive reflexivity as a process that has to cross transversally the whole research, from the relations established with the people being researched, the own presences/absences of the researcher, the techniques and tools to be used, and the context. This is the context where the doubly reflexive ethnography and collaborative ethnography would be inscribed.

First we will try to explain what we mean and understand when we talk about ethnography. Our first premise is that ethnographic research tries, above everything

else, to tell us something about situations (Velasco and Díaz de Rada 2006, p. 222) which have to be placed and embodied. What does that mean? People who take part in a research process have a life, experiences, and a certain way and a certain “anchorage” to be where they live; they are tied to their experiences, conditioned by gender, class, and ethnic group, among many other elements which establish how we experience, understand, and live the places in a specific way. We have to be able to make these anchorages visible and recognize them from the standpoint from which the people speak, see, interpret, and make sense of the world. This exercise, which traditionally is so opposed to the positivistic point of view (since it is considered to be subjective and not very neutral), is the necessary starting point to place the subjects incorporating their joys, fears, certainties, and worries.¹ Ethnography builds an account interpretation based on accounts or stories of situations lived by the people who carry out research, as much as by situations lived by all the people involved in the research, and by common and shared experiences which necessarily emerge when different universes intertwine and mingle. Ethnography is “a description and interpretation of situated practices” (Díaz de Rada 2010, p. 44). Thus, we understand that ethnography should be thought as a co-interpretation which allows making and building sense on what happens in diverse situations and relational contexts. These should not be understood solely in spatial terms, but related with the multiple actors which are implied and embodied. From this point of view, every ethnographic research process has always, to a greater or lesser degree, a certain collaboration display (Lassiter 2005, p. 16). It is true that every ethnographic practice includes a certain level of collaboration. More so, as Reddy stresses, we are “interminably caught in collaboration” (Reddy 2008, p. 76). However, it is necessary not only to assume the presence and the collaborative nature from a generic point of view. For example, Lassiter (2005), Rappaport (2008), and Campbell and Lassiter (2010) claim to systematize the whole process of collaboration during the fieldwork and writing up. Co-research, co-theorizing, and cowriting are central dimensions vindicated by the authors who argue for the use of collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2005; Rappaport 2008).

There is no and should be no single model to be copied from different research contexts. Each process will have to be readapted and look for its own strategies depending on the time and place, understanding that the central dimension of collaborative ethnography lies in its collective and relational trait. We do not in any case pretend to introduce collaborative ethnography as a meta-narrative of how to do good ethnography, but to think it as an experiment and as an attempt to avoid certain tendencies historically accepted.

How can we collectively think? Or to put it in other words, how do we collectively build or make sense? How can we derive the full potential/benefit that can result from coming together in collaborative ethnography? How can we

¹ To overcome the epistemological Cartesian heritage implies not to stop asking ourselves at all stages of our research: who is speaking, from which body is she/he speaking, and from which epistemic space is she/he speaking (Mignolo 2000).

produce collective voices if we do not reflect on the dynamics and power relations that are intertwined in traditional research?

In collaborative ethnography, we understand the gathering as a setting where the traditional roles (researcher/research subject) can blur; and a clear demarcation, e.g., between the researcher and the research subject, steps on a different level since co-interpretation processes get activated and everyone involved actively interprets and builds and makes sense of what is happening in the group. There is no doubt and we are not denying the power relations that emerge and cross every relation and interaction. But we would like to notice and underline that it would of course be an irresponsible exercise to say that collaborative ethnography has an egalitarian character, with no power relations where all parts are equal. Although the analysis of power relations exceed the goals of this chapter, we would like to emphasize that we do not deny the existence of power relations, conflict dynamics, and tensions that arise and are generated in any relation. What is relevant is to name them to make them visible and not keep them invisible as it traditionally has happened and put them in the center of our views. To be able to reinterpret its meaning, it is crucial to place them in the center in order to learn how to manage it without falling in a demagogical exercise of apparent and declared equality relations which activate through perverse logics of consensus.

InterSaberes, a Research Report

Inspired by these principles of collaborative–interpretative research, we are currently carrying out a dialogical–ethnographic case study inside a recently created, so-called intercultural institution, the *Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural* (UVI) in Mexico. Our project aims at analyzing how participation in such a program by autochthonous, indigenous people and nonindigenous, so-called *mestizo* people and the teaching by anthropologists and other social scientists shape the still recent move towards the social, political, and even legal recognition of diversity within public universities. Through academic programs that principally target indigenous and nonindigenous students living in marginalized, rural communities, the UVI is trying to diversify supposedly universalist academic “knowledge.” The aim is to relate academic knowledge to local, subaltern, “ethnoscience,” and alternative knowledge—on production systems, the environment, health care, etc., all of which mutually hybridize each other and thus create new, diversified, “entangled,” and “globalized” canons of knowledge (Mignolo 2000; Escobar 2004).

As will be illustrated below, this emerging *diálogo de saberes* or “dialogue among different kinds of knowledge” (Mato 2000; Santos 2006), which involves “intercultural,” “interlingual” and “inter-actor” dimensions, also forces academic anthropology to redefine its basic theoretical concepts as much as its methodological practices that are still all too monologically and monolingually oriented. We will now briefly describe the actors with whom we are collaborating, before describing the methodology of a “doubly reflexive ethnography” which we are developing and applying in our project.

The UVI, Counterpart of Collaboration

In order to generate education systems that are more pertinent to the cultural realities and needs of the target population in rural, marginalized indigenous communities, the present decentralization efforts of higher education institutions have been accompanied by programs to diversify curricular content and teaching/learning methods. In this way, in 2005 the *Universidad Veracruzana* (UV), an autonomous, public higher education institution based in Xalapa, the state capital of Veracruz located at the Mexican Gulf coast, decided to open its own “intercultural programme.” This program focuses preferentially on the claims to higher education in and for indigenous regions of the state. As one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse states of Mexico, Veracruz is shaped by diverse ethnic and linguistic groups (cf. below) that are mostly of indigenous origin and are nowadays inhabiting the most economically marginalized and infrastructurally isolated regions of the country (UVI 2005).

In order to attend to these populations and in sharp contrast to other “intercultural universities” promoted by the Mexican federal government (Schmelkes 2009), UVI program was not created as a completely “new university.” Instead, the UVI emerged from within an established public university. An academic interest in developing culturally pertinent educational programs was combined with the demands of indigenous organizations and movements for broader and better adapted higher education options in indigenous regions and communities. In the most important indigenous regions of Veracruz, local leaders, teacher associations, and NGOs had been claiming the need for a regionally rooted higher education which would allow the local youth to continue their educational cycle but which would not force them to leave the region after obtaining their degrees towards the urban labor markets.

An agreement was established in November 2004 between the UV and the General Coordination for Intercultural and Bilingual Education (CGEIB) of the federal government’s Ministry of Education (SEP) to start such a regionally focused intercultural program from within the university. Since then, the resources for this venture have been provided principally by the general budgets of the Veracruz state government, through federal government funding from CGEIB and from the UV’s own budget. In August 2005, this “intercultural program” started by offering two B.A. degrees in four regional centers: one in “Sustainable Regional Development” and the other in “Intercultural Management and Education.”

The first two generations of UVI students entered the university through one of these two-degree programs. However, local and regional demands exceeded the topics of these two programs, as they did not include any special emphasis on legal, health, or linguistic and translation issues. Accordingly, both the community’s demands for a greater range of academic courses and the impossibility of generating “conventional” degree courses in indigenous regions led the UVI staff, composed mainly of anthropologists, educators, agronomists, and linguists, to redesign the

studies on offer. They opted for just one degree course with a multimodal structure and diverse orientations (cf. below). Hence, since August 2007, the students who had already started their degree courses were integrated into the new B.A. degree in “Intercultural Management for Development,” which is able to offer a wider range of educational options without reducing the number of regional campus locations where this B.A. is taught.

The Participation of Regional Actors

Even though Veracruz University already had a decentralized system of five campuses distributed throughout the state, these academic centers were concentrated in urban areas, where conventional degree courses based on western university models were taught. From the very beginning, the new program decided to establish centers in less privileged and in the most marginalized areas of the state. As a colonial and postcolonial legacy, indigenous peoples in Mexico inhabit so-called regions of refuge (Aguirre Beltrán 1991), often isolated or marginal mountain areas, whereas other more accessible regions have been forced since independence in the nineteenth century by the new nation state to become monolingual in Spanish and ethnically *mestizo*, nonindigenous. As a result, both in Veracruz and in the rest of Mexico, the most marginalized areas are the regions where a mostly indigenous population lives (Lomnitz Adler 1995).

After carrying out a regional analysis that applied a combination of ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic criteria, along with marginalization and social and human development factors (UVI 2005), four regions were chosen. Within these indigenous communities, the new centers of the UVI were established: the Huasteca intercultural region based in Ixhuatlán de Madero, the Totonacapan intercultural region based in Espinal, the Grandes Montañas intercultural region based in Tequila, and the Selvas intercultural region based in Huazutlán. In each of the four regional centers, the UVI hired a regional coordinator, an academic support facilitator, five full-time lecturers, and several part-time lecturers.

The central office in Xalapa administers the programs of study and offers continuous training courses for both UVI staff and the wider university community (cf. below). Apart from rather conventional academic decision-making structures, at least at the beginning of its activities, the UVI has maintained a close relationship to the communities’ local mayors, civil, agrarian, and/or religious authorities as well as to representatives of NGOs and civil associations which are active in the respective region. In order to ensure and to control the local relevance of the academic activities, these actors jointly consulted the UVI with regard to its teaching activities and research projects carried out by students and academic staff together with local communities in the regions. Nevertheless, in the course of our project, we learned that the consultation process decreased in the course of time; after an intense collaboration at the beginning, academic and not community-oriented criteria prevailed in UVI decision making. As a member of a regional

consultative body criticized, “they only asked us in the first two years, but once they got the land from us to build the university, they never invited us again!”

Academic decision making still is strictly centralized in Xalapa, which implies that a real devolution has not taken place until now, mostly due to the university’s insistence in holding control of curricular as well as staff hiring processes. Our interest in collaboratively changing these monological structures is the core impetus of our current research (cf. below).

The UVI Curriculum and Its Development

As previously mentioned, the B.A. degree in “Intercultural Management for Development” is presently offered in the four regional centers. It comprises an official and formally recognized degree program in eight semesters that responds to an inter- or transdisciplinary, multimodal, flexible curriculum. The program requires student autonomy and that has been adopted inside the UV as a whole. Students choose “educational experiences” instead of classical subject courses; these “experiences” are more flexibly conceived of as parts of a network of either methodological or content-driven topic domains, which are grouped by area (basic instruction, disciplinary, terminal, and free choice courses) and per module (conventional face-to-face classes, virtual or e-learning classes, and/or a combination of both types of teaching styles). Face-to-face classes with the local teaching staff make up the vast majority of teaching lessons at the beginning of the B.A. program, but these “traditional” classes are then gradually complemented by more specific courses, which are either taught by “itinerant” teaching staff from other UVI regions or are offered through virtual teaching and other e-learning modes. Similarly, face-to-face tutoring by the local staff is accompanied by distance learning tutors, who “circulate” among the four regions for specific thesis supervision processes.

By combining them thematically according to key professional development areas for the regions, the “educational experiences” generate a range of educational itineraries called “orientations.” These are not disciplinarily specialized curricula, but are interdisciplinary fields of knowledge which are needed for a professional future as “intercultural managers,” knowledge brokers, and intercultural translators. Starting from a shared study program, the individual student chooses her or his own itinerary leading her/him to a particular field of knowledge in which these mediating and translating skills are then applied.

Since 2007, after carrying out regional diagnostic surveys together with teaching staff and students, the following *orientations* have been identified as core curriculum areas offered in the four UVI regional centers:

- Communication: according to its program of studies, this orientation “prepares professionals in the field of cultural promotion, based on the diversified use of media and communication and a critical view of their role in the construction of

identities within a framework of globalization. (...) The training focuses on participative methodologies that enable a contextualized appropriation of tangible and intangible heritage” (UVI 2007: n.p.).

- Rights: this orientation “strives to prepare human resources to improve the areas of justice and legal issues in order to promote effective access of vulnerable sectors of society to the legal system, as well as to secure human rights as a guarantee for broader legal security” (UVI 2007: n.p.).
- Languages: this orientation “fosters an academic re-valuing, management and mediation of inter-lingual communication processes within an intercultural focus” (UVI 2007: n.p.).
- Health: this orientation “seeks to improve the health situation in the indigenous regions of Veracruz, through the training of professionals who can act as intermediaries between traditional medicine and state-run health services for communities” (UVI 2007: n.p.).
- Sustainability: finally, this orientation “establishes spaces for the intercultural construction of knowledge for training professionals capable of contributing to the improvement of the quality of life in the regions and the construction of options for sustainable development, thanks to the generation of knowledge, skills and attitudes targeting the re-appraisal, development and promotion of ancestral knowledge associated with dialogical society-nature relations” (UVI 2007: n.p.).

Independently of the orientation the students choose, this B.A. program is shaped by an early and continuous immersion of students and lecturers in activities carried out inside the host community. The program is based on a crosscutting methodological axis, so that courses and modules include methodologies of community and regional diagnosis, ethnographic tools, participatory project management, and evaluation. From the first semester onwards, students begin to carry out their own research and knowledge transfer activities inside their home communities.

Towards a Reflexive Ethnography of the UVI Dialogue of Knowledges

Our ethnographic accompaniment of these novel teaching and training processes has allowed the identification of spaces and areas of knowledge that are actively participating in an often claimed “dialogues of knowledges” (Leff 2003). In detail, the following domains of knowledge exchanges are being studied:

1. On the Huasteca campus, and in close collaboration with the UVI Rights Department, we are analyzing dialogues between the UVI and local and regional actors in the field of legal pluralism, analyzing how students and teachers of the UVI relate the customary law of *usos y costumbres* of the communities of

Puyecaco (Nahua), San Pedro Tziltzacuapan (Tepehua), and El Zapote (Otomí) with local authorities and official judges. Students and alumni have been particularly successful as brokers in two directions. On the one hand, they have offered several courses and seminars on human rights issues for local authorities and *jueces de paz*, customarily elected community judges, who through these courses realize the complementary nature of external human rights legislation and their own legal practice. As a local judge and bilingual teacher explained at the end of one of these workshops:

We have noticed that we have rights, our own rights and the rights of the city dwellers. For them, we are third class citizens, first there are the citizens of Xalapa [state capital], the second class citizens are those from Ixhuatlán [the municipality], and finally we are third class citizens, the Tepehua peasants in our community. But now we also know our rights as Mexican citizens and as indigenous communities.

On the other hand, the same students and alumni have been revitalizing and regaining traditional community authorities such as the *huehuetlacatl*, the local Nahua healer–counselor, whose range of conflict management capacities had been limited by external, nonindigenous health or political authorities. Recently, several communities have recreated these functions as an attempt to reconquer local autonomy from external, regional institutions.

2. In the Totonacapan campus, together with the UVI Health Department, we are focusing on medical and curative knowledges, as practiced in Totonakú as well as mestizo communities of Filomeno Mata, Macedonio Alonso y Morgadal; how it is articulated in the activities of UVI intercultural health teaching; and what mediating role it plays in front of the state public health system. The local Totonacapan hospital has been hesitantly opening up its institutional practice to include not only Totonakú language interpreters when counseling indigenous patients but has also asked UVI teachers, students, and alumni to offer courses on traditional medicine for physicians and nurses. Despite these first attempts of “opening up” the health institution, the western-trained hospital staff still does not fully recognize community health and midwifery specialists as counterparts in their daily health-care activities. A former UVI student who is now collaborating at the hospital as an interpreter and community midwife jokes about the staff’s ambiguous strategy towards her:

After a lot of paperwork from our *InterSaberes* project, the hospital director finally allowed me to work inside the hospital and to assist in the revision of pregnant women as well as in births. But every once in a while, when the supervisor visits our hospital, I have to hide. They ask me either to stay away from the hospital for that day or to dress in white, as if I were a doctor – that is really funny, isn’t it?

Therefore, the participating UVI researcher and his students focus their broker activities on both spheres: internally, contributing by awareness raising measures to preserve and recover traditional health knowledge inside the community, and externally, insisting on the need to recognize the importance of traditional local specialists for the health provision of the Totonakú and mestizo localities.

3. On the Grandes Montañas campus, working in collaboration with the UVI Communications Department, our ethnography centers on the dialogue that the UVI students, teachers, and graduates maintain with community actors, such as a migrant returnee organization in the Tehuipango Nahua community, in relation to cultural heritage projects and community empowerment activities. Cultural promotion activities carried out together with UVI students and alumni emphasize the often conflictive relations between school institutions, community authorities, parents' associations, and migrant and returnee networks. While migrant remittances are mostly used for single household economic diversification strategies, supra-household, community-based inversion and capitalization strategies are nearly absent. Therefore, local villagers and community authorities asked the UVI research team to look into possibilities of linking and creating synergies between family- and community-driven economic and cultural promotion strategies, such as the construction of a community center or the reform and adaption of the local school facilities.
4. Finally, in the Selvas campus, the analysis is based on our collaborative work with the UVI Sustainability Department and is therefore focused on the environmental and agroecological knowledge exchange which this department is carrying out together with producer organizations, regional sustainable development advisory councils (COMUDERS), and environmental management units in the Nahua communities of Huazuntlán, Pajapan, and Tatahuicapan as well as in the Popoluca community of Soteapan. Inside these externally promoted environmental management units, which have been created by a biodiversity protection scheme, students, alumni, and a UVI researcher are identifying *emic* fauna and flora taxonomies and their related local usages, in order to translate them into the official language of environmental service delivery. Thus, local producers can prove their contribution to preservation and sustainable exploitation of endangered species of birds, reptiles, fruits, and corn variants. As a local UVI teacher and project participant explains,

There is a huge knowledge on the environment, on deer, on birds, on crocodiles, on fish. . . inside the communities. Parents show their kids, grandparents teach their grandchildren daily about how to exploit without destroying these resources. So these peasants, fishermen, hunters, artisans are contributing to the conservation of our environment, but nobody recognizes them, bureaucrats from the city come to tell them what is forbidden and what is allowed. Now, with the newly created councils, the COMUDERS, it is a first step for participating, but external agents still dominate decision-making on local resources. So we support the local networks of producers, we try to make visible their contribution to what the development agencies call 'environmental services'.

These four spaces have been chosen because they are intersecting, in the sense that they do not subsume ethnocultural and ethnoscientific knowledge beneath the traditional monologicality of the western university. Instead, local identity processes as indigenous villagers, as traditional maize peasants, and as ritual "protectors" of the local environment are integrated into preservation, development, and cultural revival strategies, as reflected in the B.A. curriculum. We are studying these knowledge dialogues and exchanges with a hybrid, exploratory,

qualitative methodology that combines institutional ethnography, designed for empirical research within institutions, especially educational (Gobbo 2002, 2003; Velasco and Díaz de Rada 2006), with reflexive ethnography developed for the participative and dialogical study of social movements (Dietz 2009; Álvarez Veinguer 2011), and collaborative and coauthored research between academic actors and local communities (Leyva et al. 2008).

The dialogical strategy applied here is developed together with UVI researchers, students, and alumni who work inside these projects and exchange continuously academic and community-based knowledge. Cyclically shifting between phases of “listening” to our local actors through ethnographic, narrative interviewing; phases of accompanying them through participant observation and collaboration in their specific legal, health, environmental, and/or community development projects; and phases of counseling and jointly analyzing these verbal and visual, interview, and observation data through common workshops where we co-interpret the different experiences, the lessons learnt from each of the projects and the contradictions arising from the clash between expectations and outcomes, between local claims and structural constraints, between first fruitful regional dialogues of knowledge and persisting hierarchies of institutional monologues. As a workshop participant summarized her lessons learnt,

Through this meeting, through this session, I have recognized not only my community’s legal problems with the municipality and with the state government. I have also learnt from my neighbour communities, from their problems, they are very similar to ours. We used to fight among each other, for land, for access to the market, for different conflicts, different reasons. But here I see how important it is to keep on meeting, talking, exchanging. And also learning, for example about the rights we have and how do defend our *costumbre* [customary law], our *deacuerdos* [binding agreements], because they are not contrary to national law, as these lawyers from the city always make us believe. . . .

This cyclical strategy conceives ethnography and its systematic oscillation between an emic and an etic—internal, actor-centered vs. external, structure-centered—vision of diversity, as a reflexive task which, when functioning from the inside, recovers participant actors’ discourses while at the same time, functioning on the outside, contrasting the corresponding habitualized intragroup praxis with intergroup interactions. Taking into account the hierarchical and asymmetrical institutional context, which is implicit in any academic program related to the indigenous context, these two analytical horizons, which interrelate discourse and practice, actor and inter-actor perspectives, are extended towards a third analytical axis: the underlying institutional structurations which characterize the university itself as well as the participating government institutions and the nongovernmental organizations. In this way, a tri-dimensional ethnography emerges that combines the following axes of analysis:

- (a) A semantic dimension, focused on intra- and nonacademic actors who belong to different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and generations, whose discourses and knowledges are collected by ethnographic interviews, from an *emic*, intracultural, and intra-discursive perspective, and are interpreted using critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 1995).

- (b) A pragmatic dimension, focused on modes of interaction (Soenen et al. 1999) of different academic, organizational, and community actors, whose exchanges of knowledge are studied principally through participant observations, focal groups, and network analysis (Trezzini 1998; Mateos Cortés 2009, 2010), by using an *etic* perspective, which is analyzed in terms of their intercultural and interlingual competencies (Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz 2006; Dietz 2009).
- (c) A syntactic dimension, focused on institutions such as the UVI, the participating NGOs, and the community actors, within which are articulated knowledges as well as practices, as part of their inter-exchange and comanagement. They are analyzed in an inter-discursive manner, as mutually intersecting *histoires croisées* (Werner and Zimmermann 2003). Starting with these “epistemological windows” (Werner and Schoepfle 1987) made available through fieldwork, i.e., the contradictions and divergences that arise from contrasting emic and etic perspectives, these contradictions are made explicit, exchanged and debated in so-called intercultural workshops (Dietz 2009), which are being realized for each of the four knowledge areas mentioned above.

Throughout these workshops, the narrated discourses of the participating actors are analyzed and contrasted with the observed actors’ praxis. The contradictions and/or divergences which arise from these discourse–praxis comparisons are not interpreted superficially as “failed” coherence between what is said and what is done, but are interpreted together with the actors themselves as more complex results of a clash between what is claimed, what is actually done, and what is institutionally allowed to be done.

For example, in one workshop session in the Selvas region, we discussed the need to revise and redefine the students’ B.A. thesis and degree procedure. Students, teachers, and some participating local villagers criticized particularly two constraints in the degree process: the majority of B.A. theses were not delivered in an indigenous language but in Spanish, and local *sabios* and specialists who had collaborated in the thesis were not invited as members of the degree examination board. Both claims were collectively recognized as legitimate but were analyzed as well with regard to the structural constraints they made visible: on the one hand, the university still resists recognizing local expert knowledge unless it is officially expressed through an academic degree. Accordingly, in the curricular revisions our project channels to the UVI directives, we propose to expand the B.A. degree process by including both an “academic validation” (through members of the UV and UVI academic community) and a “community validation” (through expert members of the studied communities); however, the university authorities until now have rejected this proposal. On the other hand, our joint interpretation on the use of the indigenous languages for thesis writing purposes conducted us to a profound analysis of the need not only for regaining and revitalizing these languages in daily life but also for expanding their use and usability towards academic purposes, for decolonizing them from their colonially imposed *macehual* or peasant nature. Several students explained that there are conceptual notions they learnt in

Table 1 Dimensions of a comparative ethnographic methodology (Dietz 2009; Álvarez Veinguer 2011)

Semantic dimension	Pragmatic dimension	Syntactic dimension
Actor-centered	Interaction-centered	Institution-centered
Religious identity and/or ethnicity	Religious praxis, culture (intraculture/interculture)	Institutional entities (territorialized)
= Discourse	= Practice	= Societal structure
Ethnographic interviews	Participant observations	Intercultural workshops
= <i>Emic</i>	= <i>Etic</i>	= <i>Emic/etic</i> (“epistemological windows”)

Spanish which they right now cannot express in Nahuatl or Popoluca, as they lack the respective words. The workshop ended with a very innovative and creative exchange of ideas on language “actualization” and “normalization” as well as of notions of what is expressible and what is translatable and what is not.

The resulting methodological model is graphically summed up in Table 1. Connecting the different intercultural, interlingual, and inter-actor dimensions within this tridimensional methodology, the *emic* and *etic* visions of the principal educational actors are contrasted through the use of the mentioned intercultural workshops. In this way, we pursue classical objectives of empowerment of (future) indigenous professionals as well as objectives linked to the mainstreaming of the key competences required for their professional and organizational performances. Accordingly, our main participants and coresearchers are students and teachers–researchers working inside UVI and recently also alumni already working as intercultural managers outside UVI. In the following, we briefly characterize the brokerage activities of the UVI students and teaching staff.

Emerging UVI Actors as Hybrid Subjects

Taken together, the five generations of UVI students which have been involved in the B.A. program in the five different orientations and in the four regional study centers total approximately 600, of whom more than half are women. Of this student body, two thirds are native speakers of an indigenous language and one third only speak Spanish. The main indigenous languages spoken by students are Náhuatl, Tutunaku (Totonaco), Nún̄tah+’yi (Popoluca), Diidzaj (Zapoteco), Ñahñü (Otomí), Teenek (Huasteco), Hamasipijni (Tepehua), and Tsa jujmí (Chinanteco). Classes are normally taught in Spanish, but certain kinds of teaching and project activities are also carried out in the main indigenous language in the region: in Náhuatl (in the Huasteca, Grandes Montañas, and Selvas centers), in Totonakú (in the Totonacapan center), in Popoluca (in the Selvas center), and in Otomí (in the Huasteca center).

The indigenous regions of Veracruz are still marked by a striking lack of educational options at high school level so that students have often been obliged to pursue precarious modes of distant education such as *telesecundarias* and *telebachilleratos*, which are postprimary schools which lack the complete range of teachers and which are therefore run through satellite TV educational programs. For this reason, the standard process of choosing students through multiple-choice entrance exams is not applied in the UVI regional centers. Instead, students must run through a qualitative selection interview and present a personal letter of their motives for pursuing studies at the UVI as well as a letter of recommendation by a traditional, civil, or religious authority of their local community. Given the recent nature of this new kind of university, the first two generations of UVI Intercultural Managers for Development just graduated and are starting to work, mostly as project managers, mediators, translators, liaison officers, and/or technical assistants in governmental or nongovernmental projects. Others work through self-employment in local and regional development initiatives or consultancies.

To achieve a smooth transit from UVI studies to employment, the majority of students have started rather early to carry out intermediary and advisory activities and to design projects while still studying. Almost all of the UVI students are from indigenous regions and would not otherwise have been able to access higher education in urban centers. However, recently an increase in student mobility between regions is perceivable due to the fact that more students who are from other regions, including urban centers, have decided to apply to study at the UVI.

As mentioned above, the B.A. in Intercultural Management for Development is taught through a mixed format that combines conventional face-to-face classes in small groups with newer kinds of workshop-based classes and intensive community outreach work, which students carry out under the supervision of a lecturer-tutor and in close collaboration with communal authorities, NGOs, and civil associations present in the regions. For this reason, the UVI has signed a series of agreements with local actors and regional networks, who get involved as counterparts in the extracurricular teaching and learning process. Through such early work experiences, the students have to compare, contrast, and translate diverse types of knowledge: formal and informal, academic and community-based, professional and experiential, generated in both rural and urban contexts by both indigenous and nonindigenous actors.

This continuous exchange of knowledge and methodologies, of academic versus community-rooted kinds of knowledge, is generating new rather hybrid subjects which are able to oscillate not only between different kinds of knowledge but also between rather diverse ways of putting knowledge into daily practice inside and outside their communities of origin. Our project has shown that these emerging hybrid capacities not only of translating between knowledges but of creating new cultural and identity strategies go far beyond the expected focus of official interculturalism: students and alumni do not only shift between academic and community knowledge and between nonindigenous, mestizo, and indigenous cultural domains but creatively incorporate cultural innovations which transcends ethnic divisions and which stem from gender diversity; from generational, subcultural developments as well as from locally unconventional sexual identity.

For example, in several UVI sites gay and lesbian students dare to express their sexual identity openly at least inside the university, whereas outside of it they still cannot live accordingly. On the other hand, both students and former students are actively creating self-help and support networks of local peasant women who are trying to get economic independence from their often absent husbands and to obtain legal counseling with regard to their rights as women and as citizens. Gender relations are rapidly changing with the establishment of higher education inside the local communities: particularly young women but increasingly also young men are starting to experiment with new, more diversified, but also more ambiguous gender roles than the traditional ones.

Accordingly, the diversity profiles the intercultural university is dealing with are no longer reduced to ethnic identities which are often officially conceived as binary and juxtaposed ones: students often organize their project work along lines of religious adscription (Catholic, Adventist, Pentecostal, etc.) or their belonging to subcultural youth styles (*darketos*, *emos*, etc.), but particularly new gender roles (female students taking over traditionally male professional tasks and vice versa) and sexual identity (the coming out of gay and lesbian students on campus) are prominently emerging inside academic activities and teaching and learning topics.

This diversification also affects the teaching staff. The UVI lecturers and researchers cover a wide range of humanities, social sciences, and engineering disciplines and include many young, recently graduated teachers who are just starting postgraduate or PhD studies. These lecturers and tutors are not employed with regard to their ethnic origin, but following criteria of professional experience and considering above all their intimate knowledge of and their rootedness inside the region in which their UVI center is located. Accordingly, most UVI lecturers and tutors come from the region in which they work and thus provide their students not only with academic but also with local and regional knowledge. Other nonacademic professionals and/or local experts also participate in the teaching of certain modules or of specific courses which are directly related to their own professional practices. In total, the UVI has a teaching body of approximately 60, including full-time and part-time staff, as well as those in charge of designing and coordinating the B.A. orientations from the central office in Xalapa.

A substantial change that is currently under way within the UVI is associated with the relationship between teaching, research, and community outreach services. Until recently, research and project implementation activities were mainly carried out by students, while lecturers concentrated on teaching and on tutoring projects carried out by their respective students. A university-wide process of “departmentalization” started inside the UV in recent years in an effort to bridge the traditional gap between university teaching, organized in “faculties,” and research, channeled through “research institutes.” By creating the new figure of “departments,” the UVI is in the process of transforming its “orientations,” offered as part of the B.A. program in Intercultural Management for Development, into the future departments of “communication,” “sustainability,” “languages,” “law,” and “health.” Each department is made up of the lecturers in charge of their respective orientation in each of the four regional centers and in the central office in Xalapa,

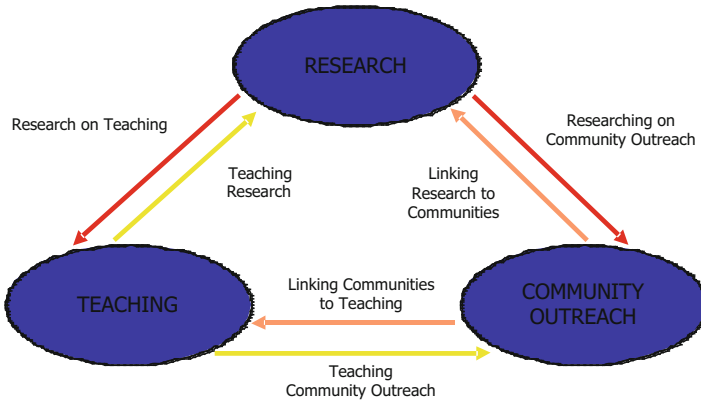


Fig. 1 The UVI loop of research, teaching, and outreach (Dietz and Mateos Cortés 2007)

thus forming small units that combine tasks of teaching, research, and community outreach. Hence, the lecturers' outreach research activities are closely linked to community demands and to ongoing student projects. The result is a mutually enforcing and complementary "loop" of circular teaching, research, and community outreach activities, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

Collaboration, Interpretation, and Double Reflexivity

We will finally describe how our above developed methodology is contributing, firstly, to collaborative research in general and, secondly, to the methodological complementarity of hermeneutically inspired interpretive approaches and action research originated collaborative approaches.

Collectiveness should not be understood as a dynamics to reach an instrumental consensus where the product is the result of a forced agreement due to the own need to synthesize and arrange opposing positions. We have to continue searching and thinking about how, from the different existing experiences and the collective processes, the multiple decisions are made and agreed as well as about the kind of strategies with which the group manages conflicts and settings of disagreements that arise. There are no recipe books for this kind of practice without the specificity of each context and place, as there are none for any ethnographic practice. Each group, each type of relations, conditioned by their own vital experiences of the people who are part of the group will mark and define the possible strategies. What is important is to be able to narrate and share the process in order to understand what has happened, how the situation has been reached, which ways are available to exit these settings, and which options and paths have been built in each process. We need to name and make vulnerabilities, fears, and tensions visible as well as recognize the group dynamics which are placed in specific places and

times, inscribed in privileges and intertwined in power relations. We have to insist, we shall present not only the product but also the process (the path) which has allowed us to reach the place from which we are stating the experience. This will allow us to understand, follow, and share the multiple coordinates with other experiences which are being articulated and brewed.

This is the reason for not declaring collaborative ethnography as a new identity seal that has to be incorporated or as a new paradigm or an avant-garde methodological proposal which promotes the assembly of a solely conceptual innovation. Nothing is further away from our intention. Since the 1980s and especially from the feminist and postcolonial approaches, the vindications about the need to overcome multiple dichotomies and hierarchies which are part of the ways in which we built knowledge is argued for. The positivist legacy, based on a Cartesian epistemology, has consolidated settings of multiple dualisms which have played a central role in the way research is carried out, the methodologies employed, and the knowledge production of the past centuries. Subject–object, objectivity–subjectivity, science–ideology, truth–spirituality, theory–practice, rational–emotional, tradition–modernity, civilization–wildness, etc—all of these are hierarchical couples which have marked and conditioned the ways of understanding, interpreting, and thus building and making sense of the world. As far as interpretation is concerned, research action has been for decades proposing and building active methodologies which try to surf these unidirectional settings. To mention only a few proposals, Lawless, for example, wrote already a long time ago about “reciprocal ethnography” (Lassiter 2005, p. 9), and Dietz works with the “doubly reflexive ethnography,” both possible conceptual scaffoldings.

The notion of “collaboration” does not easily escape the polyphonic character, and depending where we look, we can find different uses for the term. Some authors understand collaboration as a collective writing between different researchers (Kennedy 1995). For some we are talking about a process through which data is “collected” jointly (Moreno-Black and Homchampa 2008, p. 92); for others it refers to a collective writing (Wyatt et al. 2010). In anthropology there are two ways of traditionally thinking about collaboration: first collaboration between researchers and second collaboration between researchers and research subject (Kelty 2009). We would like to focus on the second kind. This is not the place to analyze if the term is operative or not; instead we would like to stress that when we talk about collaboration, our spotlight is to look for an ethnography which allows us to co-interpret and, as far as it is possible, allows us to co-conceptualize, coproduce data, co-analyze, cowrite, become coauthors, etc. (no matter in which order).

The same way the dialogic metaphor substituted the textual metaphor in interpretive anthropology, the collaborative metaphor substituted the dialogue one in critical anthropology. Nevertheless, as Marcus points, the collaboration trope which emerged during the 1980s did not entirely substitute the rest of the tropes (Marcus 2001, p. 159), and in a certain way, for Lassiter, the problem lies in the fact that more critical anthropologists only committed themselves with collaboration metaphorically (Lassiter 2005, p. 160).

We insist, we do not want to vindicate the term *per se* nor to fight its exclusiveness or areas of appliance; we think it is useful and valid to analyze and tackle relations among people who take part in ethnographic research processes. It is useful to short-circuit historically produced unidirectional monologues which are interpreted and narrated only from the position of the so-called researcher. With no other aim, we want to insist on the use of the term *collaboration*, understanding it as a collective process.

However, the collaborative process often faces structurally imposed limits and obstacles. As an innovative pilot project, the UVI has encountered a range of bureaucratic, financial, academic, and political problems since it started only 3 years ago. The heterogeneity of the participating academic, political, and organizational actors has proved quite a challenge when institutional stances must be taken that are both efficient and legitimate for all the parties involved. After a long process of diagnosis and political negotiation on the choice of regions and communities in which to establish the UVI regional centers, the main political representatives have continued to support the UVI project strongly.

Nevertheless, the great cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the indigenous regions of Veracruz still poses an important challenge for curricular development and diversification as well as for the implementation of programs relevant to the regional population. Our project shows that it is not enough to “interculturalize” a conventional institution by opening up spaces of diversity at the margins, as in the UVI campuses, without challenging the prevailing notions of university, universality, and homogeneity of knowledges.

While the UVI is widely supported by the regional societies it serves, within the public university which gave birth to the project, resistance and misunderstanding persist. Due to the heterodox notion of “university,” of “degrees,” and of “curriculum” employed by the UVI staff, some more traditional and “disciplinary” sectors of academia aim to confine and limit this initiative to old-fashioned paternalist, top-down “outreach” activities rather than open their own teaching and research activities to such experiences: in their view, indigenous regions should be “helped” by particular outreach activities, but these should not impact conventional higher education contents or teaching methods. Therefore, the inclusion of a diversity of actors and a broad range of regional knowledge in the very nucleus of academic degree programs challenges the universalist rather “monological” and “mono-epistemic” character of the classical western university. In this field, for a public anthropologist and his or her corresponding engaged, “activist” methodology (Hale 2008), one of the main challenges consists in linking the characteristics of an “intercultural university,” orientated towards and rooted in the indigenous regions, with the dynamics and criteria of a “normal” public university.

Far from establishing new empirical fields and/or new academic subdisciplines in a context that is already excessively specialized and compartmentalized, the distinctively dialogical contribution to the uses of interpretive approaches in educational research lies in its particular, theoretical–empirical binomial. This dual emphasis on a collaborative, dialogical co-interpretation—on diversity and interculturality, in our example—and an interpretive ethnography of the

interactions between the diverse participating actors at school generates an integral and circular vision, both *emic* and *etic*, of the object–subject and the subject–object of study. This allows us, on the one hand, to deconstruct and decipher the discursive and practical fluctuations of a broad range of usual actor-centered essentialisms—such as ethnicisms or nationalisms. On the other hand, its semantic and pragmatic analyses complement each other and complete an ethnographic vision of the institutions that, like an omnipresent but underlying syntax, structure the identity discourses of each of the actors studied as well as their respective lifeworld practices. By doing this, turning our eyes from the problem to the problem maker; from the individual—the actor and the community member—to the sedentary institutions; and from the subordinate minority or the “beneficiary” client to the hegemonic “benefactor” nation state, the anthropological endeavor turns all too homogeneous and static interpretations at least more conflictive, more challenging, more disturbing for the established orders.

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**Genre 4 Ethnography *in* Educational
Research: Applying Ethnographic Methods
in Educational Inquiry**

Introduction

Dennis Beach and Elina Lahelma

Ethnography has been recognized as an important research method in educational research for over 40 years but has a longer history, as is shown in a four-volume set on ethnographic methods in education (Delamont 2011). It has roots in cultural anthropology, particularly in the USA while the British and European tradition is more within the sociology of education (Delamont and Atkinson 1995): see also Kehily's chapter in this section. In both cases, it involves research that takes place in or on educational institutions through observation and participant observation. Researchers are important tools in the research process, as they acquaint themselves with educational settings through immersion in the daily lives of the participants. The ethnographers' selves are implicated in the research process, as they observe, learn, and understand local cultures through their own experiences in the field (Beach et al. 2003). Standards for ethnography have been put as follows by Geoff Troman (2006) in his inaugural editorial for the journal of *Ethnography and Education*. Ethnography:

- Uses multiple methods for the generation of rich and diverse forms of data and is characterized by the direct involvement and long-term engagement of the researcher(s) as the main research instrument
- Gives high status when driving research ideas forward to the accounts of participants' and to their perspectives and understandings
- Involves a spiral of data collection, hypothesis building, and theory testing and focuses on a particular case in depth as a basis for theoretical generalization

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- Interrogates and develops theories of educational structures, practices, policy, and experience and seeks to explicate and challenge the effects of educational policies and implementation in/on practice
- Provides accounts of how the everyday and sometimes mundane practices of those engaged in educational processes are implicated in broader social relations, cultural production, and social reproduction and highlights the agency of educational subjects
- Takes place over time in order to allow a fuller range of empirical situations to be observed and analyzed and to allow for the emergence of contradictory behavior and perspectives
- Considers relations between the appropriate cultural, political, and social levels of the research site and individual, group, and community agency there
- Includes various theoretical perspectives in order to sensitize the analysis of data and provide an opportunity to use empirical ethnographic research for the interrogation of macro and middle-range theories.

Education ethnography is thus about developing close-up descriptions of education lives, identities, and activities through situated investigations that produce knowledge about basic educational conditions and practices and the perspectives of the participants involved in them, without over-steering from personal ideas or pet theories. It is said to in this way be able to open up the black box of institutional educational activities and practices.

The chapters in this section of the handbook provide illustrational and exemplary examples. They each examine a specific subject or aspect of the interpretation of data in education ethnography and, at the same time, present research that has been done in a particular subdomain of the educational research field. They use multiple theoretical perspectives to aid interpretations: sometimes conjointly. For example, the chapter of Kehily draws both from cultural and feminist perspectives, Mészáros uses poststructuralist queer theory and critical theory, and the sociocultural method in the chapter by Kozleski and Artiles draws from critical theory and historical materialism.

The history of ethnography is thus both long and varied. However, this methodology has faced new challenges in recent years from technological innovations and epistemology. The former have increased the needs and possibilities for the use of visual and internet methods and social media (see, e.g., the chapter by Holm, Londen, and Mansikka), while the latter, through the textual turn and the crisis of representation (Clifford and Marcus 1986), has impacted on ethnographers for decades, questioning the ideal of objective ethnographic accounts and calling for more dialogic accounts that write the researcher into the text. This is discussed in more detail in the chapters of Dillabough and Gardner and Mészáros.

Still another tendency that we illustrate in this section is in integrating several ethnographic studies. Instead of the lone researcher observing in specific settings for long periods, there are examples of collaboration and joint reflection of several researchers working in different settings. George Marcus (1995) has called multi-sited ethnography work in which ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, to multiple

sites of observation and participation that crosscut dichotomies such as the “local” and the “global.” Examples about collective or meta-ethnographic perspectives are given in the chapters by Lappalainen, Lahelma and Mietola, Beach, Eriksson and Player-Koro, Dillabough and Gardner, and Geoff Troman and Bob Jeffrey.

Chapter Summaries

There are eight chapters in this section. The chapter of Mary Jane Kehily gives a comprehensive review of the history of ethnographic endeavor, considering it as a project capable of writing culture. The main body of the chapter draws on an ethnographic study of two schools to illustrate the explanatory power of ethnography as a method for understanding school processes. Examples are used to demonstrate how student–teacher perspectives on gender relations, sexuality, and sexuality education are made visible through the ethnographic method. Finally, the chapter considers how ethnographic interpretation remains a product of the research context and the personal/biographical investments which set the scene for encounters in the field.

The chapter by György Mészáros discusses key aspects of the *textual and research context* of autoethnography. Autoethnography is inherently biographical and focuses on the socioculturally situated subject of the researcher. It often deals with sensitive issues. The chapter by Mészáros is no exception. Focusing on his experience as a gay male researcher in the very heteronormative Hungarian socio-cultural context, he discusses issues of going public and interpretation. A *critical autoethnographic* interpretation of the “I” in which the subject is decentered, but not in a poststructuralist way, is contrasted to a narcissistic or solipsistic understanding of the dissolved self without hope and agency. A Marxist interpretation of the subject is contrasted with a poststructural one.

Jo-Anne Dillabough and Philip Gardner illustrate the power of narrative and narrative imagination as a temporally located strategy for making sense of the world. They suggest that the exploration of narrative expressions constitutes a central element of the ethnographer’s trade. They focus on three elements of everyday life—temporality, symbolism, and space—as central to a storied account of research with young people living in the present. They describe the theoretical and methodological problems and approaches that they encountered and sought to address in the design and implementation of a large-scale, comparative ethnography centered upon some of the many disadvantaged and excluded young people who existed at the fringes of the Canadian cities of Toronto and Vancouver.

Photography as a research method and the interpretations of photographs in ethnographic research are the focus in the chapter of Gunilla Holm, Monica Londen, and Jan-Erik Mansikka. They have chosen to work with photos taken by the participants since it is their construction of their own identifications that is in focus of the research. The purpose of their study is to explore how Finland-Swedish students position themselves with regard to belonging to the Finland-Swedish group.

Geoff Troman and Bob Jeffrey's chapter is based on a series of projects researching English Primary Schoolteachers' interpretations of and adaptations to state education initiatives in an era of intensive "reform." They use an interpretivist stance underpinned by a loose body of Symbolic Interactionist theory with a focus on actors' meanings, motivations, and interpretations to discuss how their task was to attempt to penetrate the various "layers of reality" of the social setting of teaching from the actor perspective. The importance of descriptive field notes for familiarity and analysis and in accounting for interpretations of events is highlighted in the chapter in relation to the experiences and impressions of the field and the effects they have had on unfolding understandings and emergent ideas about the situations, cases, and practices researched.

In the chapter by Elizabeth Kozleski and Alfredo J. Artilés, the authors explore the notion of technical assistance within an ethnographic research tradition. They propose a set of approaches to making and acting on interpretations drawn from technical assistance activities to illustrate the complexity of using evidence in a variety of ways to help systems make important shifts in their cultures and decision-making processes with an eye to produce outcomes that are more equitable for the students. Thus, their work could be considered as that of ethnographer activists who participate in and influence the work of schools with particular emphasis on social justice and equity. Through this approach, they try to help organizational leaders understand and remediate the ways that they structure and support equity in their schools. The implications for this for interpretive ethnographic practices are illustrated and discussed in the chapter.

Based on long-term policy ethnographic research of teacher education policy-driven reform in Sweden, the chapter by Dennis Beach, Anita Eriksson, and Catarina Player-Koro explores and illustrates an exemplory response to the challenges and possibilities of ethnographic synthesis based on translocal and transtemporal research connected to teacher education policy making. It explores and tries to illustrate how a synthesis of ethnographic studies and what they term as a meta-ethnographic analysis may produce more general insights than primary studies are able to do. The chapter demonstrates how meta-ethnography involves comparisons across projects in an attempt to identify, interpret, and synthesize key elements from each respective investigation. This process "worked" on the basis of each of the collaborating project (and the publications from them) having unique qualities that were also related through a common focus.

The chapter of Sirpa Lappalainen, Elina Lahelma, and Reetta Mietola demonstrates collaborative and cross-cultural analysis that combines several ethnographic studies conducted in multiple educational settings, multiple localities, and multiple decades. The authors give two examples of their collaborative work, illustrating how the analysis is partly conducted through discussion and interpretations are jointly built. In the first example, the analysis is focused on the construction of a "special student" in a lower secondary school in postcommunist Estonia. In the second case, the analysis concentrates on representations of "normal" childhood and youth in various cultural texts and ethnographic data sets.

The Chapters in Relation to the Aims of the Handbook

The general aim of each genre in this handbook is to present in eight studies representing, in turn, examples of one of eight fields: learning; teaching; curriculum; evaluation and assessment; educational organization and leadership; equity, justice, and diversity; policy; and nonformal education. This kind of strict categorization is difficult in ethnography, which is generally more comprehensive in its approach. Most of the chapters fit into the fields of equity, justice, and diversity (especially Dillabough and Gardner; Kehily, Mezsaros, Lappalainen et al.; and Holm et al.) or policy (Beach et al., Kozleski and Artiles, and Troman and Jeffrey). Therefore, even though the chapters can be placed in the book matrix in one field each, they do this in relation to issues of education equity, policy, or both.

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4.1 On the Subject of Sex: An Ethnographic Approach to Gender, Sexuality, and Sexual Learning in England

Mary Jane Kehily

Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between educational research and ethnographic methods. Using ethnography as a way of generating insights into the processes of schooling has a long and distinguished history in educational scholarship. The chapter will explore the ways ethnographic methods can be used as an *interpretive tool* for making visible the ordinary. In documenting everyday practice over time, ethnographic accounts accumulate details of events as they unfold through the firsthand experience of being there. This chapter will consider the interpretive power of ethnography to place the taken-for-granted under critical scrutiny, discussing how ethnographic methods have contributed to our understanding of schools and schooling before focusing on an ethnographic account of sexual learning in a secondary school (Kehily 2002). The chapter demonstrates the value of participant observation and other features of ethnographic work to document the familiar but largely unacknowledged culture of school. By getting under the skin of school culture, ethnographic methods have been central to developing an understanding of how schools work and how schooled subjects—both teachers and students—feel about the day to day experience of being in school. The first two sections of the chapter take a historical approach, discussing the development of ethnography as a way of writing culture. Subsequent sections focus on its application in school settings as a method with a strong academic heritage that educationalists continue to draw upon in productive ways. The main body of the paper explores examples of ethnography in action, outlining the context for the research and the approach to analysis anchored in the meaning-making potential of ethnographic method.

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The Ethnographic Lens

As a research method for the writing of culture, ethnography has its roots in nineteenth-century colonialism and particularly the emergence of anthropology as a discipline dedicated to the study of other cultures (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Early anthropologists appeared as intrepid explorers, keen to make sense of encounters with “strange people in faraway places.” Key features of an ethnographic approach involve sustained contact with a cultural group or community over time, participating in their everyday life and achieving group membership without “going native.” Conventional ethnographic studies describe the researcher’s initiation into the group through select members of the community, the proverbial “gatekeepers” that mediate access and play a crucial role in interpreting practices for the benefit of the researcher. Crucially, ethnography gives epistemological status to respondents. The ethnographer’s aim to understand the group as an “insider” gives status to *all* group members as expert commentators and interpreters of their own way of life.

At their most persuasive, anthropological accounts speak back to the normative assumptions of West societies by offering other ways of being in the world. To take an obvious though controversial example, Margaret Mead’s (1972[1928]) study of growing up in Western Samoa challenged Western notions of the teenage years. American psychologist G. Stanley Hall charted adolescence as a stage of development within the life course in a two volume study, *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Anthropology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. Hall is best known for his characterization of adolescence as a period of *storm and stress*:

It is the age of natural inebriation without the need of intoxicants, which made Plato define youth as spiritual drunkenness. It is a natural impulse to experience hot and perfervid psychic states, and it characterised by emotionalism. We see here the instability and fluctuations now so characteristic. (Hall 1904, vol. 2, pp. 74–5)

For Hall adolescence is marked by physiological change and bodily development that in popular discourse conjures up an image of the stereotypical teenager, subject to “raging hormones,” mood swings, and an inability to communicate with adults. Hall’s account of adolescence and the contemporary image of the teenager in popular culture imply that young people are at the mercy of biological changes that produce an erratic range of feelings and behavior. Mead’s study of girls in Western Samoa, conducted in the 1920s, documents how becoming a woman can be differently marked; female desire is conceptualized as positive and sexual coming-of-age as trouble-free. Mead describes the transition to womanhood in Western Samoa as an orderly period of slow maturing and an embracing of sexual pleasure as girls are expected to have many lovers before marriage. Mead concludes that problems associated with young people in the West can be attributed to a regulatory approach to sexuality and particularly the repression of adolescent sexuality.

The Chicago School of Sociology reformulated ethnographic ideas in the mid-twentieth by using ethnographic methods to study local culture and everyday social practices within Western societies. This reorientation of people and place

gave rise to a new body of work that turned the ethnographic gaze inward by documenting diversity “at home” in the urban street life in contemporary America. William Whyte’s Boston-based study (1943) *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* remains an enduring ethnographic study of the period. Asking how we know what we know, ethnographers act upon an invitation to “make the familiar strange” (Mills 1959) by noticing and interpreting what passes as normal in social contexts.

Culture and Subcultural Interpretations

Culture and the craft of writing culture lies at the heart of the ethnographic project, yet the term has a wide range of meanings in both academic and everyday discourse. It can refer to the traditions of a particular society or community, but it can also be used more narrowly to refer to artistic forms and practices, in the sense of “high culture.” From a cultural studies perspective, culture can be defined as *everyday social practice*. No distinction is made between “high” and “low” culture and their associated practices. Rather the idea of culture is extended to include the commonplace routines and practices that characterize and bind together a particular group or community. Culture, in this sense, can be observed and studied in day-to-day engagements with the social world. This way of conceptualizing culture draws upon the work of Raymond Williams (1965) who insisted that *culture is ordinary*. Williams referred to the everydayness of culture as a *way of life* that makes sense to individuals involved in a particular community. This perspective sees culture as a form of action, a dynamic process rather than a fixed entity. It is not something that people *have*; it is also what people *do* in their day-to-day activities. Applying these ideas to young people has important consequences for understanding youth. A cultural perspective suggests that young people make sense of the world and take their place within it through participation and engagement with everyday social practices. Viewing young people culturally also positions them as active meaning makers in their own lives. Through negotiations with the social world and the exercise of agency, young people give shape to their lives and actively ascribe meanings to events. In this way young people can be seen to develop their own cultures. Indeed, the term *youth culture* is commonly used as shorthand to describe these processes. A rich vein of youth scholarship has focused on the concept of *subculture* as a way of making sense of the collective activity of particular groups of young people who differentiate themselves from other young people through modes of dress, musical taste, and attitude.

A.K. Cohen (1955) further explored the concept of subculture and the ways it can aid our understanding of the social world. Cohen suggests that subcultures can help us to understand and explain *what people do*. In Cohen’s analysis, subcultures arise when people with similar problems get together to look for solutions. Through interaction with one another, Cohen argues that members of a subculture come to share a similar outlook on life and evolve collective solutions to the problems they

experience. This process, however, often creates a distance between the subculture and the dominant culture. Indeed, achieving status within a subculture may entail a loss of status in the wider culture (Whyte 1982). Subcultures exist in relationship to the society in which they emerge and their existence may provide an insight into the experiences of young people especially in the areas of education, work, and leisure.

Youth Subcultures and the Birmingham School

The cultural studies approach to youth subcultures has had a generative impact on educational research and is largely associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, UK (1964–2002). CCCS researchers focused upon subcultural formations among young people in 1970s and 1980s Britain. In an influential collection of studies, *Resistance Through Rituals, Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain* (Hall and Jefferson 1976), CCCS researchers trace their interest in youth subcultures as expressive forms of resistance that make connections between everyday experience, social class, culture, and the wider society. Engaging in subcultural activity involves young people in acts of “articulation”—the bringing together of different elements in particular contexts, in ways that make sense to the individuals concerned. Taking inspiration from Gramscian ideas of cultural and social change, Hall et al. suggest that working-class youth subcultures involve young people in a “double articulation” firstly with their parents’ culture and secondly the broader culture of postwar social change. To view youth subcultures as adolescent rebellion is to underestimate the extent to which young people seek to speak to and comment upon generational change and social structures. Rather, from a cultural studies perspective, youth subcultures appear purposeful interventions, imbued with meaning.

Recent approaches to youth culture have critiqued earlier definitions and challenged the concept of subculture itself. We are all mainstream now, the argument goes; the increased commodification and commercialization of all areas of social life close down the possibility of subcultural space for young people. Besides, the notion of a “dominant culture” is also changing and fragmenting, creating multiple *cultures* rather than the mainstream and the subcultural. Recent studies of youth formations indicate that definitions of subculture cannot be fixed in terms of earlier studies or sociocultural moments. Like other sociological concepts, it is subject to change and redefinition (Hesmondhalgh 2005).

A strand of cultural studies research drew upon subcultural insights to consider young people in relation to the labor market rather than leisure. Using the local context of school and youth club as research sites highlighted the gendered nature of youthful experience. Willis’s (1977) classic study of working-class male counterculture in the West Midlands area of the UK demonstrated the direct and functional relationship between school and work, elaborating on the subtitle of the book, how working-class kids get working-class jobs. As an anti-school group, the “lads” were both popular and spectacular nonconformists. Central to their

school experience was the ability to wring humor out of every situation. Willis concluded that for the lads, ridiculing teachers and having a “laff” could be regarded as preparation for the future world of work in the manufacturing industries of the area. The styles of trickery and subversion the lads engaged in became the means whereby young men literally “learned to labor.” McRobbie’s (1978) study of working-class girls argues that popular cultural forms and the practice of female friendship help to prepare young women for their future roles as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere (McRobbie and Garber 1982). In the post-Fordist era, it appeared that the young people in my study were hardly “learning to labor”; their futures in the workplace and the home were less certain and not so clearly defined.

Contextualizing the Research and the Researcher

Having completed postgraduate study in cultural studies at Birmingham University with 12 years’ teaching experience and a long-term resident of Birmingham, my biographical details appear relevant to the formulation of a research agenda. My approach to ethnography drew upon CCCS insights into culture and subculture and the rich body of research that prioritized taking young people seriously. The schools where I carried out research were located in an area that had undergone far-reaching economic change. The Midlands region of the UK has a history of factory employment as well as a former industrial heritage related to the manufacture of cars and skilled craftwork such as jewelry making. More recently the region has witnessed widespread deindustrialization, the dismantling of former industries, and the emergence of a competitive global economy. Furthermore, in the postwar period, the region has become synonymous with the settlement of diasporic communities from the New Commonwealth countries as well as large numbers of people who have arrived from Pakistan and Ireland. In these “new times” of global change and development, it is the convergence of time and space that has radically transformed English working-class culture. The study recognizes the cultural specificity of the school as a local space that exists in complex interaction with wider global processes relating to migration, the economy, and culture. At the local level, the very fabric of the Midlands region seems to speak of an industrial heritage that can no longer be realized, functioning as a symbol of postindustrial alienation.

The materiality of young people’s lives poses many big questions for schools concerning the nature and purpose of education in the present period and the relationship between school and society in the face of global change. The role of the school and its relationship to the local economy is seemingly less obvious as local industries and long-term manual work decline. At the same time multinational chains in the retail and service sector, together with new forms of “flexible” employment, have expanded. Observing the scope of economic change prompts more questions than answers. How has economic change impacted upon the lives of young women and men in school? What are the implications for versions of masculinity and femininity? Is there a new, emergent sex–gender order? In many

respects, the sex–gender identities of young men and women in the area appear strongly traditional and deeply embedded in older forms of social and cultural practice. It is against the backdrop of these changes and points of continuity that this study has been carried out.

My study aimed to explore issues of sexuality, gender, and schooling ethnographically. I was interested in the way school students interpret, negotiate, and relate to issues of sexuality within the context of the secondary school. In order to explore these themes, I used the concept of *student sexual cultures*, the existence of informal groups among the student body who actively ascribe meanings to events within specific social contexts. *Student sexual cultures* refer specifically to the meanings ascribed to issues of sexuality within peer groups and in social interaction more generally. My argument, developed through the thesis, highlights the constant activity of the student body, their making-meaning processes, and shifting investments in individual and collective identities. Peer group practices produce and maintain self-determining hierarchies embedded in rituals of inclusion and exclusion, involving the constant negotiation of sense of self in relation to others. The study observed and documented the way sexuality features in the context of student cultures and the implications of this for sexual learning and the construction of sexual identities. I was particularly interested in the interrelationship between gender and sexuality and the way school students negotiate complex social relations that can be both creative and constraining.

The study focused upon two key areas in the field of sexuality and schooling: firstly, the shaping of pupil cultures and the construction of sexual identities and, secondly, teaching and learning in the field of Personal and Social Education (PSE), particularly sex education. I was interested in exploring the frameworks informing the teaching of PSE and the ways in which policy is *translated* into practice in schools. Work in this area in the past (e.g., Lees 1993) tended to focus on the *delivery* of sex education programs rather than on the ways they are *received* by students. I was concerned to explore the “reading effect”—the ways in which the meanings and messages of the official curriculum are mediated by student sexual cultures.

The emphasis on student cultures can be seen as a way of “giving voice” to school students who *receive* the curriculum but play no part in the structuring of the school as an organization or the planning of the curriculum and the teaching of lessons. This approach, however, can have a tendency to see teachers a monolithic force, defined in opposition to students. I was, therefore, also concerned to draw upon the experiences of individual teachers, including my own, and their personal accounts of teaching and learning in the field of sex education. I viewed this as an important element in developing an understanding of current practice in contexts where both teachers and students may have investments in the construction and maintenance of symbolic boundaries in this area. Fieldwork was carried out over a total of 2 years, beginning in 1991 and continuing in 1995 and 1996 in two secondary schools in the Midlands area of the UK. Both schools were open-access secondary schools for boys and girls aged 11–16, and both schools served a largely working-class local community. Oakwood School was nondenominational and

ethnically mixed with many students from south Asian and African-Caribbean backgrounds. Clarke School, however, was a Church of England school and the school population was mainly white British.

Doing Ethnography: Making Meaning

Researching sexuality in schools is a complicated business. Linking “sex” and “school” together as a focus for study brings the researcher into direct contact with many of the symbolic boundaries that shape contemporary schooling. Constructions such as public/private, adult/child, teacher/pupil, male/female, and proper/improper organize social relations within the school in ways that seek to demarcate and prescribe the domain of the sexual. Researchers in this field have commented on the ways in which informal school-based cultures are saturated with sex, through humor, innuendo, double entendre, and explicit commentary, yet the official culture of the school frequently seeks to deny the sexual and desexualize schooling relations (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Jackson 1982). Sex education remains a small and discrete part of the curriculum, while abundant and pervasive ways of talking about sex flourish in social spaces occupied by teachers and students. The symbolic boundaries containing issues of sexuality in school juxtaposed with the simultaneous desire to speak the sexual point to some ways of understanding the sexual politics of schooling. Foucault (1988, p. 10) expresses the view that “[t]he association of prohibition and strong incitations to speak is a constant feature of our culture.” This observation leads Foucault to suggest, in his later work, that people are “freer than they feel” (1988, p. 10). This way of looking emphasizes the productive potential of constraint; policing produces rebellion, and boundaries create and define the unbounded in contexts where constraint and freedom exist in a dialectical relationship of support and mutual definition. Researching sexuality in schools calls for an approach which renders visible the social relations of schooling, which recognizes the context in which sexuality is, at once, present and absent, the forms it takes, and the responses it generates. This approach involves the researcher in observations and actions. Observing the symbolic boundaries, shaping sexuality in school necessarily incurs an interpretive understanding of the context of school relations and the development of an analysis of the dynamics that are shaping and informing these boundaries.

My approach is indebted to methodological traditions of ethnography, cultural studies, and feminist practice. While the ethnographer may appear as a solitary explorer, ethnographic work, in fact, involves encounters with the footprints of fellow travelers (see McLeod and Thomson 2009 for a discussion of ethnography and social change). Taking inspiration from prior concerns with issues of reflexivity and research subjects as producers of knowledge, my approach to ethnographic work in school was to see students meaning-makers as the force informing and shaping the research agenda in direct ways. In peer group interactions, I observed

the collective negotiation of an acceptable “line,” defining, for that moment, legitimate realms of thought, words, and actions. Recognizing that there are *moments* of truth and writing (Stanley 1990) influenced my approach to data collection and analysis. I did not attempt to recreate the reality effect of field relations produced in a just-like-being-there linear narrative. Neither did I develop an overview of sexuality, gender, and schooling based on empirical observations. Rather, I looked for *moments* in the transcripts that provide a commentary on the relationship between the domain of the sexual and the domain of the school. Having identified these moments, I began to think of them in Richard Johnson’s terms as *discursive clusters*—instances where ideas and relations are condensed in particular ways. These discursive clusters became, for me, the “text,” the object of analysis which was instructive in pointing me to ways of understanding and interpreting the social encounter. Specifically, my approach to such moments drawn from the transcripts is to treat them as literary text, paying close attention to linguistic features and devices, particular words and phrases, and, occasionally, the absences too. I regard speech as a form of action that requires analysis of the act of speaking as well as analysis of what is said. Moreover, I would suggest that text produced by ethnographic fieldwork can be viewed and interpreted as a form of social practice. Drawing particularly on CCCS studies of youth (e.g., Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1974, 1977), I recognized and enjoyed the “craft” of literary-inspired analysis at work. Since 1996 Willis has discussed his ethnographic method as an elaboration of the close-reading technique employed by his teacher and mentor, Richard Hoggart. Willis describes using this technique to study a Shakespeare sonnet and, later, applying the same technique to culture in his study of a gang of motorbike boys. For Willis this method becomes a way of documenting the stylized display of working-class youth as a “common culture” expressed through the artistry of dress and leisure (Willis 2000).

Sexuality, Gender, and School-Based Knowledge

Within the school context, the artistry of young people has been documented in prior studies. The concept of the “hidden curriculum” has been used by educationists to acknowledge that learning extends the boundaries of the official curriculum and may have inadvertent effects. What is learned by pupils may not fit with the intended aims of teachers and educational policy makers (see Hammersley and Woods 1976 for a discussion of these themes). Research from this period suggests that through participation in school routines, pupils learn to conform or resist the official culture of the school (Willis 1977). Like other feminist educationists, I suggest that the “hidden curriculum” can also be seen in terms of the regulation of sex–gender categories. Within the context of the school, much informal learning takes place concerning issues of gender and sexuality; the homophobia of young men, the sexual reputations of young women, and the pervasive presence of heterosexuality as an “ideal” and a practice mark out the terrain for the production

of gendered and sexualized identities. Furthermore, such social learning is overt and explicit rather than hidden.

A rich vein of research on gender and schooling has exposed the gender inequalities that exist between young men and women and the implications for school-based policy and practice (e.g., Connell 1987; Lees 1993; Griffin 1985; Kenway and Willis 1998; Gordon et al. 2000). This body of work has the effect of “making visible” the experience of girls within the schooling process and points to the need to account for gender inequalities in school. Gordon et al. (2000) explore issues of inequality as a spatial dynamic as well as an effect of power relations. Their innovative approach to themes of marginalization and participation demonstrates the complexity of gender arrangements and the need for a reformulated notion of “citizenship” to be taken up in schools. Further research has drawn attention to sexuality and particularly the heterosexist structure of school relations by acknowledging gay and lesbian identities in school (e.g., Epstein and Johnson 1998; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Trenchard and Warren 1984; Sears 1992). This literature provides us with valuable insights and ways of understanding gendered and sexual hierarchies in schools. Within sex–gender structures in school, homosexuality may be marginalized and stigmatized through the curriculum, pedagogic practices, and pupil cultures. This literature indicates that sexual identities are not biologically given but are created through institutional and lived practices. Moreover, schools can be seen as sites for the *production* of gendered/sexualized identities rather than agencies that passively reflect dominant power relations. More recent work on masculinities has contributed to the literature on sexuality and gender by exploring the recognition that boys too are gendered subjects, engaged in the struggle for masculine identities both within schools and in social relations more generally (e.g., Connell 1995; Frosh et al. 2002; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Skelton 2001). Mac an Ghaill’s study in particular illustrates the ways in which diverse sexualities can be spoken through the various masculinities young men come to inhabit. Being a lad may involve the cultivation of a hyper-heterosexual identity, while being a “wimp” implies occupying a feminized or asexual identity that may easily translate into being called “gay.” In this sense sexuality underpins the location of young men’s masculinities within the schooling system and can be seen to structure gender arrangements more generally.

The conceptualization of schools as sites for the *production* of gendered/sexualized identities represents a break with earlier approaches that viewed schools as *reproducers* of dominant modes of class, gender, and racial formations (Foucault 1976). The theoretical shift from reproduction to production takes into account Foucaultian insights into relations of power in which social categories are produced in the interplay of culture and power. Power, moreover, is discursively produced, not only as a “top-down” dynamic but is also created locally in sites such as school. Within this framework, school cultures can be seen as active in producing social relations that are contextually specific and productive of social identities. Another concern of contemporary analyses in this field is the uncoupling of sex–gender. In this respect there is a recognition that school policies and practices traditionally treat gender and sexuality as if they are inextricably linked where one bespeaks the other.

The prizing apart of the sex–gender couplet in recent research allows for a more nuanced analysis of masculinities, femininities, and their relationship to sexuality. The growth of work on masculinities has been important in this respect and suggests new ways of looking at schools as productive of sex–gender hierarchies.

Student Sexual Cultures

Drawing upon my ethnographic study (Kehily 2002), this section demonstrates the layers of meaning accessed through ethnographic methods, uncovering both the informal learning that takes place within pupil cultures and the ways in which the PSE curriculum is *received* by pupils. The approach points to the social meanings that pupils ascribe to events and the way these meanings contrast and overlap with sexual learning in formal spaces such as PSE lessons. Barrie Thorne’s (1993) US-based study of gender and schooling relations has commented on the ways in which adolescence can be understood as a period of entry into the institution of heterosexuality. Viewed from the perspective of pupils, adolescent relationships form part of a *sexual economy* where features such as physical attractiveness, desirability, and status are commodified and played out in rituals of dating and dumping (Griffin 1992). Within the arena of these cultural practices, same-sex peer groups play an important part in the mediation of ideas and exchanges which involve the acting out of versions of masculinity and femininity in enactments that rehearse and reiterate a repertoire of teenage dramas.

The following extracts are from a Year 10 PSE lesson requiring pupils to complete a quiz sheet on different forms of contraceptives. I am sitting at a table with five girls—Vicky, Sophie, Naomi, Sara, and Sarah—and Nathan, a boy in the class. Nathan usually sat at a table near the door with a group of boys. However, for this lesson he has moved to sit by Louise who is sitting directly behind Naomi. The reason for Nathan’s change of location becomes clear as the lesson progresses. During the course of the lesson, Nathan asks Naomi a series of questions, verbally and in the form of notes, passed via Louise who appears to be acting as an intermediary:

Vicky: (to me) Naomi is having boy trouble.

Vicky: (to Naomi) You told me earlier that you can’t stand him, what are you sending messages to him for? (in loud authoritative voice) You’re playing with his emotions my dear.

[Girls on table work through the questions in the quiz in fairly haphazard fashion.]

Vicky: (reading) “It is easy to teach yourself to use the natural method.” I don’t know. Can you? True? (reading) “Baby oil is good for lubricating condoms” is it? (reading) “Hormone injections interfere with a woman’s menstrual cycle” Yes they do, don’t they?

- Sophie: (reading) “All male condoms prevent against sexually transmitted diseases”? I don’t know. Is this a test? Do female condoms prevent against sexually transmitted diseases? I don’t know.
- Vicky: I don’t know. I don’t know any of this; we haven’t been taught all this. (reading) “IUDs are ideal for”—IUDs, what’s IUDs? (reading) “Condom splits on you, you can take emergency contraception.” Yeah you can.
- Sophie: Yeah, 72 hours after, up to three days.
- Naomi: Yeah. Louise [unclear message to Nathan].
- Vicky: (to Naomi) So are you going to go out with him? You like him then? Just tell him you don’t wanna go out with him if you don’t wanna go out with him. Oh, (in exasperated tone) I don’t wanna get involved.

This extract makes explicit the two different agendas operating in the classroom: the contraceptive quiz and the dialogue between Naomi and Nathan. Students are engaged and occupied by both activities, though there is seemingly no point of connection between the two. The exchange illustrates how two contrasting approaches to the power–knowledge couplet can be deployed and negotiated within the same educative space. The official classroom task sees sex education in terms of technical knowledge, details of biology, and sexual health to be learned and accumulated, while pupil interactions stress the importance of the experiential and the instrumental role of the peer group in key aspects of social learning. The “dialogue” between Naomi and Nathan indicates that, for them, negotiating the sexual is strongly gendered, entailing engagement with normative sex–gender categories that in turn involve identity work and imperatives to act. In this exchange Nathan appears to be enacting boy-who-wants-girl while Naomi’s responses involve her in a performance of the opposite, girl-being-chased-by-boy. Their “relationship” is mediated by a go-between, Louise, and under the scrutiny of the female peer group. There is a strong sense of Naomi and Nathan’s “business” being public property, requiring discussion and intervention by the girls. This sense of collective ownership and negotiation in relation to male/female relationships contrasts with the construction of sex in PSE classes as “private,” involving two people in matters of personal choice, intimate relations, and medical knowledge. The activities of the peer group demonstrate their agency in the negotiation and regulation of gender-appropriate behavior in school. The role of Vicky, in particular, illustrates the accomplished multitasking of high-status girls as she exposes and monitors Naomi, orchestrates peer group responses, adopts different voices, liaises with me, and remains actively involved while claiming to desire noninvolvement. The activities of the peer group highlight the way sex–gender identities may be shaped by and through social exchanges that offer possibilities for expansion and regulation.

As the lesson proceeds, the two activities continue with the details of the quiz being attended to intermittently, interspersed with dialogue and commentary concerning developments between Naomi and Nathan:

- Vicky: She’s (Naomi) just getting another note. What does it say Sara?
 Sara: It says, “So you want to go out with me in two weeks?” *De De Derrr!*

- Vicky: She's told Nathan she'll go out with him in two weeks. Why d'you say you'll go out with him in two weeks?
- Naomi: 'Cuase Jonathan will be back then.
- Vicky: You're not even going out with him though.
- Naomi: I am!
- Naomi (to me): I like Jonathan you see, but Nathan likes me.
- MJK: So what are you going to do about it? Do you feel that Jonathan isn't so interested in you as you are in him?
- Naomi: Um yeah, that's right.
- Vicky: What's a matter? Why d'you tell him (Nathan) you'd go out with him in two weeks?
- Naomi: I don't want to tell you. It's private.
- Vicky: You tell me everything else [laughs].

Here, the interest in Naomi's affairs comes to a tentative and temporary closure. Naomi's concern to make herself available to Jonathan while holding Nathan in abeyance is a strategy which involves distancing herself from her female peer group while responding in favorable, though noncommittal tones to Nathan's advances. Naomi's actions incur direct disapproval and censorship from Vicky who believes that Naomi has misplaced investments in Jonathan and is deliberating misleading Nathan. For Naomi, in this instance, maintaining girlfriends and having a boyfriend is a difficult balancing act and her discomfort can be seen in terse replies and the retreat into "privacy." In courting femininity and heterosexuality, Naomi finds herself contradictorily positioned as loyal female friend and compliant would-be girlfriend. In such moments, heterosexual relations involve a disruption of same-sex alliances. The management of intimacy within the peer group becomes a highly charged affair in which notes, declarations, explanations, and calls for privacy become symbolic signifiers in the paraphernalia of heterosexual practice.

At the end of the lesson, Naomi told me in more detail that she feared her relationship with Jonathan may be over when he returns from his holiday and she may then consider a relationship with Ryan as he "likes her." She, however, likes Jonathan. Naomi's attempts to exercise control point to the gap between sex education and the "lived" version of sexual relationships within pupil cultures. The "just say no" message of the sex education video and the clinical knowledge of the contraceptive quiz do not address the feelings of desire and vulnerability experienced by young women in the negotiation of femininity and heterosexual relationships. Naomi wants to be recognized as sexually attractive, wants to be "liked" and wants a relationship, preferably with Jonathan. Her desire to be desired places her in the uncomfortable position of being pressured by Nathan and policed by her female peers. As Skeggs (1997) points out, the concern of young women to validate themselves through dynamics of desirability requires the confirmation of men. Over the following weeks, the dalliance between Naomi and Nathan escalated to the point where Naomi's mother came into school to speak to Mrs Evans. Mrs Evans reported to me that Naomi's mother expressed concern about Naomi as she was being "pestered" by Nathan. Apparently, Nathan had been telephoning their house persistently and had also followed Naomi around over the weekend when she went into town with her girlfriends. When Naomi told Nathan she wanted

to spend time with her friends, he threatened to get some other girls to beat her up. Naomi's mother had told Naomi to have nothing to do with Nathan and was worried that the boy had an obsession with her daughter and that Naomi was secretly enjoying the attention. Mrs Evans also added that Nathan was sitting near to Naomi in lessons and had asked to change groups for some subjects in order to be in the same class as Naomi on all occasions. Mrs Evans decided to speak to Nathan and his mother about his behavior and hoped that this intervention would resolve the situation. However, Mrs Evans' comments to me focused upon Naomi's burgeoning sexuality:

Mrs Evans: Last year, you know, she (Naomi) wore her hair scraped back into a ponytail and this year she's got it in tresses all over her face; she's always flicking it back and playing with it and then there's all the makeup and the [*flutters her eyes*].

Mrs Evans also commented that Naomi's mother appears to be very strict, does not allow her to have boyfriends, and is clearly not someone Naomi could talk to about relationships or sexual matters. This example illustrates the ways in which embodied femininity is read in terms of sexuality and thus becomes the object of attention, rather than the behavior of the young male. Naomi's sexualized femininity, expressed through her physical appearance and bodily styles and gestures, is interpreted by adults as worrying and potentially dangerous. Naomi's mother appears to wish to repress and deny the sexual in the strict prohibition of boyfriends and her disapproval of domestic disruption. Mrs Evans' preoccupation with Naomi's appearance rather than Nathan's actions echoes elements of the "she-asked-for-it" argument, popularly employed in commonsense discourses to account for incidents of sexual harassment. Both adults indicate an awareness of the dangers ascribed to female sexuality, particularly the power of sexuality to disrupt the rational educative process (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Walkerdine et al. 2001). From the perspective of the adults, Naomi is "playing with fire," promoting her sexuality at the risk of damaging her reputation and her chances of academic success. It is interesting to note that Naomi's behavior incurs recrimination from all of the social spheres she has contact with: Nathan's advances, her peer group's regulatory exclamations, her mother's concern, and her teacher's disapproval. The collective rapprochement of Naomi positions female sexuality as culpable. My field notes, written up after the discussion with Mrs Evans, underline the gendered interpretation of the incident and the encoding of a potentially dangerous female sexuality:

I'm sure that Catrina (Mrs Evans) does feel that Nathan's behavior is a form of harassment but find it strange, in retrospect, that she made hardly any comment on his behavior and focused almost entirely on Naomi. (field notes 25.3.96)

Teacher Cultures and Sexual Learning

To enhance understanding of sexual cultures in the school, I sought to include teacher's accounts. I was interested in the ways they narrated themselves as individuals and professional practitioners. This led me to consider teacher's

biographies and how personal experiences play a significant part in shaping and giving meaning to the pedagogic styles they adopt. I found that approaches to sexualities in school and, particularly, the teaching of sex education can be seen to be informed by this dynamic in significant ways.

School structures and processes indicate that teachers cannot approach issues of sexuality in a decontextualized manner (Kehily and Nayak 1996; Lupton and Tulloch 1996). In matters of sexuality, teachers carry with them a set of associations that are not easily divorced from their other teaching initiatives. The positionality of teachers as instructors/professional educators encourages the deployment of formal teaching methods based on a view of the teacher as holder-of-knowledge. In sex education, however, formal methods may not be so appropriate to teaching and learning. Many researchers have commented on the need for less formal approaches to sexuality education which recognize pupil sexual cultures as a starting point for teaching and learning (Thomson and Scott 1990, 1991; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Holland et al. 1998). As part of such informal techniques, teachers often expect pupils to confide in them, open up areas for discussion, and talk frankly. Such strategies can be viewed by working-class pupils as a particular middle-class mode to be resisted. Attempts to teach sex education using informal methods were not necessarily regarded as successful or welcome from a pupil perspective. Many pupils I spoke with found informal approaches “uncool” and unacceptable and were quick to point out the disjuncture with other areas of the curriculum where they were explicitly told what to do.

Mr Carlton, a Craft, Design and Technology (CDT) teacher with many years of experience at Oakwood, illustrates how the success of sex education programs is contingent upon local factors, particularly the connection between individual teachers and the student body. Mr Carlton expressed his relationship to students as based on a strong working-class regional identity:

Mr Carlton: I’m from here, right, from this part of the world. I grew up in this part of the world, went away and came back and taught here ever since and I’ve never been to another school—which could be a mistake, but the kids here I’ve always managed to relate to and I treat them probably the way their parents treat them and I think that’s what it comes down to. They know that if I tell them something then I tell them from the heart, not from what other people are telling them. I try to always tell them the truth, even if it hurts, you know, tell them the truth.

Mr Carlton’s identification with the pupils is based on his commitment to common bonds of community, class, and location. He suggests that this shared experience forges an emotional connection which enables him to speak to pupils as a parent would, from “the heart.” Mr Carlton’s pedagogic style was passionately pupil centered; he talked about teaching and getting the best out of pupils as part of the same process:

Mr Carlton: If you can't be bothered, you're not going to get anywhere; they're [the kids] the most important thing, they're the raw material that we've got to work with and you've got to work with that raw material, and it's something that I've always done, taken a material and made something out of it whether it be a piece of wood or a piece of metal or a piece of a person; you've got to get the kids to work and enjoy the work that they do.

Here, the terms used by Mr Carlton indicated that he locates his teaching activity within the context of industrial processes and manual labor. The analogy of the workplace resists contemporary notions of professionalism and the language of classroom management. Rather, Mr Carlton's conceptualization of teaching forms a point of continuity with his working-class identity and regional affiliations to an area renowned for its industrial heritage and large manufacturing base. Mr Carlton further suggests that because CDT is about "making things" it is possible to break down symbolic spatial barriers. In his classroom, he explains, there is no desk providing a divide between the two groups; teachers and pupils are involved in the same process of productivity, developing and "making things" out of "raw material". Mr Carlton offers an account which makes direct links between his background and pedagogic practice. Talking about his youth,

Mr Carlton: Not to put too fine a point on it, I was, er, completely and utterly a bastard when I was younger and no female meant anything to me. Now please don't take offense at that (laughs) but I was one of the boys, rugby player, drinking quite a lot, playing the field. And then I met the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with and her attitudes have rubbed off a lot on me. She made me see that things I was talking about then were not quite right.

MJK: What sort of things?

Mr Carlton: How deep d'you want to go? (laughs) ... My attitude to women was appalling ... she [my partner] always thinks about how what she does effects other people and that's rubbed off on me because before I couldn't give a damn.

Mr Carlton's construction of himself as the rugby-playing, hard-drinking, philandering lad casts the transition to adulthood as a specifically gendered project. Mr Carlton's masculine identity is publicly played out and privately appraised in the intimacy of sexual partnership. "Falling in love" becomes a critical moment biographically, producing a dramatic shift in perspective which encourages reflexivity, especially in gender relations. Mr Carlton suggests that his past provides a point of recognition with boys in the school:

MJK: What would you do if you came across lads who were like you when you were young?

Mr Carlton: I dread it (laughs). No I don't dread it, no, no, um; I think most lads are like what I was when I was young, or I was like them. It's just a

stage of growing up and all I try telling them is there's nothing new; I've done all this. You're not going to shock me by the things that you do because I've done it all and worse 'cos I've got fifteen, twenty years more experience of doing it than you've got. Don't try and pull a fast one . . . and once they see that—I bet most of the people you've spoken to who say they can relate to me are boys.

Indeed, many boys I spoke with at Oakwood did speak warmly of Mr Carlton as “someone you can have a laff with” and “the best teacher in the school.” The dynamics of this relationship can be seen as a style of camaraderie, marked by the privileging of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Many girls in the school also held Mr Carlton in high esteem and sought him out as someone to confide in during moments of crisis. Mr Carlton did have considerable experience of talking with girls who became pregnant, providing support and talking through the implications with young women who sought him out as the first adult to break the news to. It is a measure of his success as a teacher that he was still in touch with many former pupils he has counseled over the years. His pedagogic style and personal biography insist that teacher and pupils occupy the same world through shared identifications of class and locality. This mutual recognition between Mr Carlton and the pupils he taught created the conditions for an affirmative approach to PSE where he has developed his own pedagogic style:

Mr Carlton: Six years ago it started and it (PSE) was awful. It was all bits of paper and it was work sheet, work sheet, work sheet, and I was getting brassed off with handing these work sheets out so I thought, “What's PSE? Who can say what PSE is?” PSE is you and me sitting down talking to each other, getting their ideas out of them and that's what I did.

Mr Carlton described his approach as a highly individualized pedagogy, based on his experiences, which incorporated strategies such as: responding to local events, being provocative, winding people up, and using humor. His ability to communicate with pupils was enhanced by his use of colloquial terms and regional dialect:

Mr Carlton: Accent is an automatic turn off. You get someone who's talking in a southern accent and they [the pupils] don't wanna know. Where, if you call a spade a spade . . . The way I talk to kids sometimes is the way they talk to each other and if that involves using four letter words I use them. If it makes it understood and used in context then, to me, that's not wrong . . . Some teachers here might disapprove of the language but if you've got to explain something and you're talking “a penis,” well to the kids, “a dick” you know. You make people understand through the language.

The glimpse into the biography of a practitioner illustrates how approaches to teaching and learning may be shaped by past experiences as a student and gendered

sexual subjects. Policy interventions stress the importance of getting the policy “right,” supported by curriculum documents which encourage a direct and untroubled translation into practice. My argument, however, is that the success of sex education depends on a contingency of factors which cannot necessarily be accounted for at the level of policy. Mr Carlton, for example, is unlikely to match the selection criteria drawn up in a person specification for the post of sex educator. Rather, his profile as rugby-playing, heavy-drinking lad would place him beyond the bounds of desirability for the teaching of a subject which requires sensitivity and understanding, especially in relation to issues of gender politics. However, the success of Mr Carlton’s approach to sex education and PSE generally indicates that other factors may be in play in the development of “good practice.” Mr Carlton’s identifications as local, working-class, speaker of the regional dialect and part of the community give him a grounding which facilitates the development of positive and mutually affirming pupil–teacher relations. In other words, the qualities, characteristics, and identities valued by the student population become important to the success of pedagogic practice. At Oakwood School, there is an engagement between the local culture of the school and Mr Carlton’s organic approach to teaching and learning. This highlights the importance of context in the development and implementation of policy initiatives and pedagogic strategies while pointing to some of the difficulties involved in specifying a formula for “success.”

Reflections

The examples discussed in this chapter have focused on the school as a site for the production of sexual discourses. In this domain, heterosexuality remains the dominant sexual category invoked and produced by school-based practices. Analysis of the data as a whole suggests versions of heterosexuality can be produced within the school through discursive practices in three areas of school life: the official curriculum, pedagogic practice, and pupil cultures. At the level of the official curriculum, heterosexuality is inscribed in school policy documents as a religious and moral ideal, the preferred form of sexual activity anchored in “family values” and heterosexual coupledness. This view of legitimate sexuality is mediated by pedagogic practice. In sex education lessons at Clarke School, young women become the focus for sexual learning in ways that emphasize the dangers of sexual activity and their ability to exercise “choice.” Considering how sexuality features in pupil cultures adds another layer of meaning to the official school story. As the extract reveals, negotiating the meanings of sex and gender takes place within peer groups and student interactions more generally. In this context, we see that young people make sense of sexuality within their immediate social world and that this form of meaning making may appear far removed from the teaching of sex education. My study supports the findings of other researchers who identify a gap between the teaching of sex education and the “lived” experience of sexuality among pupils in school (Holland et al. 1998; Alldred and Davies 2007; Trudell

1992). Finally, the chapter points to the explanatory power of ethnography as a show-and-tell tool in the observation of school processes. The power of the ethnographic gaze can be pointed in any direction. However, what is “seen” cannot be anticipated or fixed. As this chapter has documented, personal biographies, peer relations, and institutional arrangements provide a lens making sense of gender and sexuality in school. In this respect, sexual learning remains a haphazard affair, produced through informal networks in which the school provides a meeting place for contextually specific encounters and acts of interpretation.

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4.2 The “Gay Eye” of a Researcher and a Student in a Hungarian School: Autoethnography as Critical Interpretation of the Subject

György Mészáros

Introduction

Autoethnography as a relatively new methodological approach or genre has spread widely in qualitative research in the last decades. Among other qualitative methodologies, it questions scientific “truths” and “facts” by claiming the inherently biographical nature of research and focusing on the socioculturally situated subject of the researcher (Ellis 2004; Ellis et al. 2011). However, in spite of its spreading use especially in poststructuralist research, autoethnography has received serious critiques because of its subjectivism, methodological uncertainty, and ethically problematic character (Anderson 2006; Atkinson 2006; Tolich 2010; Pace 2012) and for being a self-centered poststructuralist approach that prevents research from contributing to social transformation. This chapter aims at reinforcing the scientific legitimacy and importance of this genre but not by hiding the justifiable problems related to it.

The *textual and research context* of this research study is my PhD dissertation. This school ethnography was completed in 2009, based on an empirical fieldwork in 2007 and was one of the first long-term educational ethnographies in Hungary. The aim of the study was to discover cultural tensions in school, focusing on youth subcultures, following the tradition of critical ethnography (McLaren 1986/1999). During the daily interactions with the students, one of them came out to me. His experience as a gay male student in a high school became part of my research, but I could not publish the results of this part of the study in my dissertation because the student did not allow me to do so at that time. Now, after some years, he permitted me to write about his experience, maintaining his anonymity. In this study, I will

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use my dissertation, my field notes, a fieldwork interview with the student along with an interview made during the reinterpretation of the original data (*follow-up interview*).

Though I am a gay researcher, I did not come out to the majority of the participants during my fieldwork and did not include this important part of my identity in the dissertation, either. At that time, I believed that it could be a risky step as a university teacher. Now I am openly gay even in the academia, and I do research on LGBTQ issues, but I understand my fears of some years ago because of the very heteronormative Hungarian sociocultural context. Findings of a recent study (Takács and Szalma 2010) indicate that Hungary is one of countries where the lowest level of social acceptance of gays and lesbians was found in Europe. Several studies (summarized by Takács et al. 2012) underscore that the individual and systemic homophobia permeates Hungarian society, and most of the educational institutions do not seem to fulfill their awareness raising and anti-discrimination education tasks, but rather reinforce the systemic oppression of LGBTQ people (Takács et al. 2008).

This new research study intends to offer an autoethnographic reinterpretation of my original one from a (Eastern European) “*gay eye*.” Its aim is to re-present and reinterpret schooling, the studied school environment from the perspective of a gay researcher, and a gay student situated in the above described context. Through this reinterpretation, the “*gay eye*” itself and so autoethnography as a methodological genre are studied.

Theoretical Framework

Three main theoretical approaches constitute the interpretive framework of my study: critical pedagogy, masculinity studies, and queer theories and the theory about liminality.

Critical pedagogy is a diverse field of educational theories that interprets education, youth, knowledge, and school in their social situatedness and in relation to the dimension of power. Its aims are to critique social injustice and want to contribute to the transformation of society (Freire 1970/2000; McLaren 1986/1999, 1995; Giroux 1993). In the last decade, mainstream critical pedagogy has been criticized by radical, Marxist critical scholars (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2005; Hill 2003) who are concerned about what they judge as prevailing reactionary, postmodernist tendencies. These authors claim that we should return to the concepts of capital, class, and revolution in order to change society not within capitalism, but by overthrowing its exploitative mode of production.

There is a clear shift in this reinterpretation of my original study from a less radical to an explicitly Marxist understanding. There are autobiographical reasons behind this change. The main one is my encounter with Marxist circles that moved me to recognize Marxist theorizing and activism as more coherent ways and more effective tools in terms of social transformation.

Interpreting gender and more specifically masculinities, I use Connell’s theory in this paper (Connell 1995). According to the Australian sociologist, masculinities

represent the position of men in the social order of gender. There are hierarchical relations among them, and a hegemonic masculinity can be described: it is a normative ideal of male behavior.

Studies around schools, gender, and sexualities (Meyer 2010, 2012; Meiners and Quinn 2012) underscore that youth culture is pervaded by sexuality and different forms of sexualization (Attwood and Smith 2011) and that gender and sexuality deeply permeate school life on its different levels. However this presence is not reflected in education. The lack of explicit awareness and teaching engenders silence around sexual behaviors and sexual diversity and creates a non-inclusive and often discriminatory school environment, especially for LGBTQ persons. Schools are fundamentally heteronormative institutions with a very strong normalizing ethos and with a hidden sexuality curriculum (Meyer 2012).

Poststructuralist *queer theory* (Butler 1993) radically questions essentialistic categories of gender and sexuality by underscoring their inherent performativity and unveiling the power dimension behind connected identity categories. Regarding school and education, queer theory or queer pedagogy (Britzman 2000) highlights that heteronormativity is rooted on the one hand in the fixed gender structure and in more general social categories and norms transmitted normatively in education. On the other hand, heteronormativity is also built from an interpretation that considers sexuality private and not political: in educational discourses, sexuality has nothing to do with public education and schools. In this chapter, I will use a Marxist reinterpretation of queer theory (Zavarzadeh et al. 2001; Floyd 2009) that situates it in a historical materialist perspective.

In the chapter, I use Turner’s theory of initiation and his insights on *liminality* (Turner 1969/1995) when trying to find the in-between situations and the in-between, liminal subjects, which question education structures. The concept of liminal subject is very well connected to the notion of Giroux’s border pedagogy. In the context of fluid, culturally “mestizaje” (McLaren 1997a, 2005) identities, according to Giroux (1993), there is a need of identities that are able to cross the borders of ethnicity, culture, social difference, etc. or stand on the border and in the margins, deconstructing the power relations represented by the borders.

Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology

The educational context of the school, especially its everyday life and its socio-cultural (economic, political, material) dimensions lived by the researcher in communication with the student involved, is in focus in this chapter. It is taken as representing the social situation of gay men in school and has been analyzed from a historical materialist perspective, which thus constitutes an ontological master narrative. However, the research also has an anthropological starting point that takes reality as accessible for us only by interpretations, mainly narratives. The ultimate goal of the research is to contribute to the transformation of homophobic school environments.

The chapter in one way comprises a *narrative* ethnography that pays particular attention to narratives related to the interpretation of personal stories and to sexual minority and education issues. It is also narrative in its style: constructing an interpretive-narrative, challenging, “revolutionary” text. It intends to be an expressionistic writing (Beach 2005) that wants to convince the reader of a subliminal truth.

As for the methodology of the study, I refer to ethnography. By ethnography I do not mean only the empirical research, but rather the whole writing process and the final written text. This genre is characterized by the cultural perspective of the study, the relatively long-term and direct (participative) involvement of the researcher in the life of the research site, the researcher as the main research instrument, and the spiral theoretical–empirical construction of the study (Editorial 2006). My original paper was ethnography according to these criteria, and this paper is also ethnography but as a reinterpretation of the former investigation. In addition, this study has a strong autoethnographic character, too (cf. Ellis 2004). The socioculturally situated “I” of the researcher is in the center of the constructed narrative.

The methods used in the original study (2006–2007) were participant observation (with field notes, FN) and a nonstructured interview (fieldwork interview, INT1) with the gay student. The data collected and analyzed in 2007–2009 are reinterpreted in the present chapter through self-reflection and a nonstructured interview (follow-up interview, INT2) with the gay man. I used NVivo 8 software in the analysis of the data. The “new findings” are constructed in a dialogical way: by a spiral of theory, self-reflection, conversation, theory, self-reflection, and so on.

The Story of an “Alliance”

I started as a stranger and I finished as a kind of friend. This was the opinion of a lot of students at the end of my fieldwork. I was very well accepted by the students from the beginning. They understood that I was a young adult, but certainly not a teacher, so they invited me to go with them to parties or to the nearest pub after school; they even explained their new cheating techniques to me. I gained their trust. And I built up a certain personal connection to everybody in the class (29 students).

My position was particular on different levels. I was a border crosser in the class, because I cultivated a good relationship with the contrasting groups of the class. I was simultaneously a “member” of the circle of the “macho,” homophobic boys and the “gay-friendly girl and boy” group. They were quite hostile towards each other, but they totally accepted my presence and position in both groups. I was a border crosser in the school, because I broke the traditional hierarchical structure of the institution with my presence. I was a liminal subject who did not fit into the usual teacher–student division. That was particularly difficult for the teachers; the students enjoyed this situation. I was not a mediator. I was clearly at the side

of the students, because the aim of the study was discovering their subcultural and school life and raising consciousness about the forms of oppression in the school in order to facilitate possible forms of student agency. I was a border crosser only in the way that I stayed at the border, always at the side of those who were under the power of teachers, without being under that power myself. So I made the border much more visible. However, I was a clearly adult figure for the students. For a lot of them, I became an adult friend: they approached me to ask for help and to share problems that they did not speak to other adults about. I somehow broke even the more general social hierarchy of adults and children.

This special position in the classroom was probably possible because I hid different parts of my identity in the beginning. In order to be able to approach very different people in the class, I did not initially speak about my musical tastes, my past as a Catholic monk, or my current religious views. But I gradually revealed all these dimensions of my life, because I thought that after a certain point they did not really constitute an obstacle in the conversations, and I wanted to share something about my life since they had shared a lot about themselves with me. Regarding my gay identity, which was in its early phase of evolution at that time, the situation was different. I did not dare to come out to the homophobic boys, because I thought it would have had a bad impact on my relationship with them and in this way on my research. I came out only to a few members of the class.

The gay-friendly girls expressed their openness, and they invited me to go with them to a party. István¹ (the gay boy) was in their circle, and he came to the party with us. He began to test me about gay issues to see how tolerant I was. István often looked for my company and wanted to talk to me. We talked a lot about films we liked, and one day while talking about a gay thematic film, he came out to me. I decided to come out to him and then to the girls, too. I constructed a certain alliance with him and partly with the girls, as well. We could speak about gay and lesbian students in school, about our private lives, we met outside school in gay locals. I was a gay young adult figure for him. We felt that in a hostile environment, we could build up another “secret minority environment” with our conversations, allusions, and mutual support. But we had to be careful:

István tells me before the class that he has brought me something. I guess it is the film, and he says yes: *Transamerica* that he has promised. (. . .) He doesn't dare to give it to me; he is waiting for me to enter the classroom: “It is too crowded!” In the meantime, the teacher arrives, so I tell him: in the interval.

(. . .)

I am leaving. . . , István wants to give me the DVD; he is waiting till the crowd disperses. It is interesting that we have to do it in secret, in hiding.

Put it in your bag quickly, because if they see this, they will think we are together.
(FN 14.3.2007)

This episode shows very well the hidden character of our relationship, and István's irrational fear implies an internalized majoritarian interpretation of being gay.

¹ This is a pseudonym for the student in order to preserve his anonymity.

“If you are gay, your relation with any other man is more likely to be interpreted as of sexual nature.” And “if you are gay, you have to be very careful about your gestures with other gays, because they might discover you.” I think this is an internalized heteronormative image that connects gay identity to unilateral interpretation of sexuality: the connection made is that being gay is mainly a sexual (i.e., private) characteristic (Takács et al. 2012).

Our alliance was important for both of us: for István because he found a gay adult in school to whom he could talk and share even the fact that he arrived late because of a passionate morning sex act with his partner and for me because our conversations alleviated the burden of hiding my gay identity. It was not a totally equal relationship: he shared much more of his life than I did. It is very important to note that this alliance was not political, but totally personal and private. In this way, we conformed to the discourses of education on sexuality as only private matter (Britzman 2000). However, at a certain point during the ethnography, I felt that István was attracted to me (he acknowledged that in the follow-up interview). This feeling was not too strong (he had started a relationship with someone), was not at all mutual, and did not seem to affect our basically friendly relationship too much, but this kind of sexual desire was part of the story. It is important to let even these aspects emerge in order to avoid the asexualization of research and education.

School as an Oppressive Environment and Institution

Negative Experiences

From a gay perspective, one of the main characteristics of school is its oppressiveness. It is not István’s explicit interpretation, but it is rooted in his experience told in the two interviews. In the fieldwork interview, he described his actual school environment as a hostile place. After 2 years he changed school, and he had a shocking experience at the very beginning of his life in the new school: a boy was physically attacked in the courtyard of the school because he was gay. In his previous schools, he had not experienced similar violence, so he realized that here he had to be very careful. Although, he had had different and even positive experiences in his previous schools as a gay student, they had not been secure places for István, either. A deeper analysis made by NVivo 8 of the interview text shows that school and gay issues together appear with negative connotations in István’s personal story. *Feeling of difference, strangeness, being targeted, bullying, name-calling, and pretending (playing a role, having a mask)*—these were the terms related to his school experience as a gay man in relation to his classmates. The positive experiences regarding his gay identity were (i) the circle of friends where he could be himself openly and (ii) sexual and love experiences, which were also related very much to the school environment. These positive experiences are not related to István as a student in school, but they are in connection to his *private life* in the school environment, which was mainly lived very *hidden* in the small circle of friends.

Heteronormative and Gender Inculcation

My field notes reinforce this picture of his school. I noted several homophobic occurrences during my fieldwork. They were not direct (name-calling or bullying), but the homophobic classmates spoke a lot in their circles about “faggots”; they told jokes and expressed their negative feelings related to the issue of homosexuality. They sometimes blamed each other for being too gay (like using gay-related expressions). I noted in my field notes the scene that one of them provoked a physical contact with someone else then said: “Oh, please don’t caress me.” This dynamic can be interpreted as a “playing” with difference, dealing with weirdness and/or as part of the continuous conforming to an ideal, hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995).

These episodes are just part of the bigger picture. From my field notes, it is clear that the interactions among students and the pedagogical processes of the school are characterized by heteronormative and gender inculcation. The possible relationship forms other than the traditional heterosexual ones were not even mentioned, and the traditional gender roles were explicitly and implicitly reinforced by the gestures, ideas, expressions of peers, teachers, and texts and by the structures, images and symbols in the school environment (pictures, only heterosexual love expressed, teachers’ comments on appropriate gender behavior, the separation of male and female sports in PE, etc.). Pedagogy strengthened hegemonic masculinity and indirectly encouraged homophobic attitudes.

As I described in my original study, a certain subcultural, carnivalesque, liminal youth culture and pedagogy challenged the inculcation of the “official” school pedagogy. Regarding queerness and gender, this subcultural resistance only partly questioned normativity. A lot of images, gestures, and texts present in everyday school life reinforced hetero normativity and gender normativity, and only a few manifestations, utterances, and conversations (especially of the emos and of the gay-friendly girls) challenged it. For instance, topics of sexual practices, experiences, attractions, pornography, etc. were very often raised by the students in different ways but always referring to heterosexual practices. István could speak about his sexual experiences only to his closest friends, while his classmates did that “loudly.”

My Experience

As a researcher, I also experienced the hostile and oppressive nature of school environment. It was a different experience from István’s, because I could keep some distance from the school context. It was “just a research site” for me. But the homophobic utterances touched my personal identity and had an impact even on my research:

Then I am approaching the boys. I ask them what they had said to the English teacher before the class. They show me the poetry (Wordsworth’s) in their Hungarian textbook (there are

some poetries in the original language in the book). There is the word “gay.” We clarify that it means “meleg” [the Hungarian PC expression for gay] in the actual English language.

- B: So faggot [“buzi” in Hungarian]
 I: No, this is the nice word in English for that. For “buzi” there is another English word.
 B: What is it?
 I: Faggot.
 B: Ah, faggot, so later on... (he doesn't finish the sentence)
 (FN 31.1.2007)

I remember that this represented a new and complex situation for me: how to react to homophobia as a researcher (in the closet) in the field? I choose the strategy not to intervene directly, not to “educate” the boys, but to have a very neutral, kind of scientific way in explaining the linguistic differences between the terms, also because the teacher had not done that. In another case, I did not stop the boys either, and I wrote in my field notes that I did not want to be normative, as I did not stop them, when they swore with the name of God, despite it having disturbed me a lot, too. Later on, I realized that in this way, I conformed to the heteronormativity of the school context, my “nonnormative” (in reality nonethical) behavior reinforced homophobia, and I was complicit in the school oppression. I intervened later when I heard any rude expression about gays. I think that intervening in this case is necessary, not only from an ethical point of view (Dennis 2009) but from the epistemological perspective of a revolutionary, transformative research, too.

The phenomena of school homophobia affected my research in some fundamental ways—they made me feel as if I dare not come out, and they played a role in my choice to adjust myself to the heteronormative context without questioning it explicitly.

The Role of Teachers and the Institutional Oppression

The boys sometimes raised the issue of homosexuality even in the classroom, and most shockingly for me the teachers never told them that their approach was not acceptable or that they should not have used the word “faggot,” for instance.² In relation to this experience of mine, it is interesting to see how teachers appear in István's narrative. There are only episodes in which the teachers' acceptance appears; otherwise the concepts connected to teachers that emerged from the coding process were *silence, neutrality, inactivity, nonintervention, complicity with homophobic bullying, and complacency*. István expected that teachers would intervene at least when his gay schoolmate was attacked, but they did not. He did not expect that teachers might speak about gay issues, because they are “more old and prude”

² I have to admit that I also had a similar nonintervention reaction in the beginning. Nevertheless I still think that their educational role should have been much clearer. When I had been in the role of teacher in previous locations, I had always intervened.

(INT1). However, with the silence experienced by István and by me too, the teachers contributed to the institutional heteronormative oppression of the school (Takács et al. 2012):

Well, it is possible not to love gays, or hate them, I don't give a shit, but everybody should do it privately. (...) So I wouldn't let such a situation happen. (...) I took it really seriously, if I would be the principal. This is the same kind of racism when someone starts calling names of Gypsies, Chinese, Negros. (INT1)

Oppression is embedded in the social heteronormative, as is gender oppression. In the same sense as in capitalist exploitation, silence reduces and alienates our being (Floyd 2009). It is in the interest of the bourgeois class to keep sexuality and sexual minorities in a normative framework, but giving them some “free space” on the level of consuming and of the satisfaction of private desires. This oppressive, normative discourse is often internalized even by the members of minorities (Freire 1970/2000). It is part of this internalized heteronormativity when violence either simply isn't recognized or when the victim is blamed for the violent attack. As István said:

... to tell the truth, it was his stupidity, too. He spoke out so much about it [that his boyfriend left him]. He shouldn't have. Especially, in such a context. . . Maybe elsewhere he could have spoken out, and he might have cried on the shoulder of a girl, but this is not that school. (INT1)

Considering the hostile context of the school, this opinion can be interpreted not as the representation of internalized heteronormativity, but as the presentation of a logical strategic option in that particular context. Likewise, my choice not to come out during my fieldwork was a strategy in a heteronormative context (cf. later in this paper).

In the follow-up interview, István reinterpreted his school experience. He told me that the situation did not really change after my fieldwork. The same boys continued their homophobic discourses, but he was never attacked directly, verbally by them, and a newcomer straight boy was even very gay friendly. All in all, he evaluated his life in that school as a good experience in terms of his gay identity. He mentioned the indirect verbal jokes of the classmates around gayness, but he said:

I didn't mind them. I take a lot of things seriously. But I never took those jokes seriously. (INT2)

On a personal level, this strategy might seem adaptive because it alleviates the burden of being offended, discriminated, and eventually oppressed. But in the last instance, it does not help point out oppression, nor does it strategically fight against it. Hence, on a personal level, it is just a form of alienation. In the follow-up interview, István acknowledged that the school years were good only because he had created a circle of friends. He used the metaphor of an “*island*.” It was an island in the hostile school environment where he could live without the disturbing outside world. So in reality, it wasn't the school as an institution or István's school experience that were good, but the “life on the island” created in and separated from the heteronormative environment and everyday school life. And again this island was a

private space far from any political struggle. Enclosing political issues in private spaces is a typical hidden strategy of capitalism.

Commodification of Gayness

The power of capital can be traced in several dimensions of István's experience. In both interviews, he mentioned that he had had very different experiences in his previous school than in the one I studied. The other school was an "elite school" where the community of the class was better, and he experienced acceptance of his probably known gay identity by his peers. In the new school, the teachers were much closer to the students; there was a more cheerful atmosphere, but the students were from a different sociocultural environment (they were "bunkó" [a Hungarian slang word for rude, not educated people] according to his expression), and therefore they were not "mature enough" to accept gayness. In addition, according to my field notes, the gay-friendly circle of students implicitly connected their tolerance to their middle-class position and cultural tastes (tolerance and diversity as values, diverse musical tastes, emo and goth style, etc.), while the homophobic boys' behavior and expressions seemed to be related to a more working-class culture (rock and underground hip-hop music, fear of diversity, xenophobia, anti-Semitism). I am aware of the fact that these labels and my labeling here are dangerous, but this division not only rests on my interpretation; it was also expressed in various ways by others as well.

It seems that tolerance and diversity were regarded as a reserved privilege of the middle-class students. Working-class youth were conceived of as immature, unintelligent, and not liberal enough to accept diversity and homosexuality, such that behind this logic lie once again the exploitation of the working class and the commodification of gayness. In the struggle between capital and labor, capital uses all the means to create obstacles to working-class agency. In this case, the conservative working-class ideology, the image of immaturity, and the separation from oppressed minorities that obstructs united activities are all easily identified factors of the oppressive strategy of an exploitative capital.

The commodification of gayness (Zavarzadeh et al. 2001) connects LGBTQ identities to consumerism. As a good consumer, part of the "liberal" free-market-dominated middle-class sociocultural context, an LGBTQ subject can enjoy tolerance, freedom, acceptance, and self-expression. But being gay in this way is just another commodity. From this point of view, and considering teachers' neutrality, and the heteronormativity of textbooks and school environment,³ István's previous high school was as oppressive as his second one, though it subjectively felt more tolerant.

³ With an awareness raising LGBTQ school program, we (with my LGBTQ association) tried to enter this school in 2011, but we did not get the permission.

Border Identities and Liminal Subjects?

Some of the most important questions of this paper are related to our border identity and liminal position in the school context. Two questions emerge. They concern whether we were border identities and liminal subjects as gay men in that environment or not and, if we were, how we exercised that role and position. They relate more generally to how it is possible to be liminal subjects as gays (student and researcher) in a heteronormative context situated in the wider social context of a post-socialist country. To speak about this issue, it is necessary to examine our identities as constructed in the texts of the study.

Our Gay Identities

It is possible to delineate a narrative of the development of our identities by reflecting on our experiences. For István, the time when we met was clearly a period of discovering sexuality and developing relationships. It was a time of self-discovery and self-definition. In the first interview, he spontaneously spoke a lot about his sexual and relationship experiences and about what he had learnt from them. He described and interpreted his position as a “different” student in the different class communities. It was an initiation process of becoming gay. His gay identity was shaped by his experiences and the discourses and conditions around “gayness” in the society and in school. His self-representation as a gay student in school was mainly based on the concept of difference, especially in terms of gender atypicality (wearing rings and colorful outfits, being less “macho,” etc.). He connected his feeling different also to a voluntary attitude of nonconformity, of “don’t give a shit” to others’ opinion. In his self-definition as a gay boy, he adopted a common homonormative discourse that he is not a “faggot” who exhibits himself during gay prides and “fucking around” but a “gay” who wants to live a normal life, like a heterosexual man, but with another man.

It was a period of initiation also for me as a researcher, as a man living on his own, and as a gay man. Some months before my fieldwork, I totally changed my life: I had been a Catholic monk and priest before, but I left the priesthood and the Catholic religious community I had been part of and had started my “civil” life. My radical turn originated partly from the fact that I had accepted my homosexuality, and I had wanted to have a gay life. So that period was an initiation, a learning process of self-definition and discovering. In a certain way, I was on the same level as István, but I reflected much more on my position and social situatedness.

After the school years, István has felt freer and more open according to his narrative in the second interview. He interprets his actual attitude as a continuation of his previous nonconformity approach which could be really accomplished without the normative environment of the high school. While in school “everybody has to conform to a certain degree” (INT2), now, he can be really himself and “not

give a shit about anyone's opinion." However, his rhetoric is contradicted by some elements of his narrative in the follow-up interview, in which conforming is clearly present (for instance, not holding hands of his partner in the streets). His gay identity is interpreted mainly in private terms, and political issues are raised only in relation to his strong fear of right-wing extremism in Hungary.

My gay identity has changed a lot in these 5 years. I have engaged in LGBTQ activism, I am totally open now in every field of my professional and personal life, and I have reflected a lot on my identity. I interpret my gayness much less in terms of a fixed essentialized identity and much more in political terms. In my self-representation, like István, I also use the rhetoric of nonconformity, but I am a bit more reflective on it, and I see how much involuntary conformity is still present in my life. There is another important common element in our narratives: the "after-school" freedom. I know another lesbian ethnographer doing her fieldwork in a school, and her strategic choice was also not to come out. I think I could not be so free about the expression of my identity if I were still doing my fieldwork. And it is a strong question if I could initiate school ethnography now, with my openly gay identity; it was extremely difficult to find a school open to such a research experience even without this issue.

Our gay identity was and is in complex relations with our other identities and with our social position. István wants to be a journalist, but he stopped his college studies. He seemed to struggle with his more lower middle-class roots, being eager to be part of the higher middle class. I finished my PhD; I have a good social position but a very bad economic situation after the crises. We both make a living by selling our labor, and in this sense we can both be considered as part of the working class in a wide sense in Marxist terms.

Revolutionary Resistance?

As a radical intellectual, my actual question should be how much our alliance and our border identities and liminal subjectivities could have represented revolutionary presence or have been the driving power for the transformation of school regarding heteronormativity. Or at least, I should ask how could I have been a more transformative researcher. But at that time my identity, my self-definition, was not like now, and I did not have this radical view of transformation. In this study, I have reconsidered my position and also the two related pivotal concepts: liminality and border identity.

Liminality (Turner 1969/1995) is opposed to normative structures and challenges them, for example, the "unquestionable" structure of private property or the normative order of gender and sexuality related to capitalism. It can be considered effective from a revolutionary perspective if it does not constitute simple discursive or ironic challenging, but brings about real transformation. Liminal phenomena often just reinforce the previous social structure after a period of brief resistance and liminal subjects can be seen as weird and possibly ironic, if also sometimes somewhat

interesting, figures who are part of a given social context without offering any real change to that context.

Border crossing or border pedagogy (Giroux 1993) is more of a cultural practice that engenders the remapping of the order of power. The notion of border identities emphasizes both the historical and cultural formation of the self and its multiplicity. If this concept is connected to political activity and reconnected to class struggle without dissolving the self, it may be still a useful theoretical framework for revolutionary practice.

Of course, border identities and liminal subjects cannot be the driving force of systemically transformational, revolutionary politics on their own without coalitions and alliances. From a radical Marxist point of view, the real transformation of schooling is not possible without deep systemic changes and eventually the abolition of capitalism, but on the road towards the final socialist goal, there are smaller struggles and resistances without the potential to change the whole system but with the promise to challenge it and to unmask everyday oppression. If these actions are strengthening the broader anti-capitalist struggle and not undermining it, they are certainly important also from a socialist perspective. In this way, we could have been forces of resistance as liminal subjects and border identities in the school context, especially if we could construct some alliances with others. But without an openly gay identity, the “voice” is missing, as is the *clear* challenge to heteronormativity. Without representation, in a hidden way, it is not possible to resist, to struggle.

However, in some way, we might have had an impact on that school environment. On the one hand, István in his follow-up interview stated that his gayness was visible and not told but known by everyone in the class, and in this way it was a continuous challenge for the homophobic classmates. On the other hand, I challenged the hegemonic masculinity in the classroom. At the end of my fieldwork, some of the boys told me that I was differently male, but in a positive sense (not aggressive, not macho type, etc.), and also the class teacher underlined the fact that I was among them as a positive *male* adult figure, and in her opinion I had a very positive effect on them. Certainly, my being in a good relationship with István’s circle and with their group was also challenging for them.

Nevertheless, the question still remains if these challenges were really transformative or not. István’s “known” gayness may be reinterpreted as the reinforcement of heteronormative structures in which what is “not normal” can be tolerated, if it is not expressed. Moreover, can an identity closed in a separated “island” be a real challenge to oppressive discourses and to an oppressive system? My masculinity could have had an effect on the boys and on their discourses, but it was more a personal challenge without questioning the system of gender inculcation in school; and most importantly, the boys interpreted my difference not in connection with my different sexual orientation, which was unknown to them, but with my former priesthood, which I revealed towards the end of the fieldwork.

One of the most pressing, specific epistemological questions related to this issue is the hiddenness of the researcher’s gay identity. How can research challenge heteronormativity if it conforms to its order? And is hiding our identity a strategic

choice or complicity with oppression, how much conformation is understandable, and how much is just a contribution to conserving the oppressive structures? Without giving final answers to these important questions, I attempt to outline some elements of a possible response. On the one hand, according to queer Marxist theorists (Morton 2001), the centrality of coming out as the solution to the oppression is a social construction which focuses on a personal choice without considering the subject's social and material conditions and the wider capitalist political and economic context. Deconstructing the centrality of coming out and reflecting on the particular context, not to come out seems to be a rational and strategic choice, at least during the actual fieldwork.

Fighting against heteronormative oppression is possible in a lot of other different ways. On the other hand, the importance of being transparent and authentic in research cannot be denied, and the non-expression of identity might be viewed as the reinforcement of the heteronorm. Similar points and criticisms can be made of researchers who try to critique the capitalist political economy and culture from within a liberal identity. So the researcher might consider revealing their identity at a certain point of the fieldwork or in the end, and it seems desirable that in their writing, they present their identity since it has a certainly strong impact on how they interpret the data. If they cannot contribute directly to the transformation of the research site, they should write a transformative text. As for the more general question around conformity, my paper suggests that the illusion of a voluntaristic nonconformity attitude is to be deconstructed. Conforming is not totally avoidable, and we cannot get rid of our socioeconomic conditions and situatedness. What we can do is to make this conforming visible. With our reflective writing, we can unmask and denounce the exploitative and oppressive processes we conform to, and at least in this way we may contribute to the struggle against them. This has also been the purpose of the present chapter.

Reflections on Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a term used to indicate a “method” or a genre applied in a lot of mainly interpretive and constructionist research studies, but it is very difficult to define it exactly (Ellis 2004). As Ellingson and Ellis (2008) remark, what is called autoethnography depends fundamentally on the author's claim. And there might be a lot of factors that influence the researcher's choice to call their study autoethnography: the popularity of the term (as Ellis 2004 notes it has become the term of choice), the scientific or academic context, publishing practices, and so on.

In the case of the above presented study, originally I used the term ethnographic case study or simply narrative ethnography, and I acknowledged its autoethnographic character. But some of my colleagues interpreted it as an example of autoethnography and it moved my interpretation, too. After studying more deeply the variegated field of autoethnographies, I have applied the term to my

ethnography, and in this text I have re-elaborated it and I am reinterpreting it in this way. This subsequent change is in coherent line with the interpretive nature of the study qualified by the process of continuous reinterpretation.

This choice is rooted in the text and in the process of my writing. My paper is clearly autobiographical, it even alludes to the autobiographical reasons of my theoretical choices, it reflects on my gay self and identity and connects my subject to the sociocultural context, and it also tells the story of the student from my perspective, filtered through my narrative. The text can be interpreted as the story of the student connected to my story and reflected by me as a researcher or rather as my own reinterpreted story in communication and strong connection with the student's.

I think now that the second interpretation is the more appropriate one, as my colleagues also noted, so the term autoethnography is properly used for my research. It is constituted certainly not only by a simple self-reflection but by a communicative, conversational process: my experience as unfolded in the written text is in dialogue with the student's narrative. As Coffey (1999) explains, the dimensions of self and autobiography are deeply involved in every piece of ethnographic research. However, in autoethnography the self is positioned in the center; the “subject” itself is researched always in relation to its contexts and other persons (Ellis 2004; Starr 2010). In this research, I consider autoethnography a genre of writing characterized by personal storytelling and self-reflection as a methodological approach that analyses the socioculturally situated subject with an ethnographic eye.

Nonetheless, employing the term autoethnography has not only professionally justifiable reasons; it is my strategic and political choice, too. Reinterpreting my study as an autoethnography challenges the Hungarian sociological and educational academic context as an arena where the study of the self and reflections over representation, authority, and interpretation are missing. Then, concerning the international audience, with this reinterpretation, I would like to emphasize and strengthen the legitimacy, importance, and usefulness of critically researching the socioculturally situated subject, particularly in relation to LGBTQ issues. I propose that the “I” as the object–subject of research with a focus on its sociocultural (material, economic, historical, political) dimensions can fertilize an effective critical epistemology. The story of the political self might bring new ideas and perspectives even for a common revolutionary practice (cf. ad. es.: McLaren 1997b).

Autoethnography is considered to have its origins in the postmodernist turn or challenge that questions representation, authority, and (scientific) truth in research; and it is mostly linked to poststructuralist approaches that deconstruct “traditional,” “humanist” subjectivities (Ellis et al. 2011). This seems to be the “natural nest” of this approach. In addition, LGBTQ-related autoethnographic texts and some methodological papers (Berry 2007; Adams 2011; Adams and Holman Jones 2007, 2011) suggest that there is a certain inherent connection between autoethnography and poststructuralist queer theory.

My study represents a *critical*, LGBTQ-related autoethnography, taking a certain distance from this “original” tradition, displacing the genre from its nest. This

is not without precedent. Denzin (2003b) in his manifesto-like article and in his book (Denzin 2003a) connects autoethnography to performance ethnography and, in reaction to the proliferation of oppression, outlines a new critical, politically committed qualitative research trend. Starr (2010) underscores the transformative and catalytic force of autoethnography in education because it results in the increased awareness of the researcher, so in their emancipation and through dissemination, it induces also the transformation of the readers and the studied context.

There are several examples of critical autoethnography in education. McLaren (1997b) creates a narrative text reflecting on his ethnographic self as a critically reflexive flâneur. Taylor (2007) engages critical autoethnography as a teacher education method and defines its specificity referring to its emancipatory and transformative character. Similarly, Kahl (2011) and Warren (2011) propose it can help teachers recognize their oppressive practices and discourses. Quicke (2010) reflects on his own story as an educational psychologist, a critical practitioner who resists dominant discourses and constructs a hope-without-illusion story. Spry (2001) interprets autoethnography as dialogical performance reinforcing emancipation and constructs a poetical and theoretical, performative text on her embodied journey as a woman. All these studies can be labeled as critical but in different ways. However, except of McLaren's text (1997b), none of them can be considered as a critical Marxist writing. Moreover, they fundamentally remain in the original epistemological realm of autoethnography. My study, reinterpreted as autoethnography, is an endeavor to demonstrate that autoethnography can be epistemologically positioned in Marxist critical theorizing and Marxist research is rewarded by studying subjectivity in this kind of way.

Contemporary critical Marxist scholars tend to develop more analytical papers on capitalist oppressive social structures and processes and/or activism-related, manifesto-like writings. The shift in style, from ethnographic texts in dialog with postmodern approaches towards more structural analysis and practice-oriented statements, is clearly visible, for example, in Peter McLaren's works. He did not continue his autoethnographic project so well grounded in his cited writing (McLaren 1997b). Among Marxist scholars, there is a certain fear of solipsism, self-centeredness, and narcissism that self-reflective research could convey. Autoethnography, because of its postmodern roots, might be seen as an approach that undermines revolutionary practice by relativizing truth and making the subject fragmented. In addition, while different subjectivities (mestizaje, hybrid, working class) were and are studied by the proponents of critical pedagogy (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2005; McLaren 2005), autoethnography seems to be disregarded by radical Marxist critical educators.

There are deeper philosophical questions behind these problematics. Several valuable works appeared that examine the subject from a Marxist point of view (Althusser 1969; Boudain 1982/2009; Žižek 2009), but it is still a philosophical field to deepen and explore further, considering even the new challenges of post-structuralism and postmodern society. The latter are often considered as threats for the revolutionary committed subject (Heartfield 2006), but I think the sharp-edged antagonism between postmodern and Marxist thought might become more moderate in the future and new ways of conversation might open.

While I am in favor of an explicitly Marxist and radical commitment in research, I hesitate to embrace the strong contraposition of the two approaches, due to autobiographical reasons among others. I cannot see the possible lines of this future dialogue yet, because in this historical moment, gestures of conversation with postmodernism certainly appear to be complicit with reactionary thoughts and praxis. Nor can I situate my ethnography well among Marxist theories of the subject. Nevertheless, with this writing I underscore the importance of the study of the self. In this process, the subject becomes other (object of research), and through this otherness, it can be more reflexive by being more vigilant against its own oppressive practice and self-deceit. Furthermore the “I” is never isolated, it is constituted in relation to others, and it is being itself only through others (Berry 2011; McLaren 1997b). This reflexivity encompassed in autoethnography, and this openness of the self to others is interconnected and crucial for critically engaged educational research. My autoethnography is in a moment of potential and tension. I cannot give answers to the problems mentioned above. My text just aims at showing some possible ways of reflection and reflexivity.

This is an LGBTQ-related critical autoethnography, and it bears another mutual enhancement. Critical theory can be enriched by the LGBTQ perspective, the special queer or gay eye often marginalized and oppressed; and a critical Marxist approach might offer new ways of interpretation of LGBTQ issues. Moreover, autoethnography can give voice to this perspective and can make an oppressed voice louder.

The critical autoethnographic nature of the study allows for an epistemological reflection on this gay eye. According to the idea of epistemological pluralism, the perspective (the “eye”) of a certain group by which reality is inquired can constitute a particular epistemology. This paper seems to strengthen this idea and presents how schooling might be seen from a LGBTQ perspective which is different from other approaches and how a certain “queer or gay knowledge” can be constructed around education. The LGBTQ eye shows heteronormativity and gender inculcation of schooling on the basis of personal experiences; it may privilege the reflection on self-definition and self-development in research, and it repudiates the impersonalization and asexualization of education and of research. However, in this study, the “gay eye” was not the only perspective, and a critical transformative or Marxist approach might be interpreted as an even stronger or inclusively bigger epistemological dimension. Perhaps this paper may best be thought of as an example of a functioning queer Marxist approach.

In this study, I claim that there is a specific Eastern European perspective, too, and together with the LGBTQ eye, they constitute a particular Eastern European gay epistemology. This Eastern European perspective leads me to purposely use the term *gay*, even if it might seem homonormative or not fluid enough for the proponents of queer theory. In our context, queer issues are not familiar, still not rooted enough in LGBTQ activism, so realistically we should utilize a more understandable terminology in order to construct a politically more effective discourse (Connell 2010).

My original goal in this research was to focus on this “gay eye.” This epistemological purpose could be pursued very well using a genre that explores and writes the subject. This was one of the reasons why I stepped on the slippery path of autoethnographic research. Another factor was that since I am gay, part of the studied minority, the reflections evolved naturally in this direction of self-reflection. Moreover, excluding autobiographical, personal dimensions from research or even diminishing these elements for the sake of “objectivity” would have created an obstacle to present the whole picture, so the very “objectivity” and the authenticity of research would be questionable. It would have undermined the resistant, revolutionary character of the study, as well. Eventually, this study is a reinterpretation, and this reflexive reinterpreting is one of the most typical methods used in autoethnography.

The methodological specificity of my paper resides in this self-reflection. I did not use originally autoethnographic field notes (Chang 2008), and although I did use interview and a certain content analysis of the texts, I consider my “main method” the critical reinterpretation of the self, defining my text as a combination of reflexive and native ethnographies with some characteristics of layered accounts that focus on the procedure of research (Ellis et al. 2011). This is certainly problematic on different levels. First, it is difficult to exactly describe this “method,” and the accountability of research might be queried. Then, questions can be raised about methodology from a Marxist perspective. How can this method of self-reflection be considered a critical, Marxist method? Moreover, is there a specific Marxist methodology, and are there Marxist methods or methods used differently by Marxists? To what extent are they different? I do not have an answer to this challenging question. The Marxist specificity might be found more in my way of interpretation and in the concepts I use. But it is certainly a question to be studied in the future even in relation to autoethnography. Regarding accountability, I am not concerned by the objections of other postpositivistic research paradigms (Holt 2003), and I think that *authenticity, rhetorical force, and new ideas generated* (Ellis 2004) strengthen the narrative truth of my writing.

Nevertheless, I see some other problems and pitfalls in my research. First of all, because of the centrality of my subjectivity, I could disregard István’s perspective. Due to organizational reasons, the conversation, part of my study is less strong than I have planned: I have managed to arrange just one follow-up interview with the student. Autoethnography conveys the danger of colonizing other participants involved in the process. The conscious strengthening of the dimension of conversation should help decrease this pitfall. Another problem is related to ethnography as conversation with the audience. According to Berry (2006): “At the heart of autoethnography is the communicative goal to perform as storytellers in creative, evocative, and engaging ways.” I think this evocative nature of my writing is not strong, so might not match one of the criteria of good autoethnography: the aesthetic quality (Ellis 2004; Spry 2001). It was difficult to find a balance between storytelling and analysis. This is partly due to the Marxist approach. How to construct a more understandable and evocative style within the Marxist tradition is always challenging, because it has a quite specific vocabulary and dialectical-analytical style that cannot be totally avoided.

Interpretation

Interpretation is a crucial concept in my research and in this whole chapter. All my efforts at self-reflection and theorizing and my epistemological struggling can be summarized in this term: interpretation. Interpreting is inherently embedded in our human condition and our life; it is a continuous process of searching for meaning. Also science and research might be considered as procedures of interpretation. Certain traditions of social and educational studies claim that theorizing and empirical study; eliciting data and interpreting it; and seeing, collecting, and analyzing (constructing new knowledge) are not different moments in research, but it is a whole complex hermeneutical process always qualified by different ways of interpretation (Denzin 1997). In autoethnography, the two dimensions (i.e., interpretation as human condition and as research) are deeply intertwined blurring the borders of mundane and scientific, literature and science, and theory and praxis. Some opponents of this approach might consider this as a weakness, but I think this is one of the strengths of autoethnography. In this way, it can perform revolutionary research creating convincing transformative narratives of critique, hope, and change. This critical interpretation of the “I” can be really fruitful because it speaks the human language of personal storytelling but at the same time the language of political engagement.

The previous part of this chapter has already treated a lot of hermeneutical considerations. In this conclusive section, I am just summarizing what I mean for critical interpretation of the “I.” I situated (my) autoethnography in the border field of interpretive research. I disapprove of the post-positivistic, analytical concept of science that pretends to be neutral but often unreflectedly serves the interests of oppressive systems. I claim that critical Marxist ethnography should consider itself within or strongly connected to the concept of interpretive research, though its interpretation is necessarily more analytical to a certain extent; and it should maintain its alliance with the trends of this tradition resisting and criticizing post-positivist science. My hermeneutical choice is clear in this study. I intend for interpretation of the “I” a narrative, self-reflecting, relational process that is permeated by values, interests, emotions, and views, not excluding some analytical moments. Therefore, I have resisted taking into consideration the queries around validity from the (mainstream) post-positivist research paradigm. I cannot totally dispense with the poststructuralist approach either. I recognize the textuality of my research, and even if I do not follow a deconstructionist style in my writing, I am aware of the slippery nature of textual meaning giving, and I acknowledge that (re) interpretation and (re)writing are always happening; it is not under my power after the written text is read by others (Culler 1983). While I affirm that in written narratives the “I” itself is given in the text, irrefragable from its textuality, I do not follow the poststructuralist interpretation of the fragmented, dissolved, textually deconstructed subject, because I want to create a transformative, critical narrative. I indubitably feel it to be an ethical and political duty for a critical researcher.

I am convinced that texts can be transformative in this historical moment only if they express an explicitly Marxist critique of the social order and if they transmit

hope or at least make visible the potential of action for radical change. This is the *critical* dimension of (my) interpretation. It means the use of a certain conceptual apparatus of Marxist analysis. Furthermore, it encompasses the interpretation of the self as socioculturally, historically, politically, economically embedded subjectivity in a dialectical tension of situatedness and agency.

This *critical autoethnographic* interpretation of the “I” is very different from the most popular postmodernist one. The subject is decentered, but not in a post-structuralist way. It is the contrary of a narcissistic or solipsistic understanding of the dissolved self without hope and agency how Marxists envision poststructural interpretation of the subject. Critically, the “I” cannot be interpreted per se but rather in relation to others, as part of society, anchored in its context, moreover as a subject *for others*. This is possible if the interpretation is reflexive and dialectical.

My study and this whole chapter hold the tensions of continuous, multiple, and multilayered *reinterpretation* and the burden of the interpretation of interpretation. I have made it quite transparent how I have reinterpreted, and I am reinterpreting my text till the last moment when I hand it in to the readers, and it will be their turn to reinterpret it. This *reflexivity* might sometimes be disturbing, but it supports the openness of the “I” for further auto-evaluation and revision necessary for a decentered, revolutionary, researcher subject; and it guarantees the democratic nature of the narrative always being questionable, reinterpretable. This issue of re-reinterpretation seems to be more connected to a postmodernist tradition, but again I think that it is in total accordance with the critical approach reinforcing democracy, freedom, and justice in science. It has particular importance in a post-socialist context, where Marxist ideas were used as unquestionable “truth” and tool of oppression.

Eventually, I understand my critical interpretation as *dialectical*. It means that the “I” is interpreted in terms of its material conditions, within the capitalist society, related to the modes of production of this society, and in the context of class struggle and that the interpretation has a certain fluid character: inconsistencies, discrepancies, and tensions are embraced opening up to new possibilities (Harvey 2010).

Dialectical self-reflexivity is one of the main characteristics of my interpretation; it makes my writing a carrier of transformation. I hope that I managed to convince the readers about this critical potential; hence, my study may contribute to the emancipation of LGBTQ people especially in education, and this chapter may fecundate further discussion around philosophical, epistemological, and methodological implications of the critical exploration and interpretation of the “I.”

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4.3 “Of Time and the City”: Young People’s Ethnographic Accounts of Identity and Urban Experience in Canada

Jo-Anne Dillabough and Philip Gardner

Reporting on the Complexity of Ethnographic Research with Young People: Multiple Sources and Multiple Narratives

Andy: There is a lot of Asian here because this school is by [...] They call us chinks and stuff like that.

JD: Who’s the they? [...] When you say they call us chinks?

Andy: Native people. Yeah, they are like get off our land and stuff. And it’s like, for them, there are too many of you. Then we call them a racist word for Native, jugs, when people get pissed off and when people get mad or when a group beat on one guy. For being racist.

JD: Who beat up who?

Andy: Well then it gets complicated and it’s mixed. . .because some Natives hate racism too! [Andy, Chinese Canadian, aged 14, Vancouver BC]

A key power of narrative, claims Ricoeur, is to ‘provide ourselves with a figure of something’ [...] So doing, we can make present what is absent. [What we are doing is liberating] ourselves from the blind amnesia of the ‘now’ by projecting futures and retrieving pasts. (Kearney 2004, p. 99)

‘Of time and the City’ is taken from the title of Terrance Davies’ photomontage of childhood in Liverpool, UK during and after the Second World War.

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Department of Public Welfare: In the event that displaced persons or other immigrants coming to the attention of this department as public charges, such cases are to be immediately reported to the Welfare Services in order that immigration authorities may be given immediate opportunity to arrange for deportation []. Under no circumstance are they eligible for regular assistance, and temporary or emergency assistance can only be issued on the author of the deputy commissioner [City of Toronto Archives, LLP-46: 55.1 copy, 46.21, 39., March 3, 1950].

The above words, some scholarly, some derived from a research interview, and some from archive sources, convey in different ways the power of narrative and the narrative imagination¹ (see Kearney 2004) as a temporally located strategy for making sense of the world. In this respect, the exploration of narrative expressions constitutes a central element of the ethnographer's trade. It also, however, presents a number of methodological and interpretive dilemmas which are not easily resolved. For example, such dilemmas may emerge when a young person is interviewed about, or asked to visualize, their past experience in a neighborhood, the wider city, or family life. For experienced ethnographers, in such cases we learn that young people may often imagine they have little history of their own to tell and know still less about the history of the city in which they live. And this can be true for all of us at some point or another in a particular time and place. It may also be the case that there are young people who have been born into local conditions of loss that have substantially erased patterns of familial or community memory (Skantes 2012).

In this chapter, we argue that narratives expressed by research participants—in this case, young people—always carry residual meanings which operate in the present in re appropriated forms which help to shape their projected futures. It is the ethnographic interpretation of these narratives that will allow us better to understand how particular identity categories may be seen as part of a *larger narrative imagination*. A young person imagining he or she is *Eminem* or seeing themselves as “a Thug” or “a Gina”² constitutes a form of social and cultural meaning which carries residual effects into the present. In exploring such meanings and their effects, we focus on three elements of everyday life—temporality, symbolism, and space—as central to a storied account of research with young people

¹ Here we are able to witness the power of Ricoeur's notion of narratives and their surplus effects in the form of the imagination. Ricoeur suggests that individuals must narrate themselves into a possible world based upon their own historically informed imagination of the future: “what is proposed in the text is the proposing of a world that I might inhabit and into which I might project my own powers” (Kearney 2004, p. 53).

² These subcultural groups will be discussed later in this chapter in the description of the ethnographic study.

living in the present. Our objective is to explore the role of everyday practices—localized memories, youth conflicts, feelings of security, young people’s reactions to new knowledge of an urban landscape, and its past—to uncover what they might tell us about both the contemporary moment and about a time that has long since past (Willis 2000). Alongside the significance accorded to the symbolic and the spatial in ethnographic work, we argue also for the importance of engaging time through the analysis of youth narratives. The importance of the temporal dimension is illustrated by findings emerging from a major cross-national ethnographic research project in which we have participated in different ways across the last decade (see Dillabough 2008; Dillabough and Kennelly 2010; Dillabough et al. 2005; McLeod 2012). As principal project investigator, supported by a team of three project researchers, Dillabough spent over 2 years in research sites in Toronto and Vancouver, as reported in *Lost Youth in the Global City: Class, Culture, and the Urban Imaginary* (see Dillabough and Kennelly 2010). She “hung out” on a regular basis at the local school, shadowing a small sample of students in classrooms and hallways and, in a different guise, undertook two 6 to 12 month periods of action research and team teaching alongside the English and social studies classroom teachers in the schools where the study took place. Away from school, she sought, where possible, to share the activities and experiences of the young people, joining them in the informal learning contexts of their neighborhoods, away from the formal world of the school.

Those with whom we worked in this study comprised two diverse groups of economically disadvantaged and excluded young people living at the fringes of the contemporary global city.³ In working with these young men and women—utilizing a combination of visual and more traditional research methods such as oral histories, open-ended interviews, photo-narratives, media analysis, visual time lines, and documentary and archive analysis—we found that young people’s cultural expressions led us, over and over again, to a striking and poignant recognition: the ways in which they characteristically narrated their experiences in the present were marked by a powerful and pervasive temporal quality. Here, for example, is Cynthia, a 15-year-old “white” working-class “east ender” from Vancouver, Canada, reflecting on the financial challenges she faces. She is speaking of the present, yet her words are captured by symbolic references about single mothers and working-class labor that are grounded in collective memories of the urban past:

I feel like kids should not have to worry about the money [. . .], yet, they’re almost forced to because it impacts them a lot. I always have to worry about my mom’s finances cause she is a *single mother*. I have to support her as much as I can to make sure she is happy because she is the one who has to *bring in all the bacon* [. . .]. At the same time it’s hard. When she comes home she doesn’t want to do any *housework*. I have to do all the *housework*. Extra pressure for me on top of my school work which I should really be concentrating on.

³ We also begin to showcase work on a third case study which was not completed at the time of the Canadian study but is currently underway, in the UK and South Africa, and is supported by the second author. We wish to thank Jaqueline Kennelly for acting as the senior researcher and co-author on “Lost Youth in the Global City” and her valuable methodological insights which have inspired elements of this chapter.

The accounts that we heard from young people such as Cynthia showed us how the effects of time and its passing acted subtly and ceaselessly to transform and to constrain the course of their everyday lives. This recognition prompted an approach asserting neither a critique of liberal humanistic youth narratives which present young people as free and unconstrained actors nor one that proclaimed objectifying, essentialized narratives of young people who are frozen in time (see McNay 2000; Britzman 1995; Skourtes 2012). Rather, the narrative expressions that we heard from our young participants invoked highly complex storied accounts of selfhood in which everyday lived experience and the rhythms of a longer and deeper collective memory were closely entwined.

In consequence, we tried to think differently about the relationship between temporality and ethnographic practice. In so doing, a conceptualization which we found useful, both methodologically and theoretically, was the notion of *narrative identity*, as elaborated in Paul Ricoeur's philosophy (Ricoeur 1991, pp. 73–81; Kearney 1998, p. 17; Clifford 1988). For Ricoeur (1991), the idea of narrative identity comprises “the kind of identity that human beings acquire through the mediation of the narrative function.” Ricoeur (1991) writes:

After a long journey through historical narrative and fictional narrative, I asked [...] whether there was any fundamental experience that could integrate these two major types of narrative. I then formed the hypothesis that the constitution of narrative identity, whether it be that of an individual person or of a historical community, was the sought-after site of this fusion between narrative and fiction. We have an intuitive pre-comprehension of this state of affairs: do not human lives become more readily intelligible when they are interpreted in the light of the stories that people tell about them? And do not these ‘life stories’ themselves become more intelligible when what one applies to them are the narrative models—plots—borrowed from history or fiction (a play or a novel)? (cited in Wood 2004, p. 188).

Ricoeur's emphasis upon narrative and storytelling offered a productive interpretive channel for trying to reach towards an imaginary in which circulating currents of struggle and accommodation, of fantasy and recollection, were gathered together. What this meant was we could begin to confront some of the interpretive issues that linked the world of the past and the world of the present in young people's narratives of identity and exclusion in the “global city”.

Reporting Ethnographic Research Reflexively: Critique, Concepts, and Interpreting Young People's Imagined “Identities”

To contextualize this exploration, this section—guided particularly by the earlier work of Deborah Britzman (1995) and James Clifford (1983)—will briefly consider the handling of ethnographic practice and the problematic of the concept of *identity* in existing educational and social sciences research. This discussion will lead onto a

description of appropriate tools for assessing the use value of the terms “narrative” and “narrative identity” as expressed by young people in storied accounts of selfhood and urban experience. These tools should be seen as linked to what Kearney, following Ricoeur, has referred to as a “social imaginary”: a “body of collective stories, histories and ideologies which informs our modes of socio-political action (and which) is constitutive of our lived reality [...] serv(ing) both an ideological role of identification and a utopian role of disruption” (Kearney 2004, p. 86; also see Sargent 2008). In narrative performance, the ideological dimension pulls one way towards the past, striving to preserve and maintain, while the utopian is animated by alternatives, straining towards a radically different future. Understood in this way, the stories told by young people always constitute something more than their surface presentation. They cannot be approached directly through the application of objective criteria linked to straightforward notions of historical truth or narrative authority. As Somers (1994, p. 606) argues: “one way to avoid the hazards of rigidifying aspects of identity into a misleading categorical entity is to incorporate into the core conception of identity the categorically destabilizing dimensions of time, space and relationality.”

Categorical destabilization of this kind is evident in this story, told by Tony, a 14-year-old Portuguese gangsta boy [also self-identifying as a Thug] from Toronto, who visually portrays his sense of selfhood (as Eminem) and goes on to speak about his hopes for a “real” identity in the future (Fig. 1):

Tony: Most people classify me as a Thug because they call me Slim Shady, you know, Eminem. They mostly classify me as that cause I listen to Rap and all that [and I shaved my head]

[...] But they say I am slowly starting to turn [...] I eventually hope to get out of that, like to be my own self, by next year. [...] Like this year I was trying to impress people by trying to look, like, get all the new fashions but I’ve learned that I have had my fun so next year I will be dressing the way I feel like. Yeah, then [those others], they’ll be on their own [...] If they can’t accept me for who I am [...], then it’s their own fault.



Fig. 1 Tony’s self-portrait (Toronto Case Study), Portuguese Canadian male (aged 14)

In Tony's words we see the imaginative combination of factual and fictive elements in the construction of a workable narrative identity. This narrative expresses a struggle to envisage a selfhood that is rooted in the here and now but which bears within it the prospect of breaking through the constraints of the present to attain a transformed future with new horizons of possibility.

Twenty-First Century Problematics in Ethnographic Research: "Identity" and the Ethnographic Imagination

More than 15 years ago, Deborah Britzman (1995), in an elegant piece of writing on the politics of ethnographic narratives, identified a set of key problematics associated with the practice of writing ethnography. Her key concerns were as follows. In the wake of the cultural turn in anthropology and the social science and humanities, she argued that critical ethnographers were often content to criticize the authority of a social system (as perceived and defined by them). But they were much less disposed to criticize the authority of their own writing or the authority of its meanings as inscribed in the form of academic text. As Clifford (1983; Clifford and Marcus 1986, p. 118) argued, "while ethnographic writing cannot entirely escape the reductionist use of dichotomies and essences, it can at least struggle self-consciously to avoid portraying an abstract, a-historical other."

Following the work of Simon and Dipbo (1986), Clifford (1983), and others, Britzman (1995) went on to argue that there are three key forms of ethnographic authority about which we should be concerned: "the authority of empiricism," the "authority of language," and the authority of "reading." In each case, she sought to delineate the role of authority as manifested in the power of the ethnographer to shape or regulate representations of research participants' imagined identities. Her dominating argument was that ethnographers do not do enough to challenge the humanistic ideal of the universal "identity." Here we must be aware, according to Britzman, that it is not enough to question the language used by participants to define themselves. It is also necessary to assess how the ethnographer seeks to represent participants' conceptions of themselves in order to make the ethnographic story intelligible to their perceived audience (Britzman 1995; Connerton 2008).

Latterly, there have been many attempts to challenge notions of sacred, pitied, or objectified identities in ethnographic research and the kinds of affective reactions which emerge in the reading of such accounts. Clifford Geertz (2000), for example, warned of that sentimentality or pity which may act upon the readers of ethnography when the narrative is represented in terms of an individual's plight or as a "true" account of "culture." According to Geertz, this sentimentality can often lead simply to pity for the research participants, rather than to positive political action. Here, the narratives represent a form of ethnographic commemoration, in the form of highly psychologized "trauma narratives" (see Felman 2001; Simon 2005) to the

degree that “the death of the subject”—the research participant—may be seen really to take place, with lives or identities represented as frozen in time, as that to which Kearney and Taylor (2004) referred as the *sacrificial stranger*. The paradoxical consequence of this is that we must also witness the death of the actor who has played an active part in the making of the narrative itself, a part that has been rendered invisible to the reader of the ethnographic text. Here, then, ethnography may serve to undermine the complex and contested accounts of participants and the hope of eliciting critical and agonistic engagement with the meanings attributed to youth cultures themselves. An example of this misapprehended form of objectification comes from Freddy, a 15-year-old Latino “east end” boy, struggling to be recognized in his own neighborhood. In the passage below, Freddy remarks on the new arrival (a consequence of the project of “urban regeneration” at the fringes of Vancouver’s urban core) of homeless people in his neighborhood. The forms of historical classification that are rendered visible in this example reflect the significance Freddy must place on deploring the newcomers. In declassifying them or misrecognizing them as the symbolically charged foreign and failed other, he simultaneously elevates his own status at the price of demeaning other historically marginalized groups, such as the “bums and mums.” Here, the power of gender and social class in carrying the explanatory weight of the category of the mothers of the homeless is prominent: according to Freddy, the mothers must have done something stupid:

The bums I see, or the *homeless people* I see are like, you look at them and they’re like, “What are you looking at?” *I feel like what the hell is wrong with them.*

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Um. What do you think has happened to them? [. . .] If you were going to speculate on what happened to them, like, what would you say? [. . .]

I don’t know. They didn’t do education or anything. They like dropped out, or their *mum*, they did something stupid. So their *mum* kicked them out or I don’t know. [. . .] *It’s their fault that they’re out there.*

Such expressions of ethnographic authority are also tied up with the empirical element of ethnography (i.e., with the speaking power of the ethnographic text and of the ethnographer), as a form of evidence (Britzman 1995), and with the many challenges to the idea of ethnographic representation as a form of allegory (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Here the “authority of language” and the objective dimensions of the ethnographic text play a dominating role for the reader, leaving us with a realist claim about the essence of participants’ “true identity,” and inviting the charge of exoticising the “other” as an abstraction that does not carry its own history, memory, or story. In this respect, we may simultaneously fail to witness competing or contested interpretations of identity and culture. In reflecting upon this limitation, it may be that despite the advances made in these earlier and innovative debates, we are still struggling to achieve a landscape of narrative imagination within ethnographic practice sufficient to illuminate that “ambiguous, multi-vocal world”—Bakhtin’s “heteroglossia”—that Clifford (1983) urged us towards.

It is important to note that it is not just the narratives that come to matter but also the role of powerful scholarly discourses enforcing academic authority within the

ethnographic narrative itself (Lather 1991, 2007). In recent years only minor attention has been paid to the conceptual elements of narrative and particularly the practice of narrativization as part of a social imaginary—as in the creation of a story—and their role in expressing the wider historical conflicts that touch young people by way of collective memory as well as by their direct human experience.⁴ In consequence, as Kearney and Taylor (2004) observe, “such crucial functions in our social and personal lives as myths, dreams, symbols, metaphors, or social imaginaries like ‘ideology’ and ‘utopia’ are sometimes taken less seriously when assessed against a renewed emphasis on evidence-based research. Concerns about the role of the ethnographer in the framing of meaning systems about youth identity have particularly weighed upon the field of youth studies. In consequence, traditionally configured ethnographies have frequently been under-equipped to trace historical struggle, contestation, or change in the public meanings generated about youth cultural groups across diverse contexts.”

Canguilhem (1989) has referred to the “crisis in representation”—the recognition that interpretation must always fall short of the full comprehension of lived experience and is therefore always incomplete. As such, it has served to radically disrupt the ways in which ethnographers practice their trade and the manner in which they seek to narrate the politics of representation in ethnography. We can now turn to examine other methodological dilemmas which may challenge us to think beyond current and often polarized debates about the representation of young people’s “identity” in educational research.

Ethnographic Imaginaries, “Historical Time,” and Young People: Theoretical Dilemmas and Research “Choices”

Despite the existence of now well-rehearsed arguments about “identity” and representation in ethnographic research, there are other traditions of social theorizing to which we can turn. These traditions help us to look beyond the representation of young people as being ever in need of rescue from the clutches of the ethnographer and instead towards a temporal and spatial narrative of youth experience (see Ricoeur 1981). It is this focus on time—not as the moment of the present but as a broader temporal arc which unites past, present, and future in the moment of the here and now—to which we should turn. Such an appeal is likely to promise the possibility of a deeper understanding of how the reproduction of historical narratives reconfigures the symbolic practices constituting narrativity and

⁴ There are some notable exceptions (too see the work of Roger Simon (2005)). Noteworthy to is that narrative and narrativization are largely defined in educational research as one’s personal narrative. For Ricoeur, narrative has a much wider meaning in that narrativization refers to the idea of expressing a story though an imagined ideal of what we wish the story to be, as a horizon of the possible.



Fig. 2 Time line exercise: future, Portuguese Canadian girl (aged 13)

ethnographic work alike. Here we may invoke the metaphor of interlocutors joining and participating in a conversation that began long before they came to join them (Fig. 2).

A key theoretical concept we have sought to embrace is the notion of distanciation, as developed by Ricoeur (1991, p. 157). Distanciation recognizes that we will always feel estranged from any social text from another time or place, primarily because of our cultural and temporal separation from the original contexts in which it was initially formed and received. Such separation must not however be viewed in a negative light: distanciation is rather “the negative condition for the possibility of new and deeper meanings to emerge” (Smith 1987, p. 211). It is the very recognition of this productive estrangement, and the ceaseless hermeneutic endeavor to overcome it, that allows us to keep the sense of the text from perishing and permits new understandings to emerge. Distanciation thus constitutes the conceptual ground upon which interpretation is always able to operate (Bell 2011). This means that for us, the *story* of being young forms the object of representation rather than the *identity* of the young person. Cavarero (2000, p. 37) writes: “the identity that materializes in a “life story” has no future that is properly of its own if it has no past in the present of its memory” (p. 37).⁵

⁵These storied youth narratives—encoded and recoded in human time—point us towards a sociology of young people which does not use the category of “change” as a fetish and which endeavors to position young people solely as the vehicles of transition, future citizenship, and progress.

The narratives (visual, linguistic, aesthetic, written) which we encountered in our ethnographic research clearly exposed some of the current struggles that the young people we met were navigating in the global city. For example, through the strategy of asking young people to examine, critique, and re-represent historical archival images of young people living in an earlier time, we were able to witness their own affiliations to historical discourses of young people and how they imagined such young people in the present. The image below is one such example we presented to young people in wider discussions about the history of disadvantaged young people living in the “slums” of urban Toronto at the beginning of the twentieth century (Fig. 3).

But such narratives, in visual form, also spoke directly to larger theoretical concerns which identify the shifting moral registers of time and place as they are performed by young actors and which we strived to capture in our ethnographic writing. How have the dilemmas and impasses in youth studies and ethnographic approaches to which we have alluded changed the way we might think of young people’s narratives within the wider theoretical context of ethnographic practice? From our perspective, the ethnographic encounter should help us to reach out for phenomena which may at first glance appear very distant from our own experience. We need to attend to the ways in which young people interpret, narrate, and perform symbolic practices from past time—inherited from others that they themselves are unlikely to have known—as they live out their lives out in the present.



Fig. 3 Department of Health, 326, Rear Williams Street, August 1914, Toronto City Archives (@Permission granted from the Toronto City Archives)

In recognizing that any cultural performance of being young inherits elements of the past, we may hope to confront important theoretical dimensions of narrativity rather than comprehending narrative too narrowly as only ever a methodological approach or an authentic voice. If we see cultural meaning as a representation of the past and the present in discontinuous tensive relation, then our ethnographic approach ought to highlight both the paradoxical modes of representation and the ambivalences and desires which give the symbolic narratives of youth culture their particular currency. As Mabaloc (2005, p. 1) suggests: “Human existence finds at the very core of its being that it is perpetually a way to language. [. . .] it is through language that the responsible human subject is revealed, a subject who speaks and acts in a world that is immersed in constant conflict, a subject who continuously suffers in life but still desires to live.” The human persons in our ethnographic research were young people accounting, in part, for their desire to be, as they understood it in the city. But the young person remains a mystery and must always be reached for and interpreted through the indirect mediations of language, symbols, and history. It is the representation of the “overflowing creativity of language” (see Mabaloc 2005, p. 1) and its consequent surplus of meaning that can be deemed a form of narrativity. The imagined self as an actor in the ethnography is the unraveling of the text into a meaningful story (see also Arendt 1968). Understood in this way, there may be some capacity for the ethnographer to move away from an overemphasis upon questions of whether or not we should “trust” young people’s testimony or even the testimony of the ethnographer. Rather, it is this turn away from scientific “trust” and towards the multiple layers of the ethnographic narrative within a wider interdisciplinary arena where meaningful narratives can most productively be interpreted. The narrative encounters we have described thus far are best understood through the critical tradition of phenomenological hermeneutics, as developed by Ricoeur (1981) and also by Arendt (1968). Both of these thinkers have perceived phenomenology not in foundational terms but as an inherently hermeneutic endeavor (i.e., as operating through an art of interpretation in which explanation and understanding may be brought together), showing us how the appropriations and reinventions of past time—today marked by novel and immensely complex global flows within transnational social formations—serve to animate the performance of cultural identification in the present. As Arendt writes:

to identify an action is to tell the story of its initiation, of its unfolding, of its immersion in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others. Likewise, the wholeness of the self is constituted through the story of a life (Arendt 1968, p. 150).

In the case of understanding the lives of young people, the hermeneutic task for us then was to tease out the unfolding of stories as constituted through a web of historical and contemporary relations.

To be more specific about the methodological work, we drew strongly upon critical, cultural, and spatial ethnographic practices and upon field observations and semi-structured interviews, as the means through which to seek insights into the daily lives of our research participants. We also sought to understand the role of cultural symbols and narrative representation through visual approaches in producing that surplus of meaning, borne forward from the past, which it is the task of hermeneutics

Fig. 4 Mira Thrives But Mothers Rarely Do. Photo source @Peter Power/Get Stock.com, Image Number 2083215602



to interpret. For example, after investigating the archives at the start of the ethnography, we went on to examine media representations of young women and presented these to our young participants to consider. We also conducted our own analysis of these images. An image which was used in the media critique as part of the ethnography is presented above. Particular excerpts from the media account were analyzed as a way of showcasing the symbolic power of the story and its own representation of female identity. The article was taken from the Toronto Star and was entitled “Mira Thrives but Mothers Rarely Do” (Fig. 4).⁶

The emphasis upon the application and integration of multiple methods helped us to generate an approach that was consistent with our epistemology. In exploring these three dimensions, we sought to move beyond the politics of representing identity and associated paradigmatic debates in ethnographic practice and towards the recognition of a dimension of narrativity that addressed more fundamentally the making of the self through the idea of “social life as storied” (Somers 1994, p. 614), whether these were stories emerging from the official public record or from young people themselves.

The Ethnographic Imagination: Phenomenological Hermeneutics in Practice

How has the theoretical and conceptual approach we have discussed thus far informed, and in turn been informed by, our work and findings in the field? Here, Paul Willis’ thoughtful reflection on the exercise of ethnography comes to mind:

⁶ Mira is not the woman in the image. Mira was a baby found wrapped in a blanket and left on the streets of Toronto in the middle of winter in the late 1990s. The woman in the image is Jazzie and the article which sat alongside this photo was part of a series about homeless women and abandoned babies which arose after the incident involving baby Mira (for a full account of how we assessed these images before taking them into school classrooms for discussion).

[...] There is something rare and special about the symbolic stresses of the common and everyday that ethnography so routinely picks up and records. The fact that these experiences are both repeated and common does not make less of them, or make them any less human defining. They are an essential part of the creative finding of symbolic place and identity, of recognizable time and place in out-of-scale and baffling historical structures. (Willis 2000, p. 6)

Uncovering the complex commerce between “the common and everyday” and the “creative finding of symbolic place and identity of recognizable time and place in out-of-scale and baffling historical structures” neatly summarizes the goal towards which the range of our research methods was directed. These methods were designed to illuminate the three key analytical dimensions we have considered, namely, the symbolic, the temporal, and the spatial (see also Kennelly and Dillabough 2008). Before examining each in turn, the key parameters of the research project itself should be sketched.

At both sites, copious field notes were generated, and these, alongside full and authentic interview transcripts and associated media, journalistic and visual photographic sources, together with oral histories of place (with police officers, social workers, youth workers and long standing community members), comprised a cumulative stock of rich ethnographic data. Young people engaged in photo-narratives of, and interviews about, the city and urban space, self-portraits, and visual representations of temporally inflected educational and professional aspirations: they produced critical accounts based on archival material relating to young people living in the city a century before them; and they undertook mapping exercises, urban walks, and film analyses of young people living on the economic and cultural margins of urban cities in other sites (see Fig. 5).



AS you can see this is what I see every day
to school. Most people on the drive try to sell
weed to me and I always say no. After
a while it gets annoying.

Fig. 5 Photo-narrative taken by Eastside Vancouver participant, Latino-Canadian male (aged 15)

Open-ended individual interviews with the young people in both sites concentrated upon their accounts of schooling and social experiences set within the contexts of local urban space and school life at a time of profound local and global change. At the same time, interview schedules were also oriented towards uncovering that larger social imaginary of which we spoke earlier, illuminating the ways in which everyday experience unfolded against the broader rhythms of urban collective and transnational memory across time. This pattern, as Raphael Samuel has indicated, is a familiar one, “to all those, like field anthropologists and ethnologists, who have studied the storyteller’s arts (finding) that myth and history are not mutually incompatible, but coexist as complementary and sometimes intersecting modes of representing the past” (Samuel 1998, p. 14). As seen in some of the extracts and images already discussed, interview data revealed narrative imaginations composed from a complex amalgam of everyday experience, desires and fears, and currents of collective memory. They revealed, for example, students’ perspectives upon themselves in relation to peers and peer rivalry, to popular culture and cultural identity across the generations, and to the impact of popular culture upon their school experience and their wider sense of security, citizenship, and belonging in the radically changed city. The interviews also illuminated young people’s relationship to local, historically sedimented accounts of social class, citizenship, race, and emergent forms of masculinity and femininity (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Youth participant’s perspective on citizenship, Vancouver sample, Chinese Canadian male (aged 14)

All the young people who participated were aged between 13 and 17 and came from a broad range of ethnic backgrounds and cultural and religious identifications. This range varied depending upon the histories of migration and urban biographies of change in each of the cities where the research was conducted. Each participant attended a comparable secondary school at one or other of the two research sites. Many had recent histories of family migration, with large numbers having parents or grandparents who had arrived in Canada in the postwar period with refugee or asylum status. Some were second- and third-generation immigrants, with families and entire villages in some cases having migrated into a single neighborhood (chain migration) as specialized laborers at the turn of the twentieth century. A minority of participants came from white or Aboriginal backgrounds, and a further group originated from communities of Eastern European migration.

One factor unifying almost all participants was their social location and historical positioning as either “working class,” “economically disadvantaged” or “working poor,” living at the edge of the urban core of an affluent “world-class” city. Like their own parents before them, parents of participants held occupations such as taxi drivers, babysitters, cleaners, factory workers, fish farmers, construction workers, or agricultural laborers. Many parents held multiple part-time or seasonal jobs, and often youth participants were expected to care for younger children at home while parents worked. In both sites, students habitually referred to their schools and neighborhoods as a “ghetto,” as a “warehouse,” or as a “slum” for “poor kids.” We now turn to offer some further examples of how we sought to capture dimensions of time and space in our ethnographic and historical work with young people and other social actors.

Capturing the Symbolic in Ethnographic Practice

I am convinced that we must think, not behind the symbols, but starting from symbols [. . .]
In short, the symbol gives rise to thought. (Ricoeur 1981, p. 6)

Our understanding of the realities faced by the young people at our two sites turned upon the power of the symbol as a key point of mediation for understanding the narratives they related about their young lives. Symbols also constituted a powerful focus for recognizing the ways in which narratives of the present can give way to knowledge of the past. We found that symbols were expressed in highly diverse ways—through the social narratives of semi-structured interviews, through oral histories, through visual images generated by both local media and the young people themselves,⁷ and through the operation of a wider symbolic order associated with common perceptions of marginalized young people and youth cultures in the contemporary neoliberal era. Below we provide a brief extract from an oral history

⁷Rose (2007) tells us that making images as a way of answering a research question is relatively rare but is crucial in understanding social differences and of visualizing these differences as a form of cultural expression.

interview taken from a local youth community worker who had lived in the abridging neighborhood in Vancouver BC, where we undertook our study:

This neighbourhood has always been vilified. Young people, and particularly young women, are seen here as going nowhere and that started after the 60's when canning industries shut down and single night dwellings and cheap pubs were introduced. The municipality did nothing to stop it because the drug business took over and many of the police used young people to further facilitate their trade. (Oral History Interview, Youth Community Worker, Vancouver, BC)

The sources upon which we drew allowed us to access not only young people's wider symbolic worlds but oral history accounts of how such views had developed over time in relation to an already existing system of moral classification about young people.

Until the relatively recent surge in visual methods in the sociology of education (at least in the postwar period and until the early 1990s), sociologists of education remained largely preoccupied with charting narratives of exclusion almost exclusively through the means of language,⁸ whether written or spoken, or through policy studies, often underexploiting the power of the image to illuminate the social life world. The text or the spoken word of course constitutes a central resource for ethnographic research with youth people, as long as we recognize that it may be rendered, in Arendt's terms, banal and paralyzing if it cannot move us beyond the idea that youth exclusion is merely or solely a case of trauma. Rather, it must also be linked to our understandings of historicity and to ethnographic research as addressed, conducted, and expressed within the terms of a symbolic temporality. As Fyfe and Law (1988, p. 1) suggest:

to understand a visualization is . . . to enquire into its provenance and into the social work that it does. It is to note its principles of inclusion and exclusion, to detect the roles that it makes available, to understand the ways in which they are distributed, and to decode the hierarchies and differences that it naturalizes.

To access the residual symbolic traces associated with young people's experiences of urban and social exclusion, of being "warehoused" in failing schools and neighborhoods, and of the enduring epithets associated with contemporary moral panics about terrorism and migration, we made use of a variety of focused exercises. An emphasis on the making of visual culture, as well as young people's reflections upon it, helped us to access the symbolically mediated meanings they attributed to social class and security, together with reflections on their own aspirations and expectations for the future. These visual projects generated novel symbolic images that often represented more temporally complex, ambivalent, and contradictory elements of young people's experiences of the social world than they expressed through the more immediately constraining context of conventional spoken interviews, which are exemplified in Fig. 7. Indeed, in a similar manner to that described by Hall (1997), we were able to witness those modes of

⁸ Noteworthy exceptions to this were the visual sociologists from the early subcultural studies tradition developed primarily at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, founded by Richard Hoggart in 1964.

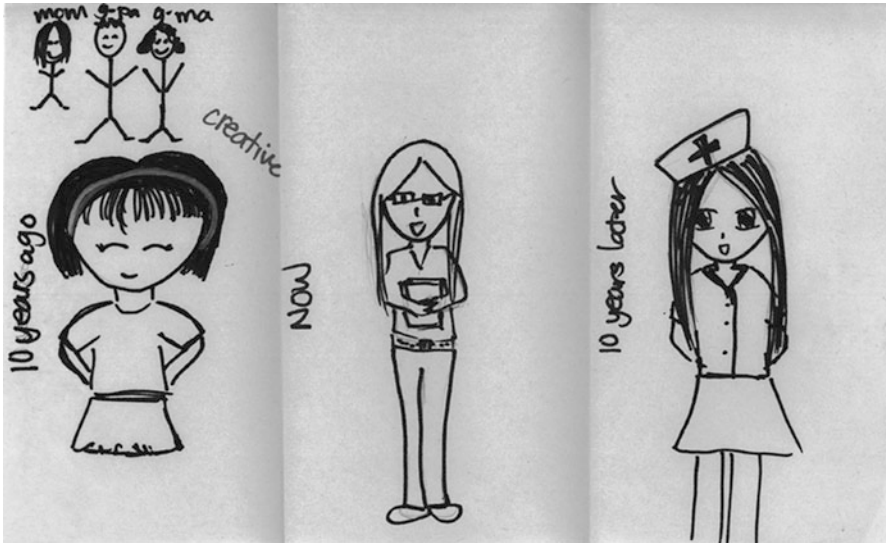


Fig. 7 Visual self-portraits of past, present, and future, Toronto sample, Canadian Philipino female (aged 14)

ambivalent knowing that young people expressed about the changing nature of the city, their place, and future within it. We also gained insights into the ways in which they understood space as a border zone of alterities of the familiar and the strange, the citizen and the other, and as a space of classification and scapegoating. This also included ways in which youth identities were “orientalized” in particular times and spaces (see Fig. 7, for example).

Participants were also invited to devise captions for media and archival images of child and youth economic disadvantage. Each of these strategies generated valuable data sources in their own right, as well as serving to deepen the spiral of active reflection within the interview context. These approaches highlighted the tensions between the interpretation of young people from what Ricoeur identifies as an archaic time—a distant and unfamiliar time—and the time of the now as expressed by young people’s place in the urban landscape of the present, allowing us to assess the power of visual symbols to render the significance of the past for the everyday lives of these young people.

Capturing the Temporal in Ethnographic Practice

Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own threatens to disappear irretrievably. (Benjamin 1968, p. 255)

A particularly important and productive visual technique for this research proved to be the use of local historical archival images, specifically images of low-income young urban dwellers in different temporal periods. These were

powerful and evocative resources in the hands of our participants, for whom the images were characteristically a mixture of the alien and distant but also the familiar and near. In working with these photographs, it became apparent that any ethnography which posed questions only about the present threatened to compromise the “art of seeing” within and across time, pointing up the absence of a historical dimension from existing ethnographies about young people. What seemed absent or lost in this respect was a methodological engagement with the role of a *historical sensibility* (see Tinker and Jackson 2011) in the making of contemporary representations of young people, particularly as inspired by vivid photographic and media images and their accompanying textual accounts. Previous work by youth ethnographers has considered the importance of history in partially framing the nature of young people in the present (Cohen 1997), as has the work of some feminist historians and historical sociologists before the second half of the twentieth century. But, with few exceptions (see, e.g., McLeod and Yates 2006), sociological research, particularly after World War II, has seemed largely oblivious to history (see Dillabough et al. 2010), concentrating instead on the present as a discrete and defining temporal frame.

In response, we undertook preliminary archival research in each urban site where contemporary ethnographic data pertaining to young people were collected. Through this process, we came across many striking visual and documentary sources from the public record representing young people across the course of the twentieth century. How could we draw upon these images most productively in the field? How might we find ways to use such images as both a historical and a contemporary resource that would illuminate the lives and contemporary social circumstances of today’s deprived and excluded young people? How might these images provide us with some understanding of the narrative imaginations of young people as they operated in the space between myth and history?

We viewed the symbols young people drew upon and referenced in their narrative accounts and visual work—just as we viewed the photographic images from the archive—in terms of the double meaning of symbolic understanding, not only speaking to their lives in the present but also to a past which would otherwise have been elusive to both us and them. We sought to capture, as far as was possible, an understanding of the operation of moral regulation through a series of hermeneutic encounters with the material traces—visual and temporal—from now absent pasts which were at once familiar in the immediacy of their symbolic power and strange in their manifest temporal distance.

To take these encounters further, we asked participants to create their own images and symbols to stand for the present moment, specifically in the light of their engagement with the historical representations we had gathered. We particularly asked our young participants to reflect upon these urban images from a past long-lost but still recognizable, to consider the once-young people they portrayed, and to comment upon the manner of their visual representations. We solicited their thoughts on why young people from a different and very unfamiliar temporal moment appeared, as were they, to be living in organized sites of urban economic disadvantage and how this fact spoke to their own circumstances in the present. Participants were invited to write captions and fuller storied accounts relating to the archival

photographs upon which they were able to gaze and to use these to stimulate discussion about aspects of change and permanence in their cities and neighborhoods in the absent past and the familiar present. The results of these activities required us to think more seriously as methodologists about “the problematic of the representation of the past [and the present]” (Ricoeur 2004, p. xvi). Here we came to see the formal historical record as not only as the “archiving of a social practice,” but also as involving a methodological approach which could assist us in taking an analytical detour away from late twentieth-century emphases upon the question of whether “identity” constitutes a discursive or a realist phenomenon. Instead, we were able to move towards a deeper understanding of how the sedimentation and reproduction of, for example, historically grounded classed and gendered narratives of youth identity could be seen to play a part in sustaining such forms of ontological sedimentation (Ricoeur 2004, p. 220) (Fig. 8).

In contrast to the persistence of seductive myths of benevolence within critical ethnography about the nature and import of the relationship with research participants, it is important to strive for some analytical and methodological distance. Historical sensibility (see Tinker and Jackson 2011) can come only with temporal distance from our own analytical authority and, in our particular case, from images of young people in the city, as they were offered to us as part of the research process. Moving beyond the impasses associated with the polarized



Fig. 8 Slum interior, October 1913 (Source: Series 372, Subseries 32, Item 26. @Permission Granted by the City of Toronto Archives)

debates about the critique of the essentialized youth identity, and towards a reminder of a once-present past as a form of social narration within methodological practice, obliged us to work towards such distancing. This also took us towards Kearney's poetics of imagination—either biographical or dramatic—showing us that young people are both actors and sufferers who are always held within moral interpretations and temporal locations, but who are never finally cut off from the meaningful presence of those others without whom they could not themselves have existed.

What this demands of us is to draw on historical sources in more expansive ways, to engage them not only analytically but also dynamically in the service of deepening the temporal dimension of our work. As suggested in Dillabough and Kennelly (2010, p. 64), “we need to find ways – to take the case of the sources we found within the archives – of inscribing images and meanings from the past more explicitly within ethnographies of the present. This necessitated the development of strategies which [. . .] allowed both participants and researchers to respond directly to evocations of young lives speaking from a different time and place, but also from a spatial setting which was immediately familiar.” Here, the goal was to utilize images systematically to open a space within the narrative for a sustained temporal and generational dimension of public understanding of young lives in urban contexts, in which the research dialogue could be stretched across time as well as within place. In this case, engaging our connection to others living in the same city in past time through research practices was a necessary hermeneutic strategy for rethinking the present. A representative example of an archival source we discussed with young people is presented below:

Memorandum To:

Municipal Clerks, Municipal Relief Administrator, Provincial Relief Inspectors, Letter Dated: Toronto, June 10th, 1940. Re: Enemy Aliens in Receipt of Relief

Non-Naturalized Italians or their dependents in receipt of relief no longer herewith receive provincial contribution

Re: “Agitators” or Sympathizers in Receipt of Relief: Some foreign born relief recipients now naturalized still retain considerable sympathy for the cause of the enemy at war with His Majesty the King. It is imperative that all municipalities scan their remaining relief rolls carefully and track down any subversive statements of sympathies which are detrimental to the Allied Cause. . . . Until further notice any relief assistance continued to proven agitators or sympathizers is a matter entirely at the discretion of the local authorities. [retrieved from Toronto City Archives, Ontario, Unemployment Relief Branch: Department of Public Welfare, June, 1940].

The Spatial

Space is never empty: it always embodies meaning.

Where there is space there is being (Lefebvre 1991, p. 22)

Within each research site (Toronto and Vancouver), several months were spent prior to embarking on fieldwork, gathering contextual data from archives,



Fig. 9 Interior January 20, 1911 (Source: City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, Subseries 32, Item 10)

government and policy documents, and local written sources about the neighborhoods in question (Fig. 9). Such contextualization was essential for an ethnographic approach that understands both history and the local conditions that have shaped contemporary neighborhoods as essential elements of the imagined realities of lived experience in the present (Bourdieu and Waquant 1992; see also Miller and Rose 2008). This is a strategy that is also important for understanding the role of space in shaping young people’s understandings of identity not only symbolically or temporally but as a set of social relations (Massey 1994). A spatial account was germane to the questions and concerns that drove the research because, as feminist geographer Doreen Massey succinctly suggests, “the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it” (1994, p. 3). Massey’s emphasis on the interpretations of space afforded a valuable complement to the hermeneutic emphasis on the interpretation of historical traces that marked the temporal dimension of the research.

Both of the sites in which we worked had been home to working-class communities since at least the nineteenth century; both had been disproportionately affected by the forces of deindustrialization and reorganization of labor that have taken place since the rapid onset of neoliberal policy regimes and practices which were then particular to the Canadian context. Each neighborhood had likewise been the site for housing waves of migrants seeking respite from poor economic and social prospects in their countries of birth, as well as being a target for accompanying moral panics and public attention directed to perceptions of class abjection and supposedly increased criminality and/or deviancy. Each site also rested at the

edge of the urban core and had been increasingly subjected to re-zoning policies and development resulting in substantial gentrification and the associated rise in housing costs that typically accompanies this trend.

We accessed young people's experiences of the spatial through the means of project-based approaches that brought to the forefront participants' encounters with, and imaginaries of, the spaces and places through which they passed each and every day. For example, participants were supplied with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs of the "places" where they spend the most time. We developed the photos and returned them to participants so that they could organize them into booklets that would include a narrative description of the photos and an account of life both for them and for imagined others in the city. This method generated a vast range of images, including local parks, housing projects, streets, public transport, apartment complexes, and stores, with associated narratives that described the significance of particular sites to participants. Figure 10 is an example of a photo-narrative produced by a young female asylum seeker from the Congo and aged 15.

This method allowed us important insights into participants' experiences of inclusion and exclusion within local spaces that were both demonized and valorized and also gave us a clear sense of where young people perceived the lines between each to be drawn. Our spatial approach to youth research methodologies was thus highly dependent on the phenomenological and hermeneutic appropriation of the centrality of symbolic meanings for young people in local spaces and what these images could reveal about young people's experiences of urban transformations, moral regulation, and their own everyday encounters with spatial structures of inequality.



Fig. 10 Photo-narrative of familiar city environments, African-Canadian female (aged 15)

Conclusion: Towards a Symbolic–Temporal–Spatial Ethnography of Contemporary Youth Cultures

This chapter has sought to describe the principal theoretical and methodological problems and approaches which we encountered and sought to address in the design and implementation of a large-scale, comparative ethnography centered upon some of the many disadvantaged and excluded young people who existed at the fringes of the Canadian cities of Toronto and Vancouver, Canada—a population that we see replicated in many other cities throughout the west, albeit in different configurations. We had hoped that any potential strength in our ethnographic approach lay in its sustained attempt to address the importance of the temporal dimension for the everyday lives of these young urban dwellers, alongside a more familiar concern to trace the symbolic and spatial elements shaping their daily existence. Though these three dimensions are analytically separable, we found that in practice they constituted a tightly entwined set of conceptual fields which could be drawn upon conjointly to better understand how compelling youth narratives were fashioned, modified, and maintained by our participants.

In terms of the strengths which the incorporation of a temporal approach brought to the study, the intimate—if often unregarded—relation between past and present was powerfully in evidence. It was founded upon the ways in which an absent past is always available for representation to the current moment in the form of its material traces, visual and textual, and in its residual persistence in the present as memory, both individual and collective. A central conceptual device for the research, uniting both history and memory as well as the social and the personal, was the notion of narrative identity, whereby an individual self or a social institution generates a sustaining awareness of time and its passing, in which elements of truth and fiction, of past and present, and of ideology and utopia are held together. In this way narrative or storied identity unites elements of permanence and persistence with the recognition of constant change and adjustment. Narrative identity is a concept that is particularly amenable to the hermeneutic approach that we have followed in this work, with traces from the past constantly open to interpretation in the present but, by virtue of the fact that historical traces always rest upon a once real present, not open to any and all interpretation. The past is never helpless in the face of the present and not all interpretations are equally valid; some repay the debt of the present to the past more and more authentically and ethically than others. No interpretation is, however, final, because the meaning of a text can never be fully apparent to this or that generation of a readership that is, in historical terms, limitless. But as we observed our young participants and other social actors (e.g., longstanding community member’s oral history accounts), working with the traces of their own local pasts, our study brought home to us how the past not only endures in shaping both our experience and our understanding of the present, but also

(continued)

the closer its embrace becomes, the more our grasp on the future strengthens in the same degree. In recognizing that actions, like texts, are open to hermeneutic reading, we see that the spatial and symbolic dimensions of our study share with the temporal the capacity for illuminating the often masked relationship between social class, urban space, and reconfigured youth cultures as they have been experienced, examined, and lived out in the inner-city settings of the ever-changing global city.

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4.4 Interpreting Visual (and Verbal) Data: Teenagers' Views on Belonging to a Language Minority Group in Finland

Gunilla Holm, Monica Londen, and Jan-Erik Mansikka

Introduction

This chapter is focused on photography as a research method and on the interpretations of photographs in ethnographic research. There are two types of image-based research, namely, moving images and still images. There are also several different kinds of still images besides photographs such as drawings and cartoons. The case we have chosen in order to examine the use of photography in ethnographic research is an example of participatory photography where the participants have taken the photos. We have chosen to work with photos taken by the participants since it is their construction of their own identifications that is in focus in our study (see also Davies 2007). Pink (2007) lists several other ways of using photography in research such as photography as a recording device, collaborative photography, participants photographing the ethnographer, interviewing with photographs, and interviewing with participants' photograph collections. Many of the issues explored here with regard to participatory photography pertain as well to other ways of using photography in ethnographic research.

Society is becoming more visual with, for example, increasing advertisement and photographs on social media like Facebook and Instagram. Mirzoeff (2009) estimates that over 478 billion photos were taken with mobile phones in 2008. Photography has been used in research for a long time in anthropology and sociology. Mead and Bateson used photographs extensively already in the 1940s,

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but film has been a more common way of visually communicating anthropological research (Hockings 2003; Banks 2000). In sociology photography was popular in the 1960s but has been seen as too subjective for most sociologists (Grady 2001; Harper 2000). Overall photography and visual research methods are slowly moving from the margins towards the center in educational research. In the last few years, numerous books on visual research methods have been published (e.g., Banks 2007; Mitchell 2011; Pink 2007, 2012; Rose 2012; Stanczak 2007), and it is more common for published articles and book chapters to contain photographs (e.g., Clark-Ibanez 2004; Cremin et al. 2011). Most of the literature is focused on how to use photography in research, but not much literature focus on the interpretation of photographs, which is the focus of this chapter. Therefore this chapter is built around our example of visual research since visual research requires being seen or experienced more so than described in order to be understood. We have chosen a very recent study of ours as the case to exemplify interpretation of photographs in ethnographic research.

The case is focused on Swedish-speaking lower secondary students in Finland. Finland is officially a bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish as national languages. This is due to that Finland was part of Sweden for hundreds of years up till 1809. The Swedish-speaking minority is numerically a small group but fairly well protected in the constitution. There is a parallel Swedish-speaking school system. The climate towards language and ethnic minorities in Finland has become quite hostile during the last few years, partially due to a new conservative party. The party has, among other things, called for the abolishment of Swedish as a compulsory language in Finnish schools even though the country is officially bilingual (see, e.g., Salo 2012). Against this background the purpose of this study is to explore how Finland-Swedish students position themselves with regard to belonging to the Finland-Swedish group by using photography as well as interviews as data collection methods. In particular we were interested in exploring what kinds of data we would receive by using only photography as the data gathering method in comparison to using photo-elicitation interviews or only interviews. We are exploring the role of the researchers' own identifications and sense of belonging as well as habitus in the interpretation of data about participants belonging to the same language minority group and presumably having a similar language minority identification.

Framework for a Visual Method Study

Traditionally photographs were seen as presenting the truth or the true reality, but as Rose (2005) points out photographs are only interpretations. They are the photographer's interpretations of the world. The interpretation of the photograph is always dependent on the photographer (and maybe the persons posing if the photograph is of people), the researcher, and the viewer. The researcher decides on the theme or subject and through his or her interpretation of them decides whether to include them in the reporting. The researcher might also be the photographer, but otherwise

the photographer interprets the researcher's directives and photographs his or her interpretation of what he or she sees. The viewer might be steered in a particular direction through the context as well as the titles of the research and the photograph itself, but ultimately the interpretation is up to the viewer. The approach with the participants taking the photo equalizes the power in the study to some extent in the sense that the participant decides on the specific subject/topic of the photograph within the context given by the researcher. The photo then becomes a production of how the participants/photographers see or want to see themselves and their more factual position in a societal relationship (Gibson 2005; Bourdieu 1998; Holm 1997). It is important though to be aware of the researcher's influence on the photographs even when they are taken by the participants. The photographs are taken for the purpose of the research, and the researcher's instructions and guidance influence the photos.

There are many different ways of analyzing photographs (see Holm [forthcoming](#); Rose 2012; Margolis and Pauwels 2011), but in the case described in this chapter, we have taken an ethnographic approach to the analysis of visual images. The visual data complement and interact with other kinds of data. The different kinds of data do not represent the same thing from different perspectives but are different kinds of data. In her book *Doing Visual Ethnography* (2007, p. 119), Pink states that "the purpose of analysis is not to translate visual evidence into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge." She sees a more open ethnographic approach as being more fruitful where the photographs' ambiguity and expressiveness can be fully used instead of trying to force the photographs into more "objective" forms. Pink (2001) suggests that "(t)his subsequently opens a space for visual images in ethnographic representation. . .In practice, this implies an analytical process of making meaningful links between different research experiences and materials such as photography, video, field diaries, more formal ethnographic writing, local written and visual texts, visual and other objects. These different media represent different types of knowledge that may be understood in relation to one another" (p. 96).

Rose (2005) is also arguing for acknowledging "that visual images can be powerful and seductive in their own right" (p. 10). However, Holm's (2008a, b) research shows the difficulties in interpreting photographs without any text or complementary data since certain things like absence are difficult to express in photographs. In addition, photos with symbolic meanings can easily be misinterpreted without complementary data. Therefore we have, in the study described here, asked the participants to write a short text describing each photograph or to give a title to each photograph. In addition, we have conducted interviews with the participants.

Since we are interested in the students' deep-seated and taken-for-granted notions of their linguistic identifications, we are exploring their habitus by also using photographs. Bourdieu argues that it is not possible to make the habitus explicit, to verbalize it, since it is "beyond the grasp of consciousness" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 94). However, both Bourdieu (1990a, b) and Sweetman (2009) see the use of photography as a means to research abstract aspects like habitus. Bourdieu further states that when there is a lack of fit between the habitus and the field, the habitus is brought to the forefront. This is relevant for our case where students have difficulties in the interviews articulating their belonging to the language minority

group in the school context (or the field) that supports the minority habitus, while the habitus is more clearly brought to the surface in cases of, for example, harassment outside of school in a context/field that is majority Finnish. In this study we are interested in their individual identifications as Finland-Swedes and also in their descriptions of the collective Finland-Swedish group habitus (see Bourdieu 1990a; Broady 1990). An interesting question is whether the habitus of bilingual and monolingual students differ. What is the influence of developing a different linguistic capital and of a different social capital on the students' identifications with the group and sense of belonging (Bourdieu 1993, 1986)? One of the tasks of the school as a language minority school is, according to the national curriculum, to maintain and support the Swedish heritage and language (Finnish National Board of Education 2004). The school's task is to further the cultural identifications and Finland-Swedish habitus of the school. The dispositions constituting the Finland-Swedish habitus seem to have changed over time as the student population has become more multilingual.

Against this background we have used Yuval-Davis' concept of belonging to interpret the students' photos as well as the interviews (2010). Being a member of a language minority often creates a sense of belonging. Minority language speakers tend to have a sense of connection, of a community, or a collective identity. Especially if the members/speakers feel threatened from the outside, an "us" versus "them, the others" identification tend to emerge and thus tie the members, i.e., the "us" more closely together (Liebkind and Jasinskaja 2006).

The Study: Methods and Data Sources

Our case discussed here is part of a multi-sited ethnography of four Swedish-speaking lower secondary schools (ninth grade) in the metropolitan Helsinki region. These schools were chosen because in the metropolitan area 50–80 % (depending on the school) of the students in the Swedish-speaking schools come from bilingual homes. Many bilingual and Finnish families enroll their children in Swedish schools since they want their children to become bilingual. Bilingual in this study means that the students can speak Swedish and Finnish at home, or mostly Finnish at home and Swedish at school. Since these are Swedish-speaking schools, Swedish is the language of instruction and students are expected to speak Swedish in class while they can speak whatever language they like during recess. Depending on the school, but in general many of the students speak Finnish during recess. This is not only due to the fact that many of the students come from bilingual homes but also that the region is heavily Finnish speaking and Finnish is the dominant language among youth as well. Consequently, all the schools in this study are minority language schools. The student population is quite diverse with regard to the students' home languages. The majority of the students are bilingual Swedish–Finnish, but there are also students from monolingual Finnish or monolingual Swedish families.

The data were collected between August 2010 and May 2011. Three fieldworkers did observations in the fall and interviews in the spring. In the larger study there were

62 interviews with students and 28 with teachers. In addition students in one school took photographs of what they thought Finland-Swedishness to be. The students were asked to take photos of what it means to them to be a Finland-Swede and what Finland-Swedishness means. Finland-Swedes refer to the language minority group in Finland that speaks Swedish. Traditionally a Finland-Swede was a person who came from a Swedish-speaking home and spoke Swedish. As will be seen, the bilingual students in this study have a somewhat different definition.

In this chapter we focus on the 62 interviews conducted with students as well as on the photographs taken by students in one of the participating schools. Altogether 43 students participated in the photography project (19 Swedish-speaking and 24 bilingual students). The students are 15 years old and in ninth grade, which is the last grade in the comprehensive school. The 43 students took 337 photographs for this study. They also wrote a sentence or two describing how they saw each photo. In addition photo-elicitation interviews (Clark-Ibanez 2004; Harper 2002) were conducted with 22 of the students. In this chapter, the title of the photo or the students' descriptions of their photographs are included under each photo.

The fieldwork began in August when school started, and we had obtained the school district's, the principal's, the teachers', and the parents' informed consent and the students' informed assent for this study. The goal was to get a sense of the school culture, interactional patterns, and student groupings. Most importantly though the fieldworker worked to create a trusting relationship with the students so they would be interested in taking photographs as well as participating in interviews. She also worked with the teachers in the five ninth-grade classes in order for them to take an interest in the photography project. She needed class time to introduce the project in the five classes. She also needed the teachers' help in encouraging the students to return their parents' consent forms and to collect the forms when the fieldworker was not in school.

In school, the photo project started with a brainstorming session about what it means to be a Swedish-speaking person in Finland and what Finland-Swedishness means overall. The question is always whether it is only the language that separates the Swedish speakers from the majority Finnish speakers or whether the Swedish speakers form a distinct cultural group. The students first discussed this in small groups and then as a whole class. Suggestions were developed by students for what kind of things one could photograph. The students then had 1 week to take photographs. They were encouraged to bring in their ten best photos. Once they had brought in the photos, they gave the photos a title or wrote a one- or two-sentence description for making the photo more understandable for the viewers. The fieldworker also conducted a concluding class discussion. The photos were then used in some of the interviews with the purpose of stimulating thoughts about the meaning of Finland-Swedishness.

All photos have been analyzed as data independently of the interviews. The interviews have also been analyzed separately and then in connection with the photos. We did a thematic analysis of verbal texts (interviews) and the visual texts (photographs), meaning that we look for patterns and types of articulations and photographs forming themes. In the interviews and the photos, a series of themes emerged including, for example, loneliness, feeling different, feeling threatened,

language differences, traditions, and the connection to Sweden. Even though all themes were found in both interviews and photos, some were more prominent in the photos and others in the interviews.

Most of the photos were pictures of objects. One reason for the lack of people portrayed in the photos could be that students did not want to bother with having people sign a photo release form. Many of the photos were constructed by the students, but many were also taken of naturally occurring things, and many were symbols of their reality rather than the reality in itself.

Interpretations of the Photos in Combination with the Interviews

In interpretations of the photographs, it is important to remember that the photographs are already an interpretation. The students/photographers have taken photographs that communicate what they have interpreted the task to be. Hence, our interpretations are interpretations of the students' interpretations expressed in the form of photographs.

The photos express several themes related to what the students perceive Finland-Swedishness to be. In the analysis the photographs were first grouped according to themes and then grouped according to *literal* and *metaphorical* representations (Sensoy 2011) since they clearly fell into two different kinds of expressions. Foremost, the themes in this study include issues related to language such as bilingual signs, customs and traditions, newspapers, and theaters as well as photos portraying nature and hobbies like sailing. Most of these are all fairly tangible aspects or literal representations of the collective Finland-Swedish culture. The other less tangible aspects of the culture cluster around themes related to the language and culture as a resource, being a minority group, prejudice, and perceived threats against the language and the culture. The photos within these themes are metaphorical expressions of what it means or feels like to be a Finland-Swede. However, many photos overlap the two distinctions in the sense that on the surface they portray a concrete manifestation of the culture or group but at the same time carry a deeper symbolic meaning. Similar themes emerge in the interviews but to varying degrees. Hence, our interpretations are a combination of the photo and the interview data. Both sets of data are read in the contexts of the students living conditions, namely, an urban, mostly Finnish-speaking environment.

Literal Representations

The photos in this section portray literal representations of the Finland-Swedish life that can easily be observed daily in the Helsinki region. These photos can be grouped as language related, culture related, and traditions.

Language had a prominent role in our empirical material. The crucial role of language for identity formation is also acknowledged by previous research (Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti 2006; Østern 2004). In the interviews all students emphasize the importance of knowing the Swedish language in order to be called a Finland-Swede, and for many it means knowing both Swedish and Finnish. In the photographs the importance of the language comes mostly through various signs or texts that are in both Swedish and Finnish, as can be seen in the signs below.



Typical Finland-Swedish area because street signs are in Swedish first



Both languages are used in many places in Finland

Signs in two languages signify that the area is bilingual. It is an easy way to visually express the presence of two languages. The language that comes first indicates which language is in majority in that particular area. In the street sign it is Swedish, but the traffic sign shows that majority language is Finnish. Interestingly it is mostly bilingual students who have taken photographs of signs in two languages and other explicit signifiers of the Finland-Swedishness. Even though students emphasized the language in the interviews, no one mentioned bilingual signs, directions, and product descriptions. In the photos they stand for literal ways of expressing presence of bilingualism. This is a good example of the kind of data photographs added to this study. By just focusing on the interviews, we would have missed the importance of explicit signifiers.

Another theme is *cultural institutions* related to the Swedish-speaking population. Schools, daycare centers, newspapers, theater, and radio and TV channels are frequently photographed as representations for what is Finland-Swedish. Cultural institutions are much more common in the photographs than in the interviews. They are examples of concrete or virtual places where Swedish-speaking people come together. This does not, however, mean that the students who took these photos spend much time in these places and spaces and more that these tangible aspects are part of the students' reference framework for what Finland-Swedish is. They are representations of the collective Finland-Swedishness. It is also more common that bilingual students have taken photos of these cultural institutions, even if bilingual students visit these places or "consume" this culture much less than monolingual Swedish students. From this we can conclude that literal representations of language and culture seem to slightly differ between bilingual and monolingual Swedish students. They are indicative signs for the bilingual students, but for the monolingual Swedish speakers, these representations are so much part of their daily lives that they do not see or notice them as a sufficiently meaningful indication of being a Finland-Swede. Overall both monolingual and bilingual students describe themselves in the interviews as Finland-Swedes, but the definition differs since the bilingual students see a Finland-Swede as a person who speaks both languages, not just Swedish.

Photos of the main daily Swedish newspaper were also recurrent. Interestingly the photo below of this newspaper also hints at the more symbolic meaning of this newspaper. It is through this paper that news important to the minority group is communicated. It is the biggest national newspaper in Swedish and therefore also contributes to creating a bond between Swedish speakers in Finland. Not many of the bilingual students read this newspaper at home. It has, nevertheless, an important place in the schoolwork where it is often utilized in different subjects. The question mark in the title indicates that it is an assumption that everybody reads this newspaper.



Most (?) Finland-Swedes read HBL

Many photos portrayed a Swedish school or daycare (but in order to protect the confidentiality of the school, these photos cannot be shown here), and in fact a Swedish-speaking school is a very literal and perhaps the most tangible example of something Finland-Swedish. The interviews show that, beyond proficiency in Swedish, many students say that what makes a person Finland-Swedish is that the person has attended a Swedish school. Many students reflected on the school as an institution contributing to who you become as a person. The school was mentioned as perhaps the most important place that creates and maintains Swedish language and culture for them. Here the community aspect is more often referred to, rather than the language of instruction. School is a place where “*everybody knows everybody*”. Our interviews indicate that there are surprisingly little groupings based on language and also that teachers are perceived as fair to students independently of their home language.

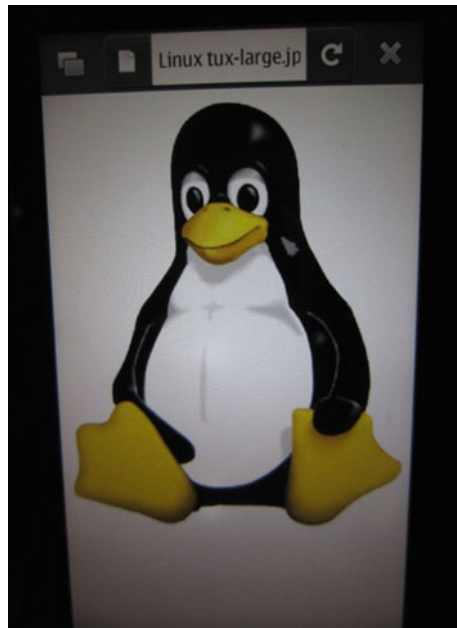
Close to the theme of cultural institutions are photos that portray *persons* who are or have been influential for the Finland-Swedish culture, Finnish history, or internationally. Here students are also reclaiming individuals who have become cultural representatives for Finland as Finland-Swedes. Students list, for example, a historical politician, a famous department store owner, and a well-known candy maker. Most frequently they mention the Moomin storybooks written by Tove Jansson.

Both Moomin books and Moomin films are immensely popular among children in Finland. Swedish speakers are also aware of that Moomin originally is created in Swedish in Finland. From this point of view, Moomin can be seen as part of the cultural heritage of Finland-Swedishness, a “world” Swedish-speaking children are socialized into. According to the photo above, it is something that *everybody* has in common.



Moomin is written by a Finland-Swedish author; all Finland-Swedes have read the Moomin books and watched the Moomin films

Close to this are examples of contemporary brands connected to the Finland-Swedish culture. An example of this is Linux, whose creator Linus Torvalds is a Finland-Swede. The photo below shows a sense of pride (in the text), claiming a famous person as belonging to the same language group. The computer world is part a teenager's daily life; hence sympathy and pride are easily awoken.



Linux is Finland-Swedish

Traditions in different forms is another common theme that is frequently photographed in a literal way. We speak of traditions in a broad sense including holidays, traditional places, and events. Particularly holidays that are specifically Finland-Swedish like “the Swedish day” and “Lucia day” are pictured. Among traditions annual crayfish parties with family and friends are mentioned and photographed.



The crayfish party is one among many Finland–Swedish traditions

Traditions can also be described as belonging to certain places or areas. The archipelago signifies for many the Swedish speakers' origin and heritage. Many of the Swedish-speaking students have relatives and summer cottages in the Swedish or bilingual parts of the archipelago due to the fact that many Swedish speakers have been fishers and farmers for generations. Many pictures of the archipelago and its nature are pointing at meeting places for Finland-Swedes, as well as activities that are connected to these places. Therefore the two pictures below are closely related; one is about a place and the other is about what you do in this place.



Nature is an important part of Finland-Swedishness



Sailing shoes, it's very Finland-Swedish to sail

Metaphorical Expressions

Another more complex type of photos were those that contained clear metaphorical references to what it means and feels like to be a Finland-Swede. These photos were more explicitly connected to the *minority* language position. There were two different forms of metaphorical expression. One was looking at the Finland-Swedish identity as a resource. Another strand was focusing on threats and existential questions. These representations, taken together, express certain characteristics for students identified with this particular culture. More specifically the

themes emerging were being in a minority position, stereotypes and harassment, sense of belonging, and views on the future. All subdivisions express certain “qualities” about living as a Finland-Swede in this particular urban milieu.

As discussed above the minority language *position* is a prominent feature in the data. However, the photos and the interviews do not only deal with the fact that there are two languages but also with the experience of belonging to a minority group.

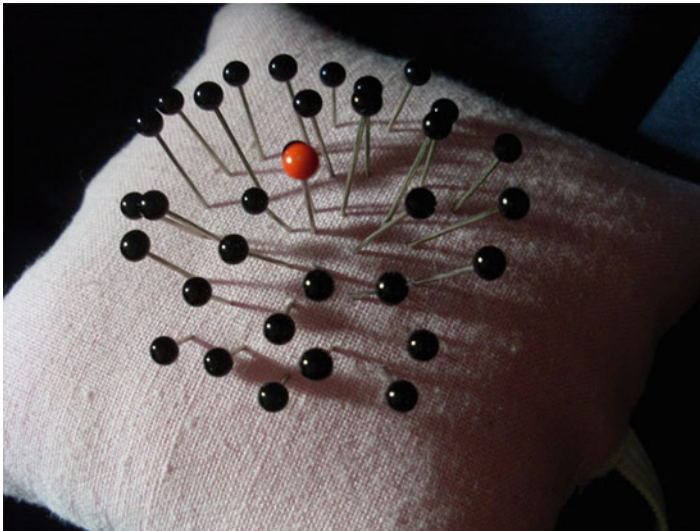


We have two languages! Two choices

In this picture the student describes how Finland-Swedes in urban milieus are perceived as having an advantage. Speaking two languages opens up more choices for the future. A Finnish-speaking student, who speaks Swedish only in school, nevertheless talks about how “we Finland-Swedes” have more opportunities because of the extra language. Here language, and bilingualism, is clearly expressed as a resource (see also Østern 2004). In the photographs the language is only one aspect, while in the interviews it is the aspect talked about most.

However, there is something more to being a language minority speaker than just the language. According to many language minority students, they feel different than the majority Finnish speakers even if they are bilingual. A bilingual girl says: “If we are among totally Finnish people from my mother’s side, for example at a relative’s party, then it can feel a bit strange... One feels different... if there are only Finnish speakers then it feels like one doesn’t belong there... you are just outside... the rest of the community.” We found many symbolic expressions about this theme in the photos. Feeling different is however often something the students see as positive, connected to a certain confidence of belonging to the language minority group. The confidence might be related to the status of the language as a national language.

One photo shows a bigger leaf and a smaller leaf; in addition the smaller leaf is upside down with a bump on it—it (and Finland-Swedes) is not only smaller but also different in more than one way. One simply feels different and the smallness of the group (altogether about 300,000 Swedish speakers in Finland) is tangible in many ways. It is present every day in the students' lives since they go to separate schools and in most cases switch language several times a day.



The photo symbolizes how few Finland-Swedes there are in comparison to Finns

For this student the Swedish speakers are at the center surrounded by Finnish speakers. However, interestingly the red needle head is standing straight up and is bigger than the other needle heads. In our interviews we found that many pupils feel confident, and value their own origin and culture, and independent of social class. This particular picture symbolizes this as well: Swedish speakers stand up for themselves even if there are not many of them. Almost all students identify as Finland-Swedes, and they describe the comfort and joy of having another Swedish speaker in a group of only Finnish speakers.

Stereotypes and Harassment

While students typically identify with the Finland-Swedes, they at the same time resist common stereotypes about the group. Even though the photos often present symbols signifying the collective identity, the students simultaneously distance themselves from these symbols. They emphasize their own individual uniqueness and identifications. They perceive each Swedish speaker as unique as each sunset.



Finland-Swedes are individuals

Being a minority language speaker does not only mean that you encounter stereotypes and feel alone at times. For Finland-Swedes it also means that you are *harassed* for speaking Swedish (see also McRae 1997, p. 113). Although fluent in the majority language, Swedish-speaking people in the Helsinki region are on a daily basis reminded that they do in fact belong to a language minority. The harassments captured in the photos are more on a group level than on a personal level, but symbolizes their own experiences as well. This is, for example, shown by a beautiful autumn photo—but with the text “*Finland-Swedes are like autumn, a time nobody really waits for.*” In addition, emotionally it may be easier to acknowledge how the minority group as a whole is harassed, as opposed to the more personal harassments many students in fact talk about in the interviews. However, as Pink (2007, p. 123) points out, photographs representing, for example, emotions or power relations need to be contextualized. “To analyze images, then, it is more useful to examine how people’s uses and definitions of the visible content and form of photographs. . . attach them to particular ideologies, worldviews histories and identities.” It is clearly necessary to attach the photos these students have taken to their and the group’s histories and identifications as well as the current societal context.

This example of different things being emphasized in different kinds of data also strengthens the argument for using different methods of data collection in order to receive a multifaceted and deep understanding of a complex phenomenon such as harassment. This need can clearly be seen in our study since in the interviews the students openly talked about the harassments and name calling they have encountered:

Ida: *People say “move back to Sweden from where you come”. . . a long time ago it felt really bad, but now I understand that they are just stupid that I don’t need to listen to them. But I don’t really know; do they really believe I’m from Sweden when they so often say it or are they just very envious because they don’t understand what we say?*
 Stella: *Some (Finnish friends) are like yes, I want to learn Swedish, but then half are like “we don’t want you Swedes here in Finland, go back to Sweden” and things*

like that. Sometimes it's really bad to be with them. . . They cuss, but they don't hit or something worse.

Interestingly the students often make excuses for those who harass them by explaining that they were just teasing or were drunk as if being drunk gives a license for harassment. Even though they try to brush off the harassment and try not to care about it, it does have a long-term impact. They often recall events from many years ago when they were young children. A bilingual boy describes how he was beaten by older Finnish boys in sixth grade because he spoke Swedish. He says that he becomes very annoyed at people who tell him and his friends not to speak Swedish, for example, on the bus. He would like to tell them to go somewhere else and that he has the same rights as others. However, in reality he, like many others, do not speak Swedish on public transportation, especially in the evenings in order to avoid being harassed (see also McRae 1997).

The effect of the harassment seems to be that it strengthens their identification with the minority group (c.f. Liebkind et al. 2006). When telling stories about harassment, Lukas says: *I'm proud to be a Finland-Swede* or Filipa. *I'm glad I'm a Finland-Swede*. Even the students who speak only Finnish at home or who speak another language than Finnish or Swedish at home are treated by society at large as Swedish speakers, which makes them feel more like Finland-Swedes. The harassment has also forced many students to learn to pass as a Finn by recognizing potentially troublesome situations and immediately switching languages to Finnish. This is only possible for the bilingual students. Importantly also this harassment does take place exclusively outside school. All students—Swedish speakers, bilingual students, and Finnish speakers—feel they are supported in school. Due to the anti-Swedish political climate at the time of the study, many students (including bilingual students) feel that Swedish speakers as a group are pressed into a corner from where it is difficult to escape.



In my opinion Finland-Swedes are pushed into a corner and cannot get out of the corner

One student even states symbolically by photographing a bilingual sign for a life threatening danger that “*it can be life threatening to be a Finland-Swede*” if you are in the wrong place at the wrong time.



It can be life threatening to be Finland-Swedish

Belonging and Views on the Future

Belonging and views on the future are also themes emerging strongly both in the photographs and in the interviews. Of interest is the school's explicit and implicit role in supporting the students' identifications with and sense of belonging to the Finland-Swedish group. The students say (in interviews and via the photos) that certain Finland-Swedish holidays are celebrated in school. Likewise a few mention and have photographed a relay festival for all Swedish-speaking schools. It is the biggest school sports event in Europe. Of a total population of 32,400 Swedish-speaking students in Finland (Westerholm 2011), over 10,000 runners and 1,500 cheerleaders from all levels of schooling participate in this annual 2-day event, and it is therefore a real network builder.

However, the implicit role of the school is much more important. For some students, especially those from bilingual or Finnish-speaking homes, the school is the only, or the main, place where they speak Swedish. Students perceive the interactional patterns to be different in Swedish-speaking school as compared to Finnish schools. For example, in Swedish schools teacher–student relations are perceived as informal with the students calling teachers with their first name. They perceive the school as a Finland-Swedish space with a Finland-Swedish atmosphere even though things like cultural traditions are not strongly emphasized in the curricula. As Prosser (2007, p. 14) points out, the hidden curriculum of a culture is “all the more powerful because it is visible but unseen”. Lane (1993, p. 161) also

argues that we develop an “unconscious mental model of our culture,” that is, even though we are not always aware of the cultural premises that influence us, they exist and facilitate us in our everyday life. The Finland-Swedishness is built into the structure of the school in subtle ways, and this *visible but unseen* culture and habitus can also be identified in the interviews; the students find it hard to explain what exactly it is that makes up the Finland-Swedishness or how a Finland-Swedish school is different from a Finnish school. As Albin says “*Well I know I’m Finland-Swedish, but I don’t think about it much. It’s a basic thing. I’m a Finland-Swede. It doesn’t mean so much for me.*” The Finland-Swedishness is the daily life and is taken for granted. It’s the students’ and the school’s habitus. However, this kind of Finland-Swedish habitus is one that accepts the students’ bilingualism. The habitus of these urban schools has changed over the years due to a sharp increase in the number of bilingual students (see also Slotte-Lüttge 2004).

Students see the common language as the major bond in their identification as Finland-Swedes. In addition, many students claim that everybody knows everybody. These teenagers are already in the process of building their own social capital as adults have done. They build their own social networks by getting to know other Finland-Swedish students from other schools directly, via friends, hobbies, or parties. As one bilingual student states: “*Almost everybody who speaks Swedish are friends.*”



Networks, “everybody knows everybody”

Even students without this kind of network see themselves as Finland-Swedes due to the common language. Some argue that there is a strong community. They have a strong sense of belonging to the group. This is evident in that they, at times, feel as outsiders in groups of Finns. A bilingual student says “*for example, if you find a new group of friends and they all speak Finnish, then you are kind of alone.*”

And one can feel as an outsider.” She continues by saying that if another Swedish speaker joins the group, it’s a really good feeling even if she doesn’t know the person.

In other words, the school contributes to a Finland-Swedish habitus which also shows itself in that the students will continue to Swedish high schools, vocational schools, or universities. Many also state that they in the future will speak Swedish with their children. Even those who argue that there is no community, say Finland-Swedes protect each other: *“Of course we take care of each other against the Finns who think we should go back to Sweden. It’s kind of a group feeling, kind of, that we protect each other.”* This student clearly speaks of us the Finland-Swedes as opposed to the others, the Finns. It is self-evident to him to protect other Swedish speakers in potentially troublesome situations. It is part of his habitus and positioning himself against the other strengthens and clarifies his habitus.



Finland-Swedes stick together

Sticking together means you are part of the group; you belong. An indication of this sense of belonging is the many thoughts on the future. As was mentioned above, most students say they will go on to a Swedish high school or vocational school after the lower secondary school. Students mention that they will speak Swedish with their children, and bilingual students often say they will speak Swedish with their children if they marry a Finnish speaker in order for the children to become fluent in both languages. The future was symbolically expressed through growth like photos of growing plants, flowers, and trees, light like how the sunlight appears through an otherwise dark sky, a candle in the dark, babies (growing up to be Finland-Swedish), and photos of people sticking together through hard times. However, many worry about the future of the group which shows in photos like the one below.



It's fine, but for how long?



The sun is going down like the Finland-Swedishness

Only people who feel a kind of belonging to a group and identify with people sharing, for example, a common language or similar values are concerned with the future of the group. Keeping in mind that the photos are taken by 15-year-olds, the photos show an awareness of their language minority in a broader societal perspective. However, students are happy with being a Swedish speaker and express no desire not to be who they are.



Finland-Swedishness is beautiful



It's nice to be Finland-Swedish

Participatory Photography and Interviews as Our Preferred Methods

Using photography in relation to interviews was an innovative way of exploring students' personal identifications with being a Finland-Swede and their perceptions of the collective Finland-Swedish habitus. Both Bourdieu (1990a, b) and Sweetman (2009) indicate that it is possible to explore habitus using photography which supported our decision. Holm also has an extensive experience in using photography as a data collection method in ethnographic studies and especially with regard to identity and self-perceptions (Holm 2008a, b; Janhonen-Abuquah and Holm 2008; Veintie and Holm 2010). From her research it is also clear that even if photography has worked very well as a data collection method, it is not possible to use photography alone without complementary verbal data (Holm 2008a, b, 1997). This led us to ask the students to give titles or descriptions for their photos. With regard to many of the metaphorical photographs, it would have been difficult to understand the meaning without the students' comments accompanying the photographs. In all Holm's earlier studies, the photographs were taken by the participants themselves which produced very insightful data. Therefore we also decided to use the same method in the study described here. Participatory research allows the students to produce their own representations of or views (Sensoy 2011) on their identifications and the collective habitus. Through interviews and observations, we developed a partial understanding of the students' identifications and feelings of belonging to a Finland-Swedish community. However, we wanted something more directly based on the students' own perceptions of their own identifications and belonging. Also, for young people who grow up in the digital age and have phones that allow for good photo and video quality, taking photos and videos comes naturally and has become a way of interacting and, for example, showing friends what they have been doing. Children and adolescents show a great deal of creativity when it comes to using their phones and other forms of digital media. The students use photos on a daily basis for their Facebook profiles and blogs, to name only a few ways adolescents use visual material. Keeping this in mind using photos as a way of collecting data can be a strong way to approach young people who, as was mentioned above, might find it intimidating to discuss rather personal and not so straightforward topics face to face with a researcher. Participatory photography is a way to connect to and engage the students in the research questions. Photography usually evokes their interest (Cremin et al. 2011).

We expected that the photographs would give us much richer data and a different kind of data, especially since this was a difficult topic for the students. Analyzing oneself and one's linguistic and group identifications is difficult since many different identifications influence who they are, especially since they were only 15 years old at the time of the study. The photos give a strikingly different and much more varied picture of how students see themselves as Finland-Swedes and Finland-Swedishness in general than what emerged in the interviews. In general taking photos requires much more engagement from the participants than participating in

interviews. The photographs require initiative since they were told only the themes and not what to photograph. The thoughtfulness and insightfulness with which they constructed the photographs are striking, especially since we thought we had a thorough understanding of their situation as minority language speakers. Some students were of course engaged in the interviews as well, but in interviews students are more influenced by the interviewer's presence, which is not the case when students took photos on their own. Mannay (2010) similarly found that photographs taken by participants opened up new ways of seeing a familiar situation. It is also easier for young people to express the complexities and difficulties of their lives through photos and especially easier for the less verbal and more visually oriented students (Cremin et al. 2011; Sensoy 2011; Lodge 2009; Wilson et al. 2007). Burnard (2002) also points out that young people are not always aware of what they know and much of their knowledge is implicit and therefore more difficult to express in words. Interestingly, it is much more common to use participatory photography with young children than teenagers (Serriere 2010; Stephenson 2009; Einarsdottir 2005).

Others (e.g., Croghan et al. 2008) have also found that photos allowed young people to bring up issues and themes that would most likely not otherwise have emerged. Like in our study, they found that certain aspects of the young people's self and identity emerged often in the photos but rarely in interviews and vice versa. In Croghan et al.'s study, the participants through the photos also brought up serious and sensitive issues to race, ethnicity, and religion, which seemed difficult to do without the photographs. Croghan et al. see that "(p)hoto-elicitation might therefore be a useful method of researching identity positions that are usually silent," (p. 355) and by extension photos bring out what might otherwise remain silent.

Using photography as a data collection method is not without difficulties. As can be seen also in our study, participants are reluctant to take photographs of people since they need a photo release from those photographed. It is of course possible to blur or "box" faces in the photographs but that takes away substantial information from the photo itself. It also objectifies the person in the image (Wiles et al. 2008). It is overall more difficult to promise confidentiality when using photographs. It requires more sensitivity from the researchers when publishing results. For example, in our study we have not published photos of the school or other recognizable institutions or places nearby that could identify the school. Due to this difficulty in promising confidentiality, it is also more difficult to obtain permission from some institutional review boards (Wiles et al. 2012). If participants themselves take photos, there is no way to completely control or regulate what they photograph. However, the researcher is still in charge of how the photographs are used. In our study too there are tens of photos that we cannot use since we did not receive either the responsible adult's consent or the student's assent form and images of people for whom we have no photo release form. Image-based research does even less than regular ethnographies fit the preset rules of institutional review boards. Many argue for an ongoing informed consent process where the participants give informed consent as new situations so require (Wiles et al. 2012; Pauwels 2008). Interestingly not all participants want confidentiality. They prefer it to be known that they have taken the

photograph or that they are the person in the photograph (Renold et al. 2008; Grinyer 2002). However, if the group or the school is promised confidentiality, then individuals' photos cannot be identified due to the risk that the individual's known identity leads to the recognition of the others.

With digital cameras often huge visual data sets are to be combined with the verbal data. Even though we did an ethnographic study of four lower secondary schools, photography was used for data collection in only one. Collecting photographs from four schools would have meant close to 2,000 photos. It is difficult and time consuming to analyze first the photographs and then the photographs in relation to interviews and observations. Data management programs where the different kinds of data can be combined are helpful, but the amount of data can still be overwhelming.

Issues in the Interpretation of Photos and Interviews

This study provides support for the increasing interest among educational researchers for visual research methods (e.g., Lodge 2009; Allen 2009; Newman et al. 2006; Fischman 2001). Photography has played an important role in social science research, and especially in anthropology and sociology, for a long time but less so in education except for in the history of education (e.g., Grosvenor 2007; Grosvenor et al. 1999). Photographs are still to a large extent used as illustrations and not as a data source in educational research. Consequently it is very common to see quotes from interviews in ethnographic writing in education, but photographs have not been included very often even though we are seeing a change here too with at least token photos being included (Cremin et al. 2011). Sometimes photos are used in the study but then translated into words in the reporting of the results. If photographs are interpreted only via verbal explanation, everything hinges on the researcher's ability to interpret and describe the photos. The reader cannot interpret the photographs but has to rely on the researcher's interpretation.

In the study described here, photographs are used as data in themselves and are not translated nor used as illustrations. The study though shows that it would have been difficult to interpret some photographs without any text. For example, looking at the photo of a sunset (p19), it would be impossible to know what the student intended to communicate. One student saw the sunset as the downhill path of the Finland-Swedes, and another interpreted her photo of a sunset as the Finland-Swedishness being beautiful. With the text it becomes very clear at least for someone with a similar language group habitus or identification. On the other hand, it is important to note that in this case it would have been entirely possible to use the photographs with their titles but without the photo-elicitation interviews and other interviews as the primary data source due to the researchers' familiarity with the culture. Interestingly the photo-elicitation interviews did not give more data than just the plain interviews. In questions about a photograph, students repeated what they had written in the accompanying text about the same photograph

and had difficulties elaborating on their thinking about the photograph. Banks (2001) stresses that a photo needs to be interpreted in relation to its social context. We argue that our familiarity with the social context makes the interpretation easier for us. We know what Banks calls the external narratives of the photos. We have a deep understanding of the everyday culture in which these photos are produced (see also Pink 2006; Lister and Wells 2001).

In the interviews students tended to focus a lot more on the language, while the photographs to a much larger extent take up a diversified array of aspects related to the students' minority status. Since the Finland-Swedishness is their identification and habitus, it is difficult for them to talk about it. It is self-evident and taken for granted. It is the lens through which they view and act upon the world. However, it is also a rapidly changing habitus due to students' increasing multilingualism. What it means to be a Finland-Swede varies to a large extent based on whether the student is bilingual or monolingual and social class background also colors the definitions. As Sweetman (2009) points out, it is in some ways easier to express habitus through photographs instead of verbally. This has been shown to be the case in our study as well. A significant result is also that the school, by accepting the students' bilingualism but by providing instruction in Swedish and creating an atmosphere supportive of the minority language culture and language, contributes to a minority language identification and habitus for bilingual students. The majority language Finnish is not looked down upon even though students are strongly encouraged to speak Swedish in school. Finnish is nevertheless acknowledged as part of the students' lives and is constantly present in school as well even if it is not actively supported other than taught as a home language or second national language.

The students constructed their identifications and perceptions through the photographs and the accompanying text in either literal or metaphorical ways that were very revealing and understandable for the researchers. However, since the focus in this case was on belonging and identification, the photos would have been more difficult to understand and interpret for a researcher not belonging to the same language minority group or knowing the context and the significance of institutions portrayed like the Swedish newspaper. Hence, we discovered that sharing certain experiences with the participants made our interpretation much easier, but we still look at the students' identifications and interpretations as outsiders since they are different from our own. For example, regarding the harassment and feeling unsure about the Finland-Swedes' future is of course understandable at a surface level for someone not very familiar with the situation. A person from another minority group might have a somewhat deeper understanding of what the students are expressing. However, for the three of us, we knew instantly the current and historical reasons for, for example, the feeling of the group being pushed into a corner and not being able to get out from it. Likewise the harassment and the necessity of switching languages is something every Finland-Swede in this region has experienced.

Similarly the photos of the crayfish platters do not signify just a platter of crayfish or a party where crayfish is eaten as it would be understood maybe by an outsider. Crayfish parties give a stereotypical picture of the Finland-Swedes and is seen as typical for the group even though most Finland-Swedes do not have crayfish

parties every year in August. Crayfish parties have a strong social class connotation since traditionally only the upper class could afford the expensive crayfish. Crayfish is associated with dinner parties, drinking, and singing. The stereotype is of elaborate, expensive parties, but these days imported cheap crayfish makes eating crayfish possible for the middle and working classes as well. Hence, here too we are seeing a change. Many of the students have given us photos of crayfish, a partially stereotypical picture of the Finland-Swedish group, even though they have never eaten crayfish or been to a crayfish party. Interestingly though, Rose (2012) points out that sometimes participants avoid taking photos of things disadvantageous to the group like stereotypes, but that was not the case with this group of students. They took photos of several different kinds of stereotypes.

Consequently questions arise: What is required of the researcher with regard to knowledge of the researched group in interpreting especially photographs? Can we understand photographs without having knowledge about the societal context for the photos? How much of the context or culture do we need to understand and know in order to interpret the photographs? Do we need to have a similar framework in order to have a deep understanding of the photos or does a similar habitus or identification prevent us from seeing certain things in the data? In qualitative research, as Coffey (2007, p. 1) states “the experiences of the researcher are integral to data collection and analytical insight.” What background knowledge about the participants do we need in order to understand their photos and accompanying texts? How do texts produced by the participants help us interpret the photographs taken by the participants? As Bloustien (2003, p. 1) argues “the representations of what we see are influenced by our historical and cultural perspectives.” Hence, if the participants’ historical and cultural perspectives are shared by the researchers, it influences the researchers’ interpretations.

Furthermore, how is our own understanding of our own culture and of the participants’ views on our common culture influenced by the data produced by the participants? Are the researchers influenced by the general societal attitudes and debates about the participants’ culture and situation? Photos produced by young people can also help us see familiar things from a new perspective (Lodge 2009) such as the notion that a Finland-Swede is a person who is bilingual. As Bourdieu (1990b, pp. 6–7) points out “the most trivial photo expresses... the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group... Adequately understanding a photograph... means not only recovering the meanings which it *proclaims*, that is, to a certain extent, the explicit intentions of the photographer; it also means deciphering the surplus of meaning which it *betrays* by being a part of the symbolism of an age, a class or an artistic group.” In other words Bourdieu sees photography as a tool that can uncover habitus at a superficial level. However, Sweetman (2009) argues that it is possible to move beyond this superficial level and study habitus at a deeper level through photography.

As with other methods there are numerous issues to be considered in using photography in ethnographic research. It is a method that is best used in combination with other data collection methods. Receiving permission for and from participants participating in a study using photography is important but also somewhat

difficult due to confidentiality issues, especially with regard to publishing. Even though most of the attention in the literature about visual methods, and in this case photography, has been focused on the actual data collection, the more difficult and equally important aspect is the interpretation of the photographs. The study we have discussed here is an attempt to further the understanding of the interpretation process as well as of how the interpretation of photos is combined with the interpretation of other kinds of data.

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4.5 Interpreting Education Policy and Primary Teachers' Work in England

Geoff Troman and Bob Jeffrey

Introduction

Our research over the past two decades has involved a series of projects researching English primary school teachers' interpretations of and adaptations to a range of state education initiatives in an era of intensive "reform." In this work we have used an approach to empirical research that has adopted an interpretivist stance underpinned by a loose body of symbolic interactionist theory. Three basic and interrelated ideas are critical to this theory:

1. The focus is on the interaction between the actor and the world.
2. A view of both the actor and the world as dynamic processes and not static structures.
3. The actor's ability to interpret the social world.

Social researchers guided by this theoretical framework necessarily need to focus on actors' meanings, motivations, and interpretations. Social reality has "many layers of meaning." Our task, therefore, was to attempt to penetrate the various "layers of reality" of the social setting of teaching (schools and classrooms).

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This required understanding the social lives of schools and teachers and that we took the role of the other by putting ourselves in the participants' position, looking at the world with them. We also recognized the importance of the culture and attempted to capture the meanings that permeated that culture as understood by the participants. Part of this task required the researcher to learn the symbols of the culture studied. This primarily involved learning the language of the participants with all its nuances and perhaps special vocabulary. Interpretations and interactions were also "situated" because situations affect perspectives and behaviors and perspectives can affect situations.

What our interpretations of the empirical studies showed was that the effects of restructuring the education system in the UK and the responses of the teachers to the process were both complex and contradictory. Teachers' interpretations and reactions could not simply be read off from official policy prescriptions. Policy analysis revealed the nature of education policy at the macro (system/societal) level. Ethnography helped us to understand the implications reforms have for teachers, how they are experienced and interpreted at the meso (organizational) and micro (personal) levels and how these interpretations and experiences work and affect their teaching.

In order to illustrate the ethnographic approach developed by us in various studies, this chapter focuses on one project Primary Teacher Identity, Commitment and Career in Performative Cultures (PTICC) 2005–2007 (RES-000-23-0748) which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of the UK. This project built on our previous research (Woods et al. 1997) into primary teachers' responses to educational reforms. We charted the adaptations of "creative teachers" to the national curriculum and other policy changes during the 1990s (Jeffrey and Woods 1996), showing teachers both responding to policy prescriptions and playing a creative role in its implementation. Since 1995 three allied projects focused on teachers developing creative learning (Jeffrey 2003); school restructuring (Troman 1997) and the impact of Office for Standards in Education inspections (Jeffrey and Woods 1998) with a reported growth of constraint, intensification of work, and increasing managerialism; and the social aspects of stress and teachers' identity reconstructions (Troman and Woods 2001).

The research on which this chapter focuses extends this work of mapping changes in primary teachers' identity, commitment, and career in the context of performative cultures and identifying policy implications concerning the recruitment, retention, and morale of teachers.

Our focus on the meanings the restructuring policies held for the teachers and their interpretations of them led us to develop theory in the areas of "identity," "commitment," "career," and "culture."

Interpreting Research Problems

The Research Project

Numerous authors argued that teacher commitment was central to the work of teaching and the functioning of education systems. Elliott and Crosswell (2002, p. 1), for example, argue that:

Teacher commitment and engagement has been identified as one of the most critical factors in the success and future of education (Huberman 1993; Nias 1981). It contributes to teachers' work performance, absenteeism, burnout and turnover, as well as having an important influence on students' achievement in, and attitude toward school. (Firestone 1996; Graham 1996; Lewis 1990; Tsui and Cheng 1999)

But there were indications that with the introduction and intensification of the recent performative reforms that teachers were experiencing a crisis of commitment. For instance, of the five reasons most often cited by teachers for leaving teaching identified by Smithers and Robinson (2003), salary ranked last and workload, school cultures, and commitment were ranked higher. Their study suggested a causal relationship between teacher supply and the experience of working/training in the performative cultures of schooling. Further, indications of disillusionment and disengagement were evidenced by the large numbers of unfilled vacancies for deputy and headteacher posts (Howson 1999). The forced overreliance on supply of teachers and teachers unqualified in specialist subjects threatened the quality of educational provision (Menter et al. 2002). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001) data indicated that this crisis was not limited to the UK but was global. Hargreaves (2003, p. 2.) argues teaching, though vital to the knowledge economy, is now a profession which "more and more people want to leave, fewer and fewer want to join, and very few are interested in leading ... (and that) it is a crisis of disturbing proportions."

Research by Jeffrey and Woods (1996, 1998) and Woods and Jeffrey (2002) indicated identity transformations and changes in commitment suggesting government policies were changing not only what teachers do but also their social identity (Ball 1994). The teachers "self" and "ontological security" (Giddens 1991, p. 36) had come under challenge. Our previous research on primary teacher stress (Troman and Woods 2001), for example, showed how the reforms rode roughshod over the values of English child-centered teachers and how overcommitment and over-conscientiousness of primary teachers to preserve their values and identities while implementing the reforms resulted in stress, burnout, and the exit of many from the profession. For those that remained, the experience of primary teaching was one largely of "change without commitment" (Webb and Vulliamy 2006) which was a teacher survival strategy "employed to reduce stress and to try to conserve time and personal resources for those aspects of teaching (to which they were strongly committed) such as building relationships with children, which were priorities for most teachers but were increasingly being eroded by time pressures" (p. 130). Primary teachers, it seemed, had become more strategic and political in

defending their self-identities. Some evidence suggested that their priorities had been to hold on to their humanistic values and their self-esteem, while adjusting their commitment (Woods and Jeffrey 2002; Nias 1989; Broadfoot and Osborn 1988). They had, perhaps, become more instrumental and now seemed to be seeking “satisfiers” more outside teaching (Goodson and Sikes 2001). An urgent task identified by these authors was to realign teachers’ personal projects with education.

These trends in teaching raised important questions for the effective running of the education system and the nature of contemporary society. Goodson (2006) argued that “attempts to commercialise the public services through the introduction of tests and targets” affected commitment and “people’s sense of meaning and mission” and this would “turn teaching into a profession attractive only to the compliant and docile, and conversely unattractive to the creative and resourceful. By pushing too far, they threaten to turn our schools into places of uniformity and barrenness – hardly a site on which standards will rise and educational inspiration flourish” (p. 17). In terms of social theory, this type of evidence supported arguments around a general demise of commitment to and in organizations and careers in Western societies. This raised some very interesting empirical and theoretical questions. Had the experience of work in new capitalism, which may be destructive of commitment, loyalty, and solidarity, brought about a “corrosion of character” (Sennett 1999) so that the way people now expressed their commitment and pursued “meanings,” “missions,” “dreams,” and “purposes” in their lives was no longer through work and occupations? Were there processes of “individualization” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) or “reflexive projects of the self” (Giddens 1991) taking place? Goodson (2006) argues that this seems to be exactly what was happening:

What we may be seeing, then, is the beginning of a substantial “turning away” from one of the major sites of collective purpose and social engagement – the public service workplace. The other side of this movement is a “turning towards” the individual; the personal; the consumable; the special interest; the private purpose. It is not quite as stark as “there is no such thing as society” or that “greed is good” but it is a growing focus on the private world of the individual self. (p. 6)

In this context our research, PTICC, was eliciting data on primary teachers’ experience of work, the nature of their commitment to this work, and how commitment changed during the teacher “career.” We were also interested in those factors in schools and social life which sustained or diminished commitment to teaching. In taking the “policy case” (Ozga 2000) of teachers, we were, potentially, therefore, in a position to reflect on the changing nature of public service work more generally, given the pervasive nature of performativity in this sector, thus, contributing to the debates outlined above. One aim of the project, therefore, was to identify changes in commitment over time and the implications of this for personal and professional identities and conceptions of teaching as a career. Later in this chapter we will focus on the various forms of commitment the teachers revealed as important in their decisions to teach and why primary teaching was an attractive occupation for the realization of their “purposes.” To do this we revisit some of the “classic” texts on teacher commitment by way of comparing our data derived from teachers working in contemporary cultures of performativity. We argue that the

teachers in our study exhibit the main forms of commitment to teaching as found in these previous studies. However, the commitment they exhibited is a complex of parallel commitments which show them investing in both the personal and professional—the private and the public.

We begin with details of the sample and methods used in the project.

Sample and Methods

We conducted fieldwork in six contrasting primary schools in five local authorities. The distribution and characteristics of the schools and teachers participating in the research were as follows:

London

Borough A – medium-sized primary school, high SES, *Green Common Primary*

Borough B – large inner-city school, low SES, *West Side Primary*

Borough C – large inner-city primary school, low SES, *Metropolitan Primary*

Southwest

Large urban primary school, high SES, *Albert Road Primary*

South Midlands

Small rural primary school, high SES, *County Primary*

Large inner-city primary school, low SES, *City Primary*

SES = socioeconomic status

Fieldwork commenced in May 2005. We conducted initial interviews and recorded life history details with 42 teachers. These represented the gender proportions in primary schools nationally at the time and a range (early–mid–late) of career stages. Analysis of the interviews, life history details, and school documentation was an ongoing process forming the basis of continuing visits to schools for progressive focusing. School visits at “high” and “low” points in the teachers’ school year and observation have taken place in classrooms, and other school contexts (e.g., staffrooms) took place. We are also tracked (for their first year in teaching) with two career change Postgraduate Certificate of Education-trained teachers who took up their posts in autumn 2005.

Methodological Approach

To understand and interpret the complexities of what was happening, we employed an ethnographic approach, which “captures and records the voices of lived experience...contextualises experience...goes beyond mere fact and surface

appearances. . . presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another” (Denzin 1989, p. 83). Data collection took place over one school year, enabling us to follow some identity trajectories and expose some of the contradictions and developments as well as gaining deeper analysis.

Data was collected within the school context, since identities are strongly shaped by that context (Rosenholtz 1989). We saw identity not as an entity but as processes, subject to change and modification in the light of changing circumstances. We mapped changes in identity, commitment, and the teachers’ subjective experience of career against changes in national, local, and school policy and changing schoolwork cultures. An “intermittent” approach (Jeffrey and Troman 2004) to data collection enabled us to visit the sample schools at significant times during the school year to observe and record events where performativity was overt (threshold payment assessments, pupil testing) and other occasions (outings, celebrations).

The research was based in six primary schools across two local authorities with a sample of 24 teachers. We judged this to be the maximum possible, given the depth of fine detail we sought, but large enough to afford a comparative basis for the research. We aimed for some significant contrast between the research schools (large inner city, small rural) in terms of size and socioeconomic status (our theoretical interpretation judged these likely to be important influencing factors on teacher identity and school culture). Among the teachers, we aimed for a balance of sexes, career stages and positions, and roles (see Table 1 for a breakdown of the sample). This sample provided an opportunity for comparison between such factors as gender and status and different forms of adaptation. We consulted LEA officials, teacher unions, and headteachers in identifying suitable schools. We had good contacts here from our previous and current researches. An example of a School Description Summary made at the time of the research can be seen in Appendix A.

Data were collected using several different methods and techniques. These included an interview facesheet to record teacher career, and demographic details were completed at the commencement of each “formal” interview (see Appendix B); semi-structured, in-depth life history interviewing, informal (conversational) interviews and observation, document analysis of national and school policy documents. Interviews were tape recorded, subject to participants’ approval. Recorded interviews were partially transcribed and those which were of theoretical significance were professionally transcribed in their entirety.

On average 1 day a week was spent in one of the six schools over the school year. This allowed interviewing to take place in different temporal phases of the school calendar and also facilitated the development of rapport between researcher and staff, the penetration of the various layers of reality in the schools, and the mapping of changes in teacher morale and commitment over time. We aimed for at least five interviews of at least 1 h duration with each of the teachers to be conducted over the school year. In addition, a number of unplanned, unstructured conversations

Table 1 Sample of teachers participating in the study

Schools/teachers	Age	Role	Years in teaching
Green Common			
Christine	55	Head	30
Barbara	52	Year 3	12
Lara	55	Year 1	9
Mary	50	Foundation	12
Andrew	30	Year 3	8
West Side			
Stephanie	50	Deputy	28
Dorothy	46	Year 3	2
Vicky	30	Year 6	9
Ellie	34	Year 4	3
Laurie	38	Year 2	5
Pat	66	Year 2	40
Jan	26	Year 3	3
Lindsey	32	Year 1	7
Anne	50	Year 2	27
Elisabeth	45	Year 6	1
Metropolitan			
George	59	Assistant head	30
Jennifer	24	Year 1	3
Brian	39	Year 1	10
Albert Road			
Martin	54	Head	33
Caroline	45	Deputy head	23
Samantha	33	Year 3	1
Bill	49	Year 6	25
Tamara	29	Foundation	2
Penny	29	Year 2	4
Claire	28	Year 4	4
Lisa	36	Year 2	13
County			
Loraine	54	Head	32
Catherine	31	Year 1	9
Chloe	39	Year 3	17
Hannah	42	Year 2	2
Judy	59	Foundation	39
Charlotte	39	Year 6	5
Nick	30	Year 4	4
Jeremy	38		1
Michael	60	Teaching assistant	2

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Schools/teachers	Age	Role	Years in teaching
City			
Edith	62	Headteacher	40
Susanna	31	Deputy head	8
Sharon	41	Year 6	2
Rachel	30	Year 3	5
Kate	28	Year 2	4
Nancy	23	Year 3	1

and discussions with teachers singly and in groups took place. The extent of interviewing was dependent on the willingness of the teachers to continue their commitment to the research. The interviews probed such areas as:

- The teachers' sense of self and identity and how these were changing
- The importance of teaching in their lives
- Teachers' views of the "satisfiers" and "dissatisfiers" in teaching and how they secured a balance between them
- Teachers' views of how their classroom teaching and relationships with pupils have been affected by the introduction of performativity cultures
- Teachers' views of working in performative cultures, in terms of staff relationships and of what changes would enhance their commitment

Our ethnographic approach was the same as that employed in previous projects (Woods 1995; Troman 1997; Troman and Woods 2001). The researcher's role was one of the "involved observer" (Woods 1979), taking part in school activities without becoming a fully participant observer. This aided insights into teachers' work situation and facilitated interviews and conversations with the teachers. It also provided triangulation for the teacher interviews. We expected to witness instances of "satisfiers" and "dissatisfiers," and various forms of social relationships. The observations we recorded were unstructured in the sense that they were not collected or recorded in the form of a structured observation schedule. Recording was in the form of field notes later entered into a research diary. Observation took place in a number of contexts in the school (classroom, staffroom, headteacher's office, and meetings) where the performativity culture was influential. This provided in-depth knowledge of school organization, climate, and teacher culture and teachers' subjective experiences of these. This highlighted the complexities affecting the performative culture of teaching. We were then in a position to identify those factors that enhanced commitment or, alternatively, reduce it and induced disengagement from teaching.

Teachers who are willing to do so were encouraged to keep diaries over a school year (audio or oral). The aim here was to encourage reflection, free writing (or speaking), and personal and private testimony. We envisaged some of the diary compilation to be done at home, enabling them to consider their work and their attachment to it "at a distance." The diaries were a resource during the interviews, promoting a number of "diary interviews." Zimmerman and Wieder

(1977) employed this technique, allowing interviewees to expand on what was written and to fill out “the less directly observable features of the events recorded, on their meanings, their propriety, typicality, connection with other events and so on” (p. 484). Diaries, we felt, could benefit teachers in terms of professional reflection and continuous professional development. Payment for teacher supply cover was included in the research budget in order to facilitate these activities, enabling teachers to do some of this at work, thereby maximizing the chances of completion. Documentary analysis of official national and school policies was undertaken in the manner described and demonstrated in Troman (1996).

Theoretical Interpretations

Research proceeded in the sequence, data collection–analysis–data collection–analysis, to provide a “spiral of insights” (Lacey 1976). We sought to generate theory from the data using the method of “constant comparisons” (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Comparisons took place both within the research and outside, especially with other, related, studies. Analysis of the data, alongside ongoing reference to the literature, informed data collection.

Primary analysis aimed to identify broad themes and categories from the data. These were then saturated, refined, and sometimes modified by more data collection, sometimes using different methods to triangulate the results. The category was then specified in terms of the conditions which gave rise to it, the context in which it was embedded, the strategies by which it was handled, and the consequences of those strategies (Strauss and Corbin 1990). These concepts were then reconsidered with others from related literature with a view to developing a more comprehensive theory (see Troman and Woods 2001). Data storage, retrieval, and analysis were supported by the use of the qualitative data analysis computer package ATLAS.ti.

We planned to provide feedback on findings to teachers and schools and any other interested parties and further develop policy recommendations through these discussions.

Theoretical Interpretations of Teacher Commitment

Woods (1983) argues that teacher identity, commitment, and career are closely interrelated concepts. In terms of commitment, there is a:

range or degree, from near total through partial, to almost complete lack. Career bound teachers tend toward the first, misplaced teachers the last, but most show partial commitment. (Woods 1983, p. 155)

Three forms of commitment in teachers have been identified—“vocational,” “professional,” and “career” commitment (Woods 1983, p. 155). Vocational commitment leads teachers to seek out schools in which their values (especially

pedagogic) can be realized (Lacey 1977). They are committed to education in a wider sense and “if blocked from achieving their ideals through teaching will explore other means of bringing them about” (Woods 1983, pp. 155–156). Professionally committed teachers “rated their teaching abilities very highly and were committed to their advancement” (Woods 1983, p. 156). Career-committed teachers “find what is profitable to [them] is bound up with [their] position in the system” (ibid). Here there is a strong career investment in the organization in terms of advancement or merely career continuance for “other involvements and responsibilities, like family, house, community, pensions, keeping them going” (ibid).

Nias’ (1984) 100 English primary teachers had “strong dedication to religious, political or humanitarian ideals” (p. 270). These beginning teachers saw themselves as “missionaries” or “crusaders” and were committed to “create through their teaching, a more humane, socially just and constructively self-critical social world” (ibid.). Two thirds of Nias’ sample expressed the “pursuit of principle” as a “crucial part of the job” (ibid.) and were “guided by the inner conviction about what’s right” (ibid.). Others were “concerned with broader professional standards and the single-minded pursuit of ‘occupational competence’” (ibid). Of course, not all of the teachers were initially committed in these ways; one felt “I’m very unsure about my identity as a teacher, what I believe in, what I want to do’ (ibid.). And some of those who entered teaching without a strong sense of commitment had found the work of teaching had induced it and had ‘been motivated by the job into wanting to work hard for something’ (ibid).

There are clearly, then, different forms of commitment to teaching. There is also a range of commitments. Changes in the nature and intensity of commitment to teaching are, of course, contingent on factors derived from personal and professional lives. In terms of the professional, Day et al. (2005) argue that:

researchers have found that teacher commitment may be enhanced or diminished by factors such as student behaviour, collegial and administrative support, parental demands and national education policies. (p. 566)

And teacher commitment “is thought to decrease progressively over the course of their teaching career” (Elliott and Crosswell 2002 see also, Fraser et al 1998; Huberman 1993).

While the dynamic nature of teacher commitment is acknowledged here, we concentrate in the following section on the forms of commitment the teachers expressed when they chose teaching as an occupation.

Interpretations of Empirical Data

Lortie (1975, p. 25) argued that:

Occupations compete, consciously or not, for members, and there is a largely silent struggle between occupations as individuals choose among alternative lines of work. Occupations proffer different advantages and disadvantages to those making choices, and people vary in

their dispositions and personal circumstances – an occupation will attract some persons and repel others. Out of the combinations which ensue, an occupation will come to be staffed by people of particular dispositions and life circumstances.

In trying to discern what attracts individuals to teaching, we can, potentially, identify important data on personal dispositions in terms of identity, commitment, the meaning of work, and conceptions of career. Lortie “questioned those within the occupation, asking them to describe the attractions they saw in it and to identify those which made it more attractive than the alternatives they seriously considered” (p. 26).

We adopted a similar approach in parts of our interviews, though unlike Lortie (who conducted a questionnaire survey and interview approach) we held life history interviews with further follow-up informal conversation style interviews during the school year. Like Lortie we were interested to identify what kinds of people were finding teaching in performative school cultures attractive. We particularly concentrated on the choice of teaching as a “career,” when and how this was made, and what forms of commitment were revealed in this way. The identifications of attractions in teaching, of course, indicate potential “satisfiers” (Evans 1998) in the work of teaching.

Lortie (1975, pp. 27–37) categorized, in the form of themes, the five attractors of teaching, arising from his interview and survey data, as follows:

The Interpersonal Theme; The Service Theme; The Continuation Theme; The Theme of Time Compatibility; and the The Material Benefits Theme.

We explored these themes in our data, by way of comparison. This constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) also meant that the interview data were interpreted in the context of the knowledge and understanding we had derived from informal interviews/conversations, national and school policy analysis, school descriptions and observations, and teacher demographic and career details.

Our interpretations using this method generated the following categories.

The Interpersonal Theme

Since teaching “calls for a protracted contact with young people” (Lortie 1975, p. 27), it is, perhaps, unsurprising that the interpersonal theme provided the largest category in our data. Some teachers talked of a long-term attraction or “loving” to work with children. Some talked of the “love of teaching” and “love of being with children” (Lara, Green Common, Y1). Stephanie (deputy, West Side) said that:

I always loved children right from an early age. My Mum was a Keep Fit Teacher and my sister also loved children and she went into teaching too. So I suppose it's a family career.

For some of the teachers, opportunities to work with children became attractive when they experienced motherhood and becoming parents themselves (Sikes 1997); Sharon (City School, Y6) found:

When I had my own children and they came to this school I decided to help them out in nursery and then help them out in their classroom. From then on a teacher asked me, would I like to do some paid work as a Teaching Assistant. So I started doing the odd days which then went to me getting a job in another school. And I did that for four years and then started thinking, well actually I'd quite like to take this on. My children were getting older and I wanted a career and then it took me two years to make the decision to actually go into teacher training.

For others it was strong identifications with people who were teachers which provided the attraction.

The Service Theme

Lortie (1975, p. 28) noted that “although their (teachers’) status had been shadowed, teachers have been perceived as performing a special mission in our society, and we see the continuation of that conception among those engaged in the work today.”

In our research, both older experienced and younger inexperienced teachers saw some kind of service to society as an important attractor. But only the older generation of teachers expressed this in the form of a strong sense of mission.

Edith (headteacher, City), for instance, encapsulates this perspective:

I just always knew that I wanted to be a teacher from primary school and I think it's the old story of an inspirational teacher called Mr. Johnson, who changed my life. He made magic for us as children and I wanted to do that for children, combined with a very appalling teacher who made life miserable for a whole class. In fact a generation of children brought up in that town. We all hated her. Horrendous woman, horrendous! It was in the 2nd year Juniors, equivalent to Year 4 now, but I can remember being terrified, absolutely terrified of her and such a negative feeling. I went from her to Mr. Johnson and I think even at that age I realised that it's how you are with other people that can change their lives completely, and I wanted to do that for children, so that's why I went into it. So I trained straight from school. I wanted to learn about the craft of teaching. I'd like to say the whole thing was magical when I started teaching.

This testimony is strongly reminiscent of the vocational commitment Nias (1984) identified in some of her teachers.

The mission and identification with teaching as an occupation (often mentioned alongside other possible “service” choices) were formulated (in the case of the older teachers) sometimes at a very early stage in life.

A number of the younger teachers developed a sense of mission and purpose through global issues while working abroad.

Both Lortie and Nias note a long tradition (in both American and UK cultures) of not only a secular service ethic but also one derived from religion. Nick (County, Y4) attended Bible school for a year and in that time did placements in primary

schools. He did weekly assemblies and on the strength of that experience felt these schools “looked like a good place to be.” George (Metropolitan, headteacher) had a strong religious mission which was influential in his later entry to teaching:

The Continuation Theme

Lortie (1975, p. 29) noted that “some who attend school become so attracted to it that they are loathe to leave”—the teachers in his study “referred to such attachments as attractive to the occupation.” Teaching also can “serve as the means of satisfying interests which might have been fostered and reinforced in school.” For some of the teachers in our study, school had been a positive experience, thus making an occupation in teaching attractive. Chloe (County, Y3) found:

I just thought it (junior school) was very interesting. I had a great time when I was at junior school. Absolutely adored it. So I think it brought all the memories flooding back, I would enjoy teaching the children the kind of things I learnt when I was at school and I would enjoy doing all the preparation for it. I found it interesting.

Christine (Green Common, headteacher) had taught at school and home as a pupil:

I was very lucky when I was at school and I was allowed to be very supportive. I was able to help with the younger ones quite a bit and things like that. And also I've got younger sisters – I've got one sister who is 14 years younger than me. Right from when I was 14 years old there was a little one around. I think that makes a difference.

Penny (Albert Road, Y2), a career changer, had developed a strong interest in sport throughout her primary and secondary schooling and wanted to continue to develop this interest in teaching primary children.

The Theme of Time Compatibility

Lortie (1975 pp. 31–32) argued that:

The working schedules of teachers have always been special; although the length of the school year has increased steadily over the last century, most (other workers) are required to work considerably more days per year than the average teacher. Teachers are sensitive to criticism about this, and one senses that reaction in the statistics their national association gathers to show that teachers actually work longer hours than formal school schedules require. The fact remains, however, that the teacher's schedule features convenient gaps which play a part in attracting people to the occupation. Work days which are finished in mid-afternoon, numerous holidays, and long summer holidays do not go unnoticed by young people comparing teaching with alternative possibilities.

In our research one male teacher mentioned the attractions of time flexibility because of the issue of balancing work with family life. Most of the female teachers, particularly those with children, did find (initially) this potential flexibility of

working hours to be an attractor. Given the traditional (and persisting) sexual division of labor in the home (Oakley 2002; Crompton 2006), this is not surprising. Ellie (West Side, Y4) was attracted to teaching for this reason:

Teaching is a good career if you want a family, it's quite flexible in that respect, so that was also a consideration I suppose. I couldn't go back to an office.

Mary (Green Common, Foundation), a career changer, found teaching compared much more favorably to her former work in architecture with a long-hour culture:

Having my own family and realizing that I actually enjoyed children, had a rapport with them, I wanted to be a full-time mother, which I did until Jessica was nearly 4 years old and then realized that I did want some sort of employment, and the sort of things that I can do with architecture didn't appeal with the hours I was having to meet.

Hannah (County, Y2) a former journalist (also an occupation with a family-unfriendly work culture she argued) developed a career within education, which facilitated her with working within the same institution as her young son, thereby, removing the need to organize (and pay for) child care.

The Material Benefits Theme

Material benefits refer to money, prestige, and employment security. Obviously, in most occupations remuneration for the work done could be expected to be a prime attractor and, therefore, source of commitment. Traditionally, in primary teaching, salaries and status have been low, which some have argued (see Crompton 2006; Evetts 1987, for examples) accounts for the preponderance of female teachers while making it an unattractive occupation for males. However, few of our respondents raised this aspect in interviews. Lortie (1975, p. 30) explained this phenomenon in terms of traditional views of teaching as an occupation:

Historically the status has been defined as under-rewarded; teachers addressing others may hesitate to cite material benefits when in the public eye, such rewards are said to be inadequate. But I suspect that the emphasis on service, on teachers as 'dedicated', is a more potent source of inhibition, since many people both inside and outside teaching believe that teachers are not supposed to consider money, prestige and security as major inducements. Such normative pressures make it probable that material benefits influence teachers' decisions more than their answers indicate.

While this might have been the case in our research, some respondents were willing to talk about material benefits of teaching as an attractor. These respondents tended to be women and women with children. Hannah (County, Y2) had a salary increase when entering teaching; in provincial journalism her salary was "rubbish and if you want to earn money you have to go to London, but journalism's worse than teaching when you start, certainly, when you start." Moving to London to increase salary was, however, not a viable option given the location of her husband's work and child's school. Career changers sometimes took a large cut in salary to become teachers. Samantha (Albert Road, Y3), the former army captain, said, "I was earning a lot of money in the Army, 3 or 4 times what I'm earning now."

Pat (West Side, Y2) made an interesting comment which suggested that “good” salaries, presumably aimed at increasing teacher commitment once in teaching, were in fact, for some teachers, sustaining commitment merely in the form of career continuance—and both the teachers and their pupils were experiencing negative effects as a result.

The Interpretation of Interpretations

It is probably evident from the transcript materials above that some of the attractions of teaching and the commitment(s) they reveal cannot easily and neatly be allocated to discrete categories, though the exercise is fruitful for analytical purposes. This is because the individual teachers' life history accounts contained within them show evidence of a range of commitments. It is clear from looking through these categories that particular teachers appear in more than one category. Some of this complexity can be seen in the accounts of Hannah and Jeremy above, but all the teachers' transcripts showed range and complexity of commitment. This is methodologically interesting, and a critique of Lortie's research might be appropriate at this point, but we want to focus here instead on what we see as the theoretical interest—what are these data and our interpretations of them telling us about the nature of teacher commitment?

The narrative accounts provided by these teachers display multiple commitments which reveal multifaceted identities. When assessing the commitments of these teachers, it is hard to separate out the professional and personal—the public and the private. For example, taking the theoretical case of a teacher deciding to leave teaching to have a child (Pomson 2004, p. 657):

As Acker (1992) has shown, a choice such as this might once have been regarded as indicating a lack of career commitment in the face of pressures from home. More recent research which attends to the subjective content of career decisions, suggests that the juggling/balancing of personal and professional commitments may more likely evidence what is often referred to as a parallel rather than vertical career strategy (Evetts 1990). To quote Nias, it shows that someone ‘may hold personal and professional goals to be of equal importance and seek to achieve both simultaneously’ (Nias and Aspinwall 1995, p. 200). It need not imply a lack of career commitment.

Acker (1999, p. 162) also points out that an implied lack of career commitment which may be involved in the “stop-start career” and the choice to have a family can also be the cause of “career blockage” and occupational resentment and frustration:

Women who had children were thought to experience further disadvantages. Either they carried on, with only a short break for maternity leave, or they were faced with returning to a lower-status, often marginal position. Grant's (1989) review of studies of women teachers' careers identified the ‘career break’ as particularly deleterious to women's chances of career advancement in a system where ‘promotion is tied to age-related norms’ (p. 44). Nias (1989) discusses sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for primary teachers she interviewed. Those who were temporary, supply or part-time were particularly likely to express ‘disappointment, resentment or frustration’ (p. 127). Chessum's (1989) interviewees voiced similar sentiments, one terming herself as a ‘part-time nobody’. (Acker 1999, p. 161)

There was much evidence in our research of the “seriousness” with which teachers “treat both their professional and domestic commitments” (Pomson 2004, p. 657). It was clear too in the testimony of some of our teachers. Dorothy, for instance, said that “her sense of herself as a mother was coloured by her identity as a teacher, just as her work in the classroom was shaped by her experiences as a mother” (ibid.). There was, then, “a weaving of personal and professional commitments” (ibid.) and very often this was the source of tension and contradiction.

Conclusion

Our interpretation of the teacher narratives (in the context of our other empirical data) does not show much evidence of the grand narratives of modernity such as “crusading” moral purposes or social class-based commitments with regard to addressing educational inequality. But these were, according to the “commitment literature,” only ever held by a minority, with the majority being “conservative” and uncommitted to progressive change in school or society. Perhaps, the grand narratives have become elided into the softer, late-modern, and ambiguous narrative of “making a difference” or those around global issues such as the body, health, international development, and the environment. These kinds of projects are, of course, forms of identity politics: arising from lifestyle issues. In this sense there does seem to be increasing investment in the self revealed through these forms of commitments. And it must be remembered that many of the teachers in our current research had recently turned to teaching from other professions. Initial and career-change decisions were characterized by a great deal of uncertainty around choices (Duncan 2003) and preferences (Hakim 2000) of career in postindustrial society (Hage and Powers 1992). In terms of portfolio careers, then, we must ask, what kinds of commitment(s) were the teachers investing in their previous occupations and what happened to it?

There was much evidence in the teacher narratives, though, of “love” and commitment to “care” which must be the most fundamental commitments in life in both domestic and work spheres. The teachers of our previous researches had, in many cases, owing to their strong professional and vocational commitment, failed to “juggle” the personal and professional and with this failure came an identity crisis and the vulnerability to which Edith referred. Teachers in the contemporary context seemed much more adept and realistic in both recognizing and managing their range of parallel commitments. An increasing emphasis on strategies to protect the personal and invest in the personal, while also investing in the public, need not necessarily be read as “instrumentality” or as a form of “individualization” or “projects of the self.” They do seem to be kinds of parallel and “care-full” commitments. However, whether they can be sustained in contemporary society under rapid change and in performative school/work cultures is another matter.

Appendices

Appendix A: Example School Description Summary

City Primary School

The City Primary School became primary school in 2003 when it amalgamated of a first and an infant school. It is situated at the margins of a southwestern English city, surrounded by big council estates. Ofsted cited in its 2006 inspection report that the school serves a significantly disadvantaged area and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school is part of an excellent and city program. The City Primary School has been in special measures, but was able to raise standards during the last years. The school has established "excellent links with outside agencies" with their "total commitment to the Family Links Nurturing Program." In its 2002 report Ofsted cited that there has been a very high turnover of teaching staff over the last 2 years.

Pupil Data: City Primary School

Total number of pupils on roll	473
Pupils with SEN, with statements: number and percentage	19 (4.0 %)
Pupils with SEN, without statements: number and percentage	157 (33.2 %)
Number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average	
Absence record for pupils of compulsory school age	
% unauthorized absence	2.0 %
<i>Key Stage 2 Test Results 2005</i>	
English	
% of pupils achieving level 4 or above in English	61 %
% of pupils achieving level 5 in English	9 %
Mathematics	
% of pupils achieving level 4 or above in mathematics	63 %
% of pupils achieving level 5 in mathematics	13 %
Science	
% of pupils achieving level 4 or above in science	75 %
% of pupils achieving level 5 in science	21 %
Average point score	25.6
Value added	
School VA measure	99.2
School VA coverage indicator	97 %

Details of interviewed
staff: City Primary School

Name	Age	Post
Edith	62	Head teacher
Susanna	31	Deputy
Kate	28	Year 2 teacher
Rachel	30	Year 3 teacher
Nancy	23	Year 3 teacher
Sharon	51	Year 6 teacher

Teachers and Classes: City Primary School

Qualified teachers

Total number of pupils per qualified teacher

Average class size

Details About the Schools from Its Prospectus

The school describes itself as an “excellent school” in its school prospectus. It sees itself as “a center for learning and development,” “where standards are high in all subjects,” “where all can develop and achieve their potential,” and “where there is a stimulating, safe environment and teaching is exciting and relevant so that children are eager to learn, where all learn how to learn.” Furthermore, it describes itself as a “happy school,” “a bright, attractive place where all are valued and welcomed,” and “a place where there is mutual respect.”

The school strives for:

- Clear expectations, high and consistent, and understood by everyone
- Clear boundaries
- Commitment from everyone and an understanding of where we fit into the school community
- A conscientious headteacher and good clear management
- Sensitive caring staff who are happy, motivated, and able to inspire
- Effective liaison with parents/carers: good communication leading to support, loyalty, and respect from parents
- Effective links with other schools
- Awareness of different kinds of disability and a determination to make sure it will make no difference to life opportunities and self-worth
- A broad, rich curriculum to inspire and enrich
- An effective governing body
- Self-evaluation

Appendix B: Example Teacher Interview Facesheet: Demographic/Career Details

Name of School	Green Common
Local Education Authority	London
Date of Interview	22.11.05
Time of Interview	9.00 – 10.00
Place of Interview	Head's office
Head Teachers' Name	Christine
Female/ Male	F <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 52 <input type="checkbox"/> Early <input type="checkbox"/> Mid <input type="checkbox"/> Late <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Union Member	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Role in School	Head Teacher "external communication"
Class this year	
Years in Teaching	"I've been teaching for 25/28 years. A deputy for five years. .. I was a head for three years in Richmond"
Years in this School	5 years
Experience in other Schools	"I was in a very difficult school in Hackney ... I've taught in all sorts of schools. ... I taught in Battersea for six years as well and I loved teaching in those multicultural schools and the challenges that those schools offered."
Experience in other Employment	Went straight into teaching but was thinking about going to the Police as well

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4.6 Mediating Systemic Change Through Sociocultural Methods in Educational Systems in the USA

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Mediating Systemic Change in Educational Systems Through Sociocultural Methods

In this chapter, we explore the notion of technical assistance within an ethnographic research tradition and then propose a set of approaches to interpreting and acting on interpretations drawn from technical assistance activity. In the end, we hope to reveal to the readers the complexity of using evidence in a variety of ways to help systems make important shifts in their work, their cultures, and their decision-making processes so that changes in systems produce outcomes that are equitable for the students who go to school there. The processes that we use to collect, compile, analyze, and inform our work are steeped in ethnographic research methods. Thus, our work could be considered as that of ethnographer activists who participate in and influence the work of schools with particular emphasis on social justice and equity. Through this approach we help organizational leaders understand and re-mediate the ways that they structure and support equity in their schools.

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Some of this work offers units of analysis that link macro with micro level factors (Artiles and Dyson 2005; Gallego et al. 2001). For instance, we examine how federal policy makes its way through state and district interpretations to locally enacted practice at the school-wide and classroom level and even into specific interactions between teacher and student. This emergent work transcends fragmented views of individuals in which single markers of difference (e.g., race, social class, gender, etc.) constitute the focus of analysis (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). It moves beyond psychological notions of learning and development that locate knowledge development and change within individuals to focus on learning within communities as individuals build shared experience, explore opportunities, and hone their practice through interaction (Engeström 1999).

Change in participation defines learning. Systems change work embodied in sociocultural research methods offers an approach to engaging in change within community. In this approach change work becomes both the *method of inquiry* (i.e., the process for understanding) and the *mediating context* (i.e., the activity that shifts understanding) in which change occurs. In addition to locating change in community and identifying change processes as research, there is a third pillar of this work: on equity focus. By focusing on equity, systems divest themselves of institutionalized racist policies and practice that, we argue, are a result of action without inquiry, which, in turn, stems from anemic or weak methods for examining, interpreting, and critiquing local practice (Engeström and Sannino 2010).

Using the tools of ethnography to examine a system's work in action offers opportunities and challenges for researchers and participants alike. Participants within activity arenas like schools and school systems wrestle with time on a minute-by-minute basis. Institutional mandates, the 182 days that students attend school; the densely packed, test-atomized curriculum; and the unexpected daily even hourly surprises that come from large numbers of people trying to navigate the same pathways; at the same time, following the same routines, challenge even the most skilled time managers. Therefore, reflexivity, the luxury of considering an action before making it and assessing its value afterwards, is rarely experienced.

Our project work with school personnel asks practitioners to take time to remediate their experiences, attending to multiple influences and interpretations of the events that surround them. We meet with small groups of school personnel with a set of questions that help lead them through a process of questioning their daily practices, both what and how practice occurs. Critical ethnographic methods require the accumulation of evidence in some consistent process, the development of hunches or working hypotheses about what is happening, followed by more and more focused evidence collection to help make meaning and refocus effort (Holstein and Gubrium 2008). Vignettes from shared descriptions of everyday life and the commentary that accompanies these vignettes become part of the evidence change that is used to chronicle conceptual and activity shifts in school communities. In this way, together, researchers and participants document how schools construct, manage, and sustain social realities. Importantly, in our work, we ask ourselves and our participants to be *critical* ethnographers (Anderson 1989). We collectively examine how, through our discourse and instructional tools,

meaning emerges and the cultural work of schools is woven. As we discuss here, entering into a critical stance complicates research efforts to warrant our processes with participants and external audiences as we construct understanding of our data. Thus, using ethnographic tools to mediate our activities as technical consultants creates a number of methodological and ethical dilemmas that we explore in this chapter.

In this chapter, we reveal a kind of double move in which the data in the system (e.g., vignettes and their commentaries) and our own field notes about the influence of our presence are consulted as we move forward. How we take care to collect, compile, and use our own field notes, status reports, and decision trees to track and examine our own work is a critical piece of this chapter. We explore the ways in which our mission constrains our support and our support constrains our mission. Further, while we provide support in specific ways, we are also funded by governmental agencies in which vested interests define what counts as success. Chronicling, interpreting, and theorizing about the meaning of these moves offer a telling view of the politics of educational reform. Along the way, readers will encounter sections of this chapter that explain the context of our work, describe systemic change with educational systems using one case as an example, highlight the methods, and explore the impact and analytical opportunities by enacting our role as a method of inquiry.

Methods

Setting: Working on Equity Issues as an Arm of the Federal Government

This chapter draws from work completed through a grant from the US government that funded our work as an equity assistance center. The center was responsible for providing rights training and advisory services for all schools and communities in three states to address equity and access issues in public education. There were almost eight million students from preschool through 12th grade in these three states. We focused on prevention, intervention, and remediation strategies with schools, local school systems, and state education agencies to reduce racial, gender, and socioeconomic disproportionalities among groups of students.

Variability in public education in the USA is important because local and state contexts produce very different kinds of tensions and opportunities. States, not the federal government, have the constitutional responsibility to ensure access to education in the USA. This means that all 50 states and 10 US territories (e.g., Puerto Rico) have their own sets of educational laws and regulations that map, where required, onto national legislation that finances some programs, notably those for students who meet certain thresholds for poverty, English language skills, and educational disabilities. Local school systems raise much of the operating costs

for educating children from kindergarten through high school graduation through local property taxes. Locally elected (in some cases appointed) school boards oversee local school districts that have distinct and specific sets of regulations. For instance, in one metropolitan area of more than eight million residents, there are 18 different school districts and school boards each with their own curriculum, teacher hiring and evaluation procedures, transportation systems, and so on. Thus, working with any school district requires careful excavation and attention to its cultural history, rules, lore, collective identity, modes of communication, and procedural fluencies. This context is critical to understanding that centralized and national strategies to change educational practice have had little impact on local experience in spite of more than 60 years of sustained efforts to improve educational outcomes through national initiatives.

What became apparent in working with individual systems was that often, districts and schools lacked information on two counts. First, their knowledge of current research and emerging knowledge was fuzzy at best. Second, they were unaware how their own practices improved outcomes for students viewed as culturally and linguistically diverse (see field note 1, 2009). Further, school and school district organizational structures served as barriers to change and improvement. Institutional structures lacked flexibility for developing internal capacity in terms of the distribution of knowledge and inquiry strategies, the redistribution of services and supports, and communication strategies with their employees as well as the larger communities they served (Kozleski and Artiles 2012). Complicated by institutionalized practices, these structural barriers appeared to explain some of the graduation and assessment data gaps between White and Asian-American students and other ethnic, racial groups as well as special education and EL groups.

Keep in mind the importance of our approach as a continual interpretive act based on analyses of the institutional and structural constraints of the system that we were entering. That is, interpretation of our work began as we made decisions about where to enter a school system in order to increase the probability of changing practices. Understanding the local context meant that deciding whom to call for an initial contact had implications for who would call us back and what kind of reception we might have. What occurred in these initial conversations had ripple effects in terms of who else in the senior administration might call us and begin conversations. We wanted to connect with enough people in the system to help us better understand the constraints and affordances that existed in this particular context so that our work with them could expand and connect both quickly and deeply. Each move was based on interpretations that were being made as we talked and began to map the relationships, the leadership dynamics, and the local funds of knowledge (Chase 2005). We taped these initial conversations (with permission from our participants), wrote field notes, and involved our own team members in interpreting the emerging story lines.

In the district that we refer to in the paper, district leaders were in flux. The superintendent was retiring. Several senior executives each with different kinds of responsibilities such as curriculum, personnel, and finance each saw themselves as potential superintendents. The interviews with each of them and

the people who supported particular promotions equivocated between offering sharply focused (a) analyses of equity issues and (b) analyses of poor leadership decisions. In the next sections, we describe our work with schools and districts from the first contact with a district, through data gathering, planning, implementing, learning, and honing the remedies or processes.

Process: The Conceptual Frame

We conceptualized transformative equity assistance work as coordinated effort to build capacity and nurture ongoing professional development through reflexivity. Ethnographic methods provided the vehicle. Using data, we worked with organizational leaders to inform their frameworks, develop their knowledge base, and remediate what they emphasized through discourse and action. We supported this work with tools designed to help mediate how people understand the landscape in which they work and define their problem spaces in ways that recognize and organize complexity (Engeström 1999). In addition, we proposed that transformative equity work is institutionalized and scaled up through a distributive model of organizational change in which effective practices are systematically disseminated through school networks (Kozleski and Huber 2010). We have described this work elsewhere as organized around five key transformative mediating structures: (a) remediating understandings of the problem; (b) disrupting the view from above; (c) forging new spaces; (d) cycles of inquiry, reflection, and action; and (e) implementing and assessing change (Kozleski and Artiles 2012). Critical ethnography demands that researchers examine how power and privilege are exercised within settings (Cannella and Lincoln 2009). Unexamined everyday practices reify historical patterns of interaction in which some groups benefit because of the existing informal or unspoken rules of conduct that marginalize other perspectives and frames of reference.

One district in particular had serious gaps in achievement among racial/ethnic groups. After a series of conference calls in which the district superintendent, the chief academic officer, and other district leaders identified a set of issues that they felt were contributing to their data outcomes, we proposed a process for working with them. We designed this approach to foreground organizational change for social justice and equity outcomes since addressing issues of inequity for some families and students emerged from an initial needs assessment. Our task was to create access to tools that captured the current landscape as well as anticipated progress on critical equity issues that centered on differential educational achievement based on gender, national origin, and race. We wanted to help the district team understand how a focus on improving results for *all* students improves results for particular groups as well. As ethnographers, we went back to our data to examine the relationships.

Throughout this period of time, with the consent of the individuals and the school system involved, we audiotaped our meetings, made field notes, and shared

brief summaries of those notes with the district participants. We were beginning the work of laying an ethnographic trail of our entry into the system. While we talked with groups, we also interviewed key players individually to understand motivation, commitment, and the degree of reflexivity that key individuals brought to their work and the problem spaces they inhabited. As Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) remind us, we had to collect and sift through our data carefully. The data connected in specific ways to the context in which we were operating. While disclosures from individuals mounted as we built closer relationships, we had to be cautious about introducing mediating tools based on what was emerging. As ethnographers we needed to preserve our relationships with all the participants. We could create new tools, like processes for conversations that we knew needed to occur but were mindful that we might create uncomfortable dilemmas for participants about whether to disclose information or stay silent. In these moments, we returned to data to tell the story for us. Sometimes, crucial concerns remained buried for some time before they emerged, if at all. While we coded our data line-by-line, we also had to stand back from our transcripts and look at whole anecdotes and scenarios to understand the emerging relational and political map. We shared our data with our participants, always in groups so that data that came to us looped back to groups to interpret together.

We both established a bounded space in which individuals developed relationships *and* explored assumptions and ambitions about the nature of the space and the complex issues that surfaced. Our technical assistance emerged as a process for troubling the spaces in which equity issues were emerging. At the same time while we were creating the contexts for awareness to develop and build momentum for change, what we did was also critical ethnography. It made participants aware of how they conceptualized and acted within this bounded space.

Widening the Work: Remediating Whose Views Matter and How Problem Spaces Are Conceptualized

We asked the district leadership team to identify a set of key leaders among their teachers, related service personnel (e.g., school psychologists, speech/language therapists, counselors), principals (i.e., school heads), and district managers. Members needed to be able to commit to working as members of a district change team in the mode of what Engeström (1999) calls an “expansive lab” to reimagine the landscape of the district looking at historical timescales, patterns of migration, the emergence of the professional hierarchies, and the structures and socialization patterns that shaped contemporary practices. This team needed to consist of more than inside members of the organization; it also needed to include the students and families who experienced the school culture and establishment. This mix of insiders and outsiders was a critical move intended to disrupt practice and dialogue in its usual way. As critical ethnographers, we needed to broaden the participation

in our research since we wanted to uncover the multiple intersections of power and privilege. The experience of family members in schools is often a telling detail.

We asked to meet with family groups that were informally organized and serving as critics of the system. A series of focus groups helped us to learn more about family experiences and responses to the school experiences of their students. We also met with students in focus groups. Data from these focus groups merged into our mapping phase described in detail in the next section. Our ethnographic strategy was to widen the circle of reference for the work and widen our own understanding of the cultures negotiated and transformed within the district. Through the voices of families, we began to understand the distribution of power within the school system. With the families, we analyzed transcripts from the focus groups from two perspectives: the ways in which families read the official district discourses and how families were attempting to mediate and shift those discourses to benefit their children (Anderson 1989).

Through the focus groups, we nominated a set of family representatives and students who joined the *district change team* (DCT). Their participation elevated concerns with district staff and family members. At the heart of these concerns were issues around (a) expertise, (b) the capacity of the district to meet the “demands” of families and students, and (c) how negotiated spaces might be constituted and engaged to find ways of moving forward together. Families and students were concerned about being drowned out and dismissed. These concerns came from our frequent individual interviews with key participants. As ethnographers, not only were we interested in the work of the group around making changes to improve the opportunities for historically marginalized students, we were also interested in the individual narratives that were traveling alongside the constructions of the larger group. We wove back and forth between these lenses to help us understand the change project as it evolved but also to understand its impact on individuals within the system. We sifted and analyzed the individual and collective evidence. The ongoing data analysis accomplished two agendas. It provided direction for our technical assistance while it also informed our ethnographic discovery method, helping to direct us to new sources of information.

We surfaced issues that emerged in our focus groups and interviews through small vignettes that we wrote for dyads of school and family members to read and discuss. These anchored conversations became a way to open up conversations about the nature of knowing and the kinds of knowledge prized in schools. Transcripts from our focus groups were analyzed as they became available. They helped us develop hunches about the dynamics of the district, the decision-making processes, who and what was valued in decision making, and the historical threads that seamed together some working assumptions of the group.

For our work, making hunches marked a new period of inquiry. What was being interpreted and problematized began to seep into our work. We wrote brief memos and vignettes that captured emerging tensions to share with the participants. In this way, without naming sources and through describing what we called “cases,” we were able to member check our analyses, sharpening our understanding of what we were learning *and* improving the quality of our interventions.

We wanted to generate insights, develop explanations for how the district operated and used power to maintain its stasis, as well as to seek understanding for why the system operated as it did. We did this always mindful that, while the participants had particular experiential knowledge that we lacked, they also were reconstructing their own individual and collective social realities (Anderson 1989).

Through the member checks, individuals began to know one another and develop appreciation for the points of view and experiences that they brought into the DCT. Developing a team selected for its transdisciplinary nature meant selecting school insiders who represented a variety of teaching, learning, and operational perspectives. It also meant that inviting school outsiders who had stakes in school outcomes but weren't employed by the system to change the nature of the dialogue. Selecting who would be on the DCT was the first of several disruptive moves that we made. These moves were designed to help reveal to participants the unexamined assumptions that formed the foundations of some of their everyday practices. For instance, while teachers said that they engaged parents, they didn't want parents at their DCT meetings because "they wouldn't understand." At each juncture and new step in the process, we made sure to remind participants of the double moves being made by supplying participant meanings and perspectives ethnographically: (1) the conversations and meetings formed the basis of inquiry and (2) the inquiry formed the basis of action. Because of this interactive process, we were able to get feedback frequently about our hunches about what was being observed and interpreted.

Gathering Data: Disrupting the View from Above

We asked the district leaders to compile data from district databases to display geographically the contours of the issues that they faced. We wanted to use maps since they emphasize the spatial relationships that provide texture and describe patterns without words to translate these relationships. As Paulston et al. (1996) noted, words sometimes filter the interpretative act, putting unnecessary barriers between the observer and the data. We mapped a variety of data. For instance, data from the focus groups that identified schools where referrals to the office for students of color were frequent were mapped onto geospatial Google Maps of the community. We included achievement data by clusters of students grouped by (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) race, (d) ability, and (e) English language status. Imagine a Google Map that you might encounter in the local newspaper showing neighborhoods by density of the population. Highly dense neighborhoods might be red, while moderately dense ones would be yellow, and low-density spaces would be colored blue.

We used maps to accomplish a similar goal. This kind of data representation is so important to visualizing the narrative in critical ethnography. Explanation gives way to geospatial representation. The picture provides the opportunity to pinpoint social injustices quickly without much mental effort. Mapping entailed coloring

school buildings by one factor, such as the racial makeup of the student population. For example, all buildings with a student body comprised of more than 70 % Latino students were colored yellow. A district might have 120 schools, marked on the map, by location. Of those 120, 84 would be colored yellow. And then, because the purpose of the map would be to show the spatial dimension of a problem, all the buildings that overidentified their Latino students for special education might be shaded with diagonal lines. In many cases, the schools that were overidentifying might be the 36 schools that were predominantly White.

This kind of data representation tells a powerful story to its users and moves the conversation beyond what numbers represent to questions about what happens in the two sets of schools, surrounding neighborhoods, and communities. Critical ethnographers can build a narrative case using data in a number of visual ways. Geospatial representation reminds us at once that we inhabit lives that have geography and this geography as Soja reminds us shapes our lives (Soja 1996). Curricular resources, teacher experience by years of service, building facilities, longevity and experience of principals, student population numbers, class size, and many other features of opportunities to learn (Oakes 1990) were overlaid onto the maps. Images of neighborhoods and context anchored the data, pushing the conversations forward.

By creating these maps and the space for analysis and interpretation within the DCT, we were setting the stage for the team members to understand the educational space created within the district in new ways. Members of the school district had been exposed to *receiving* numerical data in the form of tables and charts, but they had never connected the data to place so that patterns were readily discernible across the geographic scape of the district. Further, by overlaying different kinds of data, patterns between placement and achievement or opportunities to learn and active, well-used community space (like parks, community farmer's markets, and local grocery stores) emerged. The DCT began to connect data in new ways that accounted for the contexts in which school and student performance occurred. Together, the DCT was able to examine context and current outcomes.

Ruitenber (2007) notes that "representations never merely represent, they also constitute and produce (p. 9)." Geographic data displays shaped the discourse. We constructed geographic information systems (GIS) maps and other evidentiary sources (e.g., classroom photographs, videos, and building walk-throughs) to disrupt simplistic explanations of the problem. We also mapped enabling influences that might inform future intervention efforts (e.g., collective efficacy, social networks, civic engagement) (Artiles et al. 2011; Kozleski and Artiles 2012). The artifacts we designed also made visible the ways in which disability constitutes a boundary object (Star and Griesemer 1989) that is highly adaptable to local conditions "but [its] structure is common enough to more than one [social] world to make [it] recognizable, a means to translation" (p. 393). *Equity* can be indexed and more readily seen in spatial analyses that demonstrate the distribution of *inequities* (Artiles 2011). Participants noted that there was "disparity in our own knowledge of the district (field note 2, district meeting)." They began to discuss who had access to certain kinds of information, what kinds of information were

privileged, and which were dismissed. By shifting the team's conversation to understanding as opposed to recognition, the group coalesced around inquiry as a mode for dialogue.

The next step in our ethnographic process was to design inquiry tools (sets of questions that required analyzing evidence before answering) that mediated the participants' understanding in new ways. We used available evidence and represented it in unfamiliar ways that demonstrated the complexity of educators' work at the intersections of policy, research, and practice (Engeström 1999). By changing the discourse around data, we tried to disrupt binary explanations of outcome inequity that blame either students and their families or systems. Critical ethnographers must be concerned with how the distribution of power and privilege operates to marginalize some while privileging others. Mapping data offered what Engeström (1999) refers to as a mirror that both reflects a picture of the district and requires the construction of a shared narrative that offers a way of different factions to co-construct a new reality. Thus, our mapping venture provided a situated, improvisational, and contested space so that narratives and counter narratives emerged from the participants. Our mapping process required three meetings for the group to (a) move through their reactions, (b) develop shared understandings, and (c) forge new narratives for the school district. Embedded within this narrative were spaces to concentrate effort and innovation to shape improved outcomes around equity.

Forging New Spaces

We continued to meet as a district change team to develop a plan based on the new narrative around equity and inequities. Through the process of mapping, we created an analysis and conceptual framework explaining how the system produced inequities. The next part of our process was to use this conceptual framework to design collaboratively a plan for remediating the institutional structures and cultures that maintained the status quo. Developing this conceptual framework with our participants helped to name problem spaces while still maintaining the drive towards understanding.

The planning process began with identifying features of good solutions to equity issues. Small groups of three and four team members worked together to develop a set of criteria that they would use to evaluate whether or not solutions that might be suggested would meet their criteria for "good." This allowed the participants to delve more deeply into considering the notion of "good." In particular, they explored notions of good *for whom* and *for what outcomes*. This approach was initially confusing and difficult. Participants in project of this nature want to identify solutions. They rarely consider the features or criteria for good solutions before trying solve the problem. At first, their conversations easily strayed into identifying what would work. After several false starts, they began to understand the importance of considering what they typically saw as ways of solving problems

and how bringing a critical lens to finding solutions changed the nature of problem solving itself.

This work was frustrating and slow for many of the participants. However, two aspects of the social nature of the groups seemed to maintain their willingness to stay connected to the process. The variety among the group members kept individual participants working. School personnel wanted to demonstrate their professional commitment to leadership work so they maintained their effort. Families and students maintained their participation because they wanted to sustain their involvement over time and avoid returning to old patterns of exclusion. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) remind us that grounded theory development requires attention to several dimensions: (a) the simultaneous need for data collection and analysis, (b) the search for emergent themes in the early stages of data analysis, and (c) the opportunities that arise for understanding basic social processes within the data.

Spirited and intense conversations generated a variety of criteria for good solutions. Small groups presented their criteria to the entire team. Participants clustered criteria when they seemed to have similar intent and concern. One criterion that emerged from multiple groups was to build in a sense of urgency into each goal by setting expectations for rapid and sustained change. Each solution included specific evidence to track progress and goal attainment. In this phase of the process, the group began to talk aloud about what researchers might call internal validity. They began looping back to previous work to ensure that their sorting processes were consistent over time. Where they found anomalies, they discussed changes in their protocols and decision trees. Where they made changes, they went back and resorted criteria. The role of the group facilitators was to ask questions to help clarify processes. The group determined the point at which all criteria for good solutions had been determined. The next step in the change process was to examine the maps again to identify key issues, identify possible solutions, apply their criteria for good solutions, and then craft explicit goals for change processes. As ethnographers, our work was to focus some attention on the process itself, ensuring that all perspectives were aired and discussed fully. We tracked these conversations to make explicit the kinds of decision-making processes that were being used.

Cycles of Inquiry, Reflection, and Action

The district change team was ready to move to a new phase of their work: the familiar space of action. First, they needed a plan that not only had instrumental equity goals but was designed in such a way that it expanded learning and development for practitioners, families, and students throughout the district. Thus, the processes of mediating how people came together to understand, reflect, and act in congruence with equity outcomes were critical to the success of the end goals. Gutiérrez (2006) speaks to this notion of reflexivity in which critical issues like voice and participation become key touchstones for ongoing research that is equity minded in nature. However, the process of inquiry, reflection, and action was

unfamiliar. It clashed with deeply held notions of the role of leadership in creating a path forward and conflicted with needs to make rapid advances in long-standing inequities. In this district, leadership had meant commanding attention, issuing policy, and asking managers to carry out the policies. Where resistance arose, staff attended professional learning workshops to learn to perform the new policy. Political power was maintained by creating small, loyal groups that worked behind closed doors to decide on collective public performances. This strategy sustained over several generations of superintendents. Spending time in shared inquiry, evidence interpretation, and critical analysis was unfamiliar territory for most of the school personnel.

The tension between technical solutions, that is, what should be done and in what detail, and a critical analysis of the power and privilege dynamics that maintain certain structures, notions of accomplishment, forms, and functions within organizations and among people, was continuously present in our discussions. Our constant threading of critical ethnography methodologies in our work helped the group to be both in the process and stand back from it so that a constant critical examination of the power dynamics happened simultaneously. The role of our mediating tools was to surface the assumptions that undergirded solutions that were proposed. We still needed to create social spaces to use tools productively and where particular practices mediated people's engagements with the tools.

The design of two kinds of social spaces was instrumental in our work. First, we designed social spaces for labor-intensive meetings led by our staff with state Department of Education personnel. Second, we designed learning networks among states. These two strategies allowed us to infuse explicitly an introspective dimension through activities that promoted a "double move" (Hedegaard 1998) in which participation structures compelled personnel to shift from personal/professional experiences to theoretical sense making, based on a new vocabulary offered in these meetings. Simultaneously, the everyday experiences of the personnel offered a way into sense making that was grounded in local state department problem spaces. These two processes constituted the double move in which both the TA staff and the government personnel engage in understanding the target problem. The TA staff created a platform for understanding, while the government personnel brought their everyday conundrums into the space. For instance, a phone call from a mother requesting assistance because someone wants to label her son begins to be mediated by helping to identify the problem space (i.e., the object), as ways of engaging families and the schools that serve them. Shifting problematizing to engagement helps the participants begin to learn more about how they systematically categorize and organize their students in order to accomplish their own schooling tasks rather than how they organize their work to support their students. Central in this work is exposing the nature of assumptions about the roles that schools take on and their public purposes, as well as the identities that are conferred to those that hold the roles. Part of our technical assistance work is to reveal through dialogue how these perceived identities as well as prescribed roles interact to afford certain kinds of responses while constraining others.

Once a problem space was identified from the mapping work and the features of good solutions were described, then small groups worked together to identify at least three strategies for addressing priorities. The group selected a final slate of action items after considering the work of each small group. Reviews of what to do and why, how others would be involved in learning and developing their understanding of the agendas, and how they might be shaped and modified at a local classroom or building level were established. Then, participants designed plans for communicating the work, the steps forward, and the outcomes. The design team specified progress checkpoints and outcome measures. A small group produced a project tracking and coordination plan that was reviewed and agreed to by the entire design team.

We used two ethnography tools consistently in our work. The first was the design and development of a field note tool that each of us used whenever we had a face-to-face or virtual meeting with members of the DCT. This field note extended the field note description of Emerson et al. (2011). The field note had places to itemize what was discussed, what was planned, and who had responsibilities for following through on tasks. The field note also had spaces for chronicling observation in which many power-laden actions were noted: (a) the changing uses of language, (b) developments in discourse patterns that altered standing practices around who spoke and who primarily listened, and (c) notations on the social networks within the team.

Once a month, these field notes were compiled, looking for emergent themes. Quarterly, the field note compilations were fed back to the DCT as a form of reconstituting and remediating the communication patterns and impacts within the team. At almost every meeting, we were able to identify one or two participants who seemed to either be strongly involved or moved to the margins in the conversations. We interviewed these individuals to check our field note observations, get expanded points of view on the meeting, and help us understand how we might change up the mediation patterns at the next meeting. These interviews also became part of the data feedback loop. We sought to avoid providing information in such detail that identities were revealed while wanting to show that we constantly assessed our own understandings to better understand and detail the process. Sharing the data became another form of intervention with the DCT.

Implementing and Assessing Change

Another key assumption that informed our practices was that educators' professional learning is promoted through data-driven and research-grounded content *within the context* of educators' practice-embedded activities (King et al. 2009). Thus, these social spaces were grounded in personnel's professional practices and evidences collected by the system in which they worked. Moreover, in response to a critique by Davies, Nutley and Walter (2008) of the use of research in policy and practice, we suggest that research methodologies need to transcend linear views of

knowledge work. Critical ethnography is a kind of knowledge work as this chapter has demonstrated. It is, at best, a spiral process in which information is gathered, interpreted, processed with participants, and examined again as perspectives within the group shift through interrogation and interaction. No longer do ethnographers labor in specific contexts to produce evidence that is transported into other settings. Instead, our critical ethnography approach provides action processes for the design, modeling, and development of research *as* practice. For this purpose, we followed cycles of inquiry, reflection, and action with the DCT so a period of active data collection was punctuated by sets of meetings that required examining evidence of how our work was changing perspectives and the power differentials within the group. We asked the DCT to consider who benefited and who was marginalized by our actions and their results. The data we used to examine power and privilege as an outcome of the organization were also part of our ongoing inquiry into the process of inquiry itself.

Sharing the Data as a Form of Intervention

Our task was to help support questioning, data gathering, and the ways in which systems change efforts were assessed against equity benchmarks such as demographic data on discipline referrals, community involvement on the part of school staff, and the redistribution of creative capital through, for instance, creating teacher networks to support and develop robust teaching (Kozleski et al. 2012). Further, the DCT team members learned to collect multiple kinds of data that helped them to understand what, why, when, how much, and how inequities seem to develop and sustain locally. These approaches to inquiry, implementation, and assessing change outcomes led to changes in how principals worked with their staffs. They began to use heuristic tools to help teachers question their practices and reposition their approaches to learning. Together, they began to develop feedback loops that traced their initial assumptions about what was needed locally, their efforts to implement, and the results of those efforts on changing patterns of performance locally. In this section, we explore some of the methodological issues that emerged as we engaged with the DCT.

Our approach was grounded in an emphasis on civil rights and cultural responsiveness, as well as evidence from the literature that students can excel in academic endeavors if they are provided with access to high-quality teachers, curricula, instruction, programs, and resources and their cultures, languages, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning (Rumberger and Ah Lim 2008). Guided by a thematic focus on enhancing both *understanding* of equity in classrooms, schools, and school systems and the *use* of evidence-based practices, our approach addressed the gaps and priorities identified in recent, major policy and research equity reports (Artiles and Dyson 2005; Donovan and Cross 2002; Harry and Klingner 2006; Klingner et al. 2005; Skiba et al. 2008).

Conclusions and Next Steps

Our work focused on partnering with school systems to address equity and social justice in schooling. We used a set of ethnographically crafted tools that both help districts examine and understand their data in deep ways. This same data helped us as technical assistance providers to interpret what we chose to look at and then to make decisions together in terms of the change process. The entire process is ideographically complex and fraught with unknowns that, at each step, must be fairly and productively addressed. What our data compilations examine and omit in displays of evidence skewed participant attention and, therefore, their activities. To maintain our stance as researcher-activists, we pushed ourselves to warrant our data trails, insisting on integrity in member checking and ensuring that the resulting evidence both help us understand the process of change while powering change at the same time.

A substantial proportion of our equity work focused on the racialization of disability as a means to address deep educational inequities for learners that live *multiple marginalities*, i.e., gay, disabled, and African-American (Kozleski and Artiles 2007). Our critical ethnographic work assumed a systems change stance in which macro, meso, and micro levels of systems interacted to seek stasis while, simultaneously, individuals and groups within systems remediated goals, reinterpreted events, and renegotiated activity (Kozleski and Huber 2010; Cole 1996; Cole and Griffin 1983). This required an ethnographic examination of evidence about practices that make visible the deficit visions about some learners that permeate educational policies and practices and the subjective nature of disability diagnostic decisions (Kozleski and Artiles 2012).

Our perspective on technical assistance transcended previous notions of “assistance” that sought to transfer research knowledge to the everyday worlds of practitioners. Instead, we designed theoretically grounded artifacts with evidence from participants’ everyday practices as a way to remediate their views and actions (Kozleski et al. 2012). Next, we engineered social spaces with practitioners in which we used these artifacts in the analysis of the racialization of disability. What emerged from these analytical events were new forms of understanding the problem and alternative educational futures for the affected marginalized learners (Engeström 2011).

We examined how researchers and scholars can engage in opening up the possibilities of what McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) call “the gaze.” That is, we helped participants use unfamiliar lenses to examine and understand evidence from different vantage points. Further, once evidence is curated, how it is displayed, to what audiences, and for what kinds of discussion, analysis, and interpretation provide a setup for uncovering within group differences as well as offering opportunities to uncover and debunk assumptions and positions that may have been masked to participants. Evidence referred to both quantitative and qualitative information that we asked participants to explore in novel ways that require their own participation in constructing cases, vignettes, and other forms of intermediary analysis.

Importantly, because our work was systems change in action through critical ethnography, the quality of the kinds of interpretations that were made and how interpretation migrates into action causes another form of data transformation. Standing somewhat apart from the action within the organization is our work as technical assistance providers who track the ways in which the school, district, or state teams understand, influence, and support decisions at each part of the process and make these data transparent to the members of the change system.

We described, analyzed, and discussed the study, interpretation, and implementation of ongoing educational change that explored the limits of conventional approaches to inquiry-driven projects and offers some alternative approaches to engaging change. Using data from a case study of a recent technical assistance project concerned with educational equity for marginalized groups, we detailed the challenges of careful inquiry and interpretation in a rapidly changing complex environment that characterizes school systems in the USA. In this chapter we suggested that technical assistance offers a critical opportunity to engage individuals and activity systems in changing the outcomes of their practice and, in doing so, shift their praxis in ways that can mediate future work. Because we locate this work within an ethnographic methodology that is steeped in activity theory, we described and critiqued ethnographic methods that offered a new, critical approach to technical assistance that offers a rich context for ongoing research and inquiry as a critical feature of systems transformation.

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4.7 Changing Teacher Education in Sweden? A Meta-ethnographic Analysis Based on Three Long-Term Policy Ethnographic Investigations

Dennis Beach, Anita Eriksson, and Catarina Player-Koro

Introduction

Jeffrey and Troman (2004) described ethnographic research in education as research that was usually conducted by a lone researcher through direct and participant observation in specific settings over a significant time period. This time period was ideally one of several years rather than only a few months or weeks (Walford 2008). It involved, they added, continuous reflections concerning the complexity of the researched contexts and made use of explicit theories and theoretical perspectives in its analyses. These dimensions of ethnography have also been pointed out by others, such as Willis (2000). The aim is to identify significant processes of social interaction in order to develop well-founded assessments of the ways social reality is constructed and produce detailed and precise accounts of them (Beach 2010). Their success requires “catching” the significant details of lived processes in field notes and freezing them for later, repeated inspection and analysis. Repeated interactions between ideas and data in the use of comparisons and the search for generic concepts that link and transcend local circumstances thus form the basis of an essentially creative act of ethnographic interpretation and representation (Willis 2000; Trondman 2008).

Three research projects of this kind have informed the present chapter. Each was based on long-term policy ethnographic research of teacher education policy-driven

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reform in Sweden (Beach 1995; Eriksson 2009; Player-Koro 2011, 2012a, b). They were conducted at different times (in 1988–1991, 2003–2005, and 2008–2010) as separate studies, but they also formed links in a chain of investigations. We could thus describe them in this sense as comprising a series of investigations that covered a continuing plot of policy change and teacher education development that has been presented in a sequential episode-by-episode fashion. Each project had its own unique qualities, but they (and the publications from them) were also related through their common focus on teacher education policy and the organization and content of the internal activities of teacher education over time.

Each project can be analyzed and read as an independent ethnographic study, and studies from either of them could have been used to illustrate elements of “conventional” ethnographic interpretation in keeping with the aims of the present handbook. However, due to the shared interests across the projects, there is also a possibility for making a collective analysis. This is what we try to show in the present chapter, illustrating an interpretive innovation in ethnography that goes under the name of meta-ethnography. Using meta-ethnography means that while in the independent studies we were analyzing and trying to make sense of what was going on in specific educational settings at a particular time and place, in our combined reanalysis we are interested in general trends and possible patterns in policy development over time and providing generalizations from earlier data and analyses by exploring and extending the conceptual schemes from these different studies.

Parallel to other forms of meta-analysis, meta-ethnography thus involves comparisons across projects in an attempt to identify and synthesize key elements from the contents of each respective investigation (Weed 2006; Savin Baden et al. 2008; Beach et al. 2013). These are then used as “data” and extracts from them are employed both to illustrate arguments and question any emerging claims that are made. In the present case it is extracts of and summaries from official policy, educational arrangements, and educational effects that figure in this data. Student teacher comments and reflections on their education and professional knowledge needs in the independent projects have also been drawn upon heavily. This has produced a bias in the chapter in the form of what we could term “text and talk data” (basically formal written text materials, interview extracts, and transcription fieldnote extracts). Descriptions of material relations in educational practices, social regionalization in educational spaces, and the content of social and physical interaction, all of which are common and important in the representations from the original projects, are not significantly represented here.¹

¹ Most material is from field conversations in or close to actual class-/lecture-room contexts. These conversations have been “naturally occurring” in group work and breakout sessions in conjunction with seminars or the so-called mentor group meetings. They have mainly taken place within the formal institution within one or other of the multitude of small group rooms and classrooms of the research institutions. All talk data used in the chapter has been respondent validated previously, in conjunction with our earlier investigations and reports.

History of Context: Teacher Education Policy

Ethnographic studies may (and perhaps ideally should) begin with a background analysis and presentation of the research context (Walford 2008). In the present case this context is formed by the three investigations themselves, the arenas they were carried out in, and the policy background to teacher education reform and content that they were each interested in. It is not possible to present this entire background context here. However, the common policy background is important and will be dealt with in the coming pages.

As in many other countries, teacher education policy in Sweden has been historically structured in accordance with the characteristics and content of the school system. This has created a history of different teacher educational traditions and different ways of perceiving what characterizes the teachers' mission and professional expertise (Beach 1995; Erixon Arreman 2005; Erixon Arreman and Weiner 2007). However, two distinct traditions predominate in regard to teacher education for prospective teachers of school-aged children. One derives from the teacher education seminaries from the early part of the previous century. It focuses on practical aspects of teaching younger children. The other derives from an academic education focusing mainly on academic subject teaching in the grammar schools and academies (*realskola, läroverk*).

These two traditions of teacher education have historically been very different from each other. Their recruitment was from different social classes initially and later also genders. They had very different curricula, and their "graduates" formed different professional agendas and relations to state bureaucracy. The seminary tradition has been based on a practice-oriented curriculum model together with a subject knowledge curriculum that generally consisted of the same literature that the prospective teachers could use in their future teaching. It was aimed at the teaching of younger children and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds in the so-called *folkskolan* (Jedemark 2006; Åstrand 2006). Being a seminary-trained school teacher in the lower grades of the elementary school was the lowest and least prestigious position in the education field (Lindström-Nilsson and Beach 2013), which we can still see evidence of today (Erixon Arreman and Weiner 2007).

The second tradition that of grammar school teacher education, in contrast, emphasized the learning of formal subject (disciplinary) knowledge for teaching older children, mostly from the middle and upper-middle classes. In it knowledge of teaching as a professional praxis was regarded as scientifically unproblematic, practical, and personal (Jedemark 2006; Åstrand 2006). Grammar school teachers had an academic matriculation and university studies based on extensive academic training. Subject matter expertise formed the specific cognitive base for professional action, together with one semester of studies in education and psychology that prepared candidates for teaching in both the upper levels of the academic grammar school (the academies or *Läroverk* in Swedish) and the university. Subject teachers took a dominant position in the education field because of this. They could often have a double affiliation to both the education field and the academic field, and this provided possibilities for professional closure and

distinctions based on social and cultural capital, social background, and gender (Lindström Nilsson and Beach 2013).

For some four decades from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, the public elementary and grammar school traditions of teacher education existed alongside each other, as separate forms of teacher education. However, since then the policy history of teacher education has shown a number of distinct efforts to try to weaken these boundaries. These efforts actually began as early as the late 1800s, when liberal education policy makers introduced the idea of using the elementary school to provide a common education foundation, where children from different social classes were to be taught jointly during the first years of their education. They were opposed by the Grammar School Teacher Association and right-wing political parties and temporarily put to rest, but the struggle for unification was later intensified again after the introduction of the common comprehensive school idea from the 1940s onwards by the then Social Democratic Labour Party-led government.

The 1946 National School Commission Inquiry was the starting point of a 60-year-long process, and it began a policy trajectory connected to a new school and a new teacher education for a new society (Beach 2011). It proposed a 9-year compulsory comprehensive school in 1948 and outlined a reorientation of teacher education which, it was suggested, currently set organizational and personal barriers between primary, standard secondary, and grammar school teachers (Lindström-Nilsson and Beach 2013). The Commission therefore proposed a shared teacher training for all categories of teachers to create a shared (cognitive) knowledge base for the development of the comprehensive school (SOU 1948, p. 27, s 36).

The Social Democratic Party was the strong political proponent of these proposals, with support from the organized labor movement in the trade unions and the elementary school teachers' association. However, there was also some significant resistance to the proposals. This resistance came again from the right-wing parties in the parliament, the Grammar School Teacher Association, and the universities. Regarding teacher education, grammar school teachers already had matriculation and university studies and had thus already achieved important profession-specific attributes, such as several years of academic training. Their assertion was, as previously, that subject expertise formed the cognitive base for their professional action, that a professional component based on studies in disciplinary pedagogy could only be a secondary factor, and that increasing this component at the expense of subject knowledge risked watering down academic content and was hazardous for the quality of learning, recruitment into universities, and the knowledge standards prevailing in society.

The 1946 Commission recommendations weren't the only components in the school and teacher education unification projects. Other key components in teacher education were the reports and recommendations from the 1960 Teacher Education Expert Committee in 1965 (SOU 1965, p. 29) and the 1974 Teacher Education Investigation in 1978 (SOU 1978, p. 86), the Higher Education Act of 1978, the Teacher Education Reform Bill in 1984, the report of the 1997 Teacher Education Committee in 1999 (SOU 1999, p. 63), and the recommendations for

a unitary teacher education by the Social Democratic Government in 2001 (Government Bill 2000/01, p. 3). They formed a policy trajectory that was broken first in 2007.

In 2007 the newly elected right-wing coalition government appointed a new teacher education commission, the Sustainable Teacher Education Commission (HUT 07) (SOU 2008, p. 109), to see over the unitary organization of teacher education and suggest more sustainable alternatives, which it did. These recommendations reasserted the original dualist distinctions in formal policy and the replacement of the common core professional knowledge component that had previously existed (Ahlström 2008; Beach 2011; Kallós 2009). The recommendations were followed by a Government Bill (Government Bill 2009/10, p. 89) and an Act of Parliament in 2010 that acted directly to instate the main ideas (Beach and Bagley 2012; Payer-Koro 2012b; Sjöberg 2011).

Policy Analytical Theories, Concepts, and Method

As well as an adequate social, cultural, political, and historical background analysis, the interpretation of ethnographic data also requires sensitizing theories and theoretical concepts or is at least widely felt to be facilitated by these (see, e.g., Trondman 2008; Beach 2010). In our work theories and concepts developed by Basil Bernstein have been significant. The concepts of horizontal and vertical discourse, pedagogic discourse, recontextualization, classification and framing, code, and modality have all been important (see Bernstein 1999, 2000). However, two concepts have been particularly significant. These are those of the *official recontextualizing field* (ORF) and the *pedagogic recontextualizing field* (PRF). They correspond to two distinctive but also related fields of policy practice that are sometimes termed the fields of policy formulation and of policy interpretation, respectively, where the pedagogic discourse is produced and converted to the field of reproduction (the pedagogic practice) (e.g., Ball 1990). The former is dominated by the state and selected agents in, for example, the Ministry of Education, while the latter consists of education institutions and their actors. In the present analysis much of the data that is illustrated consists therefore of formalized statements of the former, from texts produced in the field of policy formulation in the ORF, interpreted and converted in the PRF to talk data generated in interactions with and between agents in the pedagogic practice.

A number of specific policies in the teacher education ORF have been considered in the research. They have been introduced above and include proposals related to: (a) the creation of the Teacher Colleges as post-gymnasial research and education institutions for the development and communication of professional content to all prospective teachers in the 1950s and 1960s (see, e.g., SOU 1948, p. 27; 1965, p. 29), (b) the introduction of full research professorships in applied educational theory and curriculum methods in these colleges, (c) the incorporation of the colleges in the integrated higher education system in 1978 (SOU 1978, p. 86),

and finally (d) the introduction of new research subjects in university teaching and research after this from the mid-1980s. These subjects were didactics (didaktik, i.e., roughly studies of curriculum development, teaching methods, and innovation) in 1984 (Government Bill 1984/85, p. 122) and educational sciences (utbildningsvetenskap) in 2001 (SOU 1999, p. 63; Government Bill 1999/2000, p. 135) including the subject of education work (pedagogiskt arbete).

The concept of policy ethnography strongly informed each of the individual research projects and provided the empirical basis for the joint interpretative work (see, e.g., Beach 1995; Eriksson 2009; Player-Koro 2011, 2012a, b). The joint work was made plausible in that our respective points of departure in the individual studies all lay close to Ball and Bowe's description cited in Beach (1995, p. 7). They were concerned with exploring policy making in terms of the processes of value dispute and material influence which underlie and invest the formation of policy discourses (in both the official recontextualizing field, ORF, and the pedagogic recontextualizing field, PRF) and portraying and analyzing the processes of active meaning making which relate policy texts to practice. They included the plotting of matches and mismatches in and between contending discourses in these arenas and examining distinctions between expressed formal policy and policy in use. Our joint focus in respect to this was on written policy, policy outcomes, policy mediation, and policy recontextualization (Bernstein 1990, 2000; Ball et al. 1994) as well as exploring the way teacher education was being organized, reorganized, and communicated over time and what young adult student teachers made from their experiences and expressed about what teacher education offered to them generally and in relation to their future profession.

Common Themes

From the individual and collective analyses, in the coming pages we will attempt to illustrate and support several empirically grounded interpretations. The first of them concerns the policy background. In line with suggestions by other researchers, such as Erixon Arreman (2005), Erixon Arreman and Weiner (2007), Ahlström (2008), and Kallós (2009), it states two things. The first has already been introduced. It is that for several decades from the mid-1900s, official teacher education policy had clearly expressed aims related to a social democratic vision of a common school for all and a more equal and democratic society. The second is that teacher education was given a leading role in realizing this vision but was recognized as also needing to significantly change in order to fulfil this role (Beach 2011).

A series of parliamentary-appointed national inquiry commissions were set up and given the task of assessing how well teacher education was living up to its charge and with recommending further needy changes in this process (Beach and Bagley 2012). These commissions stretched, as suggested earlier, from the 1946 *Teacher College Delegation Report* (SOU 1948, p. 27) to the *report of the Teacher Education Committee* in 1997 (SOU 1999, p. 63). They expressed a kind of policy

optimism, i.e., principally a kind of faith in the abilities of reform to actually change things (Beach 1995). Intermediate policies were, as stated earlier, recommendations in the *Teacher Education Expert Committee Report* (SOU 1965, p. 29) and the 1974 *Teacher Education Investigation Report* (SOU 1978, p. 86).

The identification of this common policy trajectory takes us to our next two assertions. These are firstly that despite some 40 years of expressed policy ambitions from the ORF, these developments have proved difficult to fulfil (Ahlström 2008; Kallós 2009). Instead, the content and practices of teacher education seem to have retained an emphasis on the initial dualism established by the seminar tradition on the one hand and the academic tradition on the other. They are secondly that attempts to break this dualism have actually been internally consciously and unconsciously resisted by most student teachers and subject teacher educators (Beach 1995, 2000; Eriksson 2009; Player-Koro and Beach 2012). This point concerns disparities between the formulation arena (the ORF) and the outcome from the PRF enacted in practice. The discovery of the disparity provides an important critique of policy optimism, which is a further common theme in our three studies.

The next significant common finding from the meta-analysis is that the most recent cycle of reform initiated in 2007 breaks with the historically established efforts in the ORF towards the development of a single teacher education with a common professional knowledge (cognitive) base and makes reverse recommendations (Beach 2011). Indeed this new policy cycle actually critiques the efforts that have been made previously in these directions (Player-Koro 2012b; Sjöberg 2011). We also add that it does so despite having no scientific support for its critique and that it therefore makes its recommendations in a way that demonstrates the important role that ideology clearly plays in (teacher) education policy making today (Beach 2011; Beach and Bagley 2012). This became the next common outcome from the meta-investigation.

We make the claims about recommendations for change being unsubstantiated by science and based purely on ideology for two reasons. First of all, a common shift towards shared progressive professional values and practices is described as having taken place through the enactment of previous teacher education policy in the curriculum practices of teacher education by the HUT commission (SOU 2008, p. 109) and in the subsequent Government White Paper (Bill 2009/10, p. 89), but this development has not ensued in practice and nor has it ever been shown to have ensued by any scientific investigation (Kallós 2009). On the contrary, according to our ethnographic projects and other research, in relation to the pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF), the opposite is the case and there is no really compelling evidence of any kind of unification (Beach 1995, 2000), let alone one based on progressive values. Secondly, some very negative consequences are claimed in the HUT Commission Report and the subsequent Government Bill to have arisen from this asserted but absent common shift, in that the “progressivism” that is said to have developed is also said to have led to a watering down of subject knowledge in teacher education, a lack of attention to how pupils learn subject knowledge most effectively in school, and ultimately to poor school performances

in international comparison studies like PISA (SOU 2008, p. 109; Government Bill 2009/10, p. 89). As we assert and ethnographically illustrate, the historical dualism in teacher education and the teaching profession has never been broken in the PRF or in the reproduction field in terms of the development of teacher education student professional knowledge values and commitments and in effect should really be seen as productively associated with the problems it is asserted to be a cure for in the recent reform, not a treatment of these asserted problems.

Coding and Interpretation Processes

Coding of ethnographic data is one of the common practices in ethnographic research and much has been written on this topic. It is discussed also by Troman and Jeffrey in the present collection. In their description, as elsewhere, it is described in terms of two main strategies: precoding and in vivo coding. The first is self-obvious. The second involves combing the data for *themes, ideas, and categories* and then labeling these with specific “tags” so they can easily be retrieved for further comparison and analysis later on. Coding makes searching the data to make comparisons much easier and facilitates, as Troman and Jeffrey (this volume) suggest, the researcher’s ability to identify interesting patterns for further investigation. These can be based on *themes and topics* or *ideas* and expressed by *concepts, keywords, or phrases*. In line with Charmaz (2003, pp. 94–95) they should relate to *what is going on* and *what people are doing or saying, what denoted actions and statements may take for granted, and/or how structure and context may support, impede, or change these actions and statements*. They can be based on concepts that participants use to understand their world and describe the *norms, values, and rules* that guide their actions (so-called emic concepts), or they can be based on scientifically derived concepts relating to the meaning or significance actions and statements have for scientific analysis (so-called etic concepts). These ideas were important to each of us. We employed them to various data, not the least that relating to student understandings of the main forms of knowledge and significant skills and insights (“key content”) that they felt were central to learning the professional work of teaching.

The materials that were coded for “key content” were expected to identify and mark whether common or different understandings of professional knowledge needs were apparent between student teacher groups and what patterns there might be in terms of the distribution of these understandings. One other common code was for the *use of classroom space* in the taught components on the teacher education programs (“Space use”). Here our interest was for possible patterns in the social regionalization of education arenas. What we found was that the same spatial dispositions and forms of appropriation of physical and social space in teaching arenas as those described by Beach in 1995 seemed to apply even in the two later project periods. What we saw was that for different kinds of lesson content (e.g., subject theory, curriculum theory, and educational theory), the same

regionalization patterns applied in all the studies. This was evidenced in one of Player-Koro's journal entries:

This lesson follows roughly the pattern that has been in recent weeks. . . Henry goes through examples on the board. The group is largely silent and listening. . . This (is) the normal pattern (also described in Beach's research earlier). . . Students sit facing forward while the teacher speaks and writes on the whiteboard. . . It has even characterized work in the computer labs. . . Spatial dispositions are different in curriculum theory (which) is often open-plan. . . Students are also more pro-actively involved in classification and framing . . .

When analyzing the data coded in the individual studies, the most stable findings were firstly that "Space-use" showed similar patterns and secondly that the outcomes of instruction (expressed through "key content") were similar too. This, in that although different students in the three investigations expressed some different understandings concerning the demands of teaching and the professional skills and competencies needed by teachers, these differences were rarely related to which decade the research had been conducted in and thus which part of the policy trajectory of teacher education that their education was part of. Instead they were identified as clearly related to the former traditions that teacher education rests on historically (i.e., seminar/class teacher education vs. grammar/subject teacher education), as described in the earlier parts of the paper. Our meta-analysis showed in other words that:

The comments by prospective upper-comprehensive school (school grades 4 to 9) teachers from my studies clearly emphasise that their centrally valued knowledge is subject based (and) these comments are not significantly different from comments in Catarina's group, but they do differ in several respects from those made by prospective lower-grade (1–7) teachers, both in my investigation and Anita's (1–6), both of which seem to hold strong similarities that reflect values expressed in policies for a seminary kind of teacher education. . . It seems that whilst policy may influence practice in the pedagogical re-contextualisation field (PRF) to some degree, other features have greater (and also conservative) influence. (Analytic email memo: Beach to Player-Koro and Eriksson)

Although it should be read together with a word or two of caution due to sample limitations, this extract has certain implications for policy making and policy research. First of all, it supports ideas about the risks of policy optimism, but it also makes the claims made by the HUT Commission in 2008 and the government in 2010, about needs to re-traditionalize teacher education, seem rather suspect. There is in other words ground for policy critique, which becomes the final common outcome of the meta-analysis. This critique addresses the recent claims of policy makers that a rampant progressivism was ruining the education offered in the country and jeopardizing its economic future. It points out that these claims may be false. In teacher education progressivism has never progressed beyond an idea of the ORF. Indeed in strong contrast to progressivism, the outcomes from the PRF that is made visible through interactions in the teacher education reproduction field have led to the development of highly traditionalist understandings of the professional knowledge needs of teachers among the different students (Beach 2000; Eriksson 2009; Player-Koro 2012b) that may also be extended into and influence their schoolteaching (Jonsson et al. 2012). What was claimed to be a cure for

“diseased school performances” was more likely to be part of the problem of performance than a solution to performance shortcomings. Some key data and analytical support for these assertions are presented in the coming pages.

Data Support and Analysis

Data that were coded in relation to students’ expressions about what they felt was the most important knowledge for teachers, and teaching (“key content”) was the data that we analyzed in most detail in the meta-analysis. When this was done we felt that these data suggested a number of common things. These are basically all in line with the assertions we have made above. They are firstly that there are several important differences in what different students regard as key professional knowledge, i.e., there is some individual variation (Eriksson 2009). They are secondly that these differences can be reliably grouped in terms of which enrichment (i.e., lower or upper grade) the students were following and that they thirdly seem to have cultural and historical antecedents. They were expressed in the Grammar School Teacher Education Act from the beginning of the twentieth century and the seminary statutes between 1890 and 1932, but were also “caught” by the secondary codes developed by Beach in his 1995 research. These codes and the data in them equated well with those used by Player-Koro and Eriksson together in their later studies. They therefore seem able to represent historically structured homologies of specifically lived cultures, to paraphrase Trondman et al. (2011), as expressions relating to and reflecting particular structural, cultural, material, and historical symbolic legacies of a bygone age (Beach 1995, 2000). Our suspicion is that they may have haunted successive rounds of teacher education reform that were intended to disturb them. Taken from Beach’s investigation, concerning subject teachers, they are that:

- Teaching well means knowing the subject you will teach (“subject primacy”: SP).
- Professional skills are related to subject knowledge, personal development, and some knowledge about child psychology (“subject-based professionalism”: SBP).
- Strong identification with subject compared to other professional knowledge (“personal identification with subject”: PIS).

Upper-grade focused students regularly put things as follows:

As teachers we need a certain psychological maturity and awareness... This isn’t really something you can be taught... It is more something you simply have or acquire... You need to understand your own attitudes and values... The greatest thing a teacher can possess is insight and an ability to use these insights efficiently when teaching... This and subject knowledge (are) the things that will be of most value to us... I identify with my subject, specially maths, more than I do with the other things connected to the job of teaching... (Göran, upper, 88 intake)

Two things in particular are emphasized here. These are the value of: (a) knowledge in and enthusiasm for the subject and (b) personal insight and

practical (know-how) knowledge related to teaching (Beach 1995, 2000; Player-Koro 2011, 2012b). These were considered as “the most essential aspects for teaching in school” (Joanna, upper, 2005 intake) by prospective subject teachers and for the “quality of (pupil) learning” (Michael, upper, 05 intake). They were equally emphasized regardless of the decade in which the student studied. They suggest that prospective upper-grade student teachers tend not to see the professional knowledge of teaching as scientifically problematic in the sense that it can be objectified and scientifically studied in research and objectively exemplified and discussed in teacher education courses:

You can only learn the subject this way. . . Knowledge of a subject is important (as) is the ability to communicate this knowledge. . . Teaching is quite simply an appropriate innate ability and skill of a good teacher who knows her or his subject. . . Something she simply has. (Bella, upper, 05 intake)

You learn the knowledge of teaching more as a craft in schools (in) a kind of teacher apprenticeship situation. (Jon, upper, 88 intake)

For some students the position and outlooks expressed here may render formal education in professional studies both “unnecessary and perhaps even impossible. . . aside from a few tricks of the trade and communication and motivational skills” (Asta, upper, 05 intake). As one student from the upper intake put it, “if there is one thing that I as a math teacher have to be good at it is math. . . Another thing is that I can convey this knowledge and motivate pupils to learn” (Joseph, 88). Other upper-grade specializing students have said:

There are two parts, personality, and some education. . . But if you are not fit to play the role of a teacher it does not matter how much teacher education you have. . . It won't help. . . I can exemplify. . . You (i.e. the subject tutor) teach pretty well. . . despite not having formal teacher education and this curriculum and education theory stuff. . . so that shows we can skip it (and) don't need it. You (need) good mathematics skills as a teacher and a social competence. . . (Asta, upper, 05 intake)

It is in the school in teaching where you really learn to become teachers. . . Schools and teacher education institutions should cooperate more. . . The strategy should be to teach us the subjects we need to know and maybe something about psychology of learning and how to motivate the pupils. . . Examples of how to teach things' are important (but) mostly you learn this in school from other teachers and in practice. (Dean, upper, 88 intake)

These kinds of expression about subject value and the place of a subordinate component in some kind of educational (psychological) studies, which are again in keeping with the Grammar School Teacher Education Act, were consistent across the research period for prospective subject teachers according to our meta-analysis and seemed to reflect a general position. Moreover, the centrality of the teacher's knowledge of subject matter and the importance of subject matter content in teacher education were also reflected in comments by subject tutors and in how instruction was organized in subject areas for prospective upper-grade teacher students. As is clear in both Beach (1995) and the collection of articles and commentary texts in Player-Koro's PhD thesis (Player-Koro 2012b), subject theory is highly classified and framed front dominated instruction that gives primacy to a teacher-centered approach to the curriculum and the (assumed) superior knowledge and power of the educator.

Prospective teachers of younger children put things quite differently to their colleagues from the upper-grade specializations. They emphasized the need of “understanding the child and her way of learning” (Liz, lower, 88 intake), which they saw as “far more important than understanding the subject at a highly advanced level” (Astrid, lower 03 intake).

The position expressed here can be found in teacher education curriculum history as far back as the early teacher education seminaries in the late 1800s. It was present in the ORF until the 1940s but seems to have hung on much longer in the PRF. For instance, among the comments from prospective early grade teachers in our data, we can still find expressions about the necessity and value of having “general practical knowledge and understanding of pupils’ needs. . . and what they will study in school” (Mary, lower, 88 intake) ‘but not needing advanced subject knowledge” (Astrid, lower 03 intake).

Statements like these are child-centered in one sense. Knowing what “kind of things pupils will study” (Astrid, lower, 03 intake) together with knowledge of the “psychology of the child and group psychology” (Trine, lower, 88 intake) is “what is most important” (Astrid, lower, 03 intake). As far as actual subject knowledge was concerned, students said things like:

We probably know enough maths or science already. . . so we don’t need to spend more time on that. . . What we need is examples of the content the pupils will study and examples of how to present this to them so they can learn it effectively. (Tina, lower, 88 intake)

Again this statement could have been lifted from the seminary statutes from the late nineteenth to the early mid-twentieth centuries.

The Juxtaposition of Codes and Categories

The data coded for “knowledge content” and use of space respectively in our three investigations through the meta-analysis seem able to assert several key points. The first is the continued existence of divisions of practice and feeling in teacher education that date back to its binary structure in the academic tradition on the one hand and the seminary on the other. Prospective upper-grade student teachers affirm the need and value of “academic subject knowledge, personality. . . a little psychology maybe, for conflicts and so forth. . . and some concrete subject related communication skills and knowledge” (Dave, upper, 88 intake). Prospective lower-grade student teachers affirm “general practical knowledge. . . knowledge of what pupils study in school (and) an understanding of the psychology and learning needs of different pupils” (Joanne, lower, 03 intake). However, at the same time as the assertions firstly thus seem to reflect and derive from potentially ancient homologies (Beach 1995, 2000), they also secondly nevertheless and at the same

time both reflect and forego the recommendations and aims from the most recent round of reform. Students put things roughly as follows:

Prospective upper-grade teachers	Prospective lower-grade teachers
<p>“Being able to teach is something you are in a way born to. . . You can either do it or you can’t. You either have the skills and so on or you don’t. . . It’s not really something you can teach. . . What we do need is knowledge of the subjects we will teach and methods to help get this knowledge across to pupils” (Dave, 88 intake). “I want to be a teacher but I am also very interested in the subjects themselves and want to know as much as I can about them. This content is. . . the most important knowledge I think. You have to know the subject to be able to teach it. We all think that” (Ben, 88 intake)</p>	<p>“Teaching is about (connecting) the inside of the teacher (her thinking) with that of the pupils. . . This means psychology. . . Pupils are different (and) they learn differently” (Jemma, 03 intake). “Understanding pupil psychology is. . . central, as is a repertoire of skills and knowledge that will enable us to understand pupils’ learning styles and needs. . . and tailor our teaching accordingly” (Mary, 88 intake) “to cope with the differences in the pupils we will meet in the future” (Jemma, 03 intake). “What pupils study is important. . . but we don’t need to go to a really high level” (Joana, 03 intake)</p>

Our interpretations here are that what is expressed above is the importance for student teachers of developing the kinds of knowledge and skills that will help them “manage the practical demands of teaching. . . at the levels (they) are specialising in” (Mary, 88, lower). We also see this as fairly logical. However, at the same time, it is also very ideological, prescientific, primitive, and pragmatic. What they are interested in is coping and (or by) “knowing what you teach” (Dave, upper, 88 intake) and “gaining *different strategies and different ways of teaching something*” (Mary, lower, 88). For prospective lower-grade teachers, this know-how knowledge means knowing that pupils learn differently and “having a repertoire of practices to match these different learning needs, styles, experience and so on” (Joana, 03 intake). As one of them put it:

You cannot actually teach pupils anything outside their own capacity. . . You can only help them to learn (and) you can only do this if you understand them as individual persons and learners and reflect over how to deal in the best way with the objects of their learning. (Jemma, lower, 03 intake)

For prospective upper-grade teachers, the understanding of key demands is both different to and consistent with the above. It is consistent in terms of the issue of coping with performance demands, but different in terms of the demands that are experienced as most challenging and in most need of being responded to. Being able to cope with subject knowledge and conflicts between and with adolescent pupils is what is most important.

Prospective upper-grade teachers	Prospective lower-grade teachers
<p>“We need some general skills, but also methodology” (Bella, 05 intake). “We need to get 3–4 different ways to teach each thing” (Michacprel, 05 intake). “We need to know subjects and ways of motivating and controlling pupils. . . There is a parallel with understanding a patient and treating a disease. . . We will be</p>	<p>“Development psychology and curriculum methods are. . . important. The education should include different methods for working with mathematics” (Jonna, 88 intake). “Our responsibilities are with pupils and their futures not subjects specifically. . . Pupils are different and have different learning needs (and) we have to</p>

(continued)

Prospective upper-grade teachers	Prospective lower-grade teachers
<p>teachers, but. . . of subjects to older pupils. . . some are almost adults. . . in the upper-secondary school they can already vote even some of them. . . We don't need child psychology for this. . . We need subjects and knowledge about how to motivate and control pupils when needed and how to communicate subjects to them" (Colin, 88 intake). "We will be teaching subject knowledge to pupils and (therefore) want more knowledge of the subject plus professional studies content from curriculum studies. . . that illustrates how to make the subject appropriate in ways that are relevant to what different age-groups study in school and how they study them. . ." (Colin, upper, 88 intake). "We have to have something to teach in and we have to pass exams in it. . . We need the subject (but) also methods to communicate and motivate pupils. . . The subjects need to be possible to teach at the age level we are teaching in and curriculum studies (didaktik) should give examples among other things. . . We don't really need the rest (i.e. educational theory) just now" (Michael, upper, 05 intake)</p>	<p>adapt our teaching to their needs and the ways they are able to learn" (Joana, 88 intake). "We must recognize and respond to their different learning needs and the possibilities different learners have (due to) maturity (and) psychological make-up (not the least special needs)" (Jemma, 03 intake). "It is important to explain a variety of methods for us" (Jane, 03). "The subject knowledge needs in mathematics are really fulfilled very much through entry demands. . . Of course I don't mean we don't need any kind of mathematics at all. What I mean is that you do, up to a point, and that it is good to have this knowledge to teach the subject. . . Curriculum theory and pedagogy should then teach us both about pupil differences, how they affect pupil learning skills and capabilities (and) how to deal with this. . ." (Henry, lower, 03 intake). "We are not going to be mathematicians. . . We will be working with young children. . . We need to know how they perceive numbers and sets and so on and how we can help them understand and do division and subtraction and so on. . ." (Joana, lower, 03 intake)</p>

All the data presented in this section are quite striking in relation to the recent HUT Commission Report (SOU 2008, p. 109) and the Government White Paper (Government Bill 2009/10, p. 89) following it. Indeed they actually suggest that this round of reform seems to stand on clay feet and is based on purely ideological conceptualizations of current conditions and needs. What is suggested in the most recent round of reform is that a common core of progressivism was both ubiquitous and highly problematic in schools and that this emanated mainly from teacher education and was responsible for current lapses of performance in and of Swedish schools. What is in fact the case however in teacher education is that this "progressivism" is actually only an artifact of a curriculum discourse from the ORF and that the failure of progressivism is in other words politically constructed, and pushed forward within the most recent policy cycle, to drive a highly political and singularly ideological notion of much-needed changes that actually lack scientific support (Sjöberg 2011).²

² In this sense policies seem to be reacting to earlier policy formulations rather than to empirical analyses of actual policy outcomes. The policy texts of the ORF have exhibited tendencies towards educational progressivism in the period from 1952 to 2001, but this hasn't been matched by a concomitant shift in student values and the education practices and content in the PRF or student values. Practices and understandings are still highly "traditionalistic." Students with a focus on teaching younger students express more interest in school subject content knowledge and an education that is dominated by psychology, while those who intend to teach older pupils place more emphasis on formal subject knowledge and how to transform it to and communicate it at different grade levels of the upper-grade comprehensive school.

On Differences and Similarities

Students in the two enrichments (early versus late grades) seem to be quite different from each other. However, in another sense the differences expressed by the two groups (i.e., lower and upper) may actually also reflect deep similarities. For instance, they are both technically normative towards the origins of the teacher education that the respective students are a part of, i.e., the seminar and academic teacher education traditions as described by Jedemark (2006), which are never commented on by them or, according to our field notes, mentioned in their subject education or their curriculum theory and therefore the majority of content of their university-based studies. Also common is a criticism (at times) and (at other times) marginalization of the professional content knowledge of educational theory, except in relation to psychological knowledge, in favor of a professional knowledge that primarily only consists of objective teaching techniques. Quite simply:

I have absolutely no interest... in the sociology, history or philosophy of education... They are more or less irrelevant to us... We need to know what we are teaching, who we are teaching it to (and how) to do this effectively... (Dave, upper, 88 intake)

This lack of commitment to a more theorized professional knowledge of practice is also reflected in observational data. This data suggests that students tend more often to be absent from such lectures where they exist, than others, and are more often connected to the Internet if they are there (Beach and Player-Koro 2012). Coded interview data from the investigations we have made is also in agreement on this point. Both student categories (i.e., early/general and late/subject, respectively) describe curriculum and education theory “as really a bit of a waste of time” (Jane, lower, 03 intake) or at least a “using up time that could be spent doing things we need more of” (Colin, upper, 88 intake). There are some differences of course.

Prospective upper-grade teachers	Prospective lower-grade teachers
<p>“What on earth do we need to know things like the history or sociology of education for... It isn’t even interesting... Psychology yes... but not this... We will be teaching a subject... Teaching is a <i>craftsmanship</i> or an <i>art</i> and method... not a science... We need to know what to teach and we need the skills of teaching it” (Dave, upper, 88 intake)</p>	<p>“Although some didactics is interesting... it is (not) centrally relevant... in order to develop our work in school and our understanding of how pupils learn and what they need from us to become more motivated and successful as learners... We need to know about how pupils learn... There should be more time spent on this...” (Jenny, lower, 03 intake)</p>

These kinds of comment and their similarities and differences were consistent across the 25 years of our investigations. They point out that student teachers don’t seem to have ever been very committed towards a vertical professional discourse (of scientifically grounded know-why professional knowledge in the sense of Brante 2010, communicated in university studies) and that they have instead always tended to place premium on the vocational aspect of their education in school (i.e., teaching practices) as the “main source of learning the profession” (Jemma, lower, 03 intake), with this corresponding mainly with “learning how to do the job”

(Annie, upper, 88 intake). In this sense, once again, the most recent round of reforms is attempting to move teacher education policy in directions that re-traditionalize practices and values that are already highly traditional, this time by reinstating a horizontal knowledge of practice as the only professional knowledge component.

Using Bernstein to Interpret the Meaning of Patterns

Bernstein (2000) argues that teacher education can be described in relation to two different forms of knowledge. One is concerned with a body of knowledge similar to general pedagogical knowledge (e.g., SOU 1965, p. 29, 1978, p. 86). This component (called the teacher education *Trivium* by Bernstein) is related to internal control and the development of thinking skills and attitudes towards teaching and learning processes and their outcomes. It derives from a problematization of internal learning and reflection with respect to also external sociopolitical conditions and aims and concerns the development of the consciousness of the learner (Bernstein 2003, p. 161). The second body of knowledge (the *Quadrivium*) is related to the “external” independent subjects that teachers teach in schools (Beach and Bagley 2012).

In relation to the two divisions, Bernstein (2003) also identified six steps that described how the organization and communication of content and the relative distributions and relations between these two kinds of contents have varied over time. They bear strong similarities with the policy cycles we have described:

1. Teacher education professional knowledge is essentially vocational.
2. Lectures and positions became successively specialized to one or the other side of the Trivium (professional educational studies)/Quadrivium (subjects) distinction.
3. Education studies (Trivium) became specialized in, e.g., the philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history of education.
4. A new body of recontextualized knowledge successively emerged between the discourses of education studies (Trivium) and school subjects (Quadrivium) that was, Bernstein suggested, in part technical in focus and probably in aspiration. This subject was initially formulated in relation to bridging a theory–practice dislocation, but it became increasingly technical in terms of its relationship to school subject content knowledge.
5. The specialized disciplines of educational studies (Trivium) become weakened as “political, cultural and academic sites” (Bernstein 2003, p. 161) in a manner that leaves psychology as the only realistically remaining specialization. This specialization is taught in combination with subject knowledge, curriculum studies or didactics, and a professional training dimension through apprenticeship-like learning in schools.
6. Teacher education professional components (Trivium) become fully school-based and apprenticeship-like consecutive studies to the academic subject component.

The first five steps are represented in the policy cycles we have discussed. But step five is that which best characterizes the most recent one, which entails a greater emphasis on the Quadrivium and the introduction of a more horizontal set of content relations in the Trivium (Player-Koro 2012b). This kind of development has been described by Bernstein (2003) as a general shift to the (re)generification of professional knowledge (p. 163). It is a movement that he expects will eventually lead to the dissolution of the Trivium component of the teaching profession and professional knowledge. The development of the teacher education Trivium has been described as important for bridging the gap between theory and practice (Eriksson 2009; Kallós 2009) and between the divisions of seminary and academic teacher education. According to Zeichner (2010) and Apple (2001, p. 195), this kind of knowledge is important in determining whether teachers in schools after teacher training will be able to understand their profession in relation to its broader economic, sociopolitical, and ideological circumstances (Beach and Bagley 2012).

Our analysis differs somewhat from that of Bernstein, however, in that through policy ethnography we have researched not only official policy texts from the ORF of teacher education but also “the dark underside of policy development” that emanates from the PRF (Beach 1995, p. 7). In this analysis the emphasis on the teacher education Trivium was evident primarily only in the ORF of teacher education. It never actually gained a foothold in the mull of everyday life inside teacher education and left little if any marks or impressions on students there (Beach 2000; Eriksson 2009; Player-Koro 2012b). Moreover, it has also lately been replaced even in the ORF by a “generic” discourse that is less embedded in disciplinary pedagogical knowledge (education theory) and more connected to the everyday language of praxis, common sense knowledge, and practical goals of teaching as an occupation (Beach and Bagley 2012). This risks undermining all possible autonomy for teachers from organizations, institutions, and individuals “outside” (or structurally “above”) their profession (Apple 2001; Zeichner 2010).

The new policy cycle thus changes the classification of the professional knowledge need statements of the ORF to a more horizontal form and shifts the balance of the formal/official voice on teacher education from the Trivium to the Quadrivium elements. Moreover, it also legitimizes an archaic knowledge relationship in the ORF of the teacher education curriculum and brings it back into the line with existing structures in the PRF. It is quite reactionary in this sense. But by being homologous with and appealing to the common sense knowledge of lived cultures, in the sense expressed by Trondman et al. (2011), it is also very able to obtain support from key agents, even when this is actually not at all in their own best interests (Beach and Bagley 2012).

Concluding Remarks

The policy ethnographic research we have conducted over the years has addressed historical changes in the content and makeup of the teacher education policy field in terms of changes in both written formal policy formulations from the ORF, from the

1940s to the present day, and the recontextualization and enactment of policy in the PRF and the reproduction field of teacher education, in relation to three rounds of reform and two “kinds” of teacher education. A reanalysis of the products of this policy ethnographic research, a meta-ethnography, has then been carried out and is reported on in the present chapter. The meta-analysis of the policy ethnographies allows us to make a few important statements.

The first statement we can make is that the content of the written national policy (ORF) has shifted over the years and that the shifts that can be noted follow something like the six-stage model described by Bernstein (2000). Three significant turns can be noted in this process in relation to professional teaching knowledge. The first was from a view of teaching as based on vocational–practical knowledge and knowledge of subjects to a model divided and then specialized in terms of a teacher education Trivium. This was then followed by a re-vocationalization tendency and a reaffirmation of the value of subject content as the lone academic component. However, also noted is that student teachers seem hardly to have changed their values over time and have remained tightly tied to ideas that seem to emanate from teacher education in the early part of the previous century. Finally, we have noted that these values have now once again also become the values of the official position in the ORF.

One further issue we have noted but have not dwelled upon in the chapter is that the development of teacher education and the reflections of what constitutes valid professional knowledge for teachers in Sweden today reflect similar positions taken and policies produced by New Right governments in Europe and more widely in recent decades (Apple 2001; Beach and Bagley 2012). However, what we have also noted is that these developments in the ORF seem to be made on ideological grounds only and without (or possibly even against) research-based knowledge (Erixon Arreman 2005; Erixon Arreman and Weiner 2007). Right-wing governments today may seem therefore to tend to (a) drive reactionary policies in education and teacher education, (b) without research support and (c) regardless of any contradictory scientific evidence. This may be seen as somewhat ironic given their expressions about the need and value of evidence-based policy making.

These suggestions become graphically evident when we contrast the data discussed in the chapter about the effects of teacher education on students with the claims made in the most recent round of reform through Government Bill 2009/10, p. 89. This Bill and the Parliamentary Act following it are both written as if the previous reforms from the unification trajectory in teacher education and the development of a teacher education Trivium in the ORF have had an effect in the PRF, through a common, unison, and radical pedagogical progressivism that had become rife in teacher education and had spread to today’s schools, with devastating consequences for individual learning and aggregated performances (in investigations like PISA and TIMS) at the national level that must be remedied. In our interpretation nothing could be less true than this. The latest round of reform expresses that the problem with teacher education is the absence of conservative values and that, in order to save schools and society, they must be reintroduced (Sjöberg 2011; Beach 2011). Our research suggests clearly that conservative

values have been continually formed and reformed among all categories of student teachers and that the development of progressive tendencies is in no way evident. Conservative attitudes, structures of communication, forms of authority, and knowledge in teacher education are more correctly still to be analyzed as a potential cause of the current problems of performance in Swedish schools than they are a solution to these problems because of this (Beach and Player-Koro 2012).

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4.8 Problematizing Evaluative Categorizations: Collaborative and Multisited Interpretations of Constructions of Normality in Estonia and Finland

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Introduction¹

In this chapter we demonstrate ways to build up interpretations through collaborative and cross-cultural analysis that draws from several ethnographic studies, conducted in multiple educational settings, multiple localities, and multiple decades. Such research is often called multisited ethnography (e.g., Marcus 1995). We also discuss ethnographers' experiences about discussions that suddenly start to trouble earlier interpretations or "tickle our brains," paraphrasing Davies (2003), and invite new questions and new studies. These kinds of discussions might take place within the field with the informants, as well as with other researchers or people in other contexts. They have methodological value when conceptualizing one's understanding about research questions and focusing the gaze of the ethnographer (Gordon et al. 2005), as well as in analysis and interpretation.

The paper draws from various ethnographic studies that are conducted in our research group with colleagues in Finland and abroad. We have worked jointly since the 1990s, with joint research interests in social justice and constructions of

¹ The chapter is partly based on article Lahelma et al. 2014.

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differences in educational contexts. In research seminars and workshops, we have shared ideas and developed methodological understanding in rigorous ways during these years. According to our experience, some of the most fruitful ideas might come up by coincidence when someone happens to reflect on her/his experiences with somebody else. At their best, the informal discussions have led to joint analysis in which separate data sets have been combined, resulting in interpretations that could not have been arrived at otherwise. Among ethnographers serendipity is recognized as a valuable concept when making sense of ethnographic fieldwork (e.g., Arora 2008; Jeffrey and Troman 2003). We argue that the concept of serendipity has its methodological value, too, when conceptualizing one's understanding about research questions, as well as in analysis and interpretation. Giving two examples from our work, we will suggest in this paper that it is possible to find new kinds of interpretations by joint reflections that draw from different ethnographic studies and other data.

We start the paper by discussing some of the methodological ideas that we have adopted, reflecting on them in relation to the ideas of multisited and collaborative ethnography. Then we provide two concrete examples to illustrate how we have built our interpretations collaboratively. In the first example, the analysis is focused on the construction of a "special student" in a lower secondary school in post-communist Estonia (Leino and Lahelma 2002). Interpretations based mainly on data produced in Estonia were generated with reflections drawn on data produced in lower secondary school in Finland (Gordon et al. 1999, 2000).

In the second case, the analysis concentrates on representations of "normal" childhood and youth in various cultural texts, such as research reports and policy texts on education, and on the impact of these representations on the evaluation of normality of children, adolescents, and families by educational professionals (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006). Interpretations were built by combining two ethnographic data sets, one generated in the context of the preprimary education and the other in the lower secondary school, with the analysis of policy texts and research reports.

Collective, Comparative, Cross-Cultural, and Contextualized Ethnography

The methodological innovations that are presented in this chapter are elaborated by drawing from the ideas originating in an ethnographic project in two lower secondary schools in Helsinki and two in London² (e.g., Gordon et al. 2000, 2006). In this collaborative project, theoretical and methodological principles were shared,

² The project *Citizenship, Difference and Marginality in Schools* was supported by the Academy of Finland 1994–1998. Elina worked in this ethnographic project together with Tuula Gordon (director of the project), Pirkko Hynninen, Tuija Metso, Tarja Palmu, and Tarja Tolonen in Helsinki and Janet Holland in London.

while the planning and the actual conducting of the fieldwork in all locations were more or less joint efforts. The researcher group was interested in both the pedagogical practices and informal interaction of the school and the way in which time and space affect pedagogy and interaction. Inspired by Nancy Lesko (1988), they also wanted to trace a “curriculum of the body.”

Therefore, the group developed an analytical differentiation between the *official*, the *informal*, and the *physical* layers of the school (Gordon et al. 2000). The official layer refers to teaching and learning, the curriculum, pedagogy, and formal hierarchies. The informal layer refers to interaction among teachers, among students, and between teachers, students, and other staff, including informal hierarchies, and the physical layer to spatiality and embodiment, including space, time, movement, and sound/voice (Gordon et al. 2006). These layers helped to focus the gaze in the field but also helped to formulate the research and interview questions in certain frames and further the analysis and interpretations as well as in writing (Gordon et al. 2000). This analytical differentiation, developed in the project, has proved to be a fruitful way to deal with the inevitable “messiness” of the ethnographic approach (e.g., Lappalainen 2009; Rajander 2010). In the first example presented in this chapter (Leino and Lahelma 2002), the differentiation was utilized by focusing on the physical layer of the school.

The researchers in this project used to refer to this kind of ethnographic research as the “four Cs”: collective, comparative, cross-cultural, and contextualized (e.g., Gordon et al. 2000, 2006). Collectivity was a rather intuitive concept that reflected the setting: several researchers conducting ethnographic research in the same schools. It also reflected the commitment to feminist methodologies and a sense of rapport between the group of researchers and across the two countries. While working in a collective way, the research group also provided the opportunity to jointly discuss the initial interpretations. The discussion started already in the field, with brief comments during the breaks when meeting each other in school corridors. It continued later, for example, by reading each others’ notes and interviews and reflecting on possible interpretations in long meetings. Gordon et al. (2000) began to refer to this way of working in methodological terms as “analysis through discussion.”

What here was called collective ethnography has similarities with some of the typical ways of conducting collaborative ethnography (e.g., May and Pattilo-McCoy 2000; Choy et al. 2009). There were several ethnographers coordinating fieldwork efforts to gather data in the same setting. But data concerning the same social phenomena was also gathered from different social settings: the schools in London were studied by different ethnographers than those in Helsinki.

The term cross-cultural study is often used in literature as a synonym for comparative study.³ Sometimes, when people refer to the term cross-cultural, they might regard the “culture” as some kind of broad concept, even a synonym for the society or a nation state. Cross-cultural comparisons were then self-evidently comparisons between nation states. In our understanding, a cross-cultural perspective means that analogical incidents are explored in various cultural

³This argument is based on a literature check, conducted 2003 (Lahelma and Gordon 2010).

contexts (e.g., in different educational institutions in the same country or in the same type of institutions in two or more countries), and the main focus is not in trying to find differences but, rather, to find similar or homological patterns or processes (cf. Bourdieu 1979/2002). Strathern (2004, p. 35) uses the concept “compatibility without comparability” regarding the constant work of making connections within the recognition of difference. The aim for us, also, has been to increase theoretical understanding through analyzing cultural variation (Lahelma and Gordon 2010). For example, in the first example presented here, the educational situation of post-communist Estonia was discussed by contrasting findings that focus on special education in Estonia with those which are considered to be ordinary and normal in Finnish lower secondary schooling (Leino and Lahelma 2002, p. 81). The second example (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006) is cross-cultural in the sense that similar patterns in two different educational contexts in the same country have been recognized and placed under scrutiny.

A contextualized and cross-cultural perspective combined with comparative aims is related to what Troman et al. (2006) have called policy ethnography, in which influences of policy on educational institutions are examined. Contextualization in all studies presented here means that ethnographic interpretations from fieldwork in educational institutions were reflected against the current educational policies in each country. In both cases presented here, it means that the data from Finland and from Estonia were reflected against the ideas of neoliberal educational restructuring that has originated from the USA and reached the European countries (Beach et al. 2003; Dean 1999). This change meant a shift towards increased concerns for individualization, choice, and markets (e.g., Lundahl et al. 2010; Ball 2006). These notions stand in contrast to the ideals that were previously influential in educational policy formation of Nordic social democratic welfare states with an emphasis on equal opportunities, for example (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006; Antikainen 2006). The change was even more remarkable in post-communist countries where neoliberalism met socialist tradition (Lahelma and Leino 2002, p. 79).

Collaborative Understandings in Multisited Ethnographies

The methodological ideas elaborated in the project described above have then been adapted and elaborated further in later work in several interlinked research projects within the Research Community Cultural and Feminist Studies in Education at the University of Helsinki.⁴ Generally speaking, the objective in the majority of the projects has been in making sense of processes related to citizenship and

⁴The collaboration has taken place within the context of several successive research projects directed by Lahelma and supported by the Academy of Finland, the latest of which is *Citizenship, Agency and Difference in Upper Secondary Education* 2010–2013. The project of the Academy of Finland by Lappalainen (2010–2012) is interlinked with the above-mentioned project. The Research Community is part of the Nordic Centre of Excellence *Justice through Education* (2013–2017).

differences—especially gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and disabledness in intersectional analysis. But the situation is different from that in the project of Gordon et al. (e.g., 2000) presented above. Collaborative analysis is now conducted, drawing upon individual PhD or post doc studies that do not have a collective layout or joint planning, even if they belong to the same research program and the researchers mainly share methodological and theoretical perspectives (e.g., Lappalainen et al. 2013; Rajander and Lappalainen 2011; Mietola and Lappalainen 2006).

We reflect on our experiences about this kind of work with the ideas of multisited ethnography in which, as George Marcus (1995) has suggested, ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, to multiple sites of observation and participation that crosscut dichotomies such as the “local” and the “global.” We agree with Matei Candea (2009, p. 26), who notes that, when presenting the concept of multisited ethnography, Marcus (1995) actually reviewed already existing research strategies and nevertheless framed and concretized a methodological trend by providing it with historical contextualization and legitimacy as a proper way of doing research. The classical statements of multisited ethnography have been criticized by the absence of thick descriptions, with the practical problems of working in diverse localities, the challenges of projects based on collaboration, and the problem of implicit holism (Falzon 2009). Our ways to conduct multisited ethnography differ from that of Marcus, as we are going to demonstrate (see also Honkasalo 2011).

The first project described above, in which Elina was involved, was actually going on when Marcus provided his conceptualization. Accordingly, it did not affect this work. Later on, we have read texts by Marcus and others who elaborated ideas of multisited ethnography and collaborative work (e.g., the chapters in Falzon 2009). These theoretizations have helped us to build a more compact way of describing our collaborative work—even if we did adopt earlier the ideas of working collaboratively. We have constructed our shared research field (see Amit 2000; Cook et al. 2009) by combining data generated in individual projects in order to analyze particular processes that were difficult to capture in depth through single studies (see Hannertz 2009). In our shared work, collaboration is positioned similarly to Choy et al. (2009) as a distinctive feature of our work, opening new research topics and forming new ways of analyzing data as well as new ways of writing about our research. It has turned out to be an essential element in several interpretations that are new and unexpected.

Collaborative analyses might start with unexpected findings or serendipities that we reflect on jointly. It proceeds with questions to the one who had been in a specific field, with reflections about others’ experiences or findings that might draw from different fields. We then continue by selecting data concerning relevant themes from each study. It is important to notice that after the preliminary reading is done and pieces of data are brought into discussion, they are handled as “shared” data in the sense that we do not hesitate to analyze data pieces originating from each other’s fieldwork. It means that, for example, when Sirpa reads data generated by Reetta, her interpretation is based on the text, whereas Reetta has an embodied experience, emotional ties, and visual memories based on her fieldwork.

One of the challenges in educational ethnography is how to fight against familiarity, caused by our own experiences from the school—earlier as pupils, as parents, or as teachers; we are all well acquainted with schools and the constructions of normality within them. Therefore, many everyday practices are often considered to be self-evident (e.g., Delamont and Atkinson 1995). Some of the ways to fight against familiarity and to find different ways of seeing (Skeggs 1999) are brought about by another person, who is not familiar with the field, but views the data or makes short visits to the field and asks new kinds of questions. We present experiences from this in this chapter.

Reflecting on data jointly works as one strategy to take and maintain analytical distance. For example, when Sirpa, whose knowledge about this field is extremely partial, reads Reetta's data, she might ask questions that Reetta may not have regarded as relevant, being so familiar with her own data. Making interpretation together, "living with" the data generated by one or several of us, deepens our analysis and, at the best, leads to new questions and theoretical reflections. A prerequisite for this kind of work is confidential relationships, sensitivity to ethical questions, and shared methodological understanding.

Working together in several projects, contrasting and reflecting data from various fields, collected with different methods, has helped us to see the limitations of straightforward analysis that would be expected to provide concrete answers to research questions that were defined beforehand. A multisited approach has reminded us about the impermanence of the interpretations. As Joanna Cook, James Laidlaw, and Jonathan Mair (2009, p. 58) argue, abandoning the idea of a field as a geographically (or in one of our cases institutionally) bounded location helps to concede that a complete description is impossible; therefore, the sensible way to determine the boundaries of the field is in relation to our research questions. Good research tantalizes one into thinking and imagining, it pulls apart and seduces, it unveils the invisible (Ojala 2011). Through the following examples we suggest that our own research process—the process that we have called analysis through discussion—has seduced us into new interpretations.

Analyzing “Normality” and “Special Needs,” Produced Through Discursive Practices

The guiding theoretical principle in our analyses is to deconstruct “regimes of normal” in the educational context we are analyzing (Burman 2008; Cannella and Viuru 2004). The theoretical analysis of “normality” and “special needs” that is suggested in the examples draws from perspectives inspired by Foucault (see, e.g., Rose 1998; Popkewitz and Lindblad 2000; Davies 2004): what is implied, taken for granted and unnamed will embody the normative “center/core” against which deviance—what discursively is articulated, for example, as “children with special needs,” “children with low self-esteem,” and “families in crisis”—is analyzed. Universalized concepts, such as citizenship and competence, represent certain norms for conduct. For

example, Thomas Popkewitz (2001, 2003, 2008) has introduced the concept of the “cosmopolitan child” to analyze how principles of universal progress construct particular kinds of children as being agents and empowered, at the same time constructing “others” as abject, as not embodying the characteristics required to belong. In our analyses the focus has been on how this construction of “others” takes place in the everyday life of educational institutions. We share a cultural viewpoint, in which cultural and structural conditions framing an action are taken into account (Alasuutari 2006). The knowledge production is regarded as a political practice carried out in order to change those conditions (Barker 2008; Hall 2001).

Our data sets have been a combination of existing cultural texts concerning the explored educational field, such as curriculum texts, research reports and media texts, ethnographic data, and teachers’ writings generated in educational institutions, such as kindergartens and schools.

Interpreting Constructions of a Normal and a Special Pupil: Cross-Country Reflections from Estonia and Finland

The first example for “normality” is given from the cross-country perspective, and the focus is in lower secondary schools in Estonia. These reflections draw from Mare Leino’s ethnographic study in a special class in Estonia. Her data set analyzed in this research included the writings of 23 teachers, concerning a “problem child” and field notes from a special class, especially from a period of 2 weeks when a trainee teacher conducted her practical studies in the class. Leino conducted her study during the first years of independence after four decades of communist regime. At that time special classes or schools were only for students with a medical diagnosis, and, within the socialist ideology of equality, other differences were not thought to exist. The concept of a special class for the so-called problem children, students with behavioral and/or learning problems, was considered an innovation in the post-communist Estonia (Leino and Lahelma 2002). This innovation took place at the same time when, in several other countries (including Finland), the aim was, rather, to increase integration and inclusion of students with special needs (e.g., Arnesen et al. 2007; Kivirauma et al. 2006; Winzer 2007).

This “core data” was analyzed with reflections regarding the data from Finland and analysis conducted in the ethnographic study in lower secondary schools in Helsinki and London that is referred to earlier in this chapter (Gordon et al. 2000). When choosing data for analysis from the Finnish data sets, special interest was paid to the period of the first 2 weeks in the lower secondary school (Gordon et al. 1999). This period of 2 weeks was regarded as analogical with the 2 weeks in the Estonian schools with the trainee teacher. In both cases the class teacher was especially explicit in sharing pedagogical principles and school rules: in the first one she taught the principles to the trainee teacher, and in the second one she taught the rules to pupils newly enrolled at the lower secondary school (Lahelma and Gordon 2010). In everyday routines in the school, rules and principles are taken for granted and not so easy to see for an ethnographer.

For analyzing how the categories of normal and special are constructed in the classroom, the useful concepts of “professional pupil” and “physical school” developed in the project *Citizenship, Difference and Marginality in Schools* (e.g., Gordon et al. 2000) were used. “Professional pupil” referred to students who managed to conduct themselves competently without making mistakes or unintentionally breaking the rules (Gordon et al. 1999, 2000; Lahelma and Gordon 1997). The concept of physical school was developed to conceptualize patterns that are related to time, space, voice, movement, and embodiment in the everyday life of schools. The ethnographic analyses suggested that pupil professionalism was closely related to competence in dealing with the physical school: students are supposed to be in the right place at the right time, with appropriate embodiment and equipment; they should know when and how they are supposed to speak, move, raise their hands, etc. (ibid).

These kinds of reflections and interpretations from her own data were in Elina’s thoughts when she, as supervisor of Mare Leino, visited Mare’s research school and read translated extracts from her field notes and other data. Her visits to Estonian schools turned out to be specific because she does not know the Estonian language, and therefore, the focus of her attention was intensively on movement and embodiment (see also Epstein et al. 2013). She found within this classroom behavioral patterns that she had regularly observed in the Finnish classrooms as well. These kinds of patterns were, however, interpreted as “problematic” by teachers in Estonia and a reason for students to be moved into a special class. In Finnish lower secondary school, the same kind of behavior was generally considered as normal adolescence behavior that did not provoke further measures.

Elina’s observation that she made more or less by coincidence led Mare and Elina to analyze the constructions of normality as context-specific phenomena. Another data set was formed by writings of the Estonian teachers whom Mare asked to define a “problem child.” In the analysis the definitions were put into categories: behavior that disturbs the class or the teacher; unsuitable use of time, space, voice, or movement and embodiment; lack of engagement; lack of respect for school equipment; and unmannerly behavior. Most of them could be analyzed in terms of the physical school. Below are some examples:

Unsuitable use of time can be found behind the following ways of performing:

is late; is absent without a cause; has no time perception; answers before the question is finished; does not wait for his or her turn; gets tired quickly; looks for a reason to leave the classroom.

Unsuitable use of voice is behind the following responses:

uses foul language; makes strange sounds; speaks in an unrestrained way; is reserved; does not answer orally; is unable to act silently; speaks alone.

The following attributes that the teachers used can be interpreted as unsuitable movements and embodiment:

rocks with a chair back and forth; does not stay in his or her place; fidgets; lies on the desk; sometimes crawls under the desk; careless appearance.

The same categories were also present in Mare’s ethnographic accounts. Especially rich data was provided during a period of 2 weeks when a trainee teacher Liisa was practicing in the classroom and the class teacher Maija sat at the back. It turned out that situations when Maija interrupted the interaction in the class were closely related to situations when regulations concerning time–space paths, voice, and embodiment were broken. The following extract illustrates time as a problem (Leino and Lahelma 2002)⁵:

Liisa tells the children to read the book. Maija whispers from the back to Alvin: “You, Alvin, have to start reading as well – otherwise you will get into trouble with time.”

The following example demonstrates situations when voice turned out to be a problem which provoked Maija to intervene.

It was very noisy again. Maija came from the back of the class to the front once again and said: “We agreed that we should all help the young trainee with her teaching here in our class.”

Regulations of embodiment are involved in the following extract:

Anton lies on his face, Maija asks: “Do you have problems with your eyes, are you short-sighted?” Anton: “No.” Maija: “You musn’t sit like that, with your face down!”

While ethnographic research has for decades suggested that challenging, testing, and “sussing out” the teacher (Benyon 1985) regularly take place in schools, the Estonian teachers in Mare’ study have in mind a child who has gone too far by frequently breaking the school norms and has shown unprofessional behavior. The ethnographic findings in Finnish secondary schools (Gordon et al. 2000, 1999) suggest countless numbers of examples when students behave during lessons in a similar manner to that as described above. The next extract from field notes of a lesson in the 7th grade in a Finnish school is an example of some students’—often boys’—constant negotiations with teachers about possibilities to leave the necessities of certain spaces at certain times, trying to move their bodies from the compulsory desks:

Pete: Someone knocked [at the door].
 Teacher: Still another picture.
 Pete: I’ll go and open the door.
 Teacher: I didn’t ask you to do it.
 Pete: How can he get in?
 Teacher: There is knocking all around here.
 Pete: Hi, I forgot the folder [in the locker in the corridor], I’ll get it.
Starts to walk towards the door
 Teacher: No, you don’t go!
 Pete: It’s just very close.
He gets the permission to leave. Heikki starts to walk towards the door

⁵ All names of the students and teachers in this chapter are pseudonyms.

Teacher [to Heikki]: You mustn't go!

[Somewhat later] *Pete starts to walk.*

Pete:

I took a wrong folder by accident!

The teacher does not allow him to go out. Pete still tries, but then returns to his desk.

These kinds of incidents were regular in the schools in Finland that Elina had studied. They can sometimes be interpreted as resistance and sometimes as expressions of tiredness during what is considered to be boring lessons by school students, but often as boys' performances through which they compete with their male classmates within the informal hierarchies (see also Tolonen 2001). Often all these interpretations are interlinked (Lahelma and Gordon 2010). Teachers tend to reprimand or negotiate or sometimes to ignore this kind of behavior. However, students who behave in these ways are not necessarily regarded as "problem children"; a popular discourse of "normal" development of puberty is evoked instead (cf. Aapola 1999)—especially when the disturbing child happens to be a boy. Even in teacher education there are examples when disturbing behavior of some boys has been regarded as normal, something that both teachers and other students have to get used to (Lahelma 2011).

Already during the initial encounters in secondary schools, much energy and time are used in teaching "pupil professionalism"—skills and manners that are expected from school children (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999). Lack of such skills is more or less expected and tolerated in the Finnish schools, nevertheless. Leino (1999) argues that a dramatic shift towards neoliberalism in post-communist Estonia has rapidly changed the society. Young people's values and ways of behaving have changed, while changes in teaching traditions take place at a slower rate and are contradictory.

Through these reflections it is possible to problematize what is "normal" and what is "special" in the ways that young people behave in schools (cf. Popkewitz 1998). The cross-cultural analysis shows that "normality" is locally constructed, even if educational ideas travel from one country to another (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2003). The taken-for-grantedness is challenged in situations in which rules and routines become explicit; in the Finnish research this happened during the first weeks of secondary school, when we observed the initial encounters of teachers and students (Lahelma and Gordon 1997; Gordon et al. 1999; see also, e.g., Ball 1984). In the study of Mare Leino in Estonian, the way that the class teacher gave instructions and intervened in the incidents during the lesson of the trainee teacher rendered the pedagogical principles explicit. Here the cross-cultural analysis also was a method to challenge the familiarity of the school (cf. Epstein et al. 2013).

A comparative study between Finland and Estonia would have suggested a huge growth in special education in post-communist societies, with possible interpretations concerning the growing problems of youth. We do not challenge this

interpretation—it is easy to believe that there are marked differences in Estonian young people’s behavior when compared to the Soviet era. However, cross-country ethnographic reflections suggested that there are differences in conceptualizations of normality and speciality in the countries’ pedagogical discourses, rather than differences in young people’s behavior.

Interpreting Constructions of a Normal Child and Family: Reflections from Professional Texts and Teachers’ Talks

Another example draws on Reetta’s and Sirpa’s (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006) joint analysis of the representations of “normal” childhood and youth and the evaluation of the “normality” of a particular child, a young person, or a family. At the time of starting this collaborative analysis, Sirpa was conducting an ethnographic research aimed at studying intersections of nationality, gender, and ethnicity in the context of preprimary education (Lappalainen 2006, 2009), and Reetta for her part was analyzing education policy documents and research texts on the well-being of children and youth, for the contextualization of her ethnographic fieldwork with students in special education (Mietola 2010). Joint reflections on Sirpa’s ethnographic fieldwork and Reetta’s interpretations from the documents in a shared office led to an insight about similarities in patterns, repeated in different educational arenas when children and their well-being were discussed. Reetta and Sirpa decided to explore this phenomenon more thoroughly.

An important starting point was the bafflement and irritation that both felt when encountering professional descriptions of different kinds of children and families. In accounts of documents and research reports, as well as in preschool teachers’ talk, there was a strong moral tone in the ways that children and families were talked about and categorized. Sirpa and Reetta noticed that particular concepts were “picked out” from popular research-related texts and were further used by the professionals of education in their everyday work in diagnostic and often rather exclusive ways. For example, Eeva Hujala-Huttunen and Veijo Nivala (1996) have drawn a Gaussian curve to describe families. The extreme points of the curve were presented with conceptualizations “families with a weak control of life’ and ‘families with a strong control of life.” When conducting her fieldwork Sirpa realized that it was the former of these concepts that had established a firm position in early childhood educational context and was continuously repeated when families were discussed (Lappalainen 2006; Mietola and Lappalainen 2005). The following extract is a piece of Sirpa’s field notes on her first encounter with the teacher of the preschool class she was going to follow. In the extract, the teacher describes the neighborhood where the preschool was located:

There [in the locality of the research pre-school] are lots of children that have not been set bounds by their parents, [there is] weak parenthood, incompetence with house holding, families with weak control of life. . . . (Teacher in Sirpa’s field notes).

Although being frustrated with the stigmatized effects that the concepts had in educational institutions, Reetta and Sirpa strongly felt that all professionals they had met during their fieldwork were committed to doing their job as well as possible, and as researchers they did not aim to question the professionals' proficiency.

Sirpa and Reetta also felt that there was a certain kind of urgency in this talk—a general worry expressed about the living circumstances of Finnish children and youth in the change of the century. The need to study these representations was largely built on this urgency—this public worry seemed to have far-reaching effects, on everyday practices in the educational settings, as well as on educational policy, and as such it needed to be studied. They started to build up their analysis on the idea that, as researchers, they try to make visible the ways professionals in particular educational contexts make sense of their work (cf. Davies 2004). They decided to do this by asking the data how this worry discourse is built (where do the concepts and representations come from), what is done with it (how does it appear in the everyday practices in educational institutions and what kind of effects does it have on the lives of children and their families), and what kind of interests does this discourse serve (e.g., Davies 2004). In their analysis they were interested in the widespread worry discourse circulating in (and from) the research reports, public and media discussion, policy texts, and the everyday discussions of the professionals of education. Major interest was the localized sense-making processes that were constructed within the wider discursive context. Their thinking was influenced by the poststructuralist feminist theory. The especially strong source of their inspiration was the approach that brings into question how language, rationality, power, knowledge, and truth are considered in humanistic thinking (Adams St. Pierre 2000; Davies 2004). When analyzing professionals' reasoning, they used as an analytical tool the concept "story line" which, according to Dorte Marie Søndergaard (2002, p. 191), is "a condensed version of a naturalized and conventional cultural narrative, one that is often used as the explanatory framework of one's own and others' practices and sequences of action."

Analysis was done by reading different kinds of data, such as government reports, curriculum texts, research texts, and data generated in both Sirpa's and Reetta's ethnographic projects, side by side. The focus was on how different concepts and manners of speaking become embedded in the educational contexts. Sirpa and Reetta explored what kinds of story lines and images of subjectivities these data sets carried within them. One important body of data was research reports discussing well-being and social exclusion of children and youth in Finland in the turn of the century and observations made of the public discussion following the release of these reports. The most influential seemed to be the final report of the 3-year research project "Social Exclusion and Social Integration in Childhood" (Järventie 2001). The release of this report received wide media interest. The report stated that only 26 % of Finnish children aged 7–14 were receiving good basic care and had a positive sense of identity. In the report a strong dichotomy between good

and poor childhood was established, while providing detailed descriptions of these categories:

Children, living a good childhood, go to bed on time, they wash themselves often enough and they have a warm daily meal at home (. . .) Only sometimes do these children feel tired. They consider themselves nice looking, they are not bothered by bodily aches or pains and thus are not worried about those issues.(. . .) Children living a poor childhood sleep far too little, because they often go to bed only after 11 p.m. and regardless of this they still have to wake up early for school. The sleep they get is not calm and refreshing, because they suffer from sleeping disorders (. . .) Some of these children do not get daily food at home and they also have deficiencies in their personal hygiene. (Järventie 2001, p. 101, translation Mietola)

In the analysis, attention was paid to the ways these descriptions were built and who were positioned as actors. Reetta and Sirpa recognized that the descriptions were constructed through further dichotomizing between characteristics such as clean/dirty and regularity/irregularity. What was also apparent in this research report, as well as other research texts on children, youth, and well-being/social exclusion at the time, was that the education professionals were positioned as key actors. The research texts emphasized the need of early identification and intervention and positioned educational institutions and professionals to work towards this goal. At the same time children, young people, and their families were positioned mainly as objects of professional action. Sirpa and Reetta also recognized power invested in these detailed descriptions: they definitely provided means to identify children and families accordingly. Although the main focus of the reported project was a critical scrutiny of the prevailing social and family politics, these descriptions of good and poor childhood also dominated the media and public discussion and geared the attention away from societal conditions where families lived their everyday life (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006).

When analyzing Sirpa's field data, it was possible to find clear connections between descriptions provided by the research document, as in the example above, and those of the teachers in the context of preprimary education, as in the example below:

Sirpa: How about. . . you mentioned this kind of normal family, how would you characterise it, you mentioned 'love and quarrelling' is it that or. . .?

Eevi: Well, children have a regular rhythm in their everyday life and hmm. . . bounds, not necessarily so that both parents are in working life, but my own family has been that kind of family. Sometimes there is quarrel and sometimes love and bounds hm. . . That's normal life. Parents give their limited time for their children and not in that way that children would have too much leisure activities, not in the way. . . or that parents would hang around somewhere in the bars or something like that. In my opinion that's normal life: children are taken care of, basic care and regular rhythm in the everyday life. Sometimes children when coming here have used to eat when

they are hungry, go to bed when they want to and to sleep late. It's not necessary to have both parents, that's not the point. Maybe a single parent is able to do that as well (basic care and regular rhythm in everyday life).
(Teacher interview)

Also the teachers talked in a detailed manner about how the everyday life of a child should be organized. The regularity of life constructed a central feature in the descriptions of normal family life. Reetta and Sirpa paid attention to the ways research results and concepts were translated into everyday use. An established discourse in those times (at least in Finland) was the discourse of a "faded parenthood," which included claims that the border between childhood and adulthood had become vague in the postmodern world and parents hesitated to control their children (Hoikkala 1993; Kalliala 1999). Teachers' talk about boundaries can be connected to this discourse, against which the normal family with healthy boundaries is constructed. The teacher also refers in her talk to the problematization of single parenting. When looking at these two extracts above, we can recognize the *story line of normal family*, which is constructed through the story lines of other kinds of families: the career family pushing children towards leisure activities, the family of a single parent, and a family with weak control over life in which "parents hang around in bars." The data suggested that good parenting is naturalized through examples of bad parenting, and boundaries of good parenting are rather narrowly defined indeed.

Reetta and Sirpa conducted their ethnographies in different educational contexts: Reetta in lower secondary education (with a special focus on special education) and Sirpa in preprimary education. However, a striking observation was that very similar discourses circulated in both educational contexts. They paid attention to the tendency that risks and problems seemed to be individualized and all critiques towards the unequalizing policy vanished when educational professionals described their work. Reetta and Sirpa were curious about knowing how risks and problems become individualized by finding out the story lines inherent in the "at-risk talk" (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006, p. 237). They suggested the *story line of exclusion* as one of such pathways. In the language and work of education professionals, the concept of "exclusion," already during the 1990s, had attained an established position (Järvinen and Jahnukainen 2001). In the case of children and youth, exclusion is usually situated in the future as a possible destiny. The story line of exclusion is heavily based on theories of developmental psychology, with an emphasis on the primary relationship between the child and the adult caring for him/her.

In this story line the child's future is determined already by her primary relationship to the adult carer, where the insufficiency of this relationship is internalized by the child as a feeling of insecurity (see Burman 2008). Because of this, the child will not be able to go through the developmental tasks she is going to face at different ages. The life path of this child is described as a circle in which the

individual is drifting with accelerating speed until finally falling outside the social structures, into exclusion. In the following example Reetta tried to provide a perspective in which exclusion would be discussed from a distance:

I ask Mari [youth worker] if their organisation wants to profile itself as an organisation working on the prevention of exclusion. Mari starts to speak about self confidence and lists some of their activities which have this function.

Reetta: Well, actually, where I'm trying to get to here is that exclusion is still kind of a heavy concept.

Mari: Yes it is.

Reetta: And when it is used in the context of youth. – I still think that it carries in it this certain kind of image of an excluded, of a type of person, of a way of living.

Mari: That's true, but there still are clearly these kinds of –
Mari starts to tell me about a client of hers.

Mari: He doesn't have the means, the home doesn't provide the means to deal with difficult things . . . periods of drinking. . . mental health problems at home.

Mari tells me how they had been working with this client to sort things out. She tells me that the client had kept telling her that he doesn't want to end up living in a ditch. And when the things had been ok again, he 'just lost it [control] again'. Mari continues that when we are talking about an 18 year old, what can you do in a situation like this: 'It's her/his choice', 'you can't save them all.'

Mari: Here again you can see that there hasn't been any safety nets there earlier to fall into. (Interview with a youth worker, private sector)

When analyzing this example, we paid attention to the concepts used and the construction of the story line. We noticed that as the discussion moved to talking about exclusion, the concepts, such as self-confidence provided by psychology, were mobilized immediately. The story line is drawn from the childhood home to early adulthood, where finally possibilities of turning one's life path, avoiding "living in a ditch," are constructed as following from individuals actions and choices, from his/her inner ability to control his/her life. We also considered things which are not said as relevant in our analysis (e.g., Mazzei 2011). Reetta's suggestion to discuss the blaming effects of the concept of exclusion was quickly turned down and the individualizing perspective was set on the agenda in its most extreme form by referring to the life story of the individual client.

The concept of exclusion has previously been problematized by critical social policy researchers (e.g., Helne 2002). However, through this analysis we made visible its power in educational contexts. We interpreted that its power is realized in the way that access to particular subject positions is controlled. "At risk"

constructs a sphere of worry within which certain subjectivities are placed (see Popkewitz 1998). Once a subject is positioned outside the position of neutral normality, within the sphere of concern, her life course will be read according to the story line of exclusion. And accordingly, the life histories of those positioned as “excluded” are rewritten as stories of lack of agency and drifting. In the field of education, the image of the excluded and the concept of exclusion have attained a very powerful position: it has become an effective concept for getting funding for different kinds of exclusion prevention programs, as well as for research programs and to legitimate intervention practices (see Järvinen and Jahnukainen 2001; Niemi and Kurki *forthc*).

In their analysis, Sirpa and Reetta connected this story line to the wider “childhood in crisis discourse” (Wynes 2000) in which diversification of childhood and families is strongly problematized, while childhood in general is essentialized. According to this way of reasoning, childhood is in crises because of the disappearance of the parents’ moral and social resources to raise their children into “proper” citizenship (cf. Wynes 2000, pp. 9, 16). They argued that the worry discourse works as an individualizing, normative discourse of childhood and youth which, by putting certain categories of families and individuals under worried scrutiny, turns the focus away from unequal practices in the social, economic, and political system (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006; cf. Stainton Rogers 2004). They interpreted the situation to the effect that the worried discourse actually worked to govern childhood and youth—to redefine and demand a certain type, a suitable Finnish childhood for the twenty-first century. As such, it can be recognized as being a neoconservative discourse, with strong moral tones arguing for the traditional family structure (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006).

Conclusions: The Impact of Interpretation in This Work

The main conclusions of the paper discuss the usefulness, as well as prerequisites, of the methods that we have been elaborating. We suggest that working together in several projects, contrasting and reflecting data from various fields, collected with different methods, has helped us to see the limitations of straightforward analysis that would be expected to provide concrete answers to research questions that were defined beforehand. We suggest, following the ideas of Cook, Laidlaw, and Mair (2009, 58), the importance of liberating ourselves not only from the bounded site but also from the idea that the field of ethnographic research could ever be coterminous with or the same thing as a geographically bounded location or area.

In our research group we have regularly used the same methodologies by contrasting and reflecting data from different studies (see other examples in Lahelma et al. 2014). Here we have focused on constructions of normality in several educational contexts. Through the first example we problematize what is regarded as normal and what is ‘special’ in young people’s behavior

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in schools (Popkewitz 1998). We suggest how “normality” is locally constructed, even if educational ideas travel from one country to another (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2003; Arnesen et al. 2007). In the analysis of the second case, we suggest the “worry discourse” as a part of the wider childhood in crisis discourse (Wynes 2000) with pathologizing effects for poor families. In this discourse, diversification of childhood and families is strongly problematized, while childhood in general is essentialized. This worried discourse actually worked to govern childhood. As such, it can also be recognized as a feature of New Right ideology in which neoconservative and neoliberal discourses are intertwined (Mietola and Lappalainen 2006; see also Beach et al. 2003).

In the introduction to this handbook, the general editors suggest that interpretative frameworks are (i) brought to a piece of research, (ii) embodied in the data we collect through research, and (iii) generated out of interaction between the theoretical frameworks that the researcher brings to the research and all that he or she encounters through the research process. Finally, the kinds of conclusions that are drawn from the analysis and argument are themselves the product of interpretations and not only of the research.

The cases that we presented demonstrate a variation of these ways to use interpretation. Firstly, our earlier life histories as well as joint discussions and theoretical reflections in our research group have sensitized us to regard some incidents as tantalizing and inspiring. As feminists and persons committed to the idea of social justice, we were easily alert in situations in which we anticipated inequalities and repression; in this way interpretive frameworks were already fully engaged when we decided to explore some patterns from our data more deeply.

The cases that we have presented here are the tangential products of more coherent and planned research projects. They have resulted in one or two jointly authored articles, after which the original research plan has continued—often as a more lonely endeavor, when the researcher has struggled towards her PhD or other study. The first example started by way of Elina’s astonishment, when she followed the lessons in an Estonian classroom with students that were defined as being in need of special education. In the second case it was Sirpa’s and Reetta’s discussions about their shared annoyance about the public discourses on young people and families. But often a whole research project starts with astonishment or annoyance when confronting a tantalizing incident. For example, Sirpa’s doctoral study (Lappalainen 2006) on citizenship, nationality, and gender in preschool was inspired by her irritating experience as a preschool teacher and the feeling of not knowing how to handle a racist situation.

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Thirdly, the editors (Smeyers et al., Introduction) suggest that interpretation is generated out of interaction between the theoretical frameworks that the researcher brings to the research and all that he or she encounters through the research process. This means that the whole product of the research is interpretation. Here we emphasize the collaborative methods that we have used in working with these cases. Analysis through discussion also means for us that interpretations, made by the person who has generated the data through field notes or interviews, are reflected with others who read the accounts but do not have the long-term embodied experience from the same field. In some cases this might open the possibility of new ways to interpret data. For instance, in the examples presented here, it was Elina who noticed that behavior, which drove students towards the route of special education in the Estonian school, was considered as “normal” in Finnish schools. Moreover, there are more theoretical frameworks to use for the interpretation because—even if we share some general theoretical understanding—we have read different texts and also interpreted the same texts differently.

Finally, the editors suggest that “the kinds of conclusions that are drawn from the analysis and argument are themselves the product of interpretations not only of the research.” Interpretations are always informed by the context in which they have been made. For example, Reetta and Sirpa interpreted educators’ ways of making sense of children and families in the light of public debate that was going on at the time.

Through the examples presented in this paper, we suggest the usefulness of collaboration and cross-cultural ethnography for theoretical interpretations. With our cases we also problematize what the “field” is and what “data” is in ethnographic studies. Moreover, we suggest how discussions that “tickle our brains” or serendipity (e.g., Arora 2008; Jeffrey and Troman 2003) have methodological value when conceptualizing understanding about research questions, as well as in analysis and interpretation. Finally, we reflect our work with the ideas provided earlier in methodologies of multisited ethnography (e.g., Marcus 1995, Falzon 2009).

While we suggest the usefulness of the methodological ideas that we have discussed and illuminated through our own experiences, we are also aware of the difficulties and the problems involved. When we have presented versions of this paper, colleagues have sometimes argued that this kind of collaborative work is possible only in very specific circumstances, and this certainly is true. It is necessary to have a research group with a long joint history and rapport between the participants. This is not easy in current university environments with a strengthened individualistic ethos. Moreover, it is not easy because the researchers that conduct joint analysis have different positions in the academic hierarchies: when there are different interpretations of some accounts, it is important—and not necessarily easy—to realize that the

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interpretation of the youngest and least experienced member of the group might be more acute than that of the senior professor, a supervisor of the former. There may, moreover, be special arrangements in relation to confidential research data. We do not claim that we have succeeded in overcoming all these difficulties, but being aware of them has been very helpful.

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Genre 5 Historical Approaches

Introduction

Lynn Fendler and Marc Depaepe

Interpretation has always played a role in every imaginable dimension of historical research. First, interpretation is involved at the most fundamental level in which it is first determined what counts as an artifact of history. For example, archaeologists interpret which rocks, shards, and soil samples “count” as artifacts and which do not. Second, all archives are curated, which is an interpretive process in which the curator decides which objects to include and how to organize objects into searchable categories. Third, very little of the past is available in any archive; therefore, we must interpret not only the salience of artifacts, but we must also interpret the silences, gaps, and absences. We must imagine what and how much is not extant. Fourth, historians use interpretation to decide which artifacts from the past ought to be included in any particular research project. For example, when we conduct historical research on philosophy of education, should we include Dewey’s shopping lists among our historical data? His daily planner? Why or why not? Finally, of course, composing and organizing a historical narrative is always an interpretive project, as is all reading of historical narratives. When we recognize that interpretation plays a role in every dimension of historical research, it becomes obvious that interpretation is a pivotal concept in historically oriented educational research. Interpretation converts the chaos of objects and ideas into an intelligible order.

We can have no direct perception of the past; the past is not present to us. To one degree or another, then, historians tend to agree that it is not possible to project four-dimensional life onto a two-dimensional narrative without some

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interpretation. However, historians disagree about how we ought to deal with the issues of interpretation and perspectivism (Nietzsche 1967/1887) in historical research. Given the range of contentious debates among historians in general (Loewen 2008) and among historians of education in particular (see, e.g., Tamura et al. 2011; Goodman and Grosvenor 2011; Smeyers and Depaepe 2008; Cohen 1999) and the degree to which historiographical research has changed over time (Burrows 2009), historians are surprisingly unanimous in their agreement that historiography is an interpretive endeavor. The question then is not *whether* interpretation plays a role in history, but what various kinds of interpretation have shaped research in educational history.

For educational purposes, we have organized the chapters of this volume according to three broad approaches to interpretation: objectivist, critical, and aesthetic. These three categories should not be read as discrete or definitive—most histories include objectivist, critical, and aesthetic elements, and of course, there are many other possible ways one could classify historical writings. For the moment, however, the categories of objectivist, critical, and aesthetic are useful for illustrating the broad range of approaches to interpretation that constitute the spectrum of historical research in education these days.

Objectivist Interpretations

Objectivism is one approach to historical interpretation in which the historian strives to write history as a mirror of the past (Depaepe 2012a). Related to historicism, objectivist interpretation holds that historical ideas and forms should be described as they occurred. The language of the historian is supposed to be a mirror or photographic plate, as impartial and as objective as possible in rendering an undistorted picture of the events of the past. We can recognize objectivist interpretation in the work of Leopold von Ranke who advocated an approach to historiography that was supposed to be free of subjective or authorial influence. Few historians today would claim that pure objectivity is possible in history. Nevertheless, in this tradition, historians regard it as important to adhere to epistemological and methodological principles that are designed to minimize subjective influences such as presentism or ideology (Fendler 2008).

Of the chapters in this volume, those of McCulloch, Gardner, and Richardson share objectivist values in their approaches to interpretation for educational history. The objectivist tradition is evaluated on its fidelity to archival materials and on its methodological avoidance of bias. The ideal rendering of historical research in objectivist traditions should avoid subjectivity and strive to remove the author's voice in order to let the past speak for itself. To the extent that subjectivity is unavoidable, then it is the historian's task to account for the possibility of bias in the interpretation as part of the analysis. Described by Paul Ricoeur (1976) as "distanciation," the purpose of interpretation in objectivist-oriented historical

research is to guard against subjectivity and to discern that which can be most reliably be claimed as objective and aligned with archival sources.

Critical Interpretations

A second approach to interpretation in historical research understands history as a critical project. By critical we mean concerned with power relations in the production of knowledge. History is a source of knowledge about who we are and what is possible in the world. Therefore, some historians take seriously how the different narratives about the past have inequitable impacts across different ways of being in the world. In critical approaches to historical research, there has been an array of ideological commitments, from left to right and center to margin; political approaches to interpretation are not limited to any particular slant. For example, movements that wish to establish legitimacy may write history in a heroic mode that emphasizes triumphs of a particular race, culture, or ethnic identity. Other movements may write histories that highlight voices of silenced or marginalized groups of people. Critical approaches to historical research may also interpret historical events in unconventional ways, or from a nontraditional point of view for purposes of calling assumptions into question.

In critically oriented historical projects, language is not an autonomous mirror or a photographic plate. It is, in fact, not a mirror at all; rather, it represents the expression of ourselves and of what structures our thoughts. Only in historical discussion, in conversation with other researchers, can historical knowledge be articulated. Historical knowledge forming is, therefore, not to be sought in the past itself, but in the interpretive traditions of the “historiographical operation,” which according to Certeau (1988) is related to the way in which the historical “evidence” is produced by historians. As Ricoeur has told us, the past is not something that is, but something that has been.

In this volume, the chapters of Chartier, Franklin, and Mayer illustrate critical interpretations of historical research. In the case of Chartier’s chapter, historical evidence is interpreted to emphasize discontinuities in the history of writing. Franklin’s chapter provides historical documentation of unlikely alliances across races and cultures in the case of urban curriculum reform. Mayer’s chapter raises the voices of women as active participants in the history of vocational education. These three chapters provide some insight into the ways interpretation can function not only as a mirror but also as a lever for lifting our awareness of dynamics in history (Depaepe 2012a).

Aesthetic Interpretations

In addition to objective and critical approaches to historical interpretation, a third orientation towards interpretation can be described as aesthetic. Again, the aesthetic approach to historical research still relies on careful examination of artifacts and rigorous analysis; however, the mode of interpretation seeks neither to mirror the past nor to leverage a critical point of view (Fendler 2013). Rather, aesthetic interpretations are related to the historiographical theory of Hayden White who called our attention to the ways in which history can be analyzed in terms of literary tropes. For an aesthetic interpretation, historians use aesthetic sensibilities to analyze and classify historical artifacts on the basis of their material qualities. In addition, many aesthetically oriented histories are written in literary styles, attending to poetry, imagination, and figurative language in the narratives.

In aesthetic interpretation, there is some relation with the ideas of Sol Cohen in the history of education (see, e.g., *Paedagogica Historica* 1996 special issue on the history of education in the postmodern era). One of the central ideas in this collection is that the historian of education had to join in the “heterogeneity of language games” in order to understand and explain them. For example, the article by Sol Cohen (1996) on *Dead Poets Society* offered a good example of postmodern heterogeneity of language games. His article explored the possibilities of film as an element of the expanded textuality of postmodern culture and as a source for the history of education. Analyzing *Dead Poets Society*, Cohen’s history provided an aesthetic interpretation to the dichotomy of traditional and progressive education. In that way, the aesthetic approach to interpretation provides fresh insight and perspective on the perennial conflict between self and society.

In this volume, the chapters of Dussel and Priem illustrate aesthetic modes of interpretation in historical research. It is not only that these two chapters focus on visual images in an aesthetic domain; it is also the case that the approaches to historical interpretation are shaped by aesthetic sensibilities. Dussel’s chapter calls explicit attention to Derrida’s two kinds of interpretation—decipher and play—terms that align with objectivist and aesthetic modes of interpretation. Priem’s chapter contributes an appreciation for the history of education relative to informal education through images in *The Family of Man*.

Conclusion

Recognition of the roles of interpretation, and appreciation for a variety of approaches to interpretation, allows us to cultivate diversity in the history of education, the relativity of our own discourses, and the impossibility to find general and absolute truths in history.

In order to expand the interpretation possibilities of the researchers, it would be intellectually and educationally responsible for historians to take up as many diverse interpretive approaches as possible in the study of the past.

(continued)

Different ways of seeing can lead to multilayered frameworks of interpretation, which contribute to insight and inspiration as educational projects (see, e.g., Depaepe 2012b). If we are willing to embrace multiple different approaches to interpretation, our research will yield not only epistemological modesty but also intellectual maturity, which are both qualities of excellence in any research field. Such epistemological pluralism in research does not imply that anything goes; as for all good research projects, each of the various approaches to interpretation has its own appropriate criteria for excellence according to which it is possible and necessary to evaluate the quality of the research. Good practices of historical research are, perhaps even more than those of other approaches, preeminently those of sharing interpretive sensibilities that have been shaped by ordinary daily-life experiences.

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5.1 A Footnote to Plato: Interpreting the History of Secondary Education in Mid-Twentieth-Century England

Gary McCulloch

Introduction

Secondary education has attracted a great deal of attention from historians over the years, and this historical interest shows few signs of diminishing (McCulloch 2012). Interpretations of the historical nature and role of secondary education have changed at the same time, so that what were once widely regarded in fairly unproblematic terms as great engines of social mobility have been problematized in many different ways. This has certainly been true in the context of the history of secondary education in twentieth-century England. My own research has attempted to reinterpret the history of secondary education, especially in relation to the Education Act of 1944 and the character of “secondary education for all” from the 1940s to 1960s. Secondary education for all was initially implemented mainly on the basis of providing different types of schools for differing aptitudes and abilities, in three types of schools—grammar, technical, and modern. By the 1960s, however, this so-called tripartite system was generally acknowledged to have many shortcomings and flaws and was superseded by comprehensive schools that were intended to cater for all pupils.

What, then, was the fundamental character of secondary education in England in the years following the Education Act of 1944? Initially, optimistic assessments suggested a general growth in equality of opportunity stemming from the reforms of the 1940s. Subsequent verdicts were more critical and tended to emphasize structural inequalities on lines of social class and gender. My own research supported the view that secondary education was unequal and unbalanced, but proposed a cultural more than a social interpretation for this that linked modern secondary education

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with the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, especially *The Republic* (Plato c. 380 BC/1976), his ideals of education for leadership, and his vision of society. This led me to map out the three types of secondary school in turn. It also provided scope for a reinterpretation of the Norwood Report of 1943, *Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools* (Board of Education 1943), which was the avowed inspiration for the tripartite system. Furthermore, it offered a means to interpret the basis of curriculum differences in secondary education. This was generally a policy-oriented approach, although it sought always to interpret educational changes in relation to social history. As my research developed further, it took me in a direction that was increasingly biographical and social, focusing, for example, on the life and educational career of the principal author of the Norwood Report, Sir Cyril Norwood, and the social dynamics of the English middle classes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather than being contained within a single book or paper, this research stretched over at least five books (McCulloch 1989, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2007) and a large number of articles and essays in a 20-year period, resembling overall something like a research program. The present chapter seeks to reflect on the historical interpretations offered in this body of work and on how these changed in subtle ways during the course of this project.

Changing Interpretations of the 1944 Education Act

Reinterpretations of secondary education as it developed in England following the Education Act of 1944 took place in a broad intellectual and policy context that highlighted the importance of this particular sector. In terms of the historiography of education, such reinterpretations were an aspect of revisionist and critical scholarship. Earlier liberal-progressive perspectives had viewed changes in the education system as progressing steadily towards improvement for the benefit of all, providing greater individual opportunities and enhancing national prosperity. New research challenged such interpretations and emphasized the tensions and inequalities that underlay educational provision (McCulloch 2011a).

Internationally, secondary education has attracted considerable attention from historians especially since the 1980s. In the USA, for example, a number of important studies were produced by Labaree, Reese, Herbst, and others (Labaree 1989; Reese 1995; Herbst 1996; Rudolph 2002; Kridel and Bullough 2007). In many other countries, such as Canada, China, and Germany, new work was also forthcoming to constitute overall an impressive body of literature (Albisetti 1988; Gidney 1990; Thogerson 1990). In 2004, a special issue of the international journal *Paedagogica Historica* was devoted to “Secondary education: institutional, cultural and social history” following a meeting in Paris of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education, including a wide range of new research in many different countries (Paedagogica Historica 2004). A series of books on *Secondary Education in a Changing World*, edited by Franklin and McCulloch for Palgrave Macmillan in New York, similarly found extensive scope for a wide range

of national historical studies, for example, in the USA, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand (Sherington and Campbell 2006; VanOverbeke 2008; Openshaw 2009). It also highlighted international comparisons in relation to the history of comprehensive schooling and of secondary education for girls (Wiborg 2009; Albisetti et al. 2010).

This growth of interest in the history of secondary education occurred partly because secondary schools related well to many different social, economic, and political issues. As Savoie et al. pointed out, “It is precisely because it raises the issues of the connection between school and society – on such matters as culture; national identities; elitism, meritocracy and social democracy; the gender gap; moral and civic values and behaviours; vocational skills – that the history of secondary education is so fascinating” (Savoie et al. 2004, p. 14). It also grew at this time because secondary education was itself an increasingly controversial issue. This was certainly true in England, particularly in relation to comprehensive schools. After the 1960s, comprehensive schooling was consolidated as the dominant pattern of secondary education, but then a succession of reforms gave renewed emphasis to specialization and differentiation. Under Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997, and then Labor governments from 1997 to 2010, secondary education became a principal focus for initiatives designed to improve standards, which led to much stronger control being exerted to allow further change (McCulloch 2011b). Interpretations of the history of secondary education were conducted against a background of heated political debates and were in part at least a response to these.

These contemporary debates were clearly reflected in the historiography of secondary education, as more or less settled accounts of secondary education as gradual change and improvement over the long term became invaded by doubts and contentions over rival nostrums. At the same time, the history of education responded to broader developments in social history which became a specialized academic field in Britain from the 1950s to 1960s (Obelkevich 2000). R. L. Archer’s history of secondary education in the nineteenth century (Archer 1921) and John Graves’ account of “policy and progress” in the decades following the Education Act of 1902 (Graves 1943) were chronological and factual depictions of gradual social progress, such as were familiar in the history of education literature of that time. In the 1950s, the sociologist Olive Banks documented the controversies around the social functions of the different kinds of secondary education and in particular the social implications of grammar schools (Banks 1955; McCulloch 2008). Growing awareness of the social inequalities involved in secondary education helped to generate a more critical historical literature addressing issues of social class, such as in the work of Brian Simon (Simon 1974) and later those of gender, for example, by Felicity Hunt (1991). A number of critical overviews and interpretations served to emphasize the unresolved problems of secondary education in the twentieth century (e.g., Lowe 1989; McCulloch 2001; McCulloch 2004a; Richardson 2011). The history of secondary education in Scotland (Paterson 1983; Anderson 1983, 1985) and Wales (Evans 1990, 2008) also stimulated much more critical scholarship than in earlier decades.

These changes in interpretation were also evident in relation to the 1944 Education Act and the secondary education of the 1940s and 1950s. Early commentators such as Harold Dent pointed out the high ideals of the wartime educational reformers. Dent argued that public education had made considerable progress since the eighteenth century and put the provisions of the 1944 Act in this long-term historical context to demonstrate the “almost unbelievable change” that had come about since that time (Dent 1952, p. 19). These achievements began to appear less impressive by the 1960s as the failures and disappointments of the Act became more widely apparent. The continuities represented in the Act also appeared no less evident than the changes that it helped to bring about (McCulloch 1994, p. 49).

Growing dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the 1944 Act was further encouraged by the development of more radical interpretations that portrayed it in terms of a conspiracy on the part of politicians and officials. According to this general viewpoint, the Board of Education and its advisors constituted a self-serving elite group in ultimate control of educational policy, imbued with common values arising from their public school education and with common class interests in restricting and manipulating educational reform. The survival of the independent or “public” schools despite their widespread unpopularity during the war was an important indicator of such a conspiracy, and the Fleming committee on the public schools is an example of the kind of mechanism that was used to ensure the maintenance of social stability.

The Norwood Report of 1943 also played a key role in this interpretation. It was portrayed as a device that was intended to channel the heightened expectations for reform that existed during the war years into socially conservative directions. In particular, its preference for three different types of secondary school, rather than for one single type, was criticized for being socially divisive and elitist. Its elaborate rationale in favor of tripartism in secondary education became the focus of critical attention, especially when the grammar schools maintained their dominance after the war. Because of the strategic position of the Norwood Report, published as it was the year before the 1944 Act, it could be portrayed as the darker side of the 1944 settlement, the handbrake on a generally progressive reform. While the 1944 Act itself made no reference to different types of secondary school, the quasi-official support given to the idea in the Norwood Report appeared to provide justification for a tripartite system.

The chairman of the Norwood committee, Sir Cyril Norwood, was himself a convenient target for criticism which tended to strengthen the view that the report was reactionary and socially divisive. Norwood was much more attuned to the traditions, problems, and possibilities of public schools and grammar schools. His idealization of an “English tradition of education” was strongly reflected in the Norwood Report. His position in the charmed circle of advisors to the Board of Education, no less than his social background and his advancing years, made it straightforward to label him as a bastion of conservative forces determined to prevent wholesale or radical reforms in education. It was concluded that Norwood controlled the agenda of his committee and that the final report had a widespread

influence in persuading the Ministry of Education and local education authorities to favor a tripartite system after the war, rather than to adopt the pattern of a common secondary school for all.

The left-wing historian Brian Simon was foremost in developing this radical reinterpretation of the 1944 Act. According to Simon, the politics of the Norwood committee itself were “devious and multifarious” and “shrouded in a certain amount of mystery” (Simon 1986, p. 38). Yet its establishment was a “masterstroke” because it provided “an ideological underpinning for the tripartite system” (Simon 1986, pp. 38–39). It thus “appeared to lay down a clear pattern (and rationale) for a divided system of secondary education following whatever reforms were to be brought about by legislation” (Simon 1986, p. 39). The “devious practice” that it involved led directly to the strengthening of “selection and an elitist structure” (Simon 1986, p. 40; see also Simon 1974, pp. 323–33; Simon 1991, chapter 1). Simon concluded that as a result of this kind of “manipulation and control” during the formulation of the 1944 Act, “after all the discussion and legislation, the country emerged with an hierarchical educational structure almost precisely as planned and developed in the mid-late nineteenth century” (Simon 1991, p. 74). In short, the 1944 Act itself could be regarded as a “Conservative measure,” through which “The “New Order” in English education, celebrated by Dent and many others, turned out to be the old order in a new disguise” (Simon 1986, p. 43).

At the same time, a right-wing critique of the 1944 Act also emerged. During the 1980s, as the Conservative government struggled with the consequences of economic decline and industrial conflict, the view gained ground that such problems were rooted in the character of the education system. Martin Wiener’s highly influential work *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (1850–1980) (Wiener 1981) emphasized the importance of the Victorian public schools in the “shaping of a gentleman.” Wiener proposed that the nine ancient public schools examined in the Clarendon Commission of the 1860s became established, “more or less as they were, as the model of secondary education for all who aspired to rise in English society” (Wiener 1981, p. 17). In turn, this encouraged a detachment from business, commerce, and industry that continued to shape British attitudes and values in the twentieth century.

This argument was highly attractive as an explanation for Britain’s relative economic decline and served to reinforce criticisms of the education system. It also carried with it significant implications for an interpretation of the 1944 Act. The reforms of the 1940s could be represented as being based on a social idealism and extravagance that were misplaced in a nation facing economic ruin, as well as favoring an old-fashioned ideal of liberal education rather than the needs of modern industry and commerce. Such a view was argued in forthright terms by the military historian Correlli Barnett in his book *The Audit of War* (Barnett 1986). According to Barnett, “Britain’s post-war decline began in wartime British dreams, illusions and realities” (Barnett 1986, p. 8). Barnett argues that the cultural and political elite was directly responsible for encouraging what he describes as a mood of “New Jerusalemism” and that underlying this was the pervasive influence of the public school ethos, leading to a tradition of “education for industrial decline.”

Barnett links the 1944 Act to this tradition and again makes the Norwood Report the most prominent target for criticism. Educational reform in World War II, Barnett complains, was “in little sense related to manpower policy or to the future industrial and export prospects so depressingly debated in other corners of Whitehall” (Barnett 1986, p. 276). The Norwood Report itself is dismissed scathingly as an “amazing document” and “an exercise in hypocrisy, if not actual deception” that “publicly affirmed in uncompromising language the prevailing outlook and beliefs of the British educational establishment, and in particular of those who controlled, and would control, the levers of the educational system” (Barnett 1986, p. 299). The failure to develop secondary technical schools and county colleges in the 1940s and 1950s is attributed to this cultural and social malaise, a theme pursued further by historians of technical education such as Michael Sanderson and Derek Aldcroft (Aldcroft 1992; Sanderson 1994).

These, then, were the main frameworks of interpretation around the 1944 Education Act and secondary education in the 1980s and 1990s as I began to reassess this period in my own research. They had already generated a lively debate which was of significance for historians and also for current education policies and established some orthodoxies around the role of the Norwood Report and the characteristics of the tripartite system. These emerged as principal subjects for reinterpretation.

Three Types of Mind

The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead famously declared that “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato” (Whitehead 1928/1978, p. 39). The general interpretation that I developed was that Whitehead’s comment was almost literally true of English secondary education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was a view that helped to explain the so-called tripartite system that emerged after the 1944 Act in terms of Plato’s typology of three types of mind, described in his work *The Republic* (Plato c. 380 BC/1976). Reference to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato provided a broad framework for understanding the intellectual and cultural basis for the divisions in English secondary education, which then translated into social divisions. The fact that Cyril Norwood and many other educators of this period were avowed Platonists also made this at least a plausible point of departure for my work.

Plato’s *The Republic* proposed that there were three distinct classes in society, each of which required a different kind of preparation or education. The first class, associated with gold, was that of the philosophers. The second, made of silver, comprised the “auxiliaries” or skilled merchants and tradesmen. Last came the artisans and farmers, made of iron and copper. Plato insisted that future “guardians” or rulers should be taken only from those made of gold. Their education would involve training in music and gymnastics and then, for the most promising, tests of courage and particularly of self-control. Those emerging from such training would be not only philosophers but also rulers, indeed philosopher kings, who alone would

be fit to lead and serve the community as a whole. Meanwhile, the auxiliaries would be educated in a more practical rather than in an intellectual way to prepare them for their future vocations, while the mass of the population would be educated, if at all, to play their part in society in a more modest way.

The tripartite divisions accepted in the 1940s can be understood as a version of Plato's typology, applied to English society. It served to legitimize a social hierarchy that correlated in a straightforward manner with an educational hierarchy. As in Plato's scheme of education, the academic or "liberal" approach to education came first, the technical or vocational was assigned a poor second place, and the plebeian or banausic came in last. In this way English education seemed to constitute a life-size working model of Plato's educational ideals. As John Dancy pointed out in the 1960s, "Plato was a social and intellectual snob rolled into one, a combination irresistible to the English. His intellectual theory matched and reinforced our traditional social practice" (Dancy 1965, p. 385).

In the nineteenth century, the reinvigorated public schools provided the philosopher kings; a range of technical institutions struggled to survive as an intermediate tier; the elementary schools that were grudgingly and belatedly created were clearly intended to provide the workers of tomorrow. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the elite group was broadened to include the "meritocracy" of the new state-aided grammar schools, almost if not quite alongside the "aristocracy" of the public schools. The junior technical schools and the elementary schools continued in these circumstances to perform preordained and familiar roles. Fred Clarke, professor of education in South Africa in the 1920s, could observe from a distance the maintenance of social distinctions in this period, reflected, for instance, in upper-class opinion that could see "something incongruous and almost indecent in the phenomenon of the coachman's or butler's son learning Latin." On this view, Latin was "like polo or pheasant-shooting – the prerogative of a gentleman, and should not be prostituted to base plebeian churls" (Clarke 1923, p. 51).

A wide range of influential social and political theorists in the 1920s and 1930s also exhibited a strong regard for the values articulated by Plato. Jose Harris has argued that a form of idealism imbued with the social philosophy of Plato formed "the overarching philosophy of the early days of the welfare state" (Harris 1992, p. 142). According to Harris, "early twentieth-century social scientists found in Plato not simply a system of logic and epistemology, but a series of clues, principles and practical nostrums with which to approach the problems of mass, urban, class-based, industrial and imperial civilisation" (Harris 1992, p. 127). Moreover, the "vast majority" of these British Platonists were "reformers, democrats and egalitarians, largely oblivious of Plato's apparent endorsement of absolute political obedience, a functional caste system, and the selective breeding of a master race" (Harris 1992, pp. 127–28). These tendencies were especially noticeable in the field of education in the 1920s and 1930s.

A similar hierarchical pattern could be observed in the tripartite system after World War II. Indeed, this was noted with increasing discomfort by the classics-trained administrators of the period. Sir Robert Wood, as deputy secretary at the ministry, noted that the education system was "attaining Plato's rule that "children

must be placed not according to their father's conditions, but the faculties of their minds". On the other hand, he conceded the possibility that it might replace "social class distinction by equally objectionable intellectual distinctions – creating an aristocracy of intellect in the grammar schools and putting the "runners-up" in the Secondary (Technical) Schools, and "the field" in the Modern Schools" (Wood 1946). By the 1950s, another thoughtful senior official at the ministry, Toby Weaver, feared entrenching "for as long as we can foresee the three-tier system of Plato's Republic that is already hardening – the "fliers", whether humanists or technologists, in academic grammar schools, the technicians and managers in second creaming technical schools, and the "pedestrians" in banal modern schools with little hope of challenge or standard in their courses" (Weaver 1955).

The Norwood Report of 1943 mapped out these three types of mind in precise and graphic detail. Part I of the report identified three "rough groupings" of pupils which, "whatever may be their ground, have in fact established themselves in general educational experience" (Board of Education 1943, p. 2). It argued that these distinctions should be acknowledged and catered for in the future provision of secondary education.

The first type of mind, it proposed, was "the pupil who is interested in learning for its own sake, who can grasp an argument or follow a piece of connected reasoning; who is interested in causes, whether on the level of human volition or in the material world; who cares to know how things came to be as well as how they are, who is sensitive to language as expression of thought, to a proof as a precise demonstration, to a series of experiments justifying a principle; he is interested in the relatedness of related things, in development, in structure, in a coherent body of knowledge." Formerly, such pupils had been associated with the grammar schools, and they had generally gone into the learned professions or higher administrative or business posts. The curriculum best suited for these pupils was one that "treats the various fields of knowledge as suitable for coherent and systematic study for their own sake apart from immediate considerations of occupation" (Board of Education 1943, p. 4). According to the report, grammar schools should continue to provide such a curriculum, in order to uphold an ideal of "disciplined thought provided by an introduction to the main fields of systematic knowledge, which is valued first for its own sake and later invoked to meet the needs of life" (Board of Education 1943, p. 7).

The second type of pupil was identified in the Norwood Report as showing "interests and abilities" that lay "markedly in the field of applied science or applied art" (Board of Education 1943, p. 3). These pupils were held to be especially well suited to a curriculum that was "closely, though not wholly, directed to the special data and skills associated with a particular kind of occupation," and this could be developed in secondary technical schools that would be designed for this purpose (Board of Education 1943, p. 4).

Lastly, the Norwood Report perceived a grouping of pupils who dealt "more easily with concrete things than with ideas" and who demanded "immediate returns" from any endeavors. As it explained, "His horizon is near and within a limited area his movement is generally slow, though it may be surprisingly rapid in seizing a particular point or in taking up a special line" (Board of Education 1943,

p. 3). For these pupils it suggested a curriculum with “a balanced training of mind and body and a correlated approach to humanities, Natural Science and the arts,” not to prepare for a specific job or occupation but to “make a direct appeal to interests, which it would awaken by practical touch with affairs” (Board of Education 1943, p. 4). The new secondary modern schools would be well placed to cater for these pupils, according to the report.

Thus, the Norwood Report articulated a tripartite ideology with unsurpassed acuity and enthusiasm, although it was far from alone in its support for such a structure. Such an ideal was widely advocated and was deeply rooted in the politics and society of the 1930s and 1940s (see also McCulloch 2002). In order to understand this more fully and in greater complexity, I determined to analyze each of the three Platonic types of mind separately as historical traditions or trends to find out how they had culminated in the types of secondary school and curriculum of the postwar system. This project led to the production of three books that were devoted to these traditions.

The first book to be published (although I worked on it simultaneously with the second while on sabbatical leave from my university in 1987–1988) focused on the secondary technical schools. This was a book that was strongly oriented towards understanding educational policies, past and present, for there was at this time renewed interest in technical and vocational education initiatives in Britain in the form of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative and the city technology colleges. It attempted to explain why the secondary technical schools had been developed after World War II and also, no less important, why they had failed to prosper and spread and why they were abandoned as a policy in the 1960s. It found, consistently with the general interpretation of the period that I was already developing, that the secondary technical schools were viewed as being an important complement to the grammar schools but that they failed first and foremost because of a widespread antipathy towards technical education. Indeed, their failure was due in large part to the resistance of parents and industry, and it was Sir David Eccles, Conservative minister of education for much of the 1950s, who helped to prevent the further development of the schools. Thus, I argued, the secondary technical schools were not a successful and popular policy stifled at birth by the spread of comprehensive schools, but a policy that suffered due to social and cultural preferences and was already widely regarded as a misguided failure well before the 1960s (McCulloch 1989, p. 7).

The second work explored the tradition of education for leadership in England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here the task was less straightforward than with the technical schools, as the Platonic leadership tradition was only partly associated with the grammar schools and was more fundamentally rooted in the Victorian public schools. For this reason, I began my analysis of this tradition with an appraisal of the Victorian public schools and then sought to trace how this had been adapted and developed in the changing social and political context of the twentieth century. The Board of Education, strongly influenced by the public school tradition, strongly encouraged the grammar schools to imitate the ideals and practices of the public schools, and after World War II, it was Eric James, high

master of Manchester Grammar School, who expressed Platonic ideas about education for leadership most explicitly (James 1951). Nevertheless, this was fundamentally a story about the decline and dispersal of the classic ideology of the public schools as it mutated into different forms in a changing society (McCulloch 1991).

The third theme in this series of publications was that of working-class secondary education, leading eventually to the failed experiment of the secondary modern schools. The early origins of this movement were identified in the higher grade schools of the late nineteenth century, and the educational debates of the 1920s and 1930s reflected a search for a distinctive type of secondary education that would be most appropriate for working-class pupils. The Hadow Report of 1926 broadly supported such ideas and recognized in them “the half-conscious striving of a highly industrialised society to evolve a type of school analogous to and yet distinct from the secondary school, and providing an education designed to fit boys and girls to enter the various branches of industry, commerce and agriculture at the age of 15” (Board of Education 1926, p. 35). Many leading politicians and administrators, including ministers in the Labor government from 1945, hoped that the secondary modern schools would realize a new and more fulfilling approach to the education of the majority of pupils than was to be found in the academic grammar schools (McCulloch 1998, pp. 60–65). However, by the early 1960s it was unmistakably evident that secondary modern schools tended to be seen as inferior and that an alternative approach was urgently required.

One key conclusion that emerged from this set of studies was that Harold Dent was broadly correct when he argued in the 1950s that tripartism was “a manifestation of the “tradition of the society”, with long and deep historical roots, and should be treated as such” (Dent 1952, p. 93). It was indeed an integral aspect of the social history of secondary education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The inequalities of secondary education were cultural as much as social and political, and the ideas and assumptions that supported them in areas such as technical education and the importance of public schools and grammar schools were widely shared. At the same time, it is also true that at different times administrative concerns and class interests and ideologies have served powerfully to reinforce this underlying and embedded approach. The “tradition” was manipulated in ways that Dent did not concede to favor the continued dominance of grammar and public schools and of the academic and liberal curriculum.

A further theme that became evident was the nature of the secondary school curriculum over the longer term. In particular, the elite traditions associated with the great public schools of the nineteenth century seemed to have a continuing purchase over curriculum changes in the new phase of universal secondary education after World War II. For example, as I proposed, it was the desire to update and revise the idea of education for leadership in a changing society that helped to guide the school science initiatives of the 1950s. A key priority of the time was to equip the future elite with scientific and technological knowledge and skills, rather than the classical training that had been deemed appropriate in the Victorian period. Yet this technocratic vision retained many of the educational and social

assumptions of the public schools, especially in its concern for social leadership, its preference for humanistic and liberal values, and its focus on boys rather than girls. Whereas their Victorian predecessors had looked to classics and “greats” to produce empire builders, in the 1950s the sponsors of science curriculum reform hoped to produce a cadre of leaders suited for late twentieth-century society (McCulloch 1988).

The ideal of education for leadership was indeed to the fore in school science reform initiatives. The science periodical *Nature* described Eric James’s book *Education and Leadership* (James 1951) as a “tract for the times” and emphasized “the implications for to-day of the Platonic conception of education” (Nature 1951). James himself was active in promoting science education with this underlying vision. Addressing the Science Masters’ Association in 1955, for example, James argued that scientists should be able to use their gifts in administration and government: “Plato envisaged his philosopher kings as having been trained in the mathematics and science of his day. We must see that his vision is realised” (James 1955, p. 324). Similar arguments were widely prominent. Lord Hailsham, appointed as Britain’s first minister for science in 1959 and himself a classical scholar, suggested that science education had differing aims for three different kinds of people—the “mass of the people,” the “bureaucracy,” and the “aristocracy.” It was the members of this last group, who “by their talents and training have the power of making new scientific discoveries and so of keeping the whole fabric alive,” who should have “the training and equipment to enable them to discharge their task” (Hailsham 1963, pp. 40–41). C. P. Snow’s influential work on the “two cultures” and on science and government entertained basically the same elite vision of education for leadership (Snow 1964).

That the secondary technical schools suffered by comparison with the public and grammar schools is not altogether surprising in this broader social and historical context. In the northern industrial city of Wigan, for instance, Thomas Linacre School was established as a secondary technical school in 1953 with new, purpose-built premises and a selective pupil recruitment policy. However, it was not able to compete with Wigan Grammar School, and indeed parents showed an overwhelming preference for the latter. The traditions and reassuring shape of Wigan Grammar made it a most unequal contest with Thomas Linacre’s unfamiliar curriculum and modernist buildings (McCulloch 1989, pp. 146–51). The parity of esteem that was anticipated by the educational policy makers of the 1930s and 1940s failed to eventuate because of deeply ingrained cultural and social prejudices that favored the academic and liberal curriculum over the technical and vocational alternative.

The Second Phase: Biography and Society

By 1998, then, this historical project had fashioned a coherent interpretation of English secondary education after World War II and had mapped this in detail in relation to the different kinds of school and curriculum involved. The Norwood Report and its Platonic ideals about tripartism were the focal point of this general

interpretation, enabling it to offer a distinctive understanding of the history of secondary education which, if it was broadly consistent with Simon's class-based interpretation, helped to explain the nature of the schools and curriculum in a particular way. From this point, my historical interpretation developed further in what I would characterize in retrospect as a second phase of this general project. This amounted to a biographical and social turn. It explored the development of Cyril Norwood's contributions to education in order to help to understand the origins of the ideal of secondary education that he represented. It also investigated in greater depth the middle-class characteristics of the dominant form of secondary education as it had formed in England since the nineteenth century. Both of these approaches helped to bring into greater relief the social practices associated with education for leadership over this time. They also led towards an engagement with new scholarship in related fields, not only in history but also in education and the social sciences, especially in sociology.

As has been seen, Norwood's own role in influencing his committee's report of 1943 has often been criticized, and yet there had never been a full biography of Norwood himself and he remained a somewhat shadowy figure. Nevertheless, he had been actively involved in English secondary education since before the Education Act of 1902, first as a teacher and headteacher at urban grammar schools, then as the headmaster of two elite public boarding schools, and also as a leading policy maker at a national level through his position as chairman of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council from 1918 onwards, a role that he continued throughout the interwar period and in World War II. He had been a controversial public figure in education for over 20 years by the time the Norwood Report was produced in 1943. In personal terms, also, Norwood's life was of interest. His father, Samuel, had been the headmaster of a small grammar school in the later nineteenth century. Cyril Norwood himself had been educated at Merchant Taylors School, in London, one of the leading public schools but unusually a day school rather than a public school. He gained an outstanding first class honors degree at the University of Oxford and was appointed to the Admiralty before resigning from this and embarking instead on an educational career. It was the connection between Norwood's distinguished contributions to secondary education and his own personal development that seemed to hold a clue to the rise of a particular ideal of secondary education based on academic and liberal values (McCulloch 2006a).

This interpretation of the significance of Norwood's own life and career owed much to biographical and sociological insights into the relationship between individual lives and the wider society. In particular, it took its cue from the classic work of the sociologist C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Wright Mills 1959). Wright Mills emphasized the need to try to understand the relationship between the individual and structures of society as a key component of his ideal of the sociological imagination, which makes it possible to understand "the larger historical scene" in terms of "its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals" (Wright Mills 1959, p. 5). Indeed, he argued, "The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations

between the two within society.” He contended that this was a prime concern of the classic social analysis: “No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey” (Wright Mills 1959, p. 6). Wright Mills also traced out a key relationship, often neglected, between “personal troubles,” in which an individual finds his or her values being threatened, and “public issues,” involving crises in institutional arrangements (Wright Mills 1959, p. 7). This was a set of insights that promised to deepen and extend the interpretation of the history of secondary education that I had developed in my earlier work. It provided significant connections to more recent biographical work informed by feminist and sociological theory that had become more widespread in the history of education in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century (Martin 2012).

This new direction in interpreting the history of secondary education was also informed by fresh historical and sociological research on the middle classes. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s, the working class had attracted more attention from historians and sociologists, by the end of the century, it was the middle classes that were receiving a great deal of interest. Much of this had served to highlight the insecurities of the middle classes in terms of an underlying fear of failure and anxiety regarding social decline. Ambition and social climbing coexisted with nervousness at the possibility of failure or defeat. This was the keynote of new work in the USA (Bledstein and Johnston 2001; Aronowitz 2003), as well as in England (Kidd and Nicholls 1999; Bourke 2005). Sociological research has similarly rethought the characteristics of social class, with a special emphasis on the middle classes, often drawing on the insights of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. This work has set out to examine the nuances of middle-class identities and social practices and how middle-class families ensure the retention of social advantages from generation to generation (Devine 2004). Sociologists of education were also active in exploring the nature of class strategies (Power et al. 2003; Ball 2003).

My next full-length study therefore sought to relate Norwood’s life and educational career to these current developments in historiography, the social sciences, and educational scholarship, no less than to pursue the longer-term origins of the ideals around secondary education. It found that Norwood himself represented a particular kind of middle-class figure, with clerical and provincial roots in the nineteenth century, linked more closely to the local grammar schools than with the elite public schools that he came to idealize and to associate with leadership. The “English tradition of education” which he tried to define and extol was rooted in the ideal of education for leadership represented by the Victorian public schools (Norwood 1929). He could be regarded as something of an outsider to this elite tradition, “not quite-quite” in the telling phrase of teachers, parents, and pupils at the public schools that he admired so greatly (McCulloch 2006b). Norwood’s own life and career therefore highlight the contradictions and tensions around this tradition, as well as tracing the intellectual and policy development of the ideal itself (McCulloch 2007).

Concluding Reflections

It is of course easy to exaggerate in retrospect the coherence and rationality involved in a long-term research project which has certainly roamed around many different topics, but overall the account provided here seems to me broadly accurate. The first phase at least was an ambitious plan of research, and although the second phase was not anticipated to the same extent, it did follow on from the first in a broadly consistent manner. I have tried to describe how a particular interpretation was developed and applied to the history of secondary education in England. This interpretation began from the Platonic tripartite ideals of the Norwood Report, especially the elite tradition of education for leadership, and sought to provide explanatory purchase on the schools and curricula of the postwar period in a way that other interpretations did not take fully into account. My final reflections on this process address the nature of the project as a contribution to social history, the implications for the interpretation of historical evidence, the relevance of contemporary issues for historical interpretations, and the connections between education, history, and the social sciences in the history of education.

Although there was a philosophical basis for the interpretation developed in relation to the ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato, the project was always intended to be a contribution to social history rather than to philosophy. Plato's typology and the ideals of education for leadership informed the historical interpretation. It was the currency of these ideas within a changing educational, social, and political context and the way that they comprised one of what Whitehead called "a set of footnotes to Plato" that was of prime interest. The research was concerned not solely with ideas and their philosophical implications but with the historical development of ideas and practices and how these related to changes in education, society, and politics. As such, the interpretation as it developed conformed to the recognized conventions of historical research in terms of method and sensitivity to the concerns of the period being examined (McCulloch and Richardson 2000). It was concerned with a particular national context also, rather than seeking a general theory that would apply more broadly. It aimed to provide a critical interpretation of issues and problems in the spirit of other recent revisionist historiography in this field of study. It tried to avoid "raiding the past" or to adopt a selective use of the past in the search for telling examples to support a particular contemporary theme (Silver 1980, p. 279). At the same time, it also conformed to Harold Silver's advice that in identifying a legitimate role for themselves, "historians will be inevitably and usefully compelled to review their own organising concepts and assumptions, to learn from evaluators, ethnographers and others grappling from different directions with the same complex sequences and processes" (Silver 1990, p. 30). In its discussion of the relationship between education and a changing society, moreover, it tended to problematize and render complex what other interpretations had

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found to be relatively straightforward. In particular, the role of the Norwood Report and of Norwood himself came across as complicated and diverse and arguably more interesting than the one-dimensional interpretations that had previously been offered. In general, it was a historical interpretation that afforded scope for complexity, ambiguity, and detail rather than seeking to maintain a rigid, convenient, or simple storyline.

As with any historical interpretation, this account depended on the historical evidence that was available for the research. A large number of published policy reports were readily accessible for the period, and in particular the overall analysis gave purchase to a more detailed study and interpretation of the Norwood Report than had been available hitherto. In the first phase, the research drew mainly on the policy archives of the Ministry of Education at the National Archives in Kew, southwest London, supplemented by local and school records as appropriate. These sources of data sustained a strong policy orientation for the project as a whole and made it possible to map the different kinds of school and curriculum. They also facilitated insights into the thinking of politicians and officials which was certainly not always public or transparent. The further development of the project was greatly assisted by my discovery of the personal papers of Cyril Norwood. These included background papers on the Norwood Report, a large number of press cuttings on the many issues of educational controversy during Norwood's career, drafts of sermons and speeches given by Norwood, diaries on overseas journeys, photographs, and hundreds of personal letters. Together, these papers were vital in illuminating not only Norwood's own life and career but also the nature of his contribution to public policy. They made it possible, that is to say, to connect together "personal troubles" and "public issues" in the manner recommended by C. Wright Mills (McCulloch 2004b, pp. 70–72).

While the historical interpretation that developed in this project was concerned to make sense of secondary education in the historical period that it addressed, it also responded at different levels to contemporary issues and problems. It began in the aftermath of the Education Reform Act of 1988, which had overturned the consensus that had once existed around the principles underpinning the 1944 Act. At one level, therefore, it may be read as an attempt to provide a critical appreciation of secondary education in the 1940s and 1950s which would help to understand current policies. Several of my published contributions tried explicitly to draw out the connections between past and present (McCulloch 1989, 1994, 1995). At a time when official documents such as White Papers rarely articulated historical issues, they also attempted to instill some historical memory. By the early twenty-first century, as governments continued to grapple with seemingly intractable problems around secondary schools and their curricula, it remained an underlying aim to bring some historical understanding to the policy debates, although it must

(continued)

be said with increasing pessimism about how effectively this could be achieved in current circumstances (McCulloch 2011a, Chapter 4; McCulloch 2011b). At the same time, the questions and ideas that underlay the research also developed in response to new scholarship in related fields.

Finally, one may reflect on the ways in which this historical interpretation has related to the broad field of education, to the discipline of history, and to the social sciences and humanities more broadly. The history of education has often been contested and effectively fragmented in terms of its rationale, whether for its contribution to education, for its historical value, or for its contribution to the social sciences. Viewed retrospectively, the interpretation of the history of secondary education that has emerged from this project has engaged and interacted with all of these different kinds of approach. It has found common ground with the politics and sociology of education; it has been grounded in the methods and precepts of historical scholarship; it has drawn on social scientific theories and methodological insights. In cultivating our interpretations of the past, then, it seems apparent that we can look towards a broad spectrum of strategies and ideas, rather than a narrow set of predefined issues, to help us on our way (McCulloch 2011a, b).

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5.2 Silences and Interpretations: Historical Approaches in Understanding Classroom Teachers from the Past

Philip Gardner

The voices of school teachers weigh upon the lives of children and linger in the memories of adults. Teachers are memorable and influential figures. But when it comes to compiling the larger historical record, the voice of the teacher—once so locally powerful and authoritative—falters or falls away entirely. It is as if those who taught us so assiduously in our childhoods have nothing left to teach us in later life when it comes to understanding the course of the educational past. In this respect, teachers belong more easily to memory than they do to history. Perhaps as a consequence of this, in their efforts to make sense of educational history, historians have not always been very concerned to seek out the voice of the teacher from past time. Instead they have turned more readily to the historical traces inscribed within the formal written record—to legislation, to policy documents, to administrative records, to inspectors' reports, to school textbooks, and the like. In such records, the active figures of teachers, together with that to which Dan Lortie once referred to as their "special combination of orientations and sentiments," have left but a feint impression.¹ Moreover, for such a highly educated group, teachers who spent their working lives in publicly funded schools—by contrast with those in elite private schools—have tended to leave few written memoirs of their professional work and experiences.²

¹ Dan C. Lortie (1975) *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), viii.

² Kate Rousmaniere (1997) *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective* (New York: Teachers College Press), 7–8: "(T)he primacy of each teacher's individual classroom left this highly literate group little time to reflect on or document their work." The voice of the classroom teacher appears only rarely in sustained prose testimonies such as that of Martha Mizell Puckett (2002) *Memoires of a Georgia Teacher: Fifty Years in the Classroom* (Athens: University of Georgia Press).

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The relative rarity of the teacher's voice as a historical resource has resulted in a double disadvantage for the history of education. In the first place it has meant that the classrooms of the past—those intense, enclosed sites over which teachers presided across the course of their working lives—have substantially evaded the attention of historians.³ As a result, the study of education policy has predominated over that of practice in the classroom, despite the fact that the latter has always represented the putative focus for all the efforts of national educational endeavor. In the second place, the absence of the teacher's voice has meant that the history of the teaching profession itself, and of the individuals who served within it, has remained a sketchy and indistinct one.⁴ In failing more effectively to seek out the voices of teachers from the past, the scope and reach of that which we are able to say in broader terms about the history of education, and more specifically about the history of teachers themselves, have been substantially reduced.

It is the recognition of this failure—and the paradox which it dramatizes—that stands at the heart of Kate Rousmaniere's original and continually instructive historical study from 1997, *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective*. Rousmaniere's book is noteworthy because histories of teachers that seek to place the figure of the classroom teacher at their heart, as does this one, are few and far between. It is also particularly valuable because, in the way of all thought-provoking works, *City Teachers*, as John Rury has noted, "raises as many questions as it provides answers."⁵ Some of the most interesting of these questions impinge upon the exercise of historical interpretation in relation to both documentary and oral sources, and it is these that the second part of this chapter will seek to explore.

Before turning to these, however, it is necessary to look more closely at *City Teachers* as a product of the historian's craft, particularly in relation to its research objectives, its methods, and the assumptions that underpin the historical interpretation it presents.

The book is about the work of a group of public school teachers in a particular place and at a particular moment in time: the place is New York City; the time is the 1920s, a period dominated by a curriculum reform movement "encapsulated in the term *social efficiency*."⁶ The study is therefore concerned with teachers and their professional activities within a very particular context of heightened administrative and organizational change. As Rousmaniere observes, "No decade in American history was more noted for its school reform initiatives than the 1920s."⁷ In this

³ Grosvenor, I., Lawn, M., and Rousmaniere, K. (eds) (1999) *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom* (New York: Peter Lang).

⁴ Donald H. Parkerson and Jo Ann Parkerson (2001) *Transitions in American Education: A Social History of Teaching* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer), xiv.

⁵ John L. Rury, review of Rousmaniere, Kate (1997) *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective*. New York: Teachers College Press, *Education Review*, May 11, 1998.

⁶ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 55.

⁷ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 1.

respect, in engaging the teacher's voice to serve its research goals, *City Teachers* involves an exercise closer to oral history rather than to life history; it does not take the life course of its protagonists as its object of enquiry, but rather their experience of a defined and particularly memorable episode in the span of their professional lives. "After 30 or 40 years of employment in the school, it was remarkable that these interviewees could isolate only a few years of their career, perhaps because the 1920s were their most formative years at work, when they learned not only how to teach but how to become a teacher."⁸ Conceived in this way, the data generated by the voices of former teachers can be set alongside the data emerging from the contemporary documentary record, the voice, and the document speaking to conjoined historical contexts. But though they reveal a shared past, the two sets of traces take the relational form of a spiral rather than a composite, in much the same way that, in their own time, the daily working lives of New York teachers from the 1920s stood in relation to the terms of the governing local curriculum reform agenda. The two—and the evidential categories which flow from them—knew each other well enough in practical terms but were also existentially deeply removed from each other. If they could not fail to be close to one another in their shared object—the educational life of the classroom—they were also often mutually incomprehending. In Rousmaniere's words, there was a "persistent discrepancy between administrators' and teachers' versions of order. . . (A)s teachers continually pointed out, school reform initiatives of the 1920s were often ignorant of the daily human dramas that made up the schoolday. There was a great divide between administrative ideas of a functioning school and teachers' actual needs and practices."⁹

The methodological entailment of this complex relation between classroom teachers and the framers of local curriculum policy is that, for the history of the classroom, the evidential primacy of neither the teacher's voice nor the educational policy document can ultimately be asserted. What can be claimed, however, is that the latter has dominated most historical interpretations of the educational past to date, and that on this ground, work to recover the former carries its own intrinsic justification. Further, the unearthing of teachers' memories of the classroom in past time may be seen to promise a doubly productive return. In addition to the richer and more comprehensive answers teacher memory supplies to substantive questions about the educational past, it also opens the way for broader methodological consideration of the processes by which such answers are generated. In particular, it promises to illuminate the relation of memory and history as distinctive routes to the past and to test the relative value of the spoken word and the written word in achieving the best understanding that can be made of that past.

From the outset, *City Teachers* stresses the importance of the recovery of the teacher's voice. The study is not only "based upon. . . the testimony of 21 retired teachers, contacted through the New York City Retired Teachers Association";

⁸ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 8.

⁹ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 4.

it is also “driven” by it.¹⁰ “(N)obody had asked them what it was really like to be a teacher. This poignant comment, in and of itself, drove my writing of this book.”¹¹ Rousmaniere employs this energetic verb again in a subsequent methodological discussion, observing that in historical research, “(t)he nature of the historical data that is used drives the interpretation.”¹² This does not however imply that the character of a historical interpretation is an immanent property of the data or, in the words of an emblematic methodological conservative such as Geoffrey Elton, that “historical study depends on discovering meaning without inventing it.”¹³ For mainstream professional historians such as Elton, the historian reveals and reports the past rather than constructing and composing it. While recognizing the driving force of the data of history, Rousmaniere accords a very large space to the agency of the historical researcher: “(I)t is the historian who does the interpretation. In a very real sense, there is no history until historians tell it, and it is the way in which they tell it that becomes what we know as history.”¹⁴ The relation between conceptions of history as driven by the surviving traces of a once-present past or as driven by the interpretive predilections of the historical researcher in the present will always be a complex and tensive one, as Rousmaniere’s comments suggest. Just as the title “history” may apply both to the commission of actions and events in the past, and to the business of rendering coherent accounts of those actions and events in the present, both may be also seen as the processes by which history is “made.”

For many researchers in the field of educational history, as Rousmaniere makes clear, the second of these two processes—the history making of the historian— involves an explicit commitment to build a better future as well as faithfully to represent the past. In this perception, the past is not just made; it is also made for a purpose.¹⁵ History shows the past in order to direct the making of a better educational future. History in this respect is neither innocent nor neutral. Rousmaniere therefore seeks to “keep this historical work close to the present,”¹⁶ to conceptualize the “link between educational history and labor history”¹⁷ and to maintain a

¹⁰ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, vii.

¹¹ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 8.

¹² Kate Rousmaniere, “Historical Research” in Kathleen deMarrais and Stephen D. Lapan (2004) *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates), 33.

¹³ G. R. Elton (1991) *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study* (Cambridge: CUP), 29. Also see Niall Ferguson (2004), “Introduction” in J.H. Plumb. *The Death of the Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), xxvii-xxix.

¹⁴ Rousmaniere, ‘Historical Research’, 33.

¹⁵ “Unlike many fields of history which are focussed primarily on the past, the history of education is also integrally related to the present.” Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 35. Also see Peter Cunningham “Structures and systems and bodies and things: historical research on primary schooling and its professional relevance” *History of Education*, 41:1, 2012, 73–86.

¹⁶ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, viii.

¹⁷ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, vii.

“faith that progressive workers can create a better world.”¹⁸ Producing history of the best possible quality and integrity is an ever-present, implicit objective; but the history of education here fulfills a further practical purpose in its commitment to inform educational advance in the present and into the future. In this respect, “Historians of education are rooted in the education profession, even as they also identify as historians.”¹⁹ The shape of the discipline of the history of education is in this way seen as jointly determined by both of the nouns inscribed in its title—unlike the singular emphasis in the alternative formulation, “educational history”—and the difficult but necessary consequence of this is that “(h)istorians of education are in many ways strangers in two worlds.”²⁰

Both in *City Teachers* and in subsequent methodological writing, Rousmaniere addresses the importance of this duality of intellectual location and affiliation by elaborating the relation of the historian of education to each of these disciplinary “worlds,” together with some implications, both explicit and implicit, for the process of historical interpretation. As with many historians of education—myself included—Rousmaniere’s academic interest in education in general, and in teachers in particular, has its roots in personal experience of professional classroom teaching. “My interest in the history of teachers’ work,” she writes, “originated in my own tenure as a high school teacher.”²¹ This experience was marked by an awareness of that pervasive and seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon that Larry Cuban has described as schooling’s “policy-to-practice paradox” which results in “teachers

¹⁸ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, viii.

¹⁹ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 35. Also see William Richardson, “History, education and audience,” in D. Crook and R. Aldrich (eds) *History of Education for the Twenty-First Century* (2000: Bedford Way Papers, Institute of Education), 17–35; William Richardson, “Historians and educationists: the history of education as a field of study in post-war England. Part II: 1972–1996,” *History of Education* 28:2, 109–41, 138; Richardson notes “the continuing working out of a range of institutional and professional tensions. At their heart is a long-standing and defining difference between the practice in England (and overseas) of academic historians who reconstruct the past in ways influenced by present concerns and of educationists who invoke the past in order to apply its lessons to present concerns.” In his commentary on the influential early writings of Larry Cuban, Edward Ducharme expressed such tensions as stark oppositions: “An activist, Cuban apparently cannot resist the reformer’s impulse when he should be fulfilling the historian’s task.” Edward R. Ducharme, “Past and Present: Teachers and Pedagogy 1890–1980,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 1989, 40:2, 61–3. Cuban would doubtless challenge the implication of this opposition for the task of historical interpretation, acknowledging the first element of Ducharme’s statement and rejecting the charge contained in the second, identifying himself as both “a reform-minded practitioner” and “a scholar dispassionately investigating and documenting classrooms, schools and districts. . .” Larry Cuban (2009) *Hugging the Middle: How Teachers Teach in an Era of Testing and Accountability* (New York: Teachers College Press), 68.

²⁰ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 36: “the field of the history of education has always stood part-way between past and present, and for many educational historians the driving question of their research is simultaneously historical and contemporary.” Cuban associates this disciplinary dualism with the tensions of an insider–outsider binary; see Cuban (2009), 68. Also see Schuetz’s classic essay: Alfred Schuetz, “The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology,” *American Journal of Psychology*, 49:6, 1944, 499–507.

²¹ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, vii.

being both the problem and the solution to the enduring educational crisis.”²² What the policy maker and the teacher share is a common recognition of the classroom as a uniquely important space²³; but the purchase which they are able to bring to it is very different—while the former seeks to invest it, the latter actually inhabits it. As Richard Altenbaugh has observed, “Students, and often administrators, are transient, but teachers are likely to remain in their classrooms and school buildings year after year, sometimes decade after decade.”²⁴ One of the consequences of this has been that the customary rhythms and rituals of classroom life—particularly when, as throughout most of the twentieth century, teaching has been a lifelong occupation²⁵—have proved very resilient or, for Rousmaniere, “invulnerable”²⁶ to fundamental change.²⁷ It is this enduring awareness that Rousmaniere captures when, as a schoolteacher, she “observed the dismantling of a richly collective teachers’ work culture by school administrators who interpreted teachers’ occupational pride as dangerous worker insubordination.”²⁸ This sentence, with its intimation of an interpretive double hermeneutic—the historian interpreting actions and events that were the products of interpretation in their own time—is an epitome both of the theoretical assumptions of *City Teachers* and its sustaining narrative theme of mutual incomprehension between teachers and school administrators.

Policy development and administration—to the general dismay of classroom teachers but to the consolation of historians—produce an abundance of documentary materials that, in the fullness of time, come to stand as the most detailed, authoritative, and readily available assemblage of historical traces. But for the daily

²² Cuban (2009), 68.

²³ See Doreen Massey (2005) *For Space* (London: Sage), 9. Space is “always under construction. . . space. . . is a product of relations-between, relations which have to be carried out. . . it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.”

²⁴ Richard J. Altenbaugh “Introduction” in R.J. Altenbaugh (ed.) (1992), *The Teacher’s Voice: A Social History of Teaching in Twentieth-century America* (: The Falmer Press), 1.

²⁵ See the emblematic verse, “Fifty years a toiling teacher,” in the 1926 annual report of the Brooklyn Teachers’ Association. Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 40-1.

²⁶ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 112. Also 133: “city teachers’ experiences at work have changed little over the decades. . . The recurrence of these problems should lead us to do more than shake our heads in amazement at the constancy of the ages.”

²⁷ “There is clearly a constant gulf between the context (the history of ideas) in which pedagogical innovations are rooted and the frequently conservative socio-historical context in which they have to be implemented.” Marc Depaepe, “Introduction” in M. Depaepe et al. (2000: Leuven University Press) *Order in Progress: Everyday Educational Practice in Primary Schools – Belgium, 1880–1970*, 12. Also see Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 112: “Historical studies of teaching have noted that no matter how many reformers propose pedagogical innovation, teachers’ classroom work seems invulnerable to change.”

²⁸ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, vii. Rousmaniere’s own subsequent summary of *City Teachers* is “A study of teachers in early-twentieth century New York City show(ing) how teachers developed their own work culture that served to buffer them from oppressive administrative rule and support them in their own definition of good work, even as it also mired teachers in conservatism, fear of change, and isolation from progressive reforms.” Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 40.

practice of classroom teaching, the record is much slier; “evidence of classroom activities of the past is fragmentary, consisting of only piecemeal snapshots of teachers’ work.”²⁹ In the round of everyday contest, dispute, and misunderstanding that often marked the collision of the worlds of educational policy and educational practice in the past—that which Rousmaniere describes as the “bitter irony of (a) historical continuum”—both parties possessed a range of techniques and approaches in their struggles for tactical advantage or strategic advance. But when that past comes under the scrutiny of the historian, though evidence for the policy side remains in place, in the archive, and the public record office, that which emanated from the practice side has much more easily faded away, much like the passing of a school day, lingering only in the memory of those who were present there and then. The teacher’s voice, in other words, ceases to speak, leaving to history only a “haunting silence”³⁰ with few “accounts from the inside of schools that would document the meaning that teachers’ work held for them on their own terms.” If the voice is to speak again, in a form and volume consonant with its original character, then it has to be sought out; and one way of achieving this is through oral history, through the words of former teachers recollecting life in the classroom. For Rousmaniere, in the absence of the teacher’s direct voice, historians have, and will continue to be likely to, “misread the actual conditions of their work.” Moreover, accounts of teachers’ work founded upon the formal documentary record of their own professional associations may well form part of this misreading: “(h)istorical interpretations of teachers through the lens of workers’ unions or professional organizations. . . render a somewhat narrow vision of the occupation of teaching.”³¹

In common with Cuban and with Depaape, Rousmaniere emphasizes the significance of deep and powerful currents of continuity within the culture and practices of schoolteaching across the twentieth century, features combining professional pride with a stoical practical conservatism and a resigned social insularity: “If becoming a teacher meant anything, it meant literally becoming a certain kind of person.”³² In making sense of the professional voice of such a person, Rousmaniere identified “four recurring themes that characterized teachers’ stories of their work in the 1920s.”³³ In the first place there was “a steady increase of demands on teachers’ time and energy without concomitant support.” Teachers

²⁹ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 112. See also Gary McCulloch (2004) *Documentary Research in Education, History and the Social Sciences* (London: RoutledgeFalmer).

³⁰ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 8.

³¹ For examples of such work, see Asher Tropp (1957) *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day* (London: Heinemann); P.H.J.H. Gosden (1972) *The Evolution of a Profession: A Study of the Contribution of Teachers’ Associations to the Development of School Teaching as a Professional Occupation* (London: Methuen).

³² Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 28. Also see Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner (2004) *Becoming Teachers: texts and testimonies 1907–50* (: Woburn Press); Philip Gardner, “Teachers” in R. Aldrich (ed.) (2002) *A Century of Education* (Falmer), 117–39.

³³ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 3.

were required to engage in a widening range of social service functions alongside their existing pedagogical duties. Secondly, teachers suffered from a sense of personal and professional isolation compounded by an institutional ethos—“teachers were taught to stand apart from one another”—that placed a premium on the teacher as a “self-monitoring individual,” an orientation which contributed to the shaping of “a strangely lonely environment.” Thirdly came the “great divide” between the teachers and local educational officials, founded upon the “persistent discrepancy between administrators’ and teachers’ version of order.” Finally, there was the distinctive character of the pragmatic response of the teaching profession to the cumulative consequences of the first three trends, amounting to an alternating combination of accommodation with, and resistance to, administrative change directed or imposed from above. This stance turned the profession towards a highly defensive cultural strategy which “provided consistency and continuity to an otherwise confusing work situation”³⁴ and which spoke to “the persistent struggle of teachers to make sense out of their day.”³⁵

The educational justifications for the interpretive strategies that the historian of education brings to the past are deeply and passionately inscribed in the pages of *City Teachers*. In methodological terms, these strategies are founded upon the desire to recover lived experience from the past, to probe the meanings attached to that experience, and to explore the patterns of individual and collective memory by which they have been sustained and to which they have contributed. The emphasis is less upon the development and operation of educational institutions as the key focus for the history of education and more upon the beliefs, meanings, and associated actions of those who spent their lives within such institutions.³⁶ These strategies involve a serious and sympathetic conversation—a teacherly conversation—across time about the nature of teaching over time. But the historical assumptions and approaches deployed in *City Teachers* also have to grapple with the same difficulties that all historical endeavor confronts: temporal distance, the partiality of historical traces, the immense difficulties involved in restoring contexts to past actions and utterances, and the problem of recognizing the role—in Gadamerian terms—of prejudice, or prejudgment in the process of interpretation. All of these elements impinge upon the fundamental tension between the realist epistemology to which non-postmodernist history subscribes³⁷—that actions and events in the past unfolded in one way and not another—and the interpretive methodologies by which the historian is obliged to render an absent time that once possessed the same fullness, complexities, and confusions of our own present, but which is now in the past, as much forgotten as remembered.

³⁴ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 2–4.

³⁵ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 133.

³⁶ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 41. Also see Harold Silver “Knowing and not knowing in the history of education,” *History of Education*, 21:1, 1992, 97–108.

³⁷ See Keith Jenkins (1995) *On “What is History?”* (London: Routledge); Roy Lowe, “Postmodernity and Historians of Education: A View from Britain” *Paedagogica Historica*, 32:2, 307–23.

The methodological reflections that the book offers are very insightful, though they are also consciously lacking in development. There is a disciplinary reason for this. As Rousmaniere herself points out, “(h)istorians do not address questions of methodology in the same way that other qualitative or quantitative researchers do,” instead placing “more emphasis on historiography than they do on specific historical methods.”³⁸ In other words, in engaging with their raw materials—which is to say their sources or, better, their traces³⁹—historians test new knowledge by debating with other competing historical interpretations in their chosen field rather than by reflecting upon the methods and procedures by which that knowledge has been generated. Undue methodological reflection on such understanding presents itself as too great a diversion from the more pressing work of arriving at viable and persuasive narrative accounts of events from the past. Nonetheless, Rousmaniere clearly articulates both the centrality of the process of interpretation in doing historical research and its implications for the epistemological status of such work: “historians need to be conscious that their argument and interpretation about what happened in the past is driven by an explanatory theory.”⁴⁰ In the construction of a historical narrative, “the data and the theory evolve simultaneously and the role of the historian as interpreter is ever present.”⁴¹ One shorthand expression of this recognition is that references to historical truth are characteristically qualified by the addition of speech marks: “the historical “truth” of many student-teacher relations has been difficult to identify. . .”⁴² Another is the hermeneutic observation that despite the rigor and conviction with which a historical account may be given, the process of interpreting the past remains a never-ending one: “there is not one true historical story out there waiting to be told if only the correct facts are pulled together.”⁴³ And another is a reminder that history is always an exercise in the interpretation of experience which has already been interpreted by its original actors: “By presenting the world in which teachers worked by drawing on their own descriptions, (*City Teachers*) presents broad impressionistic sweeps of recurring themes.”⁴⁴ And the process runs further still, as Rousmaniere stresses. If interpretation may result in findings which might be

³⁸ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 33.

³⁹ Peter Burke (2001) *Eyewitnessing; The Use of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion), 13; Paul Ricoeur (2004) *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 13.

⁴⁰ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 44; “the types of sources used, and the way in which they are interpreted, have a lot to do with the types of questions asked, the theory relied upon, and the argument.” Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 45.

⁴¹ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 47.

⁴² Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 112. See also Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 34, 40-1: “the very nature of historiography teaches us to question the notion of ultimate truths or objective facts.”

⁴³ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 33.

⁴⁴ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 8.

seen as impressionistic, it also governs the convention by which the discipline of history is able to warrant the validity of knowledge claims: “what is a “valid” interpretation or source is still subject to judgment by other historians.”⁴⁵ If, as Paul Ricoeur suggests, the work of historical research will always generate a conflict of interpretations, the reception of each claim by the historical research community acts to assure that “interpretation must be not only probable but more probable than another.”⁴⁶

But the great absence of teachers from the historical record—the “haunting silence” to which Rousmaniere’s study addresses itself—is not conceived only as a problem of interpretation. It is also a problem inhering in the range of sources upon which interpretation is able to work. Like the great social and cultural historian Raphael Samuel, Rousmaniere sets a catholic standard in this respect. Historical silences are in part the consequence of history’s failure to seek out new sources or to interrogate old ones in innovative ways; the filling of the silent spaces of the past calls for imagination in the selection of sources as well as in their interpretation: “Writing about these silences involves a creative use of new resources, including oral history, the study of architecture, school photographs, and critical readings of school texts from curriculum to student notes. Such readings are inherently interdisciplinary, creative, and imaginary, and necessarily involve the self-conscious presence of the historian in the text.”⁴⁷

There is a productive irony in *City Teachers*. It is this. In setting itself the task of filling the silence left by the lost or forgotten voices of teachers from the past, the book draws our attention to another and, more pervasive, silence in historiography itself—the silence around the ways in which the defining research activity of the historian, namely, interpretation, is actually carried out. It is not only the experience of the work of the teacher in the past that needs to be pursued but also the experience of the work of the historian in the present who undertakes the pursuit. On this second silence *City Teachers* offers important but allusive insights which call for further elaboration. For such a task, perhaps the most helpful, perceptive, and stimulating guide is the hermeneutic philosopher Paul Ricoeur, for whom questions concerning both the nature of history and the methodologies of the social and human sciences were abiding concerns over many years.⁴⁸

Hermeneutics is that strain of continental philosophy which derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, “to interpret,” and which gives a name to the figure of Hermes and to his task of rendering to humankind the messages of the gods,

⁴⁵ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 49.

⁴⁶ Paul Ricoeur (1991) “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as A Text,” in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (London: The Athlone Press), 144–67, 160. Also see John G. Gunnell (1998: Rowman and Littlefield), *The Orders of Discourse: Philosophy, Social Science, and Politics*, 160.

⁴⁷ Rousmaniere, “Historical Research,” 41; also see Grosvenor et al., *Silences*.

⁴⁸ For the last and greatest addition to this work, see Ricoeur, *Memory*.

“transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp.”⁴⁹ From the sixteenth century onwards, hermeneutics developed as the disciplined task of deriving the most accurate or appropriate meaning from written texts that were otherwise obscure, uncertain, or contradictory. In this respect, its mode of operation, like that of history, proceeds through the exercise of the interpretive skills of its exponents. Historians seek to render clearly to the understanding of the present that which, because of its temporal distance and terminological or semantic unfamiliarity, may be otherwise hidden, doubtful, or alien in written texts from the past. History, like hermeneutics, is concerned with the distillation of legitimate and authentic meaning from the texts—the documents—which it habitually consults. This task is required because the reflexive condition of human being is inescapably a temporal one. The awareness of time, its irresistible passing, its contingent effects, and its ultimate consequences are experienced by all, as is the sensibility of an endless succession of once-present moments of time that have now slipped into the past to be variously forgotten, remembered, or commemorated within the faculty of memory or, more formally, within the discipline of history. Human beings are temporally aware, “timeful beings.”⁵⁰ As such, the form of knowledge to which they are most readily inclined is narrative—the arrangement of actions and events in time within a coherent, emplotted story which moves from beginning to middle and to end, in the manner of an individual human life. Time and narrative are inextricably linked. For Ricoeur, narrative is in effect “the only form of knowledge human beings can have about the phenomenon of living in time.”⁵¹ Contrasting the ungraspable extent of cosmological time with the span of human existence, Ricoeur asserts that “time become human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative.”⁵² In composing a historical narrative, the documents upon which the historian draws cannot authorize the shape of the narrative which emerges, but neither are they helpless in the face of a form of emplotment that might be unwarranted; the meaning of a text may be interpreted very differently by this or that interpreter, but the range of possible meanings it allows is not unlimited and must always be amenable to a defense founded upon the sources themselves: “The historian. . . by virtue of the links. . . between history and narrative, shapes the plots that the documents may authorize or forbid but that they never contain in themselves.”⁵³

⁴⁹ R. E. Palmer (1969) *Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 13.

⁵⁰ P. H. Hutton, “Recent Scholarship on Memory and History,” *The History Teacher*, 33:4, 2000, 533–48, 545.

⁵¹ J. D. Popkin (2005) *History, Historians and Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 37. Also see B. D. Smith, “Distanciation and Textual Interpretation,” *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 43:2, 1987, 205–16, 210.

⁵² Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (1984), vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 3.

⁵³ Ricoeur, “Model,” 7. Also see Alan Munslow (2007) *Narrative and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 2–4.

As has been seen, the force of Rousmaniere's narrative has a double intensity; it stands both as the singular story of school teachers' responses to the specific curriculum reforms of the 1920s and as a wider account of "recurring echoes of meaning and thinly connected patterns"⁵⁴ centered upon "the significant issues that the occupation of teaching raised to its workers on a daily basis."⁵⁵ In relating these narratives, two types of historical data are drawn upon—the first, on which the study is "based," are "teachers' own accounts," comprising their "descriptions of the daily rhythms of their workday," focusing "on the "commonplaces of schooling": daily occurrences in schools that. . .make up the experience of the schoolday." The second group of sources is made up of "other observations of those close to them," with which the teachers' accounts may be supplemented.⁵⁶ In practice, documentary sources turn out to be rather more prominently drawn upon in the study, and oral data rather less so, than Rousmaniere's introductory "A Note on Method" initially indicates. However, the salient point here is that by drawing upon two data sources—oral interviews and documentary traces—relating to the same sets of events, *City Teachers* endeavors to present "a composite picture of teachers' work."⁵⁷ The utilization of all the available relevant sources is clearly the best practice for producing the most comprehensive historical narrative, but in the harnessing of oral and documentary data to make a composite, important epistemological and methodological issues come to the fore, illuminating both the distinctive characteristics of different types of historical data and the implications that these hold for the process of historical interpretation. Here, the categorical distinctions between data derived from the written word and data derived from the spoken word are particularly significant.

For Ricoeur, speech and writing constitute speech acts of a quite different order, signaling that data produced through oral history interview, speaking, and through documentary research, reading, need to be approached and analyzed in terms appropriate to their differing evidential status. This does not at all mean that the data each generates cannot be used in tandem, but it does mean that each needs to be analyzed separately. Speech is a mode of communication that is designed to be heard, while writing is designed to be read. In this respect, any analogy of a conversational relationship—such as that indicated by Gadamer—between the historical researcher and the archival documents under their gaze is misplaced.⁵⁸ As Martyn Thompson has argued, "neither a text nor the past has a voice independent of a present reader. And when a historian decides to "interrogate" a text, whatever "dialogue" might ensue can only ever be internal, it can only

⁵⁴ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 8.

⁵⁵ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 7.

⁵⁶ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 7.

⁵⁷ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 7.

⁵⁸ George H. Taylor and Francis J. Mootz III, "Introduction" in F. J. Mootz III and G. H. Taylor (2011) *Gadamer and Ricoeur: Critical Horizons for Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Continuum), 1–3.

be a dialogue in the historian's own mind."⁵⁹ Written texts, in other words, do not approximate to the formalization or fixing of anterior speech, and reading cannot be construed as a special version of listening across time; written texts belong to their own paradigm of appropriation, the paradigm of reading.⁶⁰ To treat the relation of reader to written text as a species of dialogue is to confuse or conflate the two modes of communication. Writing is the mode to which hermeneutics is designed to answer, with the process of hermeneutics beginning its work "where dialogue ends."⁶¹

According to Ricoeur, and against Plato, the "fixing" of discourse in the form of writing releases an expansive capacity and a communicative potential that is lacking in speech. Plato had inveighed against writing not only because it represented the loss of the specificity and directness of meaning inhering in face-to-face speech but also because it seemed likely to result in the atrophy of the faculty of memory upon which the accurate transmission of spoken tradition across time depended.⁶² Writing had the critical characteristic of separating meaning from authorial intention in discourse; once committed to writing, a text is able to embark on its own temporal career, freed from the grasp and clarifying constraint of its original author.⁶³ In consequence, the content of written texts "rolls about everywhere"; "it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not"; "it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support." The meaning of the text may now no longer be that which its author intended, with all the complex polysemic features of language liberated from ostensive contexts and consequently able to refer in new ways to the novel situations in which it might be read, outside the limits of its original point of production. Ricoeur refers to this detaching of the text from its author as comprising a four-stage process of "distanciation," by which the text achieves its capacity to carry surplus meaning, or meaning which reaches beyond the intention of its original author.⁶⁴ In this understanding, distanciation is a fundamental condition for the process of interpretation, rendering it possible in the first place, amounting to "the negative condition for the possibility of new and deeper meanings to

⁵⁹ Martyn Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," *History and Theory*, 32:3 1993, 248–72, 270.

⁶⁰ Ricoeur, "Model," 157.

⁶¹ Paul Ricoeur (1976) *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth: The Texan Christian University Press), 32. Also see Ricoeur, *Memory*, 166: "Testimony is by origin oral. It is listened to, heard. The archive is written. It is read, consulted. In archives, the professional historian is a reader."

⁶² Plato (1995) *Phaedrus*, trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett), 79–81.

⁶³ Ted Hopf "The Limits of Interpreting Evidence" in Richard Ned Lebow and Mark Irving Lichbach (eds) (2007) *Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 55–84, 62: "Once spoken or done, a social practice becomes the property of the audience."

⁶⁴ Ricoeur (1976), 55, 76. Also see Martin Packer (2011) *The Science of Qualitative Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 112–18; R. Harris, "How Does Writing Restructure Thought?" *Language and Communication*, 9:2/3 (1989), 99–106, 104.

emerge.”⁶⁵ Distanciation involves, firstly, the “fixing of discourse” such that the temporal moment of a speech act—the event of saying—is surpassed by the meaning of what is said; secondly, the separation of the intention of the author of a text from its meaning; thirdly, the freeing of a speech act from its original ostensive reference and its consequent capacity to refer more widely, opening the “world of the text” in which a document from the past takes on the capacity, familiar to all readers of history, to evoke “a world “as if” we could be there”⁶⁶; and fourthly, the ability of the text to surpass the confines of the original audience to which it was addressed and to direct itself also to the “unknown, invisible reader” of the future.⁶⁷

Taken as a whole, it is the process of distanciation which makes possible the interpretation and resultant understanding and explanation of the absent worlds of the past by way of the documentary traces which have survived from them into the present.⁶⁸ What is particularly instructive about Ricoeur’s approach is that, although it is often densely articulated, it is very helpful in clarifying the stages in the hermeneutic process—what Ricoeur calls the hermeneutic arc—by which texts or documents are characteristically read and interpreted. As Rousmaniere has indicated, historians are generally too fully occupied with the practical task of working through and interpreting archive materials to clarify or systematize, beyond allusions to principles such as “immersion,” “context,” or “judgment,” the procedures by which a historical document may be read, assessed, and analyzed. Such procedures are always complex, involved, and rarely sequentially precise; they are therefore infrequently elaborated, though routinely engaged and successfully accomplished in practice by the trained historian. However, a recent systematization by Allan Bell of the operation of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic arc within the field of discourse analysis presents a useful model which might be drawn upon for illuminating the case of historical research.⁶⁹ Bell’s model begins with the process of distanciation, by which the content of a past text may appear to an interpreter as mysterious, estranged, or alien; thence follows an initial reading which is oriented by the reader’s preexisting knowledge, opinions, and judgments; this exercise produces a proto-understanding or naïve initial guess as to the meaning of the text; from here, the text is analyzed more fully within its ideological and intertextual contexts, allowing proto-understandings to be tested and prejudgments to be reexamined; next comes the phase of reading and seeking to understand in front of

⁶⁵ Smith, “Distanciation,” 211.

⁶⁶ D. M. Kaplan (2003) *Ricoeur’s Critical Theory* (Albany: SUNY), 35.

⁶⁷ Ricoeur, “Model,” 150.

⁶⁸ Packer, *Science*, 113. It is instructive to set Ricoeur’s hermeneutic approach alongside that of the intellectual historian Quentin Skinner, whose influential intentionalist histories dramatize Ricoeur’s distinction of reading “behind” or “in front of” the text; the significance of authorial intention is the major issue of contention here. See Philip Gardner, “Hermeneutics and History,” *Discourse Studies*, 13:5, 2011, 575–81, 579.

⁶⁹ Allan Bell, “Reconstructing Babel: Discourse analysis, hermeneutics and the Interpretive Arc” *Discourse Studies*, 13:5, 2011, 519–68.

the text, a process in which the world of the text is allowed to unfold itself as fully as possible in the mode of the “as if”; and finally, completing the arc of interpretation comes the point at which the original estrangement from the text is replaced by the fullest possible appropriation by the reader of its meaning, an appropriation which adds to understanding and to the critical refinement of initial prejudices.

The greatest value of such a model for the historian is not programmatic but heuristic—in clarifying or separating out the interpretive processes involved in doing historical research, it permits critical reflection upon the ways in which historical understanding and explanation are achieved through interpretation. The purpose of such reflection is to contribute to the better practical execution of interpretive work in the future. Further, such reflection helps in understanding where the limits of documentary interpretation lie. The capacity of written traces from the past to carry surplus meaning is evidenced by their ability to attract successive, competing exercises in interpretation across time. The document—so long as it can be shown to be genuine—has the pristine quality that attaches to any artifact which remains as an unalloyed trace of the time to which its original reference speaks. In this sense it is, and always will be, “of its time.” Successive historians may interpret the document differently and may extract new layers of meaning from it, but, having done so, they return it, unchanged and unaffected, to its original place in the archive to await the attentions of the next researcher, with different features to be accented, different meanings to be uncovered. For example, Rousmaniere introduces a chapter on the life of the classroom—“Through the Classroom Door: Teachers’ Work Culture and Students”—with a striking contemporary report of a classroom observation, entitled “Any School Morning,” published in *The New Republic* in November 1924.⁷⁰ In a mixture of summaries and direct quotation, Rousmaniere addresses the observations of the author, the progressive educationist and journalist, Agnes de Lima, adducing them as part of her developing narrative argument: “the classroom was a “cramped and arid space” . . . the activities inside the room were also deadening and dreary. The teacher’s work was nothing more than “police duty” . . . The students sat frozen to their seats, bored into obedience. . . The teacher herself was “as aware as anyone else of the futility of the performance. Still, was she not as trapped as the children?” . . . The students droned their recitations in “utter indifference.” . . . But when the noon bell rang, “a shiver of expectancy went over the room.” . . . Only . . . as the children entered the street was vigilance relaxed and “the children burst out into the free air of the streets like so many exploding shells.”⁷¹

Here, the teacher, her students, and the sympathetic visiting observer share the same frustrated confinement within the educational regime willed by curriculum reformers and administrators. This is the interpretation that best fits with the

⁷⁰ A. de Lima, “Any School Morning” *The New Republic: Educational Section*, vol. XL, no. 519 Part II (12 November 1924), 19–20.

⁷¹ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 127.

theoretical position announced at the opening of *City Teachers*. But on another interpretation, the report might also be seen to show that the relation between teacher and observer possesses a further layer of complexity, of difference, which is worthy of note. De Lima validates her observational report as “an exact transmission of what took place” and claims a degree of representativeness for it based both upon her preconceived expectations and the assumed validity of her sample, resting upon her apparent warrant to visit any public school classroom: “Both school and class were selected at random, the visitor merely choosing the first school she happened to come across after going into an unfamiliar part of town. . . her notes would probably have been little different, no matter what school or class she had visited.” De Lima reports the teacher’s classroom demeanor in an explicit, mannered tone of distaste and with a degree of license and disregard that would challenge the ethical assumptions of a later research generation: “Miss Perkins examined them critically. . . “the boys who have pens in their hands put them down instantly! . . . let us try a spelling match.” This was obviously for the visitor’s benefit.’; ‘one boy involuntarily thrust his foot into the aisle. . . in the direction of freedom. “John!” snapped Miss Perkins, “you may stay after class for fifteen minutes.”’ “The teacher’s voice was hard and metallic and her face lined with a multitude of little seams of nervous irritation.” And as for the content and cadences of the voice itself, reported directly from its original time and place—that very voice which oral history strives otherwise to recover indirectly across many years of intervening time—some of this is recorded here in immediate and revealing detail: “I always say that the dull child has as much right to be educated as the smart one. That means giving him a hand once in a while. Now then boys clear the board. Put down six million, three hundred and twenty-seven thousand, five hundred, and fifty-two. Divide by nine hundred and fifteen. Nathan, where are your eyes? . . . We shall stand here until every head is still. . . The boy who has his elbows up put them down.” In a related fashion, de Lima’s observations also commend themselves as highly productive stimulus material for eliciting focused responses in oral history interviews with former teachers—for example, her unveiled assessment of pedagogical standards and styles in 1920s New York: “the teacher doled out irrelevant and uninviting bits of knowledge in the name of “education.””

Oral history interview data of course make up the second major source informing *City Teachers*. And, in the same way that Ricoeur’s methodological commentaries shed light upon the properties of the historical document as a product of the written word, they also help in assessing the potential of the spoken word as it is expressed in the form of the oral history interview. Here, once again, the important distinction between meaning and intention in discourse is the key starting point. In writing, the separation of meaning and intention through the operation of distanciation is the motor for the widening reference and surplus meaning which a text is able to sustain and which, for Ricoeur, bestows upon the written word its power for interpreting and understanding the past. In speech, by contrast, particularly in the context of an oral history interview, meaning and intention in the speech acts of interlocutors are held together, in part because of the ostensive, prosodic, and gestural features that govern the sharing of the same conversational

time and space—precisely the conditions which cannot apply in documentary or archival research work. More significantly, however, in speech, meaning and intention are held together—indeed, may come to be demonstrably the same—because the mode of face-to-face conversation allows for successive requests for clarification or elaboration until an interlocutor can be sure, unless the other is lying, that the meaning conveyed by their statements accurately represents their intention in speaking. This means that, for all its richness, rhetorical force, or revelatory detail, speech can never carry, across time, the same expansive interpretive potential of writing. Its meaning, however dramatic or illuminating, remains tied to the context of its production. In the words of Jane Bachnik, spoken discourse “fails to transcend the specific situation. Only when discourse becomes text does it achieve autonomy from the spatiotemporal context of the speakers and their subjective intentions, becoming public and open to multiple interpretation.”⁷²

The capacity of the spoken word to keep meaning and intention together in this way is linked to the operation of a yet greater temporal unity, namely, that which holds past and present together. The idea of history as a disciplined academic enterprise is conceptualized against such an intimate connection, acknowledging instead the extent of the temporal rupture which separates that which is past and absent from that which is present and extant. History recognizes the past as different, distanced, and estranged from the present, calling for disciplined historical research and the knowledge which it produces to act as the bridge by which the two may be meaningfully reconnected. But in the case of memory, continuously active in human consciousness, the categorical separation of “then” and “now” does not apply in the way that it does for history; in memory, past and present do not require a connecting bridge, for they are always already dynamically joined in the lives and remembrances of individual human beings and the collective communities of which they are a part.⁷³

It is precisely this living connection between past and present in memory that oral history values and seeks to uncover and explore. Here, the greatest strength of oral history data lies in its capacity to release or rescue the historical voices of those—in this case, school teachers—who do not have the inclination, the opportunity, or the power to add their voices, with all the authentic detail of the insider, to a historical record from which they have been excluded or marginalized and to which they can be restored by no other technique.

As *City Teachers* demonstrates, once added to the record, the assembled voices of those who have been effectively silenced are able to support the significant rewriting of received historical interpretations. But it would be a mistake to set oral interview data alongside documentary data promiscuously in the expectation only

⁷² Jane M. Bachnik, “Native Perspectives of Distance and Anthropological Perspectives of Distance” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 60:1, 1987, 25–34, 26.

⁷³ See Geoffrey Cubitt (2007) *History and Memory* (Manchester: MUP), 30: “Where the discourse of history poses the question of how the present can achieve knowledge of a past from which it is separated, the discourse of memory posits a more intimate or continuous connection between past experience and present consciousness.”

of further augmenting or corroborating the stock of information available to historical research. The spoken word surely possesses great evidential strengths, but it also presents a number of technical issues—quite different from those attaching to the written word—which bear upon the process of historical interpretation. In the first place, the historian can no longer claim the putative role of disinterested interpreter, as in the case of surviving documentary evidence; in oral history interview, he or she becomes the partial producer of a new source of evidence generated through conversational exchange which he or she has herself initiated. As a result, while it may be possible to evade injunctions for methodological reflexivity by adopting the role of detached or omnipotent narrator in the presentation of documentary data, such a strategy is far more difficult where oral data are involved, as in *City Teachers*. Moreover, in the conduct of oral history research, the “texts” that we encounter actively talk back to us in conversational contexts, placing the importance of originary intentions and understandings alongside the primacy of the interpretive meanings that we might otherwise seek to ascribe to them. “In the homes of over a dozen retired teachers,” in Rousmaniere’s case, “I listened to stories about what it was like to be a teacher in city schools more than 70 years before. . .ask(ing) not for precise events, but for the recurring themes and for the meaning that teaching held for them. . .Notable. . .was their generosity and eagerness to talk with a stranger about their work. Many of these teachers thanked me for coming, often remarking that in all their years at work in city schools, nobody had asked them what it was really like to be a teacher.”⁷⁴ The evidential status of the oral history interview transcript both symbolizes and realizes the extent of the historian’s implicatedness in the production, as well as the selection and interpretation, of the historical data that he or she uses in understanding and explaining the past. The transcript is a data source over which the interviewer will always retain a special degree of interpretive insight, for only the interviewer can read the transcript as a personal memory of an intersubjective event as it was experienced, with each line evoking a fullness of contextualized meaning which cannot be directly achieved by other readers.⁷⁵

Secondly, the validity of the data generated in the course of an oral history interview must always depend to a greater or lesser degree upon the accurate rehearsal of memory. Memory, exercised in the present, about the past may be unreliable, undisciplined, or confused; it may even be misled or manipulated.⁷⁶ With this recognition, it is possible to perceive memory as the enemy of history, if history is conceived as a measured and systematic discipline, objectively interpreted, and constructed from sources flowing directly and authentically from

⁷⁴ Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 8.

⁷⁵ See Raphael Samuel “Perils of the Transcript,” in R. Perks and A. Thompson (eds) (1998) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge), 389–92, 391: “The collector of the spoken word – of oral memory and tradition – is in a privileged position. He is the creator, in some sort, of his own archives, and he ought to interpret his duties accordingly.”

⁷⁶ Ricoeur, *Memory*, 53.

the past times of which they speak.⁷⁷ And indeed, in Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, or in the idea of narrative composure, as deployed by oral historians such as Alistair Thomson and Penny Summerfield, personal experience, public discourse, imagination, and chronology may be seen as intricately interwoven and creatively shaped in the service of a meaningful, unifying, or consoling memory through which the pattern of a life may be understood.⁷⁸ In other words, the need for equanimity by way of a settled and coherent temporal identity—"telling and retelling, to ourselves and to others, the story of what we are about and what we are"⁷⁹—constitutes the distinguishing marks of a memory that may be governed by accreted and generalized rhythms of repetitive remembrance, as opposed to the goals of scientific rigor and chronological accuracy which govern history. Many of the memories of lives given to professional teaching that are recorded in *City Teachers* are of this sort; for example:

Very regularly I would go to visit students in their homes. But I learned that this was not such a good thing to do because the picture got so big and you could only handle so much. After seeing the home, you could only see the child in the midst of his problems. Unless you are able to see the whole picture and treat it as the whole picture, then you can only take a little bit at a time.⁸⁰

The limits of memory in the service of identity—in this case professional identity—need to be properly understood; this does not mean, however, that such memory should not constitute a legitimate object for historical interpretation.⁸¹ But by no means all the products of oral history interview yield this kind of data. There are occasions when, whether by consequence of the type of questions asked or as a result of a respondent's purposeful reflection, answers take the form of those of a formal witness, conscious of the need to render evidence of an event as it happened in its own time and context:

⁷⁷ Raphael Samuel (1994) *Theatres of Memory, Volume I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso), ix. Also J. Wertsch (2002) *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 18–19.

⁷⁸ Ricoeur (1992) *Oneself As Another* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), 140–63; Richard Kearney (2006) "Introduction: Ricoeur's Philosophy of Translation" in Paul Ricoeur *On Translation* (London: Routledge); Penny Summerfield, "Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews," *Cultural and Social History*, 1:1 (2004), pp. 65–93; Alistair Thompson "Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory into Practice in Australia," in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge), 300–10; Peter Redman "The narrative formation of identity revisited: Narrative construction, agency and the unconscious," *Narrative Inquiry*, 15:1 (2005), 25–44.

⁷⁹ David Carr (1986) *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press), 97.

⁸⁰ D. Mayer, quoted in Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 118.

⁸¹ See A. Portelli (1991) *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: SUNY), 15, 15. Also Cubitt, *History*, 87: For Portelli, "'The discrepancy between fact and memory ultimately enhances the value of the oral sources as historical documents', for it is this discrepancy that gives us clues to the mental strategies by which those who are caught up in history make sense of their own experience and of the political and social conflicts that have moulded it."

So I walked into [the principal's] office, and she was very polite, she listened to me until I was finished and then she looked at me with her cold blue eyes and she said: "Miss Smith, I am the principal of this school and I will decide." And she tore up this thing I had worked so carefully on. Well! She might just as well have slapped my face. . .⁸²

Memory work in oral history possesses the demonstrable capacity to answer to a different standard of evidence to that deployed in the repeated stories upon which the processes of narrative identity or composure rest. This alternative source, often hard for interviewers to seek out and harder for interviewees to relate, is based upon those half-forgotten, unarticulated, or suppressed recollected memories which emerge from the disruption or challenging of settled identity accounts. Here we hear, instead, the form of bearing witness or giving testimony, generating attested accounts of the past as it was, that are able to stand alongside, to corroborate, or to be corroborated by, accounts founded upon the documentary record.⁸³ In other words, in this mode oral history has the capacity to uncover the "how it was" of specific events from the past, as well as the "how was it" of lived experience understood across the broader sweep of time.⁸⁴

In revealing the daily lives and work of New York's public schoolteachers from the 1920s, *City Teachers* spoke with effect to a great silence in the historical record of education, filling it with historical data made from the discursive resources of both the written and the spoken word. In so doing, the book performed a further service in opening the door to a yet greater silence on the nature, operation, and limits of interpretation in the history of education. In the case of the first of these silences, Rousmaniere's work has been a particularly important and productive exemplar for continued historical investigation of the lives, educational ideas, and pedagogical practices of generations of schoolteachers from the past. In the case of the second silence, despite a growing body of powerful and exciting methodological writing in the field of history of education,⁸⁵ much remains to be done to invest the insights of such work more securely within the conventional interpretive practices of historical research.

⁸² A. Marsh, quoted in Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*, 87.

⁸³ See Ricoeur, *Memory*, 57: "The historian undertakes to "do history" (*faire de l'histoire*) just as each of us attempts to "remember" (*faire memoire*)."

⁸⁴ Alessandro Arcangeli (2012) *Cultural History: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge), 6; Cunningham and Gardner, *Becoming*, 8.

⁸⁵ See, for example, the assembled collection of essays in *Paedagogica Historica*, 44:6, 2008. Special Issue: *Focusing on Method*; Martin Lawn (ed.) *Modelling the Future: Exhibitions and the Materiality of Education* (Oxford: Symposium Books); Martin Lawn and Ian Grosvenor (eds) (2005) *Materialities of Schooling: design, technology, objects, routines* (Oxford: Symposium Books); Depaepe et al. (2000) *Order*; Sol Cohen (1999) *Challenging Orthodoxies: Toward a New Cultural History of Education* (New York: Peter Lang); Braster, S., Grosvenor, I., & Maria del Mar del Pezo Andrés (Eds.). (2011). *The black box of schooling: A cultural history of the classroom*. New York: Peter Lang.

5.3 Liminality: Interpreting Research on Learning in the Context of the History of Childhood

Theresa Richardson

Introduction

This chapter examines ways the historiography of modern concepts of learning as constructed in relationship to how childhood has been investigated and interpreted in the first half of the twentieth century. Large-scale philanthropies associated with the fortune of John D. Rockefeller Sr. funded research in the social and behavioral sciences with the objective of identifying universal standards for normal stages of mental, physical, and emotional growth. It was believed that perfecting child rearing by understanding how children grow and learn would lead to the advancement of humanity.¹ Influenced by the mental hygiene movement, research on childhood was grounded in positivistic assumptions about the capacity of modern science to establish universal and objective truths. In contrast postmodern perspectives on the nature of knowledge and science take into account the historical and contextual framework that supports research on particular topics as well as paradigm shifts in scientific explanations.² The concept of liminality, as a period of transition subject to interpretation, is used as a way to understand from a postmodern perspective how learning and childhood have been researched and

¹Theresa R. Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989).

²Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

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classified in the twentieth century in ways that reflected not only assumptions about the structure of knowledge but the politics of knowledge and the implications this has for historical research.³

The focus is on the underlying paradigms of US American models of learning as rooted in scientific and medical views of reality. Learning theory and research is commonly associated with the discipline of psychology in the USA.⁴ Psychologists have variously studied learning as a phenomena that can be isolated in a laboratory setting and examined through animal as well as human behavior. Early philosophers and proto-psychologists in the USA were also influenced by the emerging field of scientific medicine and its counterpart in psychiatry as well as psychoanalysis stemming from Sigmund Freud's work in Europe. These approaches focused on the physical, cognitive, and emotional development of human subjects using a therapeutic model of preventive medicine. Harvard philosopher William James, psychiatrist Adolf Meyer, and child study pioneer G. Stanley Hall are examples of early professionals who shaped the knowledge base of the mental hygiene movement.⁵

Medical and psychoanalytic models of learning and human development infiltrated popular ideology as well as child-specific institutions such as schools through the mental hygiene movement, child study movement, and progressive education movement. Psychology became the major carrier of these models into teacher training, curriculum and instruction, as well as learning theory. Therapeutic approaches to stimulating changes in behavior or remediating emotional, academic, or perceptual problems are central to professions in education, social work, and public health, as well as counseling and guidance. Concepts of health and pathology and normal and abnormal growth are pervasive in American cultural perspectives on how children should be socialized and educated as well as how the problems of childhood can be remediated.

The Historiography of Liminality in Learning and Childhood

Learning can be seen as a liminal state between knowing and not knowing. It is a process of gaining knowledge or a skill informally and formally. Learning takes place over a lifetime causally by observation and experience. It also takes place

³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Science* (New York: Vintage 1973); Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in an Age of Reason* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1973).

⁴ Educational psychologist Edward L. Thorndike is credited with making learning the central issue of psychology.

⁵ Patrick Suppes and Hermine Warren, "Psychoanalysis and American Elementary Education," in Suppes and Warren, eds., *Research on Education: Some Case Studies* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Education, 1978), pp. 319–396; note that Freudian theory and psychoanalysis ultimately had more influence in the USA than in Europe.

intentionally through instruction and socialization. Formal systems of education emerged parallel to the rise of civil societies, but research on learning is relatively new, emerging after the establishment of systems of compulsory mass education in modern industrial societies and only after special disciplines focusing on human development in the social and behavioral sciences emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the same period as the rise of modern medicine. Research on learning escalated with the movement for compulsory education and the empiricist impulse to determine the intellectual capacity of a child to learn and thus the ability of educators to determine which children would profit from being educated. This began in Europe but was quickly adopted and expanded in the USA by figures such as Henry H. Goddard, director of Vineland Training School for the Feeble-minded, and Lewis Terman at Stanford University.

Learning has been examined as the outcome of making connections between outcomes and actions and as a reaction to stimulus. It has been interpreted as a product and as a process. The underlying mental hygiene approach to learning is a dynamic process. While learning has been studied as an objective subject where animal learning is considered to be the same as human learning,⁶ the mental hygiene movement and the research it promoted was solely concerned with human processes of development. The objective was to understand growth in individuals and to invoke positive social changes in society. The mental hygiene movement was not exclusively about children, but children were central to the applied research on learning conducted under the auspices of the movement as funded by Rockefeller philanthropies. The mental hygiene movement and Rockefeller philanthropies in the USA significantly contributed to the formalization of the idea of childhood as identified by psychobiological growth patterns with increases in learning capacity as independent of cultural contexts. The modern scientific approach to learning was fundamentally ahistorical. The effort was to define childhood as stages of growth that could be measured and normed rather than as a fluid and liminal process. From a postmodern perspective, childhood is a historical cultural category that is not uniform between different societies or even in the same society over time.⁷

⁶ Edward L. Thorndike, *Animal Intelligence: An Experimental Study of Associative Processes in Animals* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1897). Erwin V. Johanningmeier and Theresa Richardson, *Educational Research, The National Agenda, and Educational Reform*. (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2008), p. 261.

⁷ Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage, 1962); Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, 2 Vols. (London: Routledge, 1969); George Boas, *The Cult of Childhood* (London: Warburg, 1966); Philip J. Greven Jr. *Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970); Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton: Canada West, Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Patricia T. Rooke and R. L. Schness eds. *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary, ALBT: Detselig Enterprises, 1982); Marilyn R. Brown, ed. *Picturing Children: Constructions Between Rousseau and Freud* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

In fact, the definition, duration, and historical trajectory of childhood are controversial and differ between cultural contexts as well as in the lived experiences of individuals.⁸ Children in the same society even of the same age do not have the same experiences and even the adults who devote their lives to work with or study children do not conceptualize them in the same ways even in the same discipline.⁹ Studying the history of childhood is not only recent in origin; it is controversial in its interpretations.¹⁰ This work seeks to analyze the normalization of modern concepts of childhood and also to critically examine how research paradigms shift in their interpretations in response to funding agencies in the transition to modern approaches to research and more recently postmodern approaches. Within the framework of this essay, the idea of learning similarly is constructed as controversial in relationship to how it is investigated and interpreted.¹¹

Ideas on how human beings learn and how children are treated are interdependent. For example, “readiness” is a critical concept in learning theory as well as medical designations of physical human growth patterns identified with “normal” stages of growth from infancy to adulthood.¹² The idea of normal processes of maturation and readiness as a precondition for learning is grounded in psychoanalytic theory as well as medicine. It has become a crucial feature of learning theory in psychology and education. The idea of readiness is based on interpretations of normal human development including: (1) the idea that physical maturation involves progressive stages that are associated with age and (2) that cognitive growth progresses similarly from simple to more complex perceptions of reality. Increases in physical and mental functional complexity lead to changes in behavior as well as understanding and competency. As young people learn and their world view expands, they can make more sophisticated choices. Subjective mental and emotional states therefore operate in conjunction with and in response to external events and experiences. Finally, (3) positive and negative aspects of personality and character are an outcome of these accumulated threshold experiences over time. Stimulus–response, cause, and

⁸ See, for example, the late 1960s text in child psychology by Robert D. Singer and Anne Singer, *Psychological Development in Children* (W. B. Saunders Company: Philadelphia, London, Toronto, 1969).

⁹ Harry Eiss, ed., *Images of the Child* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green Popular Press, 1994); Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein, eds., *Childhood in Contemporary Cultures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955, 1967).

¹⁰ Laurence Brockliss and George Rousseau, “The History Child,” *Oxford Magazine* (Michelman Term, 2003), pp. 4–7; note in discussing Oxford University’s Centre for the History of Childhood that there is a danger in “historicizing a phenomenon that has few stable parameters, and, in some cultures may not exist at all. . . In several languages there is no word for child; even in English, the word has drastically shifted its meaning over the centuries.”

¹¹ Lester D. Crow and Alice Crow, eds., *Readings in Human Learning* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963).

¹² Patrick Suppes and Hermine Warren, “Psychoanalysis and American Elementary Education,” in Suppes and Warren, eds., *Research on Education: Some Case Studies* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Education, 1978), pp. 319–396.

effect interpretations of learning focus on the inborn human capacity to reason and the progressive ability to postpone gratification in lieu of future rewards. Similar concepts are prominently played out in psychiatric theories and psychoanalysis as well as theories of learning and behavioral change in child and educational psychology.¹³

Evidence and Perspective: The Century of the Child

Hygiene at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries described the branch of knowledge associated with medicine that sought to promote health and prevent disease.¹⁴ This section examines how historians can approach and interpret research originating out of the mental hygiene movement.¹⁵ The movement early turned to children as a subject with the idea that adult problems had roots in parental practices and childhood socialization patterns that could be objectively identified. It was assumed that by following rigorous scientific methods, researchers could establish absolute standards that were immune to the subjective perspectives of the researcher's personal, cultural, or class-based beliefs and experiences. They did not entertain the idea that research conclusions could be influenced by interpretations subject to biases. This was made more complex and problematic in that the pursuit of objective criteria for normal development implied deviations as evidence of pathology. Additionally, the impact of the research was intensified in that findings were early directed towards popular outlets and implementation in educational institutions as well as social policy.

The mental hygiene movement quickly became entangled with the child study movement, development of psychiatry and psychology, and Rockefeller philanthropy,¹⁶ Rockefeller funding guided the movement and its academic

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The first publication using this phrase was by a Swedish author Ellen Keys, *Barnets Århundrade* (Stockholm: A. Bonner, 1900); the German version *Das Jahrhundert Des Kindes* (Berlin; S. Fischer, 1905) was translated into English as *The Century of the Child* (New York and London; G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909). Peter B. Neubauer also used the phrase "The Century of the Child," *Psychiatry in American Life*, ed. Charles Rolo (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), pp. 133–141.

¹⁵ Theresa R. Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹⁶ Sol Cohen, "The Mental Hygiene Movement, the Development of Personality and the School," *History of Education Quarterly* 23, 2 (Summer 1983), pp. 123–150; Sol Cohen, "The School and Personality Development: Intellectual History," in *Historical Inquiry in Education: A Research Agenda*, ed. John Best (Washington, D. C.: A. E. R. A., 1983); Sol Cohen, "The Mental Hygiene Movement, the Commonwealth Fund and Public Education, 1921–1933," in *Private Philanthropy: Proceedings of the Rockefeller Archive Center Conference*, June 1979, ed. Gerald Benjamin (Rockefeller Archive Center Publication, 1980), pp. 33–46. Other related articles include Steven L. Schlossman, "Philanthropy and the Gospel of Child Development," pp. 15–32, and Robert J. Havighurst, "Foundations and Public Education in the Twentieth Century," pp. 5–14, both in *Private Philanthropy*, cited above, and also Elizabeth Lomax, "The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Some of its Contributions to Early Research in Child Development," *Journal of the History of Behavioral Science* 13 (1977): 283–293.

counterparts towards childhood and prevention using the emerging scientific medical approach to establishing objective knowledge about human subjects. The early mental hygiene movement was not about children. It originated in an obscure text by Clifford Whittingham Beers, a self-appointed advocate for the insane. In 1908, Beers published an autobiography, *A Mind that Found Itself*, about his personal journey from sanity to insanity and back to sanity. He subsequently began a social movement he identified as mental hygiene, which promoted the idea that mental illness is a medical problem that can be cured and that the insane should not be dehumanized and placed in asylums. It was about adults and self-healing, not children and professional intervention, but this changed.¹⁷ The National Committee for Mental Hygiene in the USA (now the National Association for Mental Health) and Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (now the Canadian Mental Health Foundation) founded in 1909 and 1918, respectively, took up the cause of educating the public and identifying and curing mental illness and other forms of social and behavioral problems within a medical framework that eventually “medicalized” far-reaching fields from education, social welfare, and public health to public policies concerning research into normal and pathological development as well as child guidance as concerned with delinquent youth.¹⁸ This movement took off in both the USA and Canada in the same time period as John D. Rockefeller Sr., the world’s first billionaire and tycoon, vilified and admired as founder of Standard Oil, retired, and his son, John D. Rockefeller Jr., began to establish and guide the growing fleet of philanthropies associated with the family fortune in the twentieth century. The mental hygiene cause included support for child-focused research, the establishment of appropriate disciplines in the medical and social sciences concerned with formalizing standards about normal childhood and youth, as well as exploring interventions designed to influence leaders and the public so that they would support a medicalized approach to how adults should think of and treat children and youth as precursors to adulthood and the future.

Mental hygiene became an international movement of great consequence with special significance for the USA. The individualistic ideology of popular thought in the USA quickly adopted the psychobiological framework of psychiatry and clinical psychology. Mental hygiene as an interdisciplinary and international phenomenon is an example of historical inquiry that has to be interpreted from a perspective that integrates the interdependency of its disciplinary perspectives through primary and secondary data sets.

It should be noted that this involves another aspect of liminality, that is, of disciplines and ideas that move through thresholds from obscurity in private spheres to official public spheres taken to be objectively true, endorsed by scientists, professionals, and those in positions of power, who are able to gain and sustain their

¹⁷ Norman Dain, *Clifford W. Beers, Advocate for the Insane* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg, reprint 1918, original New York: Longmans Green, 1907).

¹⁸ Margo Horn, *Before it is too Late: The Child Guidance Movement in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

legitimacy. The liminality of childhood, as timed and staged, was formalized in the establishment of modern disciplines. Rockefeller family money was a significant factor from the earliest gifts from John D. Rockefeller Sr. to the formation of the formal philanthropies that supported the mental hygiene movement. Most notably this included the transition of medicine from prescientific practices and customs to medical science, a process encouraged by the Rockefeller family in the establishment of the Rockefeller Institute for the Advancement of Medicine (now Rockefeller University) in 1901, which became a model for using applied science to solve what the officers of the family business and philanthropic offices considered to be the most pressing problem of all, health.¹⁹ Physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and others related to clinical practices involved with mental hygiene also went through various stages of liminality as they evolved from projecting practices that were grounded in family-based tradition or customs and personal subjective beliefs to trained professional personnel grounded in science that was believed to be impersonal and universal in application. The General Education Board, a Rockefeller philanthropy founded in 1903, promoted education in the southern states of the USA and was a model for applied science with a focus on changing society through providing opportunities for healthy development/learning in children.

The idea of a normal science, which examined human life and sought to cure and prevent ignorance and disease, influenced the establishment of the social sciences. The University of Chicago, established with funds from John D. Rockefeller Sr. in 1890, was influential in developing the child study disciplines related to psychology, education, sociology, and social work.²⁰ Support for disciplines involved with clinical mental hygiene practices included schoolteachers, counselors, nurses, juvenile court personnel, social workers, and others in fields related to testing and measurement dealing with children and parents from preschool to high school and beyond.

The formalization of a body of expert knowledge in a particular field also demonstrates the progression of stages of liminality. As fields of study were professionalized, the knowledge upon which they were grounded moved from operating on informal sources of information to creating formal research-based bodies of literature with distinct content and subject-specific agendas. The transition from informal to formal disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences was often supported by grants from philanthropies and eventually by government funding to universities that trained professions related to mental hygiene.

¹⁹ Robert B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper, 1952), George W. Corner, *A History of the Rockefeller Institute, 1901–1953* (New York: Rockefeller Institute Press, 1965).

²⁰ Thomas Wakefield Goodspeed, *A History of the University of Chicago Founded by John D. Rockefeller* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916); University of Chicago Archives, *One in Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973, 1991).

Liminality is also part of the trajectory of the growth of institutions that create, promote, and legitimate knowledge, most notably in modern research universities.

The Archeology of Clinical Practice, Learning Theory, Research, and Knowledge

In addition to framing research questions around intersecting topics and organizations, there has to be reliable, verifiable, and extensive sources of data. Public and private archives hold extensive collections related to the mental hygiene movement in the USA and Canada. In the following section, the ideas associated with the childhood gaze and their evolution are traced in order to show the sometimes divergent aspects of the underlying medical model as it was incorporated as a rationale for identifying knowledge about children and their learning capacity as psychobiological linked to behavioral outcomes. Three aspects of the mental hygiene movement are relevant in data collection and interpretation. First, it is critical to identify the various branches and connections within the mental hygiene paradigm that served as a vehicle for the momentum of research. Second, it is important to uncover how mental hygiene was integrated into policy and effectively applied within the practice of multiple professions and especially psychology. Finally, the question remains “how did this paradigm change domain public thinking about how children learn and grow with implications for how they should be raised and educated?”

The papers of Thomas W. Salmon, the first medical director of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, show how Salmon moved mental hygiene towards a working hypothesis that mental illness arises out of harmful experiences in childhood, therefore constituting a form of negative learned behavior. He also secured Rockefeller support with his argument that it was important to develop a scientific approach to applied extramural psychiatry.²¹ The problem with the application of a medical model for research, which was not completely formed

²¹ See letters and interviews in the Thomas W. Salmon Papers and Clifford W. Beers Papers in the American Foundation for Mental Health Archives (AFMH) and Payne Whitney Clinic Library at Cornell Medical Center. Also see the National Committee for Mental Hygiene Records in Record Group 1.1 in the Rockefeller Foundation Archives (RFA) at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC). Secondary literature includes biographies of Beers and Salmon: Norman Dain, *Clifford W. Beers*; and Earl D. Bond with Paul O. Komora *Thomas W. Salmon: Psychiatrist* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950). Raymond D. Fosdick’s *The Story of The Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper’s Brothers, 1952), and General Education Board, *The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities 1902–1914* (New York: G. E. B., 1915), which give an overview of the philanthropies in contemporary perspectives. Fosdick was the president of the Rockefeller Foundation and a long-term officer with Rockefeller philanthropies and in the family office. His own papers are also housed at RAC. The General Education Board Archives are also at RAC. Canadian archives on mental hygiene and child development include the Greenland Griffin Archives in Toronto and the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa.

but was taken as objective science, is amply demonstrated in Salmon's papers. On one hand, the application of experimental ideas on human subjects actually touched relatively small numbers of children and their families even if the harm done to individual children deemed "maladjusted" may have been significant to that individual. However, the propagandistic aspects of the program included a broad-based dissemination of ideas that over the long term can be seen to be very successful in shaping social thought and public policy. Mental hygiene was well situated to become part of the cosmology of modern approaches to problem solving based on individualized models of intervention. This approach took off in the USA following the rapid changes and dilemmas of the Progressive Era of reforms and the disruption of World War I.

When Salmon joined the NCMH in 1912, he undertook mental hygiene surveys of institutions that housed large numbers of delinquent and dependent children. The effects of negative socialization on learning became the first focus of attention in the mental hygiene field. Salmon also organized a Mental Hygiene Conference in conjunction with the New York State Charities Aid Association that was held at the City College of New York. Clarence Hincks and Helen McMurchy, who became prominent in the Canadian National Committee, were among the delegates. Records of the meetings, letters, and commentary, as well as publicity are among the records held in the Rockefeller Foundation Archives in New York and Greenland-Griffin Archives in Toronto. Related records on the National Congress on Social Hygiene and International Conference on School Hygiene in Buffalo in 1913 as well as newspaper reports on these events in the *Toronto Star* show the momentum and international character of the early movement.

The process of "medicalizing maladjustment" was the first thrust of "preventive" mental hygiene work with children. It followed from the preoccupation with dependent and delinquent children originating in the late nineteenth century that promoted juvenile courts among other approaches to controlling youthful populations in times of industrialization and urbanization. Under the guidance of the NCMH and Commonwealth Fund, this program took the form of "child guidance" demonstrations between 1921 and 1927. Child guidance programs were curtailed in 1932 when funding was cut off due to the Great Depression in the USA. This is ironic in that the Great Depression in the USA in the 1930s escalated social problems. Mental hygienists, however, dismissed social class, status, or culture as contributing to conformity or nonconformity to what science established as normal stages of developmental learning or what was interpreted as normal or delinquent behavior. Letters, reports, and memorandums in the Commonwealth Fund Archives and Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives in the RAC collection that trace the rationale for child guidance and outline its progress are also supported by vehicles for disseminating mental hygiene ideas through the US Department of Interior, Office of Education, bulletins and

biennial surveys of education as well as the publications of the US Department of Labor, Children's Bureau.²²

The documents reveal an ambitious program that included the establishment of a Bureau of Child Guidance, directed by Bernard Glueck under the auspices of the New York School of Social Work. Glueck argued that the Bureau "actually put into practice on a fairly large scale, the means for the eradication of the evil influence upon the life of children." The records show that over 1,000 children received consultation services and 800 were accepted for treatment. The most common "symptoms" were lying, disrespectful behavior, and disobedience, "disorderly conduct in school," and "stealing." The Bureau actively promoted the rationale for therapeutic psychiatric and psychoanalytic approaches to adjusting "problem" children so that they unlearned bad behavior. The approach was case based, imitating a clinical model, with a focus on parents, especially mothers. In this view, children were not born maladjusted but were trained/learned to deviate from the norm by their family of origin. Teachers were also targeted. Eighteen public schools, along with hospitals and social work agencies, cooperated with the Bureau in 13 demonstration locations in major cities across the country. "Visiting teachers" trained in mental hygiene set about changing school practices and engaging in therapy in schools across the country. Classrooms were considered to be "natural" mental hygiene clinics. Learning problems in school were considered to be "symptoms" of maladjustment that could be corrected by training teachers to perfect the techniques used to handle problem students more successfully. A "well-rounded" personality, it was thought, would best prepare the child for adulthood. Academic learning was not considered to be the primary objective. Learning in the sense used in mental hygiene was more closely akin to socialization. Delinquency defined as not learning to behave properly was taken as an indication of mental illness. Out of the 800 children accepted for therapy over 5 years, only about half the subjects were "cured." A follow-up study in the case of the St. Louis demonstration was not critical of the ways in which maladjustment was identified nor was it critical of the paradigm used for therapy. Rather it was concluded that antisocial behavior in childhood powerfully predicted adult maladjustment. Social class was again dismissed as not relevant to the way maladjustment was being defined or treated. Further, it was concluded that children with "mild disorders" who had fathers who were also identified as antisocial were less likely to profit from therapy and were much more likely to have "poor outcomes." This was a surprising conclusion given that researchers had previously identified mothers, as primary caregivers and early

²² Samples of supportive documents include "Annual Report to the Commonwealth Fund on the Operation of the Bureau of Child Guidance by the New York School of Social Work as Section I of the Program for the Study of Methods for the Prevention of Delinquency Covering the Year 1924-1925"; Bernard Glueck's "Annual Report of the Bureau of Child Guidance"; Barry C. Smith, "Report of the General Director, Child Welfare Program for the Prevention of Delinquency"; and many others including letters and interviews in the CF Archives at RAC and AFMH Archives. Secondary literature includes books by principal investigators at the time such as Smiley D. Blanton and M. G. Blanton, *Child Guidance* (New York: Century, 1927).

educators, as the primary source of maladjustment in children. Children, who were in a loosely constructed control group, were said to live normal lives free of “divorce, hospitalization, and criminal activity.”²³ This definition of normal in itself provides a window into the middle-class child guidance researcher’s definition of the normal family as monogamous, middle-class, prosperous, and responsibly engaged as upstanding responsible citizens.

In contrast with normal scientific approaches to the study of children, proto-sociologist W. I. Thomas, of the University of Chicago, pointed out that a prior “definition of the situation” determines what constitutes good health and proper conduct. This prior definition, Thomas argued, effectively shapes not only the perspectives but also the practices of childrearing.²⁴ Thomas’ observation that “if men define situations as real they are real in their consequences” is essential to understanding the mental hygiene movement and its impact from a historical perspective.²⁵ It also helps clarify a historiographic problem where historians predefine scientific research as a path to objective reality and similarly create real consequences even if the practices and policies derived from supposedly scientific facts are not true and may even be harmful.

The Historiography of Research on Infancy to Adolescence

Between the first and second World Wars, Rockefeller philanthropy supported research that established a medical basis for the cultural perception of a sequentially elaborated mental world of childhood and adolescence, which was correlated with biological maturation unique to preadults. Without this original perception, the “terrible twos” and the “teenage monsters” of post–World War II notoriety could not have become part of the conceptualization of children and youth in the 1950s and 1960s, concepts with their own versions today as institutionalized in public thought and accounted for in social practice.²⁶

Whereas G. Stanley Hall’s child study movement at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries initiated a momentum for the scientific study of children, his psychology of youth was largely grounded in biography and philosophy

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ W. I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl: With Case Studies and Standpoints for Behavior Analysis* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1923); W. I. Thomas and Dorothy Swain Thomas, *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs* (New York: Knopf, 1928, reprint New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970).

²⁵ The Thomas Theorem as quoted by Robert K. Merton: “If men define situations as real they are real in their consequences.” For a discussion, see Robert K. Merton, “The Self-fulfilling Prophecy,” in Lewis A. Coser, *The Pleasures of Sociology* (New York: American Library, 1980), pp 29–47.

²⁶ Donna Varga, “LOOK—NORMAL: The Colonized Child of Developmental Science,” *History of Psychology* 14, 2 (2011): 137–157.

influenced by Freud.²⁷ The mental testing movement during and after World War I, although it correlated mental functioning with age, did not interweave the progress of bone growth and maturation of the nervous and reproductive systems with mood and behavior changes.²⁸ The mental hygiene movement integrated these ideas, tying together concepts elaborated by research and related social movements into an identifiable, if amorphous, pattern ready for public consumption. Much of the current information on growth that is taken to be self-evident is based on mental hygiene concepts.

The twentieth century witnessed the institutionalization of the idea of stages in the normal human life cycle each with specific “normal” learning characteristics. Similar to intelligence tests, if a child was exactly on target for his or her age, they were considered to be progressing at the average or normal rate. Children who exhibited learning characteristics of an older age or younger were considered either precocious or slow. There was an obsession with normalizing the sequence of stages of development and consequently with pathologies and deviancies. Being ahead of one's age/stage could be considered as positive or negative. It was good to be intelligent and to learn quickly in school, for example. Such children were recognized as “gifted.”²⁹ However, to demonstrate precocious behaviors related to sexuality or to adopt adult postures and interests was considered to be unhealthy and possibly criminal. Slow children or those typed as various levels of incompetence for their age were singled out also as vulnerable to corruption. Patterns of lagging or retardation could be treated harshly and interpreted as a menace to society.³⁰

The establishment of professional disciplines whose official role was to intervene into previously private spheres of life accompanied these trends. Medicine served as a model for intervention. It also served as a successful prototype for advanced graduate training in universities. Technical experts and professionals filled the ranks of bureaucracies whose mandate was to oversee public interests.

²⁷ G. Stanley Hall, “The Contents of Children’s Minds,” *Princeton Review* 11 (May 1883): 249–272; G. Stanley Hall, *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* (New York: D. Appleton, 1923); Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

²⁸ Edward L. Thorndike, *Introduction to the Theory of Mental and Social Measurements* (New York: Science Press, 1904); Lewis M. Terman, *The Stanford Revision of the Simon Binet Scale* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916); Lewis M. Terman, *The Intelligence of School Children: How Children Differ in Ability, the Use of Mental Tests in School Grading and the Proper Education of Exceptional Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1919).

²⁹ Lewis M. Terman, *Genetic Studies of Genius* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1925, 1926); Lewis M. Terman, *Intelligence Tests and School Reorganization* (Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: Word Book Publishing Co., 1922).

³⁰ Lewis M. Terman, *The Estimation of Juvenile Incurribility: A Report of Experiments in the Measurement of Juvenile Incurribility by Means of Certain Non-Intellectual Tests* (Whittier, CA: California Bureau of Juvenile Research, 1923); Lewis M. Terman, *Surveys in Mental Deviation in Prisons, Public Schools, and Orphanages in California: Brief Descriptions of Local Conditions and Need for Custodial Care and Training, Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent Classes* (Sacramento, CA: California State Printing Office, 1918).

Uncovering the mechanisms through which mental hygienists learned their trade and more importantly how they developed a distinctive world view can be traced through the archival data.

The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (LSRM), established in 1918 for the welfare of women and children, was a major funding agency for research on child development in the 1920s. The LSRM produced Annual Reports that were published by the Rockefeller Foundation describing their projects, which are available in many library collections as well as at the Rockefeller Archive Center. When the LSRM was merged with the Rockefeller Foundation in 1929, the work of finishing LSRM projects was taken over by the General Education Board and also the Spelman Fund, a Rockefeller philanthropy established in 1929.

An important aspect of child development research as conducted by university personnel and supported by the LSRM was that the mandate was not to create knowledge about children for its own sake but rather to uncover practical solutions to problems associated with learning. The motive was not sheer curiosity as to how various human and social phenomena came to be. The interest in science was an interest as one means to an end, and the end was explicitly recognized to be human welfare.³¹ This guiding policy shaped the character and direction of scientific child research and also explains the rapidity with which it was disseminated into training programs in child-related disciplines as well as to parents and the general public. The archival records show that much of the scientific basis for child development was a product of longitudinal child growth research involving anthropomorphic and physiological measurement, psychological testing, and systematic observation. The studies began with school-age children but encompassed a range from infancy to adolescence by the end of the 1930s. Two major sets of data were compiled, one from the early childhood studies of the 1920s and the second from the adolescent studies of the 1930s. Literally thousands of children across the country became case histories. The studies were unique. They established what was considered to be scientific standards for evaluating physical and mental maturation in human populations without regard for cultural or social class differences. Based on compiled sets of individual data, the assumption was that the outcome would automatically account for individual variation, and finding the mean in a population would lead to accurate conclusions about standards for average, above average, and below average progress. This ideology left very little room for critical self-evaluation even though the letters, memorandum, minutes of meetings, and reports show that there was considerable dialogue among the researchers and with their philanthropic mentors.³²

Detailed archival records of 15 projects involved with five major research institutions trace the progress of the research and evolving paradigm in the creation of what was hoped to be universal standards of mental–physical health. From the beginning, the objective of demonstrating the creation of a technology of human

³¹ Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, *Annual Report* (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1930), p. 10.

³² Richardson, *Century of the Child* see pp. 129–147 and notes 235–241.

relations and clinical practice was to have other institutions create similar centers and for them to become self-sufficient and permanent. The underlying ideology becomes apparent in the belief that there is one truth and that science can uncover that truth; further, the truths or facts that are established are accumulative and build upon one another in ways that can be used to improve collective reality of human beings on earth. There was also a belief in the permanence of the institutions that supported the research in spite of the fact that not only do ideas and paradigms shift over time, so do institutions.³³

Archival Revelations in the Historic Records: Child Study Institutes

There were seven major institutions conducting child study research initiated with LSRM funds in the 1920s. These include the most distinguished and successful programs such as the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station; the Clinic for Child Development of the Institute for Human Relations at Yale University; the Institute of Child Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Toronto Institute for Child Study; the Institute for Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota; the Child Development Institute at Teachers College Columbia University; and, the LSRM's funding for home economics and child study under the auspices of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) at Cornell University.³⁴ In the section that follows, the trajectory of research is examined through the records of three institutes for child study in the USA, the first institute in Iowa, Arnold Gesell's influential work at Yale, and the last institute at the University of California Berkeley, which illustrates the institutionalization of the mental hygiene paradigm in multiple venues.

Iowa Child Welfare Station: Rockefeller philanthropy, when possible, preferred to support projects that were proven to have merit and to have potential for success. They also preferred to work with other agencies either public or private. They felt that their support could boost a modest operation into a major force for change. The Iowa Child Welfare Station is a case in point. The impetus for the movement goes back to a Progressive Era statewide campaign for child health by Cora Bussey Hillis and her associates. After 16 years of advocacy for "fitter families," Hillis attracted the support of the president of the University of Iowa, Thomas H. MacBride, and the first chair of psychology and dean of the Graduate College, Carl E. Seashore.

³³ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1970).

³⁴ The extensive records on these files are in the LSRM, GEB Archives, as well as in the Spelman Fund Papers, a philanthropy created in the 1930s to continue child study research on adolescence. All are housed at RAC. In addition, Canadian materials are also in the Public Archives of Canada and Griffin-Greenland Archives in Toronto.

Working together, they were able to convince the state to pass legislation, creating the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station on April 21, 1917. The objective was to investigate the “best scientific methods of conserving and developing the normal child.”³⁵ Bird T. Baldwin, the first director of the Station, sought to expand the research with the financial assistance of the LSRM. Topics such in psychology, nutrition, eugenics, and “social betterment” were conducted with the cooperation of the medical and dental colleges, college of education, extension division, school of public health nursing, department of speech, and home economics. Publications looked at questions of heredity versus environment, learning and mental growth in relationship to intelligence, and the impact of rural living as retarding growth and learning capacity.³⁶ The Iowa Child Welfare Research Station became prominent in the nature–nurture debates on the side of nurture. Their publications emphasized the position that environmental interventions could transform a child’s mental, emotional, and physical capacity to learn.

Arnold Gesell’s Laboratory at Yale University: Child study at Yale University concentrated on infant growth and the determination of norms for mental, motor, and emotional development, building on Arnold Gesell’s work beginning in 1911, which was supported by the LSRM from 1920 to 1944. Having studied at Clark University under G. Stanley Hall, Gesell was also a medical doctor and stressed physical maturation. He was a major figure in determining age, and stage-related sequences in the maturation process, which branched out into personal hygiene, emotional health, fears and dreams, sexuality, play, school performance, and ethics as well as learning. He also gave advice as to how to handle “defective” children. Some of his books were made into film versions, presumably for public educational purposes. His work covered 37 years of research. In his research, he used videos and photographs of children as well as observation through one-way mirrors. He contrasted his studies of humans with animal studies including monkey learning behavior. His work was translated into numerous European languages.³⁷ Gesell

³⁵ George D. Stoddard and Dorothy E. Bradbury, *Pioneering in Child Welfare: A History of the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1917–1933* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1933); Cora Bussey Hillis, “How the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station Came into Being,” unpublished mss. August 1919; George D. Stoddard, “The Second Decade: A Review of the Activities of the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, 1928–1938,” *Aims and Progress of Research* 58, New Series, 366 (February 1, 1939): 1; “An Act for the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy, 1921,” *US Statutes at Large XLII, part I* (April 1921–March 1923), pp. 224–226. The Children’s Bureau also has publications on the Station.

³⁶ Bird T. Baldwin, “Heredity and Environment – Or Capacity and Training” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 19 (1928); Bird T. Baldwin, Eva A. Fillmore and Lora Stecher, “Mental Growth Curve of Normal and Superior Children,” *University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare* 2, 1 (1922); Bird T. Baldwin, Eva A. Fillmore, and Lora Hadley, *Farm Children: An Investigation of Rural Life in Selected Areas of Iowa* (New York: Appleton, 1930).

³⁷ Arnold Gesell and Francis Ilg, *Feeding Behavior of Infants: A Pediatric Approach to the Mental Hygiene of Early Life* (Philadelphia, London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1937); Arnold Gesell, et al., *The First Five Years of Life* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940, 1971); Arnold Gesell, Francis Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, and Glenna E. Bullis, *Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen* (New York: Harper, 1956). The US Library of Congress lists 77 publications of Gesell including translations.

was not necessarily easy to get along with and defended his own approach to understanding child growth, sometimes getting into disagreements with researchers at other institutes as documented in his correspondence and memorandums.

The records show that LSRM support for research at Yale included support for settings to observe and experiment with interventions such as the Shirley G. Moore Laboratory School. Counterparts of the child study institute and laboratory school continue today under the College of Education and Human Development. Research concentrates on child psychology with a psychobiological orientation. Early childhood research is currently conducted under the auspices of the Center for Early Education and Development and the Center for Neurobehavioral Development. There is also an Irving B. Harris Training Center for Infants and Toddler Development and a Child, Family, and Youth Consortium.

Institute for Child Welfare, University of California Berkeley: LSRM records demonstrate that in 1921, California volunteers attempted without success to enact a law similar to Iowa in order to establish an institute for child study. Similar to Iowa, in 1923, the idea of establishing an institute attracted the support of the president of Stanford University, David Starr Jordan, and Stanford psychologist Lewis M. Terman, champion of nature interpretations of the nature–nurture debates as author of intelligence tests and measurements. Olga Bridgman, a psychologist at the University of California, Berkeley, also became an advocate. A bill was successfully passed, but disagreements arose over the site of the proposed station between Stanford and Berkeley as well as control over its work leading to the rescission of the legislation. The LSRM was willing to take advantage of the early interest in a child study and parent education institute but declined to intervene until a request was made for support. Lawrence K. Frank, officer of the LSRM, had been willing to partner with the General Education Board and Rockefeller Foundation, to support a California project in 1923, but it took until 1927 before the final plan for an Institute for Child Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, was finalized.

The Berkeley Institute was the last major research center initiated with LSRM funds, since the Memorial, which was established with a 10-year time line, was on the verge of being integrated into the Rockefeller Foundation, GEB, and new Spelman Fund. The financial records show that the Memorial appropriated 300,000 dollars to be distributed for the Institute at the rate of \$50,000 a year for 6 years ending in 1933. Lawrence K. Frank, now an officer of the LSRM and GEB, took an active role in the design and progress of research and choice of personnel. The Institute was to include a nursery school, child study center, and research facilities used cooperatively among several departments. The first director, Herbert Stoltz, was a medical doctor who had widespread legitimacy as a researcher, administrator of Oakland Public Schools, and as a state-level bureaucrat. He was married to Lois Meek (Stoltz), a child study professor at Stanford. Harold Jones, a psychologist, with a dual appointment in psychology and in the Institute followed Stoltz as director. Jane Walker MacFarlane, also with dual appointments, followed Jones as director. She had been a director of child guidance and was increasingly influential in the 1930s and 1940s in promoting longitudinal child guidance and adolescent studies using Oakland Public Schools as sites for case studies. The

LSRM and GEB Archives at RAC contain a rich set of letters and memorandums concerned with the progress of research between the officers of the philanthropies, researchers, and administration of the university, Oakland Public School officials, and state officials. It also documents efforts to disseminate the results through conferences and publications.

Adolescent research was a logical continuation of the earlier emphasis on infancy and early childhood. The research began with pilot studies that grew in size and cost into longitudinal studies. Data gathering included anthropometric, photographic, and medical records. A physiological battery of tests were performed yearly as well as intelligence tests using Lewis Terman's Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales in addition to measures of specific learning skills in reading and math. Clinical observations used rating sheets to determine the range of personality traits indicative of attitudes, ambition, and aptitudes in the school, home, and community. Home visits were made by psychiatric social workers.

The slow pace of the longitudinal studies and the fact that their results were often arcane were taken as evidence of their validity. The research was taken as painstaking and exact in the accumulation of evidence that would uncover the true nature of adolescence. The conclusion was that adolescence was not a chronological category but a physiological category offset by cultural expectations and pressures that presented a severe challenge for parents, teachers, and school administrators. The research continued until 1950. It became increasingly apparent that the results did not lend themselves to publication in conventional discipline-based journals and books since the interdisciplinary nature of studying children to youth crossed multiple disciplines and sought audiences in multiple fields. By the end of the 1930s, it was concluded that the publication of the data would have to be subsidized by Rockefeller philanthropy. In 1938, four theses and two monograph series including six publications, 11 articles, and seven other abstracts or papers on institute research were published using Rockefeller Foundation appropriations approved by Raymond Fosdick, president of the foundation. Additional funds produced a *Yearbook on Adolescence* and Herbert Stoltz' and Lois Meek's work, *Somatic Development in Adolescent Boys*.

It became increasingly apparent that even though the participants in the project including their philanthropic mentors were convinced that the research reflected the truth about human growth and learning characteristics, there was a problem of screening information given to the public and to make sure it went to legitimate professionals. They feared that scientifically validated knowledge would be twisted by unwarranted assumptions, oversimplifications, and blatant prejudices of lay audiences. An effort was made to secure professional oversight by the creation of the National Research Council (NRC). The NRC Committee on Child Development and the Monograph Series on Child Development and Abstracts did not, however, prove sufficient. Lawrence Frank left the Rockefeller philanthropies and took a position at the University of Chicago as secretary of the Committee on Human Development, which had been created with GEB funds in 1943, as one way to professionalize the distribution of research. Robert Havighurst took Frank's place coordinating Rockefeller support for the distribution of research on children and

youth, until he too joined the University of Chicago faculty. A committee was formed with 15 members representing the major research centers in child study that evolved out of the work of the LSRM. Their mandate as recognized “experts” was to identify “scientifically validated generalizations of principles...from research findings in biological, psychological, sociological, and medical sciences.” This information was to be distributed to other practicing professionals working with children and youth. A sequence of courses was also developed. A subcommittee on Standards of the American Association of Teachers Colleges relayed information to 175 institutions associated with professional education as well as college administrators, curriculum committees, and professors of psychology and child study.

Paradox and Paradigm Shifts in the Historiography of Illusive Subjects

From a historiographical perspective, mental hygiene received relatively little scholarly attention in spite of the concentration of social historians on twentieth-century social movements from the 1960s to the 1990s. While mental hygiene in the broad sense of the term from its origins in the national committee of the USA became popularized as common sense, propaganda and misinformation also proliferated in negative ways as feared. Ironically, the archival records show that mental hygiene approaches to the study of children and youth tended to expand without the input of medical science. Alan Gregg, medical director of the Rockefeller Foundation, and Lawrence Frank brought psychoanalyst Erik Erikson into the Berkeley and Oakland research project to analyze the data. Erikson, however, to the disappointment of Gregg and Frank, was more interested in the impact of socialization and mental development in different cultures and collaborated with Alfred L. Kroeber in anthropology. He published *Childhood and Society* in 1950 and had little impact on the Oakland data set.

As the mental hygiene paradigm successfully infiltrated multiple interdisciplinary venues in the twentieth century, it became less vulnerable to critical examination. What was left out of the research paradigm limited the data and narrowed the possible interpretations. The protected core was invulnerable to a paradigm shift. The underlying medicalized hypothesis about the nature of learning was accepted as a true reflection of reality and the answer to producing usable knowledge through research. The method in following the childhood gaze reflexively reveals the biases of the fundamental belief systems of the individuals and organizations involved in the pursuit of a normal science of learning.

Following a medical model, the major omission in the research related to learning as influenced by the mental hygiene paradigm was the impact of cultural, political, or socioeconomic factors on family and child life. The orientation of the research as based on a medical paradigm downplayed or ignored historically specific conditions as irrelevant to the creation of a universal science of the

psychobiology of human beings and their readiness to learn in a healthy way. In today's postmodern world, perhaps it would not be possible to have such unshakable faith in the powers of the scientific method without taking culture, economics, and the politics of knowledge into consideration. It is less likely that there would not be a countervailing dialogue addressing the liminality of subjects as well as the liminality of disciplines that seek to define and shape social reality. Basic concepts of human development, nonetheless, were established in the twentieth century that were legitimated as immutable and universal, which is why it is vital that historians visit these ideas and their origins in a critical way. We need to be persistent in following the labyrinth of the archives, tracing the trajectory of past interpretations of historical events and ideas, as well as checking on and creating a dialogue about each other's contemporary interpretations, for therein lies the source of paradigm changes that open up new perspectives and form new thresholds through which to pass when historians pursue liminal subjects such as childhood.

5.4 Interpretation in a Historical Approach to Reading

Anne-Marie Chartier

Introduction

Nothing is more easily ordered than numbers. The general public is used to images of numeric assessment: descending and ascending line graphs “show” the progression and regression of everything that can be measured (populations, earnings, calories, barrels of oil, tons of garbage), as well as the growth or reduction of differences between nations. These quantified representations are so common and so banal that readers no longer question how these figures were constructed: everything seems assessable and thus entirely comparable. And yet, certain realities seem difficult to measure, like the quality of education or the written culture of a particular social group. To measure these less measurable realities, statisticians track “indicators” that must be universal and easy to monitor. In this way, UNESCO’s annual report, *Education for All* (www.efareport.unesco.org), estimates *reading levels* based on percentages, whether steady or declining of illiterate adults, according to three state primary school indicators: percentages of children between the ages of six and ten beginning primary school and rates of attrition at the end of the primary school cycle. The political authorities of the nineteenth century, to evaluate the progression of education in France, region by region, made a similar choice. They quantified the number of illiterate adults, the number of uneducated children, and the proportion of the population that has partially or fully completed schooling. Yet, in minister Guizot’s investigation of 1833, quantitative information was collected along with many qualitative details (on the condition of local schools, the reputation of the teachers, pedagogical styles, books used in coursework, etc.).

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Everyone knows that it takes more than simply attending school to learn how to read, and regular attendance does not imply anything about the quality of the teachers nor about the knowledge different students acquire in schools in various countries. What sense does it make to want to rigorously “measure” qualitative information about teacher training, the public or private school system, the organization of curricula, programs of study, or the local or national examination system? The only thing that matters to education economists is the relationship between what is spent on education (input) and the results (output). Since 2000, standardized tests taken by a sampling of 10-year-old students (TIMSS, PIRLS <http://timss.bc.edu/>) or 15-year-old students (PISA <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>) are sufficient to classify the countries of the OECD by their reading, math, and science test results. Math and science are undoubtedly universal fields of study, but is it possible to assess reading skills while ignoring the language, the literature, and national curricula?

Before the 1980s, these types of comparisons were difficult to imagine, because methods of teaching reading seemed inseparable from school language and the subjects examined in the reading material of each individual country’s school system. From the beginning of one’s studies, debates surrounded the details about which texts to assign (religious or secular, scientific or literary), invoking cultural values and raising the stakes about how they are taught (language, literature, and national history). Everyone understood that writing was socially useful for daily life, but schools wouldn’t deal with social learning meant to be taught out of schools. What challenged this cultural goal of scholarly learning and cleared the way for current international comparisons regarding functional reading skills?

This article will examine these recent trends and inscribe them in the long history of written culture and its place in schooling. First, I will present two French studies that, during the 1980s, examined the “reading crisis.” One study is about the decline in reading due to increased competition with other leisure activities, and the other study is on the scope of illiteracy in poorly educated adults. Second, I will present theoretical debates about the challenged certitudes upon which education policy had been based since the nineteenth century. The first certainty: thanks to compulsory schooling, reading rates increased continuously and the general population reads more and more material of higher and higher quality. The second certainty: reading was considered as a basic and general skill, regardless the texts to read. Knowing how to read meant a person was able of reading “everything.” Third certainty: widespread education would lead to the simultaneous progress of individuals, nations, civilization, and more.

Because of those deceptions, progress in the written knowledge of the Enlightenment also seemed a myth (Graff 1979, 2011). What new look on reading was coming on? I will present, third, impacts on teacher training (new learning frames, new primers) and in history of education. If what was called “reading skill” had changed over time, then the history of reading in schoolteaching was in question. I tried to make this “new history” of literacy, looking for “historical changes” in young reader’s training and assessments, from old primers and textbooks. What had been my assumptions and methodological precautions?

In the 1980s, the crisis of reading was perceived in discourses. What value ought one attribute to the pessimistic discourse about the potential loss of reading skills in

society? Has it been a question of diagnostic research or of irrational fear? Was it a knowledge or a belief? In studies on these questions, the gap between discourse and practice was crucial to consider when interpreting the data. The question was about the method: based on oral and written sources about the discourse on reading (on the decline in reading and on illiteracy), could one describe reading practices, themselves? The question was also about the artifacts studied: which type of reading, which ability to read, was the goal in one situation or another? It is the reason why the enquiry since 2000s was not based on discourse but had focused on teaching material. Primers and textbooks obey rules of use. That restricts freedom and determines practice. Which implicit definition of reading did textbooks use?

One basic postulate underlines all reading studies and legitimates comparisons: literacy is the ability to read in any context (*savoir lire, c'est toujours savoir lire*). Of course, the number of people that know how to read, the percentage of avid readers, and practices of reading varied by time, place, gender, and age, but the expression “to know how to read” (*savoir lire*), “to be literate,” seemed invariable. If this is not the case, we need new categories of analysis. In this chapter, I will present the story of this change.

Discourses on Reading: Collection and Interpretation of Data

A Study of Discourses: Questions, Methodology, and Results

In 1981, the new minister of culture¹ wanted to promote in France an ambitious policy initiative to support reading in the general public (Butlen 2008). He found himself in a paradoxical situation. The minister’s statistical investigations showed that, as the number of readers grew, so too did book sales. Little by little, reading books became more of a habit among the French, and while books remained minimally present in daily life, there was progress (Donnat and Cogneau 1990). And yet, the media reported the opposite: “Reading is in peril; France reads less and less; the French enjoy reading less and less.” Corroborating stories came from schools (where a number of adolescents struggled to read an entire novel), libraries (where new readers were drawn to use audiovisual equipment and borrowed few books), and bookstores (which were crushed by megastores). To understand this astonishing gap between the scientifically measured data and popular knowledge, the minister of culture called for a study on why and when this discourse of failure began. Who was perpetuating the discourse? What was the “grain of truth” in it?

¹ Jack Lang was the minister of culture (1981–1986, 1988–1993) after the left came to power in 1981, then he became the minister of National Education and Culture (1992–1993), and finally, he was the minister of National Education (2000–2002).

A team of historians (and not of sociologists) replied to the minister's request. The study had to focus on one of several hypotheses: either it was a discourse due to a particular situation or the discourse of professional groups (editors, booksellers) to get state funding to support their institutions or an old permanent speech similar to the one about "declining school level" (Baudelot and Establet 1989). The researchers chose the time period of 1880–1980 for their study: a century is time enough to detect trends in optimism and pessimism, if there were any.

The study found, to the great surprise of the researchers, that, longitudinally, the dominant discourse did not bemoan a lack of reading. On the contrary, all of the advisers and educators complained that the French read "too much, and anything and everything." Second surprise: despite huge political confrontations between 1880 and 1914 about secularism, for all of those responsible for religious or secular instruction, for educators on all sides, and for militants of popular culture and Catholic libraries, reading was never considered to have had value in and of itself. Bad readings were a risky business and only good readings, with high moral and cultural standards, were encouraged. Contrary to the consumerist discourse (to read a lot), maintained only by a minority of librarians, the consensus was that it was only necessary to read a small amount, to read to learn and not to entertain yourself, and to read good books (like literary "classics" that could be reread indefinitely).

The Reading Crisis in the 1960s–1980s

Persuaded that the change in public opinion happened around the time of World War II, the researchers did not continue the study beyond the 1950s. To find when and why this old discourse that "the French read too much" had been replaced by the idea that "the French no longer read," it was necessary to examine more recent data. I was given the task, along with Jean Hébrard, to complete the research and write a final report (Chartier and Hébrard 1989a). The change in public opinion was dated by corroborating information from multiple sources: official texts about academic reading, Catholic youth magazines, and professional journals. The turning point appeared in the middle of the 1960s: teachers, booksellers, and journalists, previously in competition with each other, had, at that time, created a united front to "save reading," which was threatened by the popularity of television. This pessimistic discourse took hold during the 1970s: there is a reading crisis; the French no longer read (Chartier 1990).

What was the context of this change in public opinion? Three phenomena combined at that time: the omnipresence of the television in family life; the challenge of comprehensive school where the teachers still taught as they did before, when it was more selective; and, finally, the trend of privileged families towards pursuing study more frequently in the sciences than in literature. These three changes undermined the old hierarchy of values founded on the cultural supremacy of literature. These three changes were immediately thought to be a bad omen, while the quantitative data still showed the aftermath of academic politics of the past. When the new edition of *Discours sur la lecture* (Chartier and Hébrard 2000) was published, a new study

(1980–2000) revealed an evolution over the prior 20 years: reading rates had stopped increasing and younger generations had many fewer avid readers than their forebears (Donnat 1998, 2003). On the other hand, the amount of reading practiced in social media had decreased: people were reading fewer books and newspapers, but many more magazines. People read for work, to purchase products, and relied incessantly on the media, either on paper or a screen; computers exponentially increased the time that people spent doing something that is called “reading.”

Initial Conclusions About Research Methods

What can we learn from this research? First lesson: the rapid amnesia of experience. Most of the protagonists of the study were in school during the time of this change in public opinion, but the data, which was collected after that time period, brought back forgotten or considered as “unimportant” memories.

Second lesson: the persistent gap between public opinion and statistics. The progress detected by quantitative research (the reduction of rates of “nonreaders” of books, the growth in the trend of “poor” readers) remained an invisible and insignificant phenomenon for all that consider reading books essential to life. “To read is to live,” proclaimed one of the slogans of the campaign for reading. And yet, it is always the “reading minority” that writes about reading and that speaks about reading on the radio, on television, and in newspapers, setting up their own standards for their vision of the world (Barbier-Bouvet 1988; Chartier et al. 1993). Researchers and scientists, who are professional readers, naturally see reading as the royal road to learning and comprehension and as the most efficient and democratic way in which to do so (published works are supposed to be available and everyone “can” read). Furthermore, teenagers’ disaffection from reading (Baudelot et al. 1999) undermined confidence in the value of schooling for all. The democratization of schooling was accused of creating these challenges, whereas it merely revealed the difficulty of reading literature. Inversely, statistics that continued to postulate the construction of stable variables are poor sources of information about emerging phenomena that quickly alarmed and even confused certain researchers in the field.

Third lesson: the elliptical uncertainty of ordinary speech. In texts written in the 1880s, just as in texts of the 1960s, those that spoke of “knowing how to read,” “loving reading,” and “having a taste for reading” always assumed, without explicitly stating it, that they were speaking about reading books. Those who read magazines, newspapers, comic strips, and adventure novels were not considered “real” readers. A “real reader” is someone who improves and cultivates his mind through reading and never reads for practical reasons or for pleasure. This is the origin of the pessimistic discourses of the period (“the French read too much” (improper reading material) and they “would read anything and everything”). Nevertheless, reading gained an intrinsic value as soon as TV screens seemed to endanger it. It was necessary, in the urgent effort to save reading, that all reading, of any kind, was supported and continued. In this way, the meaning of the verb “to read” changed (Chartier 1992),

at the same time as education practices changed: simply to tear teenagers away from television screens and to seduce them, the promise of the pleasures of reading appeared to be the salvation. Since the 1970s, all reading materials developed to please children (magazines, comic books, comic strips) were welcomed without hesitation into middle-class families, libraries, and at school. At the same time, statistical studies replaced qualitative judgments (good vs. bad books, pseudo-readers vs. real readers) through quantitative criteria (very good or good readers, moderate readers, and nonreaders, based on the number of books read).

Fourth lesson: this concerns, in a much more transverse way, the complex relationships that maintain discourses and practice² and not the declining relationship between “theory and practice.” The discourses were a reservoir of writing much broader than theory. These writings include prescriptions, opinions, beliefs, critiques, and projects. They unceasingly evoke their present-day realities shared with their contemporary audience but unknown to future generations. In this way, between 1880 and 1960, literature teachers were all familiar with the expression, “literary reading.” It concerned rarely a complete work, but only short pieces, never written by a living or foreign author (Chartier and Hébrard 1989b). One generation later, paperback books brought full-written works into the classroom, and new syllabi authorized contemporary authors and translated works. Young teachers found old syllabi limited or “incomprehensible,” because the outdated practices to which they referred to had been forgotten.

These four findings are methodological (they construct a corpus of information and analyze the data) as well as epistemological (they turn current issues into historical research). The study of *Discours sur la lecture* simultaneously showed the contributions and limits of a history based on the analysis of texts that were used for a long period of time to support academic orthodoxy.³ Teaching reading to beginners, which was at the center of violent debate, thus had all of the characteristics of a theoretical conflict between supporters of traditional pedagogy and militant supporters of new ways of teaching. Was it possible to understand these confrontations any differently by connecting the history of reading methods with classroom practices? This is the work we began doing (Chartier and Hébrard 1990), but we found these confrontations wrapped up in tumultuous debates about illiteracy, where one can easily see repetitions of the same dialogue between functional

² This will be the central point of reflection of my thesis, which revisits the empirical data taken for the study: *La lecture scolaire entre prescriptions et opinions: comment les discours disent les pratiques*, doctoral thesis, University of Paris V, Paris, May 1992, 3 volumes, typed.

Anne-Marie Chartier, “Usages de l’oral et rapports à l’écrit.” *Illettrismes: quels chemins vers l’écrit?* F. Andrieux, J.M. Besse, B. Falaize, dir., Paris, Magnard, 1997, pp. 95–112.

³ The history of education had long been confused with the evolution of “pedagogical ideas” over the centuries: Rousseau is neither Montaigne nor is he Dewey. Nevertheless, the endurance of certain keywords (school, teaching, training, culture) or the same pairings of keywords (adult/child, master/student, authority/liberty, knowledge/ignorance, study time/free time, work/play) could make one believe that the fundamental questions and “academic attitudes” were perennial concerns: in this way, the unconditional trust in children that Montaigne, Rousseau, and Dewey makes them appear to be guardians of “new pedagogies.”

and cultural reading. Who were these illiterates, incapable of reading quotidian writing? Why, before the 1980s, were they not present in representations of the public and thus from statistical data?

A Theoretical Debate: Literacy vs. Illiteracy: An Old Reality and a New Concept

Adult Illiteracy, from Indifference to Discovery

In 1984, the report to the prime minister *Des illettrés en France* (Espérandieu and Lion 1984) ignited an explosion of public opinion. The report found that a significant portion of the population does not know how to read, a revelation that created scandal during an era when the word “illiteracy” had hardly entered the lexicon.⁴ In 1999, the sociologist Bernard Lahire published a study that examined discourse surrounding illiteracy (Lahire 1999), as we had analyzed the discourse surrounding reading 10 years earlier. In this case, there was no need to examine illiteracy from a historical point of view: in France, before 1980, there was no data. During the 1980s, 69 government reports officially acknowledged this problem and created a permanent Committee to Fight Illiteracy (CFI) (*Groupe Permanent de Lutte contre l’Illettrisme/ GPLI*) in the Ministry of Social Affairs. Between 1990 and 1999, 113 subpoenas for colloquia organized by the CFI were issued, where politicians, grassroots activists, researchers, and experts expressed their views on the origin of the problem and how it correlated with other social realities. In 10 years, the term “analphabeticism” disappeared from the vocabulary, whereas “illiteracy” became a major social problem. However, during the decade of 2000–2010, illiteracy disappeared from urgency, except in school where it became the new name for failure.

From 1984 to 2000, vague definitions of illiteracy proliferate and the number of illiterate people did not stop increasing: in 1982, there were between 500,000 and 2 million; in 1990, there were between three and six million; and in 1998,⁵ there were between three and nine million illiterate people in France. This media-driven rhetoric has social repercussions and possibly political aims: it turns

⁴ During the 1980s, the reports used the term illiteracy or alphabeticism, which are still competing terms: Viehoff (1982) *Rapport sur la lutte contre l’analphabétisme*; Anglade et al. (1984), *L’Alphabétisation en Europe*; Dossiers IFOREP (1985) *Illettrisme et alphabétisation*.

⁵ Debates about the total number of illiterates stem from the absence of a clear definition of illiteracy and from assessments that vary in rigor, according to the studies. But everyone agrees that literacy can be considered on a hierarchical scale of competency, going from basic elementary to the most complex skills, resulting from internalized models of scholarship, but for some (the philanthropic association ATD Quart-Monde) a person is illiterate if they cannot read fluently (the reading level of an 8-year-old); for others (the AFL or Association Française pour la Lecture), a person is illiterate if they cannot effectively discuss written information (the reading level of a 16-year-old).

illiteracy into a national cause and perpetuates budgets that support systems to meet the demand for adult training.

The public needed an explanation for the looming illiteracy problem. From 1945 to 1975, during the years of economic growth, nobody cared whether the Spanish, Portuguese, or North African workers in factories or construction sites were literate or not. During this time of full employment, failing students had no trouble finding work. As the psychologist, Rene Zazzo, wrote: a child whose schooling has been compromised is not equally socially compromised, because “Society is less challenging than school,” which requires up-to-date writing skills, contrary to the world of manual labor (Zazzo 1969). However, manual labor changed, after the oil crisis caused closures of factories and a rise in unemployment. The ability to read and write became a requirement for employment. New technologies (ICT) entered the working world, and new jobs required workers to read protocols and fill out forms. The written transmission of information, formerly reserved for middle managers and supervisors, became a responsibility of the least skilled workers, both in stock warehouses and at construction sites (Clot 1995). Illiterates had been working in those positions for a long time: in 1988, 75 % of “illiterates” attended school before 1955, when schooling stopped at age 14, according to a study done by the minister,⁶ but their illiteracy was unnoticed, since it did not affect their ability to have a job. That was no longer the case in the 1980s: the discovery of illiteracy had an impact on the economy, as international comparisons later verified (EFA 2006). In England, Lord Moser, made responsible to report to parliament on the issue, linked the high illiteracy rate directly with the ineffectiveness of school and the weakness of the economy. “Something like one adult in every five in this country is not functionally literate. This is a shocking situation and a sad reflection on past decades of schooling. It is one of the reasons for relatively low productivity in our economy, and it cramps the lives of millions of people.”⁷ Thus, in the same way that the reading crisis, as a vehicle of personal culture, had been revealed by the increase in mandatory schooling, the crisis of illiteracy had been revealed by the demand of new jobs designed for manual laborers who could read.

Two Definitions of Literacy: Social Practice or a Level of Scholarly Aptitude?

In the vocabulary used in France, the contrast between analphabets (that never learned how to read, because of faulty schooling) and illiterates (former students

⁶ According to the October 1988 study conducted by the Institute of Infometrics, 50 % of illiterates were over 65 years old and thus retired. The National Committee to Combat Illiteracy (NCCI) confirmed this data in 2010: 50 % of illiterates are elderly and/or live in the country. <http://www.anlci.gouv.fr> “Rates of Illiteracy,” 2010.

⁷ Moser Report (1999), p. 9, quoted by Vincent (2003), p. 345.

that failed school) was quickly accepted, while the pairing of “illiteracy/literacy” took much more time to get established. What remained unclear was the hazy designation of the English term *literacy*. After 10 years, a practical consensus was reached about the reality of illiteracy in its multiple social manifestations, without a definitively resolved theoretical definition on what literacy was (Fraenkel and Mbodj 2010). During the 1960s, UNESCO defined *illiteracy* as the inability to independently read quotidian writing. *Literacy*, therefore, *a contrario*, was the capacity to read quotidian writing. But, is it necessary to understand what transpires for those who have the lowest reading levels—just enough to get by, but nothing more? And how far does “quotidian writing” extend? Road signs, but not maps? Television schedules, but not information about television shows? Pay records, but not employment contracts? The binary opposition between *literacy* and *illiteracy* was unfit to encompass the diversity of ways in which they are used. During the 1990s, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defined literacy as, “the aptitude for understanding and using written information for everyday life: at work, at home, in the community, in preparation for attaining personal goals and extending one’s knowledge and capacities.” This definition was so broad that the OECD immediately defined “five levels of literacy” (OCDE 1992; OECD and Statistics Canada 1995, 1998). The illiterate person is one who reads below the minimum level. Could one, with this model, speak of *media literacy*, *physical literacy*, and *emotional literacy*, by using the word *literate* as a generic term? “Literate: competent and experienced in something specified, e.g. computer-literate” (Chambers, *21st Century Dictionary*, quoted by Vincent,⁸ 2003). What is clear is that the increasing number of illiterate people does not signify that literacy standards are falling, but that they are rising (the minimum social demand for literacy is rising).

During the 1990s two opposing approaches of reading abilities prevailed. The first idea defined reading by all of its empirical uses⁹ (Street 2010; Barton and Hamilton 2010, Rockwell 2010). Social practices of writing are many, localized, and heterogeneous: browsing the newspaper, looking over a list of classes, filling out a form, checking the train schedule, reading a novel, flipping through a dictionary, and studying a history lesson are reading activities that have “nothing to do with each other.” Thus, it is necessary to avoid confusing learning how to write and the schooling process, even if, in Western countries, these two phenomena had a tendency to overlap (Scribner and Cole 1981, Hébrard 1988). One could learn outside of school, and while someone could manage to bypass challenges that writing creates in their home environment (they could get assistance from family, at a work site, or at the workshop), the occasional difficulty is not any different from

⁸ Vincent wrote he was allowed according to the model of computer literacy to talk about “Literacy literacy,” ironic title he gave to his article in 2003.

⁹ This idea privileges the ethnographic description that takes account of the variety of situations in which reading occurs. Brian Street critiques both the statistical reductionism and approaches in opposition to ideas about oral and written culture that are too abstract, in the tradition of Jack Goody (Goody and Watt 1968; Goody 1977).

the inability to drive a car, to type on a keyboard, or to speak a foreign language. Nobody was to be a social outcast because of this lack of competency. Furthermore, if someone must be labeled “illiterate” to have the right to attend a training course to “bring their French language skills up to par,” then public aid to fight illiteracy stigmatizes as much as it assists. And yet, the profiles of those asking for training are shockingly heterogeneous (Besse 1997), and the people in charge of the courses doubt that the same classroom exercises that could help a warehouse worker use software to follow the ebb and flow of products, an immigrant mother to understand her children’s report card, and an unemployed person to choose from job opportunities.

The second idea, on the contrary, defines “knowing how to read” on a progressive continuum, going from lowest level of reading ability to the highest. This is the OECD’s idea: as soon as writing becomes mandatory in social and economic circles, illiteracy is judged according to academic norms. The five levels of literacy reflect the five levels of professional qualifications (Nickell and Bell 1996), defined by levels of academic achievement.¹⁰ This definition has the clear advantage of being compatible with formal academic frameworks for the quantitative evaluation of skills for adults as well as children (Limage 2005, Fernandez 2005).

Thus, the discourse about illiteracy contributed to legitimizing a new ambition for teaching: school must prepare students for functional reading. In school, functional writing is what students need to do their student “job”: read instructions, read working papers, follow evaluation protocols, and understand performance evaluations written by their teachers. All of these various forms of information are used to come from oral exchanges in class, but now they have to be read alone. Second change, the discourse on illiteracy had validated for all school criteria. Effectively, this graduated idea of literacy¹¹ appeared around the beginning of the twentieth century, as soon as the ability to read and write became an indication of scholarly performance and individual intelligence. The question of evaluation significantly overwhelms the question of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the learning process, since it constructs new criteria for judging people.

The Ability to Read as a Criterion of Cognitive Normalcy

In France, as in other nineteenth-century European countries, mandatory schooling laws aim to eradicate illiteracy: “The illiterate population, that is to say those who can neither read nor write, will get smaller year by year in France and... the nineteenth century will end with a population that can cross that word out of the

¹⁰The levels go from primary school (level 1) to vocational certifications (level 2), then the mandatory high school diploma (level 3) to the level of the general or technical *baccalauréat* (level 4), and the fifth level corresponds with higher-level technical or university degrees.

¹¹Or of “analphabetism,” as they say in francophone Canada, or of “written culture” or “basic competencies,” as is more often said in France. Cf. Cavet (2002).

dictionary.” This can be read in the article titled, “Illiterates,” in the *Buisson Dictionary* (Ballet-Baz 1887). And yet, the tables of the same article reveal an insurmountable rate of illiteracy, so high that the idea of 100 % literacy seemed a statistical fiction (Chartier 1993a, b). How to distinguish children unfit for any sort of schooling from those who could attain at least an average level of learning? Certainly, those who are “extremely behind,” who cannot even figure out how to speak, cannot benefit from schooling, but how can one classify the others? In 1904, Alfred Binet was asked to develop a simple instrument to make this distinction: this is the metric development scale that classifies all students based on the rapidity with which they learn (Binet 1909).

Binet’s test seeks to test superior functions of intelligence (imagination, memory, attention, and moral sentiments). It gives students an oral test, without asking them to read or write, since it assumes a correlation between linguistic ability and average intellectual and scholarly ability. In this case, a normal child is one that learns how to read within a set amount of time, like the average student in his or her age group. Binet refers to those who are “far behind the average,” who can speak, but will never learn how to read, “abnormal students.” Those who can manage to decipher text, but will always need help to understand it, will never be able to follow a standard curriculum, because they need “special education.” In this way, between the spontaneous, natural acquisition of language and the formal learning process that goes with entry into the language of scholarly writing, the metric scale of intelligence makes a hypothesis of a certain continuity: the differences are by degree and no longer by nature. The metric scale thus constructs a modern definition of intelligence, which is linked to the requirements of mandatory schooling. Converted into the intelligence quotient by Stern, an American psychologist, the Binet test has been used around the world. Through the intermediary of schooling, teachers, students, and parents learn to link intelligence, mental processing speed, and literacy. They grow accustomed to think that failure to learn to read reveals a sort of deficiency that will obviously be a barrier to academic study, but does not get in the way of social and professional integration.

This evidence is questioned, a half-century later, when one can observe that a growing number of children fail to learn to read and that a number of those children have, according to tests, “normal” intelligence. In 1962, according to the statistics of the Minister of National Education, 28 % of boys had to retake their first year of mandatory schooling and more than three out of four children finishing elementary school had been held back for 1 or more years. Psychologists argue about the causes of failure; some still attribute it to intellectual deficiencies (Zazzo 1969), others to emotional challenges (Chiland 1971), and still others to a specific neurological problem, dyslexia (Debray-Ritzen and Milikian 1970). All of the institutions built around tests (scholarly psychology, counseling, and special courses for challenged children) find themselves undermined by them. At the same time, statistics show the social composition of those who are behind in school (INED 1970). For sociologists and psycholinguists, working-class students, resistant to abstract codes of conduct, are not held back by any mental handicap (Bernstein 1971). Is it necessary to attribute a sociocultural handicap to them? In order to do

this, we must define “cultural norms,” which no one is able to do, unless a middle-class education is set up as a model. There again, there are a multitude of challenges in reading (which effectively reduce the chances of academic success), stemming from the academic situation: to be able to manage alone with middle-school-level texts (texts for adolescents ages 11–15), students must read “autonomously” much earlier, by the age of 8 and no later than the age of 10 or 11. Few achieve that level of reading. Mass failure in reading therefore happened simultaneously with the redefinition of manual labor, obliging (almost) everyone to use the written word.

In the polemics about adult illiteracy, teacher trainers (working, as was my case, in teacher training institute) could see, without any difficulty, a revival of the polemics which were common 15 years earlier, but they were used at that time exclusively about school reading (Chartier and Hébrard 1992; Chartier 1993a, b). The question of reading as “mandatory” returned, for reasons that were soon considered social and academic, and from then on, reading was inserted into the new framework of analysis. The evaluation of success or failure had long seemed to describe reality as it was. Studies from the 1980s showed that the “objective” indicators were tools used to interpret reality, because they constructed the object that they were measuring. Those who denounced the enslavement of schools to economic aims, foreigners to the initial project of education for all, could just as well wonder about working in a more and more “scholarly” or “pedagogized” way in which the economic and social worlds work (Depaepe et al. 2008). At the heart of these changes that provoked as much conceptual interference as social and pedagogical stalemates, there was the acquisition of reading and thus the question of how it should be taught.

From Study on Discourse to Study on Practice: Questions, Methodology, and Results

New Representations of the Act of Reading

The traditional conception of the learning process sets two different steps: first, deciphering without error and then reading out loud to enhance understanding. In this conception, the only special feature of writing was the alphabetic code. Understanding of a text seemed to naturally follow reading it aloud. The process of reading one’s native language, hearing oneself reading aloud, word after word, enables the reader to understand. From the 1970s, the educational discourse rejected this dichotomy: to know how to read aloud is not to know how to read. One could read a text out loud without ever understanding its meaning. The official guideline of 1985 adhered to and affirmed “to read is to understand.” As long as beginners worked hard to assemble the text, word by word, they could immediately grasp the overall meaning of it. Furthermore, as soon as students could identify words without effort, they had truly begun to read. Since 1989, national assessments

were designed to precisely identify which reading skills have been mastered and which remain challenging for 8- to 11-year-olds, that is, after 2 and 5 years of mandatory schooling.

The failure of former methods can be attributed to theoretical or practical “errors,” perfectly rectifiable thanks to scientific knowledge. When phonemes and graphemes stood for letters and sounds in textbooks, linguists demanded that all teachers had some knowledge of the graphophonic system of the French language (Marchand 1975). Didactitians denounced the dangers of exercises that had got children into the habit of reading aloud without understanding the content “like parakeets” (Charmeux 1975). Psycholinguists found that many children didn’t speak good enough to start learning how to write (Dannequin et al. 1975). Sociologists had described in detail the selective results of reading codes and content for working-class students (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964, 1970). According to some psychologists, orderly steps should be followed to learn how to write and read. Otherwise, teachers would assign exercises prematurely and with no outcome (Ferreiro and Gomez-Palacio 1982). According to cognitive psychologists, teachers taught too little or not at all the formal signs that contribute to the understanding of texts (punctuation, syntax, discursive organization, and layout) (Zagar and Fayol 1992).

In short, reading practices and teaching methods were now subjected to multiple analyses by researchers, thus destroying the beautiful simplicity of an old idea: to learn to read combines processes so complex that the teacher has to combine an inordinate amount of high-level knowledge and didactical skills. To guide the class and best assist the academic progress of each student, the teacher must have as much rigor as flexibility. One can understand how a single idea began to unite people during the 1980s: one must not trust the first year of schooling to a new teacher. This recommendation seemed to make sense for teacher trainers, but it revealed a radical change in reading teaching compared to previous teaching practices. In the nineteenth century, teaching a child to read and write was considered a tiresome but easy task that one entrusted to the wife of the primary school teacher, to beginning teachers, to instructors recruited from the group of the most advanced students. Any housewife was presumed capable of teaching her children to read. In the twenty-first century, despite many years of university studies, young teachers were not deemed ready for the same task. At this point, what had changed that teaching reading had become such a difficult task? This report created a real enigma: all of the history of literacy and of teaching of reading seemed ripe for reconsideration. My research has been based on this historic mess since the 2000s.

The Representations of the Savoir Lire (Literacy) and the Question of Markers

I will sum up the steps and the results of the existing scholarship in order to question how the data gathered during the documentary research was constructed and what, in these data, pertains to interpretative choices: what made these choices possible? What makes them legitimate?

Firstly, let us remember that this type of research is set within the scope of a history which considers itself part of the social sciences: the realities at stake do not belong to political history and are not the result of legislative or institutional decisions. The history of reading (Cavallo and Chartier 1999) and of the representations of the act of reading (its functions, value, and requirements) belongs, in every period, to the realm of personal experience. Nevertheless, some of the coexisting social practices are raised to the status of an ideal model: this is the case for the “professionals of reading,” who can be depending on the centuries, religious personnel, legal practitioners, scientists, writers, or journalists. The representation of this model, adopted and transmitted by those who educate children, imposes itself on everybody, orienting the aims of the school learning process and the evaluation of its effects.

Investigating the practices in order to date these changes and to find their causes is a different task: we need to find documentary corpora that allow us to detect those practices, to situate their actors, and to set forth interpretative hypothesis that would “explain” their appearance. The search for clues implies a hypothesis that one needs to put to test against the sources. Contrary to what the proponents of the “linguistic turn” may have believed, the “plausibility” of an explanation cannot be sufficient for historians. Historical research does not obey the same paradigms as works of fiction: it requires a “documentary proof” (Chartier 1998).

For what reasons can a difference be or not be described as “historical change”? It depends on the topic of the research, which can be macroscopic (the fall of the Roman Empire) or microscopical (the apparition of the semicolon in nineteenth-century manuscripts). All primers being different from one another, what is it that allows the researcher to establish that some differences are “significant” and others are not? For instance, alphabet books can easily be classified in three corpuses, depending on their contents: religious texts (Catholic prayers, Christian instructions), instructive and moral texts (about the Earth, plants, animals, and the duties of children), or playful and childish texts (collection of anecdotes, short tales of children’s lives). In the beginning, I had assumed that those were in fact three steps going from the old textbook to the modern one, but that was a misleading path: all these different models coexisted between 1820 and 1880, and similar learning exercises could be found in all three corpora. These “differences” of content were useful for studying the ideological orientations which contributed to the construction of a cultural identity, but they were useless to reflect on the learning process.

Research on the history of alphabetization opened up another lead. The history of school, initially focused on political struggles between the Church and the state, was part of a broader social and cultural history—the story of the democratization of writing made possible by Gutenberg. But the research on popular alphabetization was at odds with the Republican vulgate: it was not the III Republic (with Jules Ferry’s laws) that had allowed the people into the written culture but the Reform in France as much as in other European countries (Furet and Ozouf 1977). The Protestant North preceded the Catholic South, but it was always in order to instruct the people about the necessary truths to their salvation that religious and civil authorities had wanted to alphabetize and school the people, not in order to form free citizens or efficient workers.

The Furet and Ozouf survey had settled the ground for a great theoretical debate on markers (Sachs and Furet 19974). Was the ability to sign a wedding or baptism register enough to prove that one could read? Statistic figures could only be drawn if the markers remained “stable” during the period. International comparisons had confirmed that signature was a “good marker” until 1870 (Graff 1981), but not any more so in the time of compulsory schooling.

Teaching How to Read and Situation Constrains

What place did learning tools hold in the alphabetization growth? As in the nineteenth century, the history of pedagogy remained the history of doctrines (Avanzini 1981). Through the evolution of reading pedagogy, it was possible to see a history of progress—progress of ideas towards science and progress of techniques towards a greater efficiency, under the impulsion of “precursor” pedagogues (Maria Montessori, Ovide Decroly, Edouard Claparède, Célestin Freinet). If pedagogy advanced, it was thanks to these exceptional innovators, whom the teachers, it appears, almost always resisted, out of hostility or of habit inertia.

This bottom-down history of pedagogy left aside all the innovations that emerged in the classroom as well as the teachers’ contribution to the crafting of their working tools: most of the textbooks had been designed by practitioners. This history made it impossible to understand why ideas or processes, which were for a long time without effect, had suddenly been massively adopted. It left in the shadows all the material obstacles to the use of new methods and ignored the debates about professional and cultural questions that divided teachers.

The beginners’ textbooks constituted a series.¹² They allowed us to date the evolutions of production and to understand how it was received on the ground. If a publication is republished endlessly (136 editions for Peigné’s one, published in 1835), it means that it meets the expectations. As opposed to the didacticians and the linguists that are looking for signs of didactic archaism or modernity in relation to current “scientific” criteria, my concern was to analyze nineteenth-century textbooks according to their classroom use value. What kind of resources did a textbook provide teachers for their day-to-day work (boards to pin in the classroom, quizzing methods, progression, oral–written relations)? To shed light on teaching situations, I had prefaces, guidebooks for teachers, student accounts, and personal narratives at my disposal. The absence and then the presence of notebooks soon appeared to me as essential data.

Firstly, I tried to understand why the syllabic method, held responsible for the massive failure in 1960s France, had allowed, on the contrary, to shorten the reading learning process of 1 or 2 years in the 1860. This first enigma

¹²I have studied 135 *primers*, edited from 1830 to 1890 (Library of INRP, now in the “Bibliothèque Diderot”, ENS-Lyon).

could be solved through dating the appearance of printed words in books in both roman and cursive characters. Cursive syllables and cursive words were models for students to read and copy in their notebooks. Yet, the methods used at the beginning of the nineteenth century separated the reading learning process from the writing one, which was to be undertaken much later. The “modern” method of reading and writing simultaneously had been made possible thanks to a technological innovation (low-cost paper and metallic pens). As soon as students learned syllables while writing them, letter by letter, they did not need to spell them out loud anymore. They could read syllables altogether (BA), hence the name “syllabic method.”

Secondly, I tried to understand how the spelling method (the B-A BA) abolished by the syllabic method worked. In order to do this, we ought to accept the idea that it is possible to know how to read without knowing how to write. The current opposition (illiterate/literate) ignored the existence of the “knowing only how to read” and to manage to understand to what this “semi-competence” corresponded; it was not didactics, but rather the anthropologies of the written word and of the division between clerks/clerics and illiterate people in ancient societies, which one needed to consider (Goody and Watt 1968; Goody 1977; Hall 1981; Grafton 1991; Hébrard 1996). Historical research about the memory of texts (Ong 1982; Carruthers 1990) has allowed us to shed light on the modalities of reading before the Reform. Back then, texts were read to be learned and recited in unison, along the lines of liturgic texts. Texts for the beginners were always heard before they were read. Thus, before reading catechism, the younger had already heard the older students reciting it (La Salle 1706). Spelling prayers known by heart, like the Pater Noster, aimed at making students perceive how a sequence of words was “encoded” in writing (P-A Pa, T-E-R Ter). Spelling a text was similar to sight-reading a musical score already memorized by hearing. Spelling was therefore a good way of learning how to read and reread out loud a limited corpus of religious texts (Strauss 1981; Hébrard 1988; Monaghan 1998). By the same token, this shed light on the “evaluation criteria” of the learning process.

Learning Aims and Evaluation Modalities

Once these texts were well memorized, students would try their hand’s at unknown texts of the same sort (psalms, hymns). Those of them that did not reach this “autonomous” reading knew enough nonetheless to answer the catechism exam and be admitted in communion: religious education did not ask for more. These examinations—to access communion in Catholic countries, or confirmation in Reform countries—existed throughout Europe. They were more or less severe depending on the expectations of the clergy: lots of children “failed” (Johansson 1981; Julia 1995). We could consider them the “PISA tests of the seventeenth century,” because they evaluated literacy of the time, though declarative (the contents of the dogma, religious history) and procedural knowledge (be able to recite/reread a know text). They were at the basis of a lot of ulterior examinations

(Caspard 2002). Communion was done at age 11 or 12 and confirmation at age 14 or 15: this 3-year gap was sufficient to explain the higher level of Protestant Northern Europe compared to the Catholic South. However, this proficiency did not allow to quickly and silently read the vast quantity of profane products mass-printed with the steam-powered printing press.

These documentary data converged towards a general interpretation. First of all, the very definition of what “knowing how to read” means had changed during the eighteenth century. This “reading revolution” (Wittmann 1999) felt around 1750–1760, when the deplorative speech appeared (“people read too much and read anything and everything”) which was to last two centuries, as we have noted. On the contrary, the learning techniques in agreement with the new aims (reading to be informed, to learn, and to enjoy oneself) and with the new modalities of reading (to read alone, fast, and silently) did not arrive in the school until the next century, around 1860, with the “reading–writing method.” Between 1760 and 1860, “reading was the curse of childhood,” to quote Rousseau. All accounts from the times converge: the old method could not meet the new objectives and too many children finished school without knowing how to read, in France and everywhere else (Matthews 1966; Vincent 1999). Moreover, school banned from the classroom entertaining and useful readings to keep only the “instructive” ones. These are “lessons” (of moral, history, sciences) that are to be read out loud again and again in order to be learned and to be recited, along the lines of catechism. Beyond the first class, school pedagogy conserved collective, slow, and aloud readings until the “reading crisis” of the 1970s.

This interpretation allows us to understand the transformations of the school curriculum, by showing the link between didactic progression and writing technologies. The method of reading and writing simultaneously was rapidly adopted by teachers, thanks to the simplicity of the new tools, but also because it solved the principal difficulty of the multilevel classroom: to occupy students who did not yet know how to read and “could not do anything without the teacher’s help.” Like the older students, they alternated between lessons and exercises, reading and writing. Thus, since the 1860s, what will later become the “preparatory course”—the first year of the new elementary curriculum, which became compulsory in 1886—has gradually been shaped.

Second relationship is between intelligence and learning pace. In 1830s textbooks, there was no length prescribed for the different steps. This is no longer the case with the textbooks from the 1860s, split into daily lessons, and distributed during the school year. Thus, teachers must have the students that “follow” study together and those that “do not follow” in another group, because everything goes too fast; the teacher moves to the next lesson before they have assimilated the previous one. Teachers notice “in practice” the relation between intelligence, rapidity, and mastery of school writing, which Binet theorized in 1904 when he establishes his metrical scale for intelligence. New modalities of reading evaluation have become “thinkable,” linking the steps of compulsory schooling and the “levels” of intelligence: to be ahead or behind (in regard to one’s age group) becomes an indicator of success or failure.

This interpretation finally solves the contradiction between speech and practice when it comes to memory. Elementary instruction is composed from this point forward of two times: the time of alphabetization (decipher between six and seven) and the time of instruction allowed by readings (moral, history, sciences). Successes in school and memory are therefore inseparable “in practice.” And yet, speeches from the time keep stigmatizing memory, always characterized as mechanic, repetitive, catechistic, and meaningless, while, in fact, having a good memory is enough to be a good student. Through this rejection, it is the old way of religious instruction through reading which is aimed at. In 1880, the great flaw of memory is that it allows to “recite without understanding.” To this date, the spelling method that came with the popular alphabetization in the time of Reform has become “incomprehensible.” Republicans, proud of the progress realized since school was no longer the Church’s business, but the state’s mission, attribute this pedagogical archaism to the clergy’s reluctance to instruct common people, or even to its will to keep it ignorant.

Conclusion

The recent fields of inquiry on the history of teaching how to read arose from present questions, because of the current mutations of writing technologies. These concerns have brought new perspectives on old sources, with new interpretative hypothesis.

The history of textbooks has “proved” the historicity of the concept of literacy, conceived as the capacity to read written texts whose usage was (historically) a social imperative. The aimed literacy in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe is religious instruction, be it reformed or Catholic. The literacy of the 1780s is the reading of gazettes, encyclopedias, and novels. The French school literacy of the 1880s is about morality, sciences, and the national humanities of republican instruction. The new literacy of the 1980s is the reading of useful writings in the working places and social space.

Between the research on teaching how to read conducted in the 1970s and those that we have carried out since the 2000s, it is not only the interpretation of data that has changed but also the interpretative framework. Until the reading crises of the 1970s, the international interpretative framework was, like the UNESCO one, built on the belief of the ineluctable progress of “the” written culture. Just as mastery of the alphabetical code potentially opened to reading anything, school had to avoid this knowing how to read being deviated into reading the “wrong” things, focusing on the corpus of instructive and formative readings, tuned to the project of the authorities of the time. Thanks to the school obligation, the democratic division of the written culture seemed secured between people and peoples.

This belief was undone at the moment when the secondary teaching became compulsory for all the teenagers in developed countries. Therefore,

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reading found itself to be competing with other cultural activities. At school, it was possible to be a good student and not liking to read as long as one was strong in mathematics. At the same time, useful readings that school did not care about until there invaded the working spaces and the social exchanges. School mass failure shows that knowing how to read was not as “cross-cutting” of a skill as it was thought to be. The problem increased with the digital technologies of the 1970–2000s, easier to deplore than to be thought, unsettled all the reading pedagogies, and confronted to failures that they still struggle to diminish.

On the other hand, they allowed to realize retrospectively of reading revolutions that produced great ruptures in past pedagogies. Beginners initiation, in agreement with the aims of the Reform, leaned on the inherited tradition (clerks formation) and a technical innovation (the printing press). Thus, a reading pedagogy built on the memory of texts passed from the clerics to the people thanks to Gutenberg. But at the cost of a concession: the ability to read and hand-write. This pedagogy of the “only reading” affected the way texts were understood or known by heart without being understood. It found itself unsettled by the rise of edition and printing press in the eighteenth century, but it perpetuated until around 1860, for lack of a collective pedagogy in agreement with the aims of extensive pedagogy, until a new technology (pens and paper at low cost) made easy the learning of reading thanks to the one of writing.

Nevertheless, this entrance into reading–writing perpetuated the separation of the learning process into two stages, one centered around accurate deciphering (oralization of syllables, words, and sentences) and the other focused on the memorization of contents (read to understand and learn). Curiously enough, “theoretical” debates between the syllabic method (dominant in France and in the countries of regular orthography) and the global method (dominant in the USA and England) constantly underestimate the role of writing in the learning process (Huey 1908; Chall 1967; Monaghan 1998). That is still where we are, at the end of the twentieth century, when new communication technologies allow online interactions between keyboard and screen, between writing and reading. Just as it happened at the beginning of the sixteenth century and in the mid-nineteenth century, these technological innovations should produce pedagogical inventions, in agreement with the new interactive modes of reading and writing.

We find ourselves in a paradoxical situation: all the reading practices that have superimposed over the centuries continue to coexist in practice in the social and school space. Nonetheless, speeches about reading, focalized on readings assessment, only legitimate those readings that are tested in the “paper–pen” tests, while we still wait for the “multimedia” tests that would associate the written word, images, diagrams, and the symbolical or formal writings.

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Evaluations pertain therefore to different levels: practices of reading (leisure activities or working tasks) pertain to the sociological and ethnological enquires, where observations and personal interviews are more important than final accounts. Numerical evaluation of proficiency has a simplistic aspect because of its structure, even if comparisons are useful in the short term. Thus, France results in PISA are stable “on average” between 2000 and 2010, but the rate of students in great difficulty has almost doubled in 10 years. How should we interpret this data? How can this drifting be stopped or reduced? Statistical markers decide how much of the iceberg is visible, but in order to address the observed “failures,” we ought not to forget the submerged part: oral exchanges, out loud reading, collective activities, memorization of poetry and songs, and free writing are also what gives meaning and value to learning processes, what makes “a culture” out of school literacy.

School reading policies are thus put to test with concrete pedagogical choices. If regulatory texts explain aims, the implementation is the day-to-day work of teachers, who never settle for barely executing the ministerial prescriptions nor for applying protocols deduced from scientific research. It is visible in classrooms; it is visible in photos and videos that show what is masked by numerical markers: the reorganization of the working spaces imposed by new tools, in a school environment which undergoes complete evolution (Rockwell 2011). In a period when social reading practices go through such important changes, patient observations in situ are always indispensable in order to avoid confusing declarations of intent and realization, wishes, and acts, in sum, discourses and practices.

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5.5 Curriculum History and Interpretation

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Act of Interpretation

At the heart of the discipline of history is the act of interpretation. Although in our common sense world, history is often thought of as representing a factual account of past events, it is actually something different. Clearly history is part of a real past, but it is a constructed past rooted in the imagination of the historian. It is this process of interpretation that defines history much as the task of explanation typifies the work of the natural scientist and even the social scientist (Gardner 2010). In their introduction to historical methodology, Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier note that every culture tells stories about itself. And it is these stories that create the meaning that constitutes the culture. History as these scholars see it is the collection of stories that we tell ourselves and others about those things that are important to us. Such stories, however, are not discovered. Rather they are constructed by historians who select the people and events that they believe are critical in revealing what a culture is all about and in so doing they “interpret the past” (Howell and Prevenier 2001, p. 1).

Sections of this essay represent a revision and extension of ideas originally developed by Barry Franklin in his book *Curriculum, Community, and Urban School Reform* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). The revision emerged from the joint efforts of Franklin and those of Richard Nye in his 2011 doctoral dissertation at Utah State University entitled, *Comprehensive High School Reform: The Lived Experience of Teachers and the Small Learning Community Initiative*.

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Curriculum is as it turns out an especially appropriate site for this kind of work. As the historian Frederick Rudolph has noted, the curriculum “is one of the places where we have told ourselves who we are” (Rudolph 1977, p. 1). Since the curriculum embodies in written and material form those things that we so prize that we wish to pass on to future generations, as well as those things that we so fear that we wish to rid ourselves of, it represents an artifact that gives meaning to our culture (Kliebard and Franklin 1983). The purpose of this essay is to explore the use of interpretation in the work of curriculum history.

Timberton and Smaller Learning Communities

Our starting point for this essay will be a consideration of a study that we undertook between 2006 and 2009 in which we studied the transformation of an urban high school that we called Timberton Central into a number of smaller learning communities. The result was to divide the school’s approximately 1,500 students, housed in traditional secondary academic departments, into a number of themed learning communities that over the course of the study varied in size from about 200 to 400 students. During the time that we were studying Timberton’s reorganization, there were changes in the shape of these communities. Originally there was a Ninth Grade Center and four career oriented communities—Applied Science and Technology, Arts and Humanities, Business and Computers, and Health Science and Human Service. Midway through our time at Timberton, the school’s administration introduced an organizational change that would occur the following year and involved the merging of the Business and Computers Community with the Arts and Humanities Community to create three career-oriented units for the tenth through twelfth grades enrolling an approximately equal number of students. The change was designed to correct an imbalance in the enrollment of the career-oriented communities and a school system decision to move the ninth grade in the city’s two high schools into the new junior high schools that were designed to replace the district’s existing middle schools.

Located in the economically distressed, high poverty, and racially diverse Intermountain West City of approximately 79,000 inhabitants, which we named Timberton, the impetus for this high school reorganization was a demographic shift in enrollment that was bringing into the city’s two comprehensive high schools—Timberton Central and Timberton North—increasing numbers of at-risk, limited English proficiency students. At the time that we began our study, Timberton had the highest concentration of Latinas/Latinos of any community in the state. Between 1990 and 2000, their share of the city’s population had increased by approximately 138 %. The result was high levels of unemployment among the city’s inhabitants, a growing population of unskilled individuals working in low paying jobs, and a high rate of childhood poverty.

This demographic shift has not left the city’s schools unaffected. At the time of our study, 43 % of Timberton Central’s student population was of Latina/Latino origin and 23 % possessed limited English proficiency or spoke no English. The 2000–2001

demographics of Timberton North show that there were 1,594 students. Of those students, 46 % qualified for the free or reduced lunch program. There was a 34 % mobility rate, as defined by students enrolling in or moving away from the school. Exasperating student attendance challenges, administrators estimated that one third of the student body missed at least one class daily. Administrators at Timberton have pointed out that many Latina/Latino students miss 8–10 weeks of school during the year as they travel back and forth to their home countries. Also, half of the Latina/Latino students reported “a low commitment to school.”

Over half of the school’s enrollment qualified for free and reduced lunch. This was a student population that was experiencing declines in academic achievement and graduation rates and increases in the dropout rate, student drug use, and school-related violence. The domestic abuse issues and violence that are present in the Timberton area have also infiltrated the district. Inner city Timberton has 71 gangs leading to the highest juvenile violent crime rate in the state, and nearly one in six of Timberton’s youth belongs to a gang. Delinquent behavior by area youth is also manifested in the form of substance abuse. It has been reported that minors in the Timberton area regularly engage in substance abuse activities where 58 % report using alcohol, 47 % cigarettes, 35 % marijuana, 22 % inhalants, and 18 % sedatives.

As a result of the delinquent behavior that existed in the city’s two comprehensive high schools—Timberton Central and Timberton North—both campuses exhibited high rates of disciplinary action. During the 2001–2002 school year, there were 1,003 suspensions, nearly a third of all high school students. Teenage pregnancies in the Timberton area are the second highest in the state, and the district referred 269 students to the city’s alternative high school as a result of pregnancies. The district’s challenges are not necessarily unique as many urban high schools have faced similar issues across the country.

In 2000–2001 and in 2001–2002, Timberton Central failed to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as measured by the state criterion referenced tests. The 2001–2002 tests indicated that 65 % of the school’s students scored below the state standard in science, 38 % below the state standard in language arts, and 80 % below the state standard in mathematics. And in this same year, Timberton Central reported graduation rates of 68 % for its White students and 32 % for its minority students. Many urban high schools have turned to comprehensive school reform to serve as a catalyst to promote change in their students’ lives (Levine 2010, p. 277). Given the nature of these challenges and the alarming necessity to do something to help the area youth, the Timberton City School District felt that it was critical to adopt a comprehensive school reform that was centered on building positive relationships among teachers and students.

The purposes behind the introduction of smaller learning communities were to “improve overall student achievement, thereby decreasing the achievement gap” and to “provide a more personal, productive, and safe learning environment where all students can realize their potential.” The goals that the project spelled out in achieving its purposes were to:

- Improve every student’s academic performance to meet high standards of excellence

- Prepare each student to successfully transition to the next stage in his or her development, including ninth grade for those entering high school and higher education or the workforce for those in the 10th–12th grades
- Improve student school-related attitudes and behaviors
- Build the school's capacity to create, support, and sustain more personal learning communities for students

Overall, the reorganization was promoted on the grounds that it would offer a curriculum that would engage students, reduce the likelihood that they would drop out, and respond positively to the school's changing demographics.

We inaugurated our study of smaller learning communities at the beginning of the fourth year of the school's reorganization. At the time that we arrived at the school, the Ninth Grade Center and the original four learning communities had been established, teachers had been assigned to these units, and each of the communities was at different stages in implementing their theme-based curricula. In our visits to the school, which occurred roughly every 2 weeks during the first year of the study and less frequently as the research progressed, we interviewed teachers, students, and administrators, talked informally to teachers in their lounge, sat in the hallway outside the main office and observed passing events, and attended learning communities and school wide meetings. Towards the end of the first year that we visited the school, we observed several classes that seemed to be making progress in implementing specific curricular innovations.

In the course of our visits to the school, we collected a large body of observational and written data. The most important information that we obtained came from the various interviews that we conducted, which we supplemented with teacher class schedules, meeting agendas, memoranda of various sorts, and teacher-produced curricular materials. Our data gathering identified a number of issues that were important in shaping our study. They included the reaction of Timberton teachers to other small schools and smaller learning communities that they visited, the leadership of school personnel during the planning and initial implementation of the project, the support of teachers and other stakeholders for the project, the effect of smaller learning communities on interpersonal relationships among teachers and students, and the obstacles that affected the implementation of the project.

Timberton's teachers were generally supportive of this reorganization. They thought highly of the new principal who was hired to implement it, and they for the most part indicated a willingness to support his leadership. They particularly liked the fact that he both set a clear agenda for the direction that the faculty would take but at the same time provided them with a large degree of autonomy in implementing the reform.

Yet, there were divisions among the faculty regarding smaller learning communities. The majority of Timberton's teachers supported the reorganization. There were others, however, who either explicitly opposed the reform or were hesitant and seemed to question its wisdom. In the latter group were teachers, typically those who had been at the school the longest, who saw smaller learning communities as

just one more reform effort that they had undertaken over the years. The problems with educational change are further exacerbated when seasoned faculty are called upon to implement and endure change after change (Evans 2001, p. 5; Hall and Hord 2001, p. 25; Oxley 2004, p. 3). Such initiatives, according to some of these reluctant teachers, come and go and over time have engendered an attitude, according to a history teacher that “this too shall pass.” What bothered these teachers was their belief that the introduction of smaller learning communities would change what had become long-standing and comfortable practices at the school.

One of the features of the Timberton reorganization, which was in fact a hallmark of small school reform generally, was the belief that the establishment of smaller instructional units would create stronger and more intimate relationships among students and between students and teachers. The initiative was to be a vehicle for building a sense of community and common purpose throughout the school. In that vein some of the teachers who we interviewed reported that the line that is often drawn between educator and student in typical comprehensive high schools became blurred in Timberton’s smaller learning communities. Students also noted that the smaller learning communities improved relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves.

Establishing smaller learning communities at Timberton did, as it turned out, pose serious challenges for the school and its staff. One obstacle to reforming the school was the idea of change itself. Faculty were not comfortable with having to alter practices that they had followed for years. Another difficulty that got in the way of the reform was the belief among some teachers that the initiative was just not working in the way that it should. It was, for example, a central belief of those supporting this kind of change that an important factor in the ultimate success of students was their selection of the community that matched their immediate interests and career aspirations. Yet, it was never all that clear as to whether students were very thoughtful in making this seemingly important choice. From our interviews with students, it seemed that many of them selected their communities on the basis of their friends’ selections rather than on their interests or long-term career goals. It has been noted that smaller learning community similar to Timberton Central have experienced the unintended consequence of “within-school social segregation, as minority and low-income students are less likely to be placed in (or choose) advanced academic classes” (Lee and Ready 2007, p. 10). Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be less inclined to engage in curricular activities with greater amounts of academic rigor for a wide variety of social and cultural reasons. As a result, many students choose to associate with those who share their same academic and social aspirations or lack thereof (Ready et al. 2004, p. 2007). Additionally it turned out in some cases at Timberton Central that students were assigned to communities for scheduling purposes, rather than because of individual student preference.

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to Timberton Central’s reorganization was the fact that the principal who orchestrated the reform was planning to retire at the end of the fourth year of the program. Faculty thought that this would mean the end

of the grant money that had made the effort possible as well as the distinct possibility that the school would return to its former departmental structure. Another obstacle to the program's success was the attitudes of students. While many students saw the establishment of smaller learning communities as a means of helping them plan for their future, there was a sense that the program was not well organized. In that vein, students reported that they encountered difficulties in actually getting into the learning community that they wanted. Other students reported that the practice of enrolling both college-bound and noncollege-bound students in the same communities undermined the focus of these supposed career-oriented instructional units.

Notwithstanding the difficulties that accompanied the smaller learning communities' initiative, Timberton's faculty identified a number of positive changes that the initiative had brought. The establishment of smaller instructional units created an environment where teachers were able to know their students, which in turn created a safer environment for everyone. It was far easier in this setting for teachers to recognize who were the potential troublemakers and who might have entered their classrooms but did not belong. Teachers also noted that student attendance and achievement were improving and that the graduation rate was increasing with the introduction of smaller learning communities. Likewise teachers pointed out that the reorganization had brought with it additional funding to enable them to attend conferences, to introduce instructional innovations, and to learn new skills.

It is difficult to know what to make of these favorable faculty impressions when we consider them side by side with the reports on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) that the Federal government employed to assess the success of the program. Timberton did not achieve AYP in 2005–2006, the first year that the smaller learning communities were in operation. While the percentage of the school's White students performing at the proficient level in language arts and mathematics was adequate to achieve AYP, the percentage of the school's Latinas/Latinos, economically disadvantaged, and limited English proficient students was not. The following year, the school did attain AYP with Whites, Latinas/Latinos, economically disadvantaged, and limited English speaking students all achieving proficient performance in language arts and mathematics. During the next year, however, only White students at Timberton attained AYP.

Historical and Contemporary Interpretation of Smaller Learning Communities

Interpretation plays a key role in our effort to understand the small class transition that we detailed in our consideration of Timberton Central High School. The reorganization of Timberton is an example of the debates surrounding the appropriate size of the high school that characterized alternative views of this institution during its early history. It is a discourse that contains conflicting elements, some

supporting small schools as a route to constructing a child-centered community, and others opposing this organizational scheme because of its supposed threat to academic achievement. Depending on which elements of small schools one chooses to focus, it is a framework comprised of different circulating discourses in the form of beliefs, knowledge, and social practices that point in conflicting directions about the purposes of this organizational pattern. We can, for example, concentrate on the deep and intimate relationships that are possible in the small school with the kind of close interaction between people who know and value each other and share a common understanding. But we can also focus on the opposing kind of relationships that occur when our interactions are distant and our understandings of those with whom we interact are transitory and superficial. Small schools are then subject to different understandings that lead us towards distinct conclusions about this form of social organization (Olssen et al. 2004).

Our focus on this topic stems from our interest in two important issues in curriculum research. First, we were interested in advancing our understanding of curriculum history further than we had heretofore. In a number of publications during the past almost 40 years, one of the authors—Barry Franklin—had been engaged in a continuing effort to explore the development of the curriculum. He embarked on this work in the mid-1970s and over the next three decades published a number of essays on the history of curriculum theory and practice. His initial work looked at the historical development of twentieth-century American curriculum thought but soon evolved into wider studies that considered the history of curriculum policy and practice (Franklin 1991, 1999, 2008; Kliebard and Franklin 1983).

Second, our research was part of a funded study to explore the implementation of smaller learning communities in urban, comprehensive high schools. The school that we selected, Timberton Central, was in the process of reorganizing the school into smaller learning communities as part of its effort to enhance student achievement in this urban, largely minority high school. This effort held out a great appeal to us because it would allow us to consider what a conceptual framework that had guided our work in curriculum history for many years, which we labeled *community*, told us about this innovation.

Our study focused on two sources of data. One source was ethnographic and included interviews of key stakeholders at Timberton who played a role in the smaller learning communities initiative, notes we took from our observations of classrooms that we visited, and a variety of memoranda, curriculum material, and other written documents related to the initiative. A second source of data was historical in nature and included a host of primary documents that examined the introduction during the twentieth century of the small schools and smaller learning communities movements as well as secondary documents in the form of scholarly articles and book chapters that explore the history of these two movements. Our approach to this research was to consider the interplay between these two data sources in providing us a picture of the introduction, development, and implementation of small schools generally and smaller learning communities in particular. Our overall framework was that of *community*, and our research consisted of considering what these different sources of data told us about this notion and how

our understanding of this concept affected our interpretation of smaller learning communities.

The notion of community is a popular concept that is often used in ambiguous and imprecise ways that allows individuals and groups with conflicting viewpoints to employ the term differently. The sociologist Nikolas Rose (1999) describes a number of different ways that the term has been used since the late nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the concept of community referred to a sense of solidarity that would repair the dislocations caused by industrial capitalism and an accompanying division of labor. In the years after World War II, the invocation of community involved efforts to repair the kind of undermining of neighborhoods that had occurred as a result of the rise of the impersonal, bureaucratic state. In the 1960s, community was a collective term to refer to the various welfare institutions that were to be found in close proximity to where people lived and work. And presently when those of a communitarian persuasion talk about community, they are referring to the affective elements that enter into the establishment of one's identity. These diverse uses of the notion of community can work to undermine the usefulness and value of the concept.

Another problem with the notion of community involves the fact that there is something nebulous about the concept that leads those who use the term to define it in numerous, vague, and oftentimes contradictory ways. The sociologist Suzanne Keller (2003) notes in this vein that the term has been used to describe a physical or geographical place, as a set of shared values, the bonds and network that join people and groups together, and a host of other collective entities.

A third problem associated with the concept of community has to do with its actual existence. The anthropologist Benedict Anderson notes in this vein the "imagined" quality of one kind of community, that of the nation. He argues that once the features of the notion of nationality were defined in the late eighteenth century, they took on something of a life of their own as present in any entity given the designation notwithstanding its actual characteristics. A feature commonly associated with community is that of deep, face-to-face relationships among members of a group. For Anderson, however, such relationships are often not possible in anything beyond the smallest of such groups. Yet, they are often posited to exist as one of the defining attributes of any group. They are, in other words, imagined (Anderson 1991).

Because of these problems with the notion of community, it is not surprising to find commentators and critics voicing doubts about its efficacy and urging elimination from our lexicon of possible societal visions. In an opinion piece in the British journal *Prospect*, William Davies noted that invoking notions of community have less to do with "revealing truths or referring to facts" than it has to do with "projecting a persona and shaping a situation." This is what he refers to as serving a "performative" function that rarely addresses or resolves important questions but rather reduces them to the level of distracting "moralisms" (Davies 2006, pp. 15–16).

We are often left, then, with the dilemma of what to do with a concept that appears to be important and yet whose meaning seems so nebulous and indefinite as

to lead many to doubt its usefulness. The ethnohistorical approach that we adopted in this essay offers us one possible resolution. Building on the ideas that we developed in the essay, we can consider the notion of community as what is called a floating or empty signifier, that is, a word without a single or specific referent (Laclau 1994). According to Rosa Burgos, a notion of this sort “flows and circulates throughout a variety of meanings and sites of enunciation, and it has become what it is today through a series of discursive articulations throughout history” (Burgos 2003, p. 55). The research approach that we took in this essay, then, offers us a way of making sense of a concept that is used simultaneously in multiple ways.

We obtained our data using traditional techniques that typify the kind of research routinely used by qualitatively oriented educational scholars who work in the fields of educational history, curriculum, and educational sociology (McCulloch 2004). It was from these data sources that we constructed our narrative and based on that account developed a historical and contemporary interpretation of the Timberton smaller learning communities initiative. We selected what we are calling a policy narrative for conveying this research because our account of Timberton’s smaller learning communities tells the story of an educational dilemma—low achievement among Latina/Latino students in an urban high school—and how that problem is addressed through public policy, in this case educational policy. As in any story, there is a beginning in which the problem is identified, a middle that suggests possible policy solutions, and an ending that explains the consequences of the selected policy in action (Fischer 2003). Framing this dilemma as a narrative gives something of a human face to the often dry world of policy deliberations. It enables us to encase the deliberation within a plot involving actual people and events, conflicts, and contingent results. It makes clear that there are numerous policy outcomes to any dilemma that hinge on the context in which the problem arose as well as on the cast of characters involved and their beliefs and predilections. Not only do such dilemmas depict what happens in the real world when people set about to resolve the issues that they face. They serve real policy makers as clear reminders that their work has real consequences for real people.

As one reviews our research, readers no doubt will raise the question of why we selected this approach as opposed to other possible approaches. The answer to this question lies in part, we think, on how scholars have heretofore explored issues of curriculum history and the strengths and limitations of those approaches. Curriculum history as a field of study first emerged in the early 1970s as the study of curriculum theory or ideas. It was in effect a history of recommendations offered by prominent and not so prominent individuals regarding what the schools should teach. Over time curriculum scholars did recognize that important limitation in this data, namely, that it addressed proposals or suggestions for what the schools should teach but not a treatment of what actually occurred in the schools. It may in fact be the case that these recommendations represented a good picture of what schools in fact did, but there was no guarantee that this was the case.

By the 1990s, we had in effect two curriculum histories. We had a history of curriculum theory focusing on what key stakeholders thought schools should teach. And we had a history of what actually occurred in schools in the form of curriculum

practice. These domains, however, were not connected. What was needed was an interpretation of the relationship between what was proposed by way of curriculum practice and what actually occurred in that practice. During the last several years, we have begun to develop this connection in what we are calling an ethnohistory of the curriculum. We are currently attempting to develop the contours of this approach. Our present work, which is described in this essay, involves part of this process, namely, an effort to situate contemporary curriculum practice as expressed in ethnographic documents in their historical context (Franklin 2010; Franklin and Ortiz *in press*).

We also selected this approach because we believe that the conventional interpretation of the small schools movement has not provided a full picture of its origins. According to this widely held view, the small schools movement was a 1960s effort to interpret the practical applications of early twentieth-century progressive era educational reform, particularly the work of John Dewey, to contemporary school organization (Semel and Sadovnik 2008; Schubert 2000). While one can correctly make this connection, it does not, we think, tell the entire story. There was a debate about the proper size of the American high school occurring during the first half of the twentieth century that went beyond the issues considered by progressive era reformers and offers us a context for exploring this issue. Contemporary discussions of the small high school seem to point to its value for attaining a number of desirable student outcomes, not the least of which is improved academic achievement. This has, however, not always been the view of school size. Early in the twentieth century, however, the small high school was seen as something of a problematic institution that did not provide students with an adequate education. Among the problems with small high schools, according to John Ruff of Michigan State College in 1926, was the fact that in such schools there was the lack of a sufficient number of well-trained and experienced teachers, inefficiencies in administration, high operating costs, an inadequate physical plant, a lack of extra curriculum activities, and a limited curriculum (1926). Twenty years later in 1946, a University of Southern California professor, E. H. LaFranchi, noted a similar set of problems (1946). Among these difficulties was the small school's curriculum, which he noted did not have the personnel and other resources to offer more than a single, college preparatory course of study. He went on to say that because of this limited program, the small high school could not provide the array of nonacademic courses to meet the needs of all who might wish to attend this institution.

It was this criticism about the limitations of the high school curriculum that was the basis for the support that educational reformer James B. Conant offered in the late 1950s for the establishment of large, comprehensive high schools with diverse curriculum offerings. It was Conant's position that high schools with graduating classes of less than 100 students, the defining feature of the small school to his way of thinking, could not provide an adequate education to groups of diverse students with different attributes, including those who were academically able, intellectually slow, and vocationally oriented. Requiring all students who attended the high schools to take an academic course of study, he noted, had the effect of frustrating less able students while reducing standards for student who were more able. Replacing these small schools with larger comprehensive high schools would, he argued, allow for a

system of secondary education that would meet the needs of all students (1959). The debate over small schools was not simply an effort to support progressive-oriented school reform. It was a more complex dispute continuing to the present day that included discourses favoring small schools as well as discourses criticizing them in favor of larger, comprehensive high schools (Franklin 2010).

The approach that we are advocating under the rubric ethnohistory is not, then, a new approach to undertaking curriculum history. Rather, it brings together two long-standing strategies, the study of curriculum theory and the study of curriculum practice, to establish a different and more useful approach to exploring the history of the curriculum.

Ethnohistorical Lens

Taking an ethnohistorical approach to writing curriculum history takes what we already know about the history of the curriculum and looks at a problem that has not been given the attention that it deserves. The problem that we are talking about is the link between what various curriculum stakeholders, teachers, administrators, academics, parents, and a host of ordinary citizens wish the schools to do and what schools actually do. This is clearly an important issue in that it identifies the critical question of what schools do as well as providing us insights about what the schools should do. In this essay, we focused on one such issue, the small schools movement. This is, however, a broader and more useful strategy that can explore a range of issues affecting the interplay between what various stakeholders believe that schools should do and what they in fact do.

So much of what occurs in the domain of educational scholarship, particularly curricular and pedagogical research, involves efforts to change or reform existing school practices to secure more effective learning. Consequently, making the connection that we are advocating becomes important. It enables us to gain insights about what can occur when we implement recommendations about curriculum and pedagogy into school practice. It provides us in this sense a better understanding of what one needs to do to change schools in the directions that we desire.

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5.6 Vocational Education, Gender, and Inequality in Hamburg, Germany, 1849–1914

Christine Mayer

Interpretation is central to any historiographically oriented form of education research. This is true not only *sensu stricto* for hermeneutical reconstructions in the tradition of the humanities, but equally applies to a multidimensional social science approach. Such an approach to history of education involves interpretation at many levels and stages, though this is often comparatively little reflected or addressed. I would like to use a study of the gendered history of vocational education to exemplify the role of interpretation in the research process and the interpretative contexts that the source material opens up. The central questions of the study were which paths pupils—especially those from the lower classes—took after finishing school and which vocational and educational possibilities were generally open to them. These questions were studied on the basis of the vocational and educational choices of male and female school leavers from the lower respectively elementary school system of the city of Hamburg between 1849 and 1914.

In the following, I will first outline some specific characteristics of the field of research in question. These not only provide the backdrop against which we ask our questions but also the frame of reference for the data to be interpreted. As a second step, I will present the source material and analyze its value both in terms of immediate data and potential interpretative scope. The next step will be focusing on the analysis and interpretation of the source material and its context. In the process, I aim to show how references to context have entered into the interpretation and affected the perspective. The following two steps will then be to analyze the suitability of the case study's approach to its subject, and to see how the results fit into the greater interpretative framework of a gendered history of vocational education.

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Research Field and Problem Statement

Vocational education tends to be a field of marginal interest in both the history of education and in gender history. This can not only be observed at the national level but tends to apply internationally. It may be due to the fact that, compared with general scholastic education, vocational education is not only more complex but, as an international comparison shows, takes on a great variety of forms over time and space. The marginal position of vocational education as an area of research is very likely also informed by the relatively lower prestige it enjoys in almost all institutionalized education systems. Given the multiplicity of forms in which it was realized over time in different countries, a transnational or generally comparative approach is also beset with greater difficulties than it is for other forms of education.

Therefore, research into vocational education must take into account that its subject—like no other field in education—is greatly influenced by its sociohistorical context which determines not only the position of vocational education within the education system as a whole but also its societal status. In Germany, vocational education has a long guild tradition that sets it apart from other Western countries (e.g., France, Great Britain, and the USA). Whereas guilds in France were dissolved during the French revolution, and even earlier in England, the guilds in some German states retained their privileges until the 1860s. Therefore, more than in other countries, vocational education in Germany has been influenced by the traditional forms of apprenticeship practiced in the crafts and trades. Even after the eventual dissolution of the old system, the new vocational organizations continued to wield great influence. Their structures provided the basis on which the German vocational education system was structured into the so-called dual system providing for training both in the workshop and the school from the turn of the twentieth century onwards. Until well into that century, women were largely excluded from this guilded apprenticeship tradition, which continues to shape vocational education. Though historical research has shown that both in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, some guilded crafts at some times and places permitted apprenticeships for women and girls, and we also find evidence for informal artisanal training provided to wives and daughters, the importance of these incidences should not be overstated (cf., e.g., Wiesner-Hanks 1996; Wensky 2005; Simon-Muscheid 1998). Even taking them into account, we find that no continuous tradition of formal artisanal training for women existed and that, moreover, female education and training was informed by entirely different goals and ideals (Mayer 2007a, 2009). The traditional occupational paradigm for youth in the lower classes was manual trades for boys and domestic service for girls. Yet while vocational training for boys began with a formal apprenticeship, there were few if any formalized vocational educational opportunities for girls.

This traditional framework of vocational education corresponds to a continuing trend of gender-based segregation in the field of labor and employment. Gender segregation continues to be a central structuring feature of the German vocational education system. More than in other parts of society, the function of gender as a

“central code” (Goffman 1977/1994, p. 105) becomes visible here. Despite efforts and campaigns to address the unequal access to vocational education between the sexes, gender coding continues to be effective here. While young women tend to achieve better results in general education than men, represent the majority of pupils in higher secondary schools (*Gymnasium*),¹ and firmly expect to have a profession and a career, their full integration into the dual vocational education system has not yet been achieved. Only slightly under 40 % of all apprentices are female, and they are concentrated in a relatively limited number of vocations.² This is especially significant since these apprenticeships are the dominant medium for the reproduction of a skilled labor force and the institutionalized acknowledgment of expertise in Germany. In 2004 the apprenticeship system took in 69 % of the 18–21-year-old male population and 48 % of the corresponding female age cohort (Harney and vom Hau 2008, p. 260). This makes clear not only that in Germany, “a substantial amount of employees are socialized into the labour force and acquire their professional skills through this institution” (ibid., p. 261), but also that it continues to be structured by gender both horizontally and vertically.

This is only a bare outline of the extent of gendered segregation and consequent inequality of educational opportunity that affects youths in Germany’s vocational education system. It was these phenomena that motivated my research into their historical roots. Up to now, the transition from school to employment has rarely been a focus of interest in history of education. There are some historical studies for Germany, though these generally concentrate on vocational education as it applies to male pupils.³ Interest in the history of female vocational education was and has remained marginal (cf. also Rahn 1997). The study which will be presented here addresses the fact that to date, little data has been available in the history of education on the paths pupils from the lower classes took after finishing school and which vocational and educational options were open to them. The fact how these options changed in the context of the economic and social changes during the nineteenth century especially in urban environments, and the patterns of gender segregation that emerged, is another aspect that has been underresearched. Here, a regional case study is undertaken to remedy this lack by looking into these developments and relationships in the context of the city of Hamburg. This kind of study must be oriented not only along the lines of gender, but also take account of class divides, especially in the context of an urban educational landscape that was increasingly differentiating and producing additional options of further scholastic and vocational education in the course of the nineteenth century. Vocational education can thus become a field in which historical educational research can study the connections and intersections of “gender” and “class” as categories of inequality.

¹ In 2012, they accounted for about 52.6 % (Statistisches Bundesamt 2013, p. 82).

² In 2012, over half (about 52 %) of all women in vocational education, but only 36 % of men were distributed among only 10 occupations (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012, p. 30).

³ For example, the seminal works by K. Stratmann (1967, 1993) on the history of vocational education and the historical studies of the emergence of apprenticeships in artisanal trades and industrial manufacturing (Harney 1987; Harney and Tenorth 1986). An overview over the state of current research is provided in Kipp and Büchter (2003).

The Sources

The sources this study is based on were found while researching the history of Hamburg's public education system. They consist of archival materials, mainly the reports and protocols of education authorities responsible at various times for the schooling of the poor respectively the lower classes (Mayer 1998, 2011). Mainly, they record the vocational and educational options chosen by both male and female pupils after finishing the schools of the lower respectively elementary school system in Hamburg. The sources provide serial quantitative data regarding the vocational and educational choices of school leavers from the second half of the nineteenth into the early twentieth centuries.

Specifically, there are materials on the schools of the *Allgemeine Armenanstalt* (the poor relief authority), especially the (handwritten) protocols of the *Schulkonvent* (its schools boards) between 1849 and 1870. These contain information on the "chosen vocations" (*erwählte Berufe*) or the further careers of school leavers. Except for 2 years, the records are complete, each year containing data on roughly 300 male and female pupils leaving school, separated by gender. However, detailed data on the vocational choices in trades or crafts were not recorded until 1860. The data from these protocols were recorded and analyzed by separate years. A source of further data is the (printed) annual reports of the school authority (*Oberschulbehörde*), which took over responsibility for the public elementary school system from 1871 onwards. This newly constituted authority continued the management of schooling for the poor, also continuing to record the school leavers' chosen vocations by gender every year. For this study, the data on the years between 1890 and 1914 were collated and analyzed. The expansion of the elementary school system under this authority meant not only an ever-increasing number of school leavers—rising from 7,400 in 1890 to 13,900 in 1913—but also more detailed information on the chosen vocations or further education. In addition, earlier data on the chosen vocations of young people leaving the Hamburg *Industrieschule* were recorded in the protocols of the *Schuldeputation* between 1788 and 1811. These data were entered into a first analysis,⁴ but for further study were only used as a standard of comparison and interpretative aid.

As interpretation is also prefigured by the choice of sources from a given time period, the decisions to include or exclude certain periods also require justifying. The protocols of the *Schulkonvent* begin recording the chosen vocations of pupils from 1829, but the data are initially limited to a few individuals, usually those whose parents were unable to secure them a position and who were then placed in employment or apprenticeships by the "*Nachweisungs-Comptoirs*."⁵ Comprehensive lists of vocational choices for all school leavers are not found until 1849, which

⁴ A first analysis of the data is provided in Mayer (2008); some aspects are also covered in Mayer (2009), pp. 21–29.

⁵ Since the early nineteenth century, institutions that specialized in matching job seekers with openings for a fee had emerged on the Hamburg labor market.

justifies the choice of this date as the starting point. The decision to further base the study on employment and educational options for school leavers in the period between 1890 and 1914 was made because of the considerable changes in economic circumstances at the time, leading to altered placement patterns and an expected change in preferences. The beginning of World War I was a further criterion for limiting the scope of the analysis.

As any historical or empirical study must, we also have to ask the question whether the source material on hand can actually be profitably used to answer our questions, what information we can draw from them, and what scope for interpretation they allow. On the one hand, we can say that a serial, gender-specific data set over such a length of time is an exceptional find. This offered the hope of coming to a better understanding of the development that produced such a pronounced gender segregation in vocational education today. On the other hand, the value of the sources must also be viewed critically. Since they record chosen vocations of school leavers, it is not possible to be sure that choice actually was realized. However, the data is likely to be relatively trustworthy judging from the fact that it also records how many were left “without employment” (*ohne Anstellung*) in a given year. The relatively low number thus recorded suggests that the data on vocational choices were collected late. Nonetheless, the question what interpretative scope these sources offer and what aspects must be considered in the process does demand attention. Their character certainly does not allow for more than an identification of broad trends, and their specificities must be taken into account at the linguistic and interpretative level throughout. It was also necessary to view the material in the context of its time, augmenting it by additional sources where necessary. These included official statistics produced by the government of Hamburg on its working-class population and its labor market.

To judge the relevance of our data set, a certain understanding of the historical context, i.e., an understanding of how they fit into the specific conditions of the time they were produced in, is required. Thus, it cannot be left out of the analysis and interpretation that the data for the first phase recorded here were taken from materials on Hamburg’s school system for the poor (*Armenschulwesen*). In an educational landscape dominated largely by private schools, these public institutions initially formed a substitute and later the basis for the development of a general public education system. This was only undertaken in Hamburg with the introduction of mandatory school education in 1871. Thus, the schools of the *Armenanstalt*, being free, catered only to a specific group of poor pupils. To better understand the material they produced, further sources were drawn on. These included a survey on the *Armenschulwesen* from 1861 detailing how many boys and girls were using free schooling for the poor at the time (altogether 3,794) and what social backgrounds they came from. According to this data, more than half of all pupils came from families of craftsmen (34 %), laborers (26 %), cigar makers and factory workers (4 %), or waggoners (4 %). Most of the widowed mothers recorded were cleaners and laundrywomen (9 %) or tailors and seamstresses (3 %) (StAH, pp. 34–35).

We must further take into account that this is a local case study whose data and conclusions are shaped by the specific social and economic context of Hamburg as a major city and trading hub. Any analysis and interpretation must be aware that Hamburg's economy was dominated by trade, navigation, the transport industry, and small artisanal businesses rather than industrial manufacturing. Further, though some guild privileges were abolished in the 1830s, a guild structure remained in place until 1865. The trade and transport sector (including navigation) even grew at the expense of the manufacturing industry during the time period studied.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Source Material

An important aspect of the preliminary work was tabulating the vocations given for male and female school leavers by single vocations and fields. To improve comparability, the classification followed the records as they were available for the elementary education system (*Volksschule*) leavers starting from 1909 to 1910. Two school years were entered into each table to keep the data manageable. The data of all school leavers recorded between 1849 and 1870 were entered into separate tables by gender. The same was done for the vocational choices of female school leavers for the 1890–1914 period. The breadth of vocational choices recorded for males in that time frame was too large to be accommodated, though, so that only the most popular choices were entered separately. This selection was clearly informed by an interpretative perspective that viewed the data primarily as a resource for quantitative analysis while the breadth of the vocational spectrum was sidelined. The data themselves were analyzed both in a gender-neutral and gendered manner. Since the subject matter was not a new one for the researcher herself, we must bear in mind that a certain level of knowledge on the context entered the analysis from the start. This knowledge is not free of its own interpretative aspects. That is why comparisons with other sources and statistics on the Hamburg labor force—as we will see in the following—played an important role in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

A first glance at the tables demonstrates that the choice of possible vocations was much larger for male school leavers than for female ones. Male choices between 1849 and 1870 cover a spectrum of 131 vocations, of which 79 were skilled trades (*Handwerk*), many of which still guilded until 1865. The data also show that apprenticeship in the trades remained the most important destination for male youths. On average, a little under half (45 %) of each year's male school leavers intended to apprentice. Though the specific vocations are spread over a broad spectrum, joiner, cooper, locksmith, mechanic,⁶ and shoemaker were among the most popular choices. To better understand these findings and make them useful beyond their limited local scope, the study looked at Jacob Eberhard Gailer's *Neuer Orbis pictus für die Jugend* (New orbis pictus for the youth, 1835) for comparison.

⁶Specializing in the production of physical instruments and machinery.

This widespread encyclopedia for young people includes descriptions of the most important professions. The comparison shows that the majority of male youngsters aimed for an apprenticeship in traditional crafts that were widespread not only regionally. Though Hamburg's economy was dominated by trade, the number of school leavers seeking employment in either retail or wholesale was small, averaging 4 % of a school year. This does not reflect the importance of this field for the city's job market as a whole.⁷ The data suggest that trade and especially mercantile apprenticeships were not open to male youth of the lower classes. Once we take into account that mercantile apprenticeships (just as those in the skilled trades) required payment of a fee, we understand why especially boys from poor families had to begin their careers as office boys. On average, 15 % of male school leavers did so in any given year. Employment in manufacturing also was of some importance, taking in 19 % on average. However, the most important employers were cigar factories where an apprenticeship as cigar maker was offered. This is owed to the trade-oriented nature of Hamburg's economy. Another important field of employment was transport, especially training as sailors and bargemen. It is notable that the majority of school leavers are recorded as heading into apprenticeship or training. Few of them aim for a subordinate position as manservant or laborer. A comparison with the employment landscape in Hamburg at the time shows that, aside from mercantile pursuits, the choices of male school leavers mirror the structure of the actual workforce in many respects (Neddermeyer 1847, pp. 291–294; Statistik 1871, pp. 34–46).

Compared to those of male school leavers, the choices of females show a much more limited spectrum of options. They are recorded as entering only 35 vocations, with the majority of them concentrated in a handful of those. The main form of employment for the lower-class female youths in Hamburg was domestic service, taking in almost half (47 %) of the average cohort. An alternative to domestic service, once the 1835 reform of guilded crafts allowed this, was the production of women's clothing and accessories. The vocations of tailoress and milliner took in an average of 12 % and 2.9 %, respectively. However, an apprenticeship in these fields was not comparable to those in the skilled trades that male school leavers aimed for. The traditional work of a seamstress was unattractive to female school leavers, with only 4 % opting for it (this number decreased with the introduction of the sewing machine). The emergence of ironing shops in Hamburg opened a further field of paid employment for women. Between 5 % and 6 % chose work as an ironer. Even though small retail and mongering offered employment to women in Hamburg, too, this choice appears only in vanishingly small numbers. Neither did factory work compete meaningfully with domestic service, which again may well be owed to the trade-oriented nature of Hamburg's economy (Statistik 1871, p. 46).

⁷ One comparison is offered by the first statistical survey of occupations in the population of Hamburg in F. H. Neddermeyer (1847, pp. 289–294) or *Statistik des Hamburgischen Staats* (1871, pp. 34–48), where a breakdown of the population by different forms of occupation is given for 1868.

In the 1860s, no more than 3 % of female school leavers on average are reported as working in factories. What is notable is that about a fifth (19.8 %) of female school leavers are recorded as staying at home. The vocational choices of female school leavers, just as those of their male counterparts, mirror the employment structure of Hamburg's labor market. Women were mainly employed as tailoresses and, in smaller numbers, milliners, also working as machine seamstresses and in the laundry business (Statistik 1871, pp. 36, 38, 1875, p. 111), fields that the school leavers are rarely recorded going into. The largest number of women aged 16–30 in the labor force was employed in domestic service, primarily as maidservants. In Hamburg, they accounted for about 13 % of the total population in 1867 (Statistik 1875, p. 116f.). We also know from other cities (e.g., Berlin and Frankfurt) that domestic service was the most important form of paid employment for young women (ibid., Kocka 1990, pp. 120–124).

As this overview and analysis of the findings shows, certain facets of interpretation are already built into the selection, emphasis, and formulation of results. The question remains which larger interpretative contexts can be gained from these findings. We find above all that the traditional vocational options—apprenticeship for boys, domestic service for girls—continued to structure the orientation of the majority of youths between 1849 and 1870. We further find that, though options for young women increased, their choice of careers remained limited. The abovementioned encyclopedia *Neuer Orbis pictus* für die Jugend illustrates this situation. While vocations for boys are shown at length in many different illustrations, the only feminine profession that is shown is milliners. In contrast “Female employments” refer to domestic work, in keeping with the bourgeois conception of the female sphere (Gailer 1835, p. 247f). The vocational choices of school leavers, too, show that, as bourgeois society sought to integrate the lower classes, its model of the family based on a sole male breadwinner was spreading into the poorer parts of the population. Compared to the previous generation, far more male school leavers sought an apprenticeship or other forms of training, while few were content with working as a laborer. Their female counterparts show the spread of bourgeois values even more markedly. Almost every fifth female school leaver is recorded as staying at home after finishing school, which indicates that even among the lower classes, domestic service in another household was beginning to be replaced by using the help of their daughters in their own homes. The options recorded for male school leavers did not include anything similar.

This interpretative perspective becomes plausible as we relate the findings to their context. The rise of real wages around the middle of the nineteenth century allowed for a reconfiguration of families around a male breadwinner (cf. Kocka 1990, pp. 493–496). Only on the basis of an overall improved standard of living can the bourgeois family model and its ordering of gender roles spread into the working population. Whereas previously the family had been conceived of as a community earners, the new orientation—as the writings of social reformers around 1848 show (Stammler 1994)—was towards the bourgeois norm of a gendered division of labor in which the woman is no longer co-earner, but housewife. Her merit was to be maintaining what the husband earned by being attentive and economical with her

resources.⁸ We find very different pedagogical aims emerging for boys and girls, a fact that is also evident from the way the *Armenanstalt* structured its schools (detailed in Mayer 2011). The primary goal for female youths even from the working classes was no longer gainful employment of any kind, but domesticity.

The focus of the second half of the study is on the vocational choices of youths and their career opportunities at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. At this stage of analysis, we need to take into account the fact that the expansion of the mandatory elementary education system (*Volksschule*) led to a great expansion in the school intake, including a broader part of the population, and consequently in the number of school leavers (from 7,874 in 1893 to 13,899 in 1913). At the same time, the labor market underwent considerable differentiation, providing us with much more complex data. Therefore, the following will be limited to outlining some tendencies relevant to interpretation. Here, too, we must consider that interpretative aspects entered into the analysis from the start, and that the contextualization of the source material itself included interpretation. Unlike for the first period studied, we have sociological studies regarding the situation of people employed in trade and domestic service for the late nineteenth century. These were used in the analysis and interpretation.

We find a shift in the chosen vocations of male school leavers, in this case away from the traditional skilled crafts and towards a variety of metalworking vocations. Among the still very numerous artisanal occupations, locksmith, plumber, mechanic, and electrician now dominate. Alongside this, we see an increase in the numbers of school leavers going into trade. While artisanal occupations had accounted for 44 % of all choices as late as 1893, their number declined to under a third by 1913. In keeping with the expansion of all aspects of trade in the late nineteenth century, its share of vocational choices rose to over a third (1913, 34 %). Of 6,968 male school leavers in that year, almost a quarter (22.5 %) aimed for an apprenticeship in wholesale trade (*Handlungsbeflissener*); 5.5 % opted for an apprenticeship in retail, while the number of those who began their working life as office or messenger boys continued to decline, averaging slightly over 4 %. Manufacturing—which in Hamburg mostly meant shipbuilding—added the choice of machine fitter to the spectrum of popular choices with 4.2 % in 1913. Unskilled factory labor was an unpopular choice, though, with only 2.3 % of school leavers recorded in 1913. Transport, especially shipping, remained important, with youths opting to train as sailors, bargemen, or stewards. Public service occupations such as railway or postal worker too are now recorded, and youths opting for free professions, especially teacher, are also found more often.

For female school leavers, domestic service continued to be the most important vocational option, though preferences gradually shifted away. While over half of all female school leavers aimed to become maidservants in the 1890s, by 1911 it was only about a third (34 %). This development mirrors the changes on the local labor market. While the percentage of domestic servants among the entire female

⁸ For Hamburg, cf. the detailed calculations in Lappenberg 1848 (StAH).

workforce had still been 37.5 % in 1900, it dropped to 24 % in the following decade (Statistik 1902, p. 90, 1919, p. 12f). This roughly matches the general trend (Kocka 1990, p.123). As for male youths, the importance of trade also grew for female school leavers. Though apprenticing as tailoresses (1913, 3.7 %) and milliners (1913, 1.1 %) remained an important perspective and new professions in printing, photography and the graphic industries as well as bookbinding were added to the options for skilled apprenticeships, only an average of 6.7 % of them chose these paths after 1911. Factory work, too, continued to play a minor role, though female employment in the German manufacturing industries overall rose strongly between 1895 and 1907 (Hauff 1911, p. 27). The question poses itself whether this pattern is owed to the specific structure of Hamburg's economy, or whether the higher social status made employment as a sales girl more attractive to female school leavers than factory work. That social prestige must be factored into any analysis and interpretation of occupation choices is exemplified by the distribution of the choice of sales versus office work. The occupation as a clerk, more highly regarded and more easily reconciled with bourgeois ideas of suitable work for women, was especially common for girls who, graduating from the *Selekta* class of their school, boasted higher educational achievements (Schulz 2000, p. 21; Timoschenko 2005, p. 140). The number of women in trade, an area so far dominated by men, began rising with the boom starting in 1890. Between 1895 and 1907, the number of female sales staff grew from 81,483 to 173,420, i.e., by roughly 36 %, while the equivalent figure for office staff was 76 %, from 13,763 to 110,220 (Schulz 2000, p. 80). These trends are also reflected in the vocational choices of school leavers: alongside sales (1913, 3.7 %), they sought apprenticeships as accountants or office clerks (1913, 10.8 %). By 1913, 15.2 % of girls leaving school saw their future in commercial careers, which is twice the number going into skilled trades. However, the rise in numbers did nothing to improve the conditions of their apprenticeships and employment. While male apprentices typically were trained for 3 or 4 years, almost half of the girls were given only 1 year of training (Timoschenko 2005, p. 48; Reinisch 1993, pp. 337–366). We also find that, as with male youths, the choice of occupations open to female school leavers generally had widened. Here, too, we find public service careers such as telephone and telegraph operator or postal worker, but also educational work as kindergarten or schoolteacher making an appearance. A further notable development is that far more female than male pupils considered continued school education. From the school year 1867/1868 onwards, we have had records of a few girls switching to the *Gewerbeschule für Mädchen* (trade school for girls). The number had hovered around 0.5 % in the 1890s. By the early 1900s, institutions like the *Fortbildungsschule* (further education school, 1913—1 %), *Handelsschule* (commercial school, 1913—0.9 %), and *Haushaltsschule* (home economics school, 1913—0.5 %) were added. The number of girls opting to stay home with their families also increased from roughly a fifth to about a third (33.8 %). From 1900 onwards, the number of those seeking to learn home economics (*Hausstand erlernen*) in preparation for their housewifely existence also rose to 4.1 % on average.

The question which further interpretative connections can be drawn from the data analyzed also must be asked for the second time period studied. We note that traditional patterns of vocational education continued to obtain well into the twentieth century, even though their dominance was reduced. This had difference consequences for the genders. Female youths gradually were offered a wider choice of occupations in the second half of the nineteenth century, though it would be erroneous to assume that their options came close to those open to boys in either quality or quantity. Instead, the opportunity gap yawned ever wider. The 1913 data for male school leavers records 185 occupations (89 of them in skilled trades and crafts), while for females, only 55 are mentioned. This imbalance was exacerbated by the fact that half of all female school leavers' choices (51.4 %) went for only four occupations: maidservant, office clerk, tailoress, and sales girl.

The gendered patterns that these trends show indicate that the bourgeois model of "a woman's vocation" had spread to large parts of the population. This meant that for a large part of the girls in question, formal education ended with leaving the *Volksschule*. If you include the shrinking, but still considerable number of female school leavers who worked as maidservants between leaving school and entering into marriage, almost three quarters of the girls recorded after 1911 opted for a path that prepared them for a housewifely existence, be it for family reasons or social expectations. By contrast, the number of girls who chose an apprenticeship or other forms of training was vanishingly small. This means that by the early twentieth century, vocational education for girls leaving the elementary school (*Volksschule*) was far from a matter of course. Looking at the transition of girls from the *Volksschule* to the Hamburg *Gewerbeschule für Mädchen* (trade school for girls) and its context opens up a different interpretative connection. On average, the school founded in 1867 by the *Verein zur Förderung weiblicher Erwerbshätigkeit* (Association for Promoting the Employment of Women) took in about 22 female school leavers per year. However, the overall composition of the student body and the fees payable there indicate that, even though *Volksschule* graduates were not categorically excluded, they remained a minority. We will return to this aspect later.

Thus we can end this section by asking what conclusions can be drawn from the data analyzed and its interpretations. We can certainly state that a strongly gendered system of life patterns and expectations is reflected in the vocational choices of Hamburg school leavers. While the majority of boys, following the normal pattern of a male biography, viewed an apprenticeship as a vital next step, a large part of the girls pursued a concept of their future that was oriented towards a "female vocation" of domesticity. For them, apprenticeships or other forms of vocational education were therefore considered dispensable, even undesirable or socially dysfunctional. Consequently, their options were limited and usually channeled them into occupations that were compatible with their perceived domestic vocation, or at least did not threaten it. Based on this local case study, we thus gain insights that, while limited to Hamburg, show a larger pattern of gendered segregation. This offers an explanation for the continued gender gap in vocational education.

Case Studies: An Appropriate Approach?

In many academic disciplines, case studies are an established part of the methodical toolkit. The concepts pursued, however, differ as widely as the positions on their functions and the value of their findings. History, too, has embraced case study as a valid historiographical hermeneutic tool with the emergence of microhistory and the cultural turn (Süßmann 2007, p. 9). However, as yet there are few mentions of the approach in historiographic literature, and no entry is found in the relevant reference works (*ibid.*, p. 14). Case studies can look back on a long tradition in education research, especially in connection with a research perspective informed by individual theory. They were especially widely received in the 1980s, when they were deployed in field research and evaluation under actual classroom conditions (*cf.*, e.g., Stenhouse 1978; Simons 1980; Fischer 1981). In the history of education, case studies have mostly figured in the form of surveys of individual schools, though the significance of the approach has, as yet, been little studied.

The conception that underlies this study views case studies not as a method, but as a research approach. They are read as representations of the represented as a case, with the layout of the case depending on the research interest. The unit studied here is a locality, *i.e.*, a specific sociographic space—the city of Hamburg—and the actions of people within that space. In their common understanding as a method, case studies in educational research are usually grouped with qualitative approaches. This overlooks that in case studies, the positions described as quantitative or qualitative research overlap significantly. From an interpretative research perspective, we may even ask whether this divide is at all useful and productive in educational research (Smeyers 2008). As regards case studies in research overall, there is general agreement that they have a number of advantages in grappling with complexity, accessing new fields of study and exploratory research, developing hypotheses, or coming to a more concrete understanding of a general fact. Their primary problem is the relationship between the general and the specific case, *i.e.*, the tension between individual, case-specific finding and generally applicable insight. The question to what degree the findings of a case study are applicable beyond its scope and how far the results can be generalized must thus also be asked in this case.

An obvious advantage of case studies is that contextualization—placing facts and data into their broader, more specific contexts and connecting them to other factors—is more easily feasible. This strong focus on context as a methodological principle can not only lead to new insight (Tröhler 2001, pp. 26–34) but also contribute to a greater transparency and accessibility of the research process and lend greater plausibility to the interpretations necessarily inherent in it. This is important insofar as the decision whether to accept the interpretations gained from a research context “will rely heavily on whether others can agree with this particular interpretation” (Smeyers 2008, p. 700). In the case of the study presented here, contextualization also serves to check the validity of the sources used. Studies spanning greater geographic or temporal ranges also force us to acknowledge the limits of contextualization, though. It can be difficult to establish complex

interrelations and connections over long periods of time and to integrate the data into broader historical contexts. In this kind of case study, the focus is rather on development trends and the interpretative perspectives that determine the narrative. The approach as it is deployed here must thus be understood as explorative. That especially means addressing a previously underresearched field such as the history of a gendered vocational education, rendering interconnections visible, and formulating the important questions which may then be followed up using other methodological tools as well. A stronger emphasis on discursive or power relationships would be well feasible in order to take account of discursive elements and their greater context while exploring the educational opportunities and limits especially female *Volksschule* leavers faced in shaping their careers. A study of this type might look at the introduction of home economics as a subject at the *Volksschule* or at the discursive binds within attempts to regulate and standardize apprenticeships in typically female occupations or open other skilled trades to women. Other methodological approaches could involve individual testimony or other first-person documents (including autobiographies, diaries, letters, etc.) which place greater emphasis on the perspective of the historical subjects. It would also be useful to draw on records of private girls' schools and general secondary schools, which often contain data on school leavers, to create a broader basis of data and gain further insight into both the gender and class aspects of vocational education.

The difficulties of regional or local case studies are mainly in producing conclusions that reach beyond the specific case. What must be addressed is how to increase the possibility of generalization, i.e., how to ensure that the interpretations derived from within-case analyses and the narrative that structures them can be placed in an interpretative context that reaches beyond the confines of the case itself. This requires a high degree of sensitivity towards and reflective capability regarding methodological questions as well as openness, transparency, and clarity in research and interpretation. A further methodical approach would be through comparative case studies in the sense of cross-case comparisons. The question researched here would be open to a comparison with similar data from cities like Berlin, Frankfurt, or Bremen to produce a more robust foundation on which to base conclusions. Berlin offers itself since the greater importance of manufacturing industry in this region can be expected to have provided a different spectrum of opportunities for school leavers, while Frankfurt and Bremen, primarily centers of trade, make for a good comparison of cities with similar labor market structures. A transnational comparative approach, too, could produce interesting results. Using local, properly contextualized case studies from, e.g., France or Britain could not only shed light on vocational education opportunities for school leavers under different cultural circumstances but also offer more accurate insights into the historicity of gendered structures and patterns in the vocational education of those countries. Even though a case study approach carries some difficulties and the subject studied here is open to different ones, it still offers a good basis to research this complex, multifaceted, and nationally divergent field.

Locating/Placing the Findings in a Gendered History of Vocational Education

If you follow Stephen Mulhall, the process of interpreting “things into practical life . . . [has] . . . no distinctive structure or principles because it is fundamentally not based on the following of some pre-given set of rules; it depends upon imagination, the ability to see connections, the creative shaping of one’s sense of how aspects of human experience hang together or fail to do so” (Mulhall 2000, p. 264; quot. after Smeyers 2008, p. 703). However, the imaginations and connections that form the basis of interpretative processes and therefore are also the foil against which narratives can unfold must always be understood in their close connection with the person of the individual researcher. As Paul Smeyers points out: “whenever we conceptualise a particular part of reality, this necessarily occurs within the boundaries of what already makes sense for us” (2008, p. 701). This act of sense making, conceptualization, and knowledge construction in turn depends on our particular contextual knowledge and our views on certain issues. In this sense, the effort to place the interpretative options presented earlier into the greater interpretative framework of a gendered history of vocational education also represents a narrative that is linked and closely connected with the insight and understanding the researcher herself has gained in this field.

When looking at the development of a gendered history of vocational education in a broader context, especially with regard to the situation of women, we open interpretative perspective whose discursive interrelations remain effective well into the twentieth century. The focus of these perspectives are two countervailing transformative processes with decisive impacts on the shape of the emerging German system of vocational education.

At the heart of the first transformation lies the process—well documented in the source material—of transferring the bourgeois domestic ideal of female education and vocation to the working classes. The backdrop to this transformation was provided by a broad discourse whose societal impact is seen at many levels. It is made explicit, e.g., in the famous 1856 work by Luise Büchner *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf* (Women and their vocation). In it, the sister of famous writer Georg Büchner and co-organizer of the German bourgeois women’s movement calls for future working-class wives to be educated not towards gainful employment, but towards their domestic vocation. She regarded the founding of educational institutions as a “true blessing for the lower classes,” though only if they didn’t train them “to be chambermaids or seamstresses, but for their true domestic vocation” (Büchner 1856, p. 102). The process is also documented at the level of schooling and education. Thus, the ninth *Allgemeine Deutschen Lehrer-Versammlung* (General Meeting of German Teachers) held in 1857 in Frankfurt (Main) discussed the “female vocation” (*der weibliche Beruf*). The first and most important of the principles passed there is: “The vocation for which a girl is to be educated is the same for all walks of life: to be a wife, mother and housewife” (Die Frage über weibliche Bildung 1857, p. 40). The statement further reads that since every woman

had to fulfill this vocation, every girl had to be prepared for it regardless of her social background. In the context of this discursive development, domestic service was defined not as a form of gainful employment, but as a “transitional period necessary in preparation for her vocation” (ibid., pp. 40, 11). The discursive dispute sharpened under the influence of accelerating industrialization in the late 1880s. Initiated by the *Verein für Armenpflege und Wohltätigkeit* (Association for Poor Relief and Charity), a broad-based discussion on the merits of instructing poor girls in home economics to counteract the deterioration of the family, the decline of morals, and the consequent heightening of class antagonism began (Schrader-Breyman 1888/1962; Kalle and Kamp 1889). A different face of this transformation in the discursive shape of its era is the idea of home economics education proposed by Georg Kerschensteiner at the beginning of the twentieth century (Kerschensteiner 1902). He used the idea of a “natural vocation” as a basis on which to argue for a comprehensive school reform that sought to introduce home economics not only in the *Volksschule* (Mayer 1992). One impact of this discourse was that vocational education for girls was regarded as less important than for boys despite the fact that wage labor continued to be a fact of life for many women even after marriage. Further, it established a concept of female education centered on home economics as the curricular core of vocational education well into the twentieth century, especially for young women entering unskilled or semiskilled fields or staying at home with their parents while still under obligation to attend school.

The second transformational process is the spread of wage labor in the form that had characterized the lives of working-class women into the bourgeois world. That this process did not pass without resistance is demonstrated by the broad public debate on vocational education for middle-class women that arose against the backdrop of increasing industrialization, social change, and the altered economic circumstances of families. In this case, too, a powerful societal discourse provided the background. It was contributed to not only representatives of the bourgeois women’s movement such as Louise Otto-Peters, who called for allowing women increased educational opportunities and thus the right to economic independence and individual self-determination in her 1866 work *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb* (Women’s right to employment). Liberal middle-class men, too, were willing to fully or at least partly support these demands, while representatives of bourgeois conservatism regarded the debate on educational and employment opportunities for middle-class women as an assault on the proper relationship between the genders and the natural order of society (detailed in Mayer 2007b, pp. 85–99, 2009, pp. 10–21). These discursive patterns show how difficult it proved to break open established ideas of women’s “natural vocation” in the domestic sphere.

With a view to the interpretation of the source material presented here, it is important to keep in mind that the second process was driven largely by pragmatic considerations. Decisive impulses were provided by the *Vereine zur Förderung der weiblichen Erwerbstätigkeit* (Associations to Promote Female Employment) founded in Germany after the model of the *London Society for Promoting the Employment of Women*. Their primary aim was to provide educational and employment opportunities for young women. In the 1860s, the first vocational schools for

the female youth were founded. By the 1890s, a network of various forms of vocational training schools had developed which cannot easily be systematized because of its heterogeneous structures (for an overview, see Morgenstern 1893). The example of the Hamburg *Gewerbeschule für Mädchen* (trade school for girls) we already mentioned taking in some female *Volksschule* leavers shows, though, that these institutions primarily met the needs of a middle-class clientele. Looking at the composition of its student body, we find that young women from the lower classes are hardly present. Of the 590 pupils attending the *Hamburger Gewerbeschule* in 1897/1898, only 3.7 % came from families where the fathers were sailors, farmers, bargemen, or laborers (in 1881/1882, the number had still been 7.8 %) (Mayer 2007b, p. 94f.). The middle-class nature is also evident from the curricula and vocational options on offer, including the fact that higher fees were charged for some vocational training courses as well as other classes. Above all, though, it is telling that the requirement for admittance was often defined as the knowledge acquired in the first year of the *höhere Mädchenschule*, a female higher secondary school catering to middle-class families. The new scholastic opportunities for female vocational education thus in effect catered to girls from a bourgeois background who could meet the educational requirements and whose families could afford the not inconsiderable school fees. A large part of female *Volksschule* leavers was thus excluded from scholastic vocational education and the emerging, higher-prestige school-trained vocations.

Thus, these privately funded institutions could, by combining elements of general and vocational education, theoretical and practical aspects, and professional and family-oriented aims, create a system of female vocational education aimed at middle-class girls. It established itself as a serious alternative to the traditional, male-dominated “dual system” of apprenticeships without ever challenging its primacy. We can thus see not only a boundary of gender segregation around the traditional “dual system” of vocational education but also between emerging elements of the system itself. The interplay of class and gender we find repeated in the various strands of a gendered history of vocational education pointed to the fact that the problem of segregation there was not solely determined between genders, but was also informed by social and societal interests that shaped expectations of vocational education. As a result, it was made available to women in a context defined by a separation of classes and social milieus from the very beginning.

Conclusion

In my contribution, I have tried to use the connections between vocational education, gender, and inequality to show in a case based on concrete quantitative data how interpretation is a key aspect of any form of historical educational research. That is true not only in the analysis and evaluation of source material but at every stage of the research process. Interpretations affect the course of research, e.g., in the selection of sources and the question what

(continued)

interpretative scope they offer; in the connection of research question, sources, and historiographic approach; or in contextualizing sources and their interpretative contexts that social history, cultural history, gender, and other theoretical perspectives can open up. Such processes of interpretation are usually woven into the process, remain intransparent, and often go largely or entirely unreflected in historical narratives if their presence and role is recognized at all.

This effort to admit to the full importance of context in making interpretation explicit should also demonstrate that the choice of that context and our particular contextual knowledge as well as our views on certain issues influence the interpretative perspective in their turn. Interpretations themselves lack any distinctive structure. They consist of imaginations and the creative shaping of connections that cannot be viewed as independent of the processes by which the individual researcher creates and ascribes meanings. However, the fact that we can regard interpretation as an individual act of sense making, conceptualization, and knowledge construction that exists in close connection with the person of the individual researcher, we not only gain context for interpretation but the opportunity to be guided towards a wide variety of new perspectives by our research interests, questions, and standpoint-theoretical aspects. Regarding the example presented here, it must thus be kept in mind that its integration into a greater historical context—a gendered history of vocational education—is based on a specific interpretative scope that demonstrates the particular perspective adopted by an individual researcher. The conclusion we must draw for historical research in general is the importance of integrating the question of interpretation more fully in historical narratives. We need a more reflected, open, and transparent approach to interpretative context and the emergence of interpretative perspectives. Such greater transparency and accessibility of the research process and the interpretations gained from a specific research context ultimately decide whether the interpretation itself can be agreed to by others. Changing the interpretative process from an internal, unaddressed one towards greater transparency and accessibility would also make particular interpretations capturing segments of a historicizing world more accessible to discursive engagement by others.

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5.7 Educational Policy in Historical Perspective: Interpreting the Macro and the Micro Politics of Schooling

Inés Dussel

Interpretive sources are chosen partly because they are in the air. . . . Theory *dates* research. (Elkins 2007, p. 482)

[There are two traditions of interpretation.] The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin that transcends play and the order of the sign, and for it the necessity of interpretation is lived as a kind of exile. The other, no longer oriented towards origin, affirms play and strives to pass beyond man and humanism. . . . [Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play,” quoted by Weber 1987, p. 3]

Introduction

Interpretation is dated, says James Elkins, and this means much more than simple chronology. *Dating research* means understanding not only the debates and strands of interpretation that are available at particular moments, but also the ways in which an interpretation mobilizes or replicates these debates. “What is ‘incorporating’? What are citations? What mixture of discourse have I made?” asks Elkins (2007, p. 485). These questions have no straight answers, because

[t]he result is a mixture of discourses, blended according to rules, taste, and customs that the writer might not even be aware of. (Elkins 2007, p. 482)

Moreover, *dating research* is not exhausted by the allocation of a statement to a given time frame. It is an action that acknowledges that a particular theory or research project might be engaged in a dialogue across multiple temporalities, in readings of readings of readings that go back and forth in time. Paraphrasing art

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historian Georges Didi-Huberman's talk about images, it can be said that theories are always "temporally impure, complex, overdetermined" (2006, p. 6).

If I start this chapter with this appeal to temporalities, it is because I would like to argue in favor of locating the interpretation of the history of educational policies within a distinct moment that frames ways of asking questions and of searching for answers, a moment that, it is important to say again, is not contained by dates, but has more of the "air" quality mentioned by Elkins.

The moment is related to what Derrida, in the epigraph that opens this text, refers to as the second tradition of interpretation: that of play and of posthumanism.¹ It is defined by the critique against historicism brought by the linguistic turn. For historicist historians, interpretation is the act of unveiling the hidden logic of history, of rendering the context transparent through causal connections, and of finding the underlying meaning to human acts.² But the linguistic critique has stated that these reconstructions are first and foremost narratives, and that history and fiction are not far apart. Interpretation is thus anything but a smooth walk through clear-cut and transparent options and depends heavily on rhetorical decisions made by the historian (cf. Hamilton 2003; Popkewitz *in press*).³

The critique of historicism has led to new questions and problems in the writing and the interpretation of history. The acknowledgement of the narrative quality of historical arguments has implied for some that all interpretations are given equal footing, as there are no firm grounds to decide which argument is better than any other beyond its persuasive force. Historical texts have to be considered as narrative fictions that reconstruct a past that does not exist outside them (White 1973).

Yet, others claim that this acknowledgement should not derive ineludibly in an "anything-goes" relativism. From this hindsight, some historiographical readings are better than others because they can account more thoroughly for the choice of analytic techniques and of an archival corpus (cf. Ginzburg 1988), and because they take it seriously to discuss previous accounts and inscribe themselves in an informed conversation about a particular issue. While it recognizes that there is no guarantee about the truth value of an argument, this second approach struggles

¹ Derrida's argument goes on: "man being the name of that being which, throughout the history of metaphysics and of onto-theology. . . has dreamed of the plenitude of presence, of reassuring foundations, of origin and the end of play" (in: Weber 1987, p. 3). Foucault's text on "What is an Author?" makes a similar point in relation to the search of a unity of the text, which is to be found in the biography or personality of the author (Foucault 1984).

² Historicist historians believe that "they can explain any phenomenon purely in terms of its genesis . . . that they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the course of events in their temporal succession without any gaps" (Kracauer, S., *History. The Last Things Before the Last*, quoted by Ginzburg 2007, p. 176).

³ While it exceeds the possibilities of this text, it would be interesting to trace the links between the critique of historicism and what Boltanski and Chiapello call the artist's critique, the new regimes of truth and of validation of arguments that put authenticity and verisimilitude as the main rule, a movement that starts eccentrically and as a radical critique but that has been swallowed by capitalism in the new creative industries (cf. Boltanski and Chiapello 1999).

with the question of what was possible at particular moments in history in ways that relativistic approaches do not.

But the “air” of this moment of research is also made of other strands of critique, particularly the critiques of power and the state, which have had considerable effects in the field of educational policy studies. This is a second *dating of research*, for theories make some concepts and processes visible, and obscure others. Until the 1980s, the study of educational policy tended to be dominated by a centralized vision of the state and of policy.⁴ Foucault said in 1977: “We need to cut off the King’s head: in political theory it still needs to be done” (Foucault 1980, p. 121). Due to the “Foucault effect” (Burchell et al. 1991) and many other theoretical movements (historical sociology, subaltern studies, feminism, actor–network theory (ANT) and others), it is now current to read that the state is not a united, single, coherent, or necessarily capable actor (cf. Yashar 2005), and that this fragmentation and instability makes “the local state a key conjunctural terrain, shot through with slippages, openings and possibilities” (Hart 2002, p. 312).

Also, political anthropologists have recently paid attention not to the state as an agent but to stateness as a relational attribute. The state quality is not an a priori given but something that is produced historically and at particular places. “The attribution of stateness to various forms of authority . . . emerges from intense and often localized political struggles over resources, recognition, inclusion and influence” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, p. 9; see also Scott 1998).⁵ Finally, ANT has produced a small but increasingly important conceptualization about educational policies, which de-centers policies from the state and claims that there are multiple agents acting politically in education, at different levels (cf. Nespor 2011, for an analysis of the politics of educational technology). These agents are not defined before their interaction.⁶

This dating of research defines what it is possible to think about the history of educational policies, in ways that leads researchers to define problems in particular ways, look at particular sources, choose analytic methods, and produce interpretations with the available concepts. Again, the dating does not imply a self-contained era that reduces everything to its context; but doing the exercise to revise how problems are thought at a particular time and how this leads to specific research

⁴ A classic textbook in Argentina was Americo Ghioldi’s *Política Educacional en el Cuadro de las Ciencias de la Educación* (1972), which defined educational policy as “the theory and practices of the activities of the State in the matters of public education” (quoted in Paviglianitti 1996, p. 4).

⁵ One example of scholarship informed by these renewed considerations about policy is Elsie Rockwell’s work on the schools of the Mexican state of Tlaxcala, which does not take the centrality of the nation state for granted and that looks for the nuances and negotiations that made the federal state a local construction, produced in the interaction between federal initiatives and local formations (Rockwell 2007).

⁶ A fine example of this approach is a recent study on educational reforms in India. For the authors, globalization and the construction of international networks—key players in these reforms—are better understood in terms of the translations between spaces that configure agents than in terms of “educational borrowing” that considers two already-defined actors (Mukhopadhyay and Sriprakash 2011).

questions might help the researchers to live interpretation as a kind of exile in a positive sense, as a “stranger to the world evoked by the sources” that gains knowledge because of this exiled condition, as Siegfried Kracauer said (quoted by Ginzburg 2007, p. 180).

In this chapter, I would like to perform this exercise of dating research and discussing the play of interpretation through two examples of my own work on the history of Argentinean educational policies. These two examples are 10 years apart, but despite their difference they speak about a moment of the historical interpretation of educational policy, at least within the research traditions I was inscribed at that time.

The first example is related to the history of the Workers’ University, a creation of the first Peronist government in 1948–1952. The Workers’ University was supposed to be the “crown” of a new system of technical education that ran parallel to the traditional school system and that was to include workers and farmers. The Workers’ University was also set as a model of a new type of university, less academic than the existing ones, and more linked to developmental and industrialist policies. It was an educational policy quite common in Latin America in the 1940s and 1950s, when national popular movements took office and decided to create new educational institutions as a way to negotiate with the old (see Pronko 2003).

In the historiographical readings available at the time when the research was conducted (late 1980s), it appeared that the University had been a decision of the government and also of the unions, resisted by traditional universities and thus destined to fail. But my research wanted to explore why the Workers’ University had survived the destitution of the Peronist government by a military dictatorship that closed down most of its creations. What was it in there that had made it possible to continue and redefine itself in the midst of a repressive context? Oral histories and written sources brought back the students’ movement that produced a social mobilization that gained the streets and kept the university open and alive. But they also brought another set of actors: disenchanted engineers and technical workers who had fled from the traditional technical schools and universities and had written the curriculum and pedagogy and served as the staff in the new institution, bringing international experiences and building a network that could last more than the government. I found that there were professional bodies and expert knowledge that preceded the Peronist era and whose struggles found a course in the Workers’ University, and eventually amplified and got reshaped. The awareness of the role of many agents and of a multiplicity of discourses and strategies helped my research to consider different layers and actors in the interpretation of policy making in education.

If the creation of a new university is clearly a state decision (although, as it has been said, the state itself cannot be taken as a fixed entity), my second example points to the micro level of everyday schooling as another layer in which policy making takes place. In the late 1990s and as part of my doctoral dissertation, I studied the adoption of school uniforms in public schools. In Argentina, schools started donning white smocks in the first decade of the twentieth century, in what was commonly interpreted as a democratic measure that supposedly contributed to an equal and homogeneous public school system. Interestingly, these dress

regulations were not ordered by an official decree but emerged out of a practice “invented” simultaneously by several school principals and teachers (I found as many as seven reports of “inventors” of such practice in the same years, 1905–1910). The practice of donning uniforms seems to have been created from below, borrowing what was common in other school systems (France, Italy, Spain) but with particular traits such as the white color of uniforms, their imitation of medical smocks, and their incorporation into daily hygienic and disciplinary supervisions of children’s bodies. In this creation, intermediate knowledge, such as the one carried by school inspectors and teachers, popular journals, and family strategies, was relevant, perhaps more than the one that came from the top of the system. It was in 1915 that the first decree was passed that turned it compulsory for teachers, and not for students, to use the white smocks. The measure was supported on a scaffolding of moral, scientific, political, and economic discourses that made it “commonsensical” to don uniforms in public schools.

The two cases are different, and yet in their interpretation I looked for similar themes: de-centeredness of educational policies, local struggles, lack of direct and transparent relations between political agents and educational strategies, and density of institutional histories and of objects. At the same time, the approaches I took differed significantly: if in the case of the Workers’ University I looked at political debates and texts, in the case of the uniforms I focused on objects, material culture, fashion, and the regulation of morals. Interpretation, then, while sharing the same “air,” opened in different paths, as it will be seen in the next sections.

Educational Policy as Seen from Above: The Case of the National Workers’ University (1948–1959)

How to study the short life and transformation of the National Workers’ University (Universidad Obrera Nacional, UON)? The traditional account stated that it was a creation of the first Peronist government (1946–1955) and was the third and last step of a technical branch of schools that ran parallel to the traditional educational system. This technical branch, under the umbrella of the National Commission for Vocational Orientation and Learning (CNAOP) created in 1944, under Perón’s impulse (not yet president), offered vocational training for workers. That was a time marked by an imports’ substitution process opened by World War II but that was expanded in the postwar years. The CNAOP schools offered new specializations (mining, industrial mechanics, car motors, electrical installations, etc.) and had an academic organization that allowed adults to study while working; some of the schools were located in factories or were associated to them (Pineau 1991). It encouraged the inclusion of working-class students: an employment certificate was required, preferably from an industrial factory.

The UON was presented in 1948 as the culmination of this system. But the rhetoric of its foundation emphasized not only the needs to industrialize Argentina

but also the social justice that it implied. A Workers' University was the recognition that there was a debt in the education of the working class and that it was finally going to be redeemed. As Pronko (2003) states, the idea of a Workers' University had been there for some time, advocated by Catholic workers (inspired in the Belgian case from Charleroi) and by the socialist and anarchist unions. Pineau (1991) documents an Argentinean Workers' University that opened in 1939 organized by the National Confederation of Trade Unions and gave courses on labor legislation and technical contents (i.e., car motors). However, as in many other aspects (most notably, feminine vote), Peronism picked the idea and turned it into its own program (Torre 2002). The political antagonism was so wide that it was difficult for the opposition to cross the board and welcome the initiative.

The parliamentary debates that preceded its creation were heated, and in the end it was only the Peronists and some independents who voted for it. The Law 13229 was passed in a climate of hostile partisanship, and this signaled its development for a while. When it finally opened its doors to students, in March 1953, the perception, later picked and amplified by the historiography, was that it was a "peronist university."

But things changed when the Peronist government was overthrown from office by a military coup d'état in 1955. Most of the institutional creations of Peronism were either dissolved or integrated into preexisting structures (cf. Bernetti and Puiggrós 1993). However, the UON survived, and its students' movement struggled for its continuity under a new name, the Technological University. Ministry commissions were created that studied its case, and finally in 1959 a law was passed that fully recognized it as a national university and officially changed its name to UTN (Universidad Tecnológica Nacional).

As it can be implied by this short account, given this partisan character of its creation, the interpretation of the UON depended on the characterization of the Peronist experience and derived in antagonistic positions (Garay Reyna 2007). Peronism has been considered "a reaction to modernization" (Germani 1971), "a new class alliance" (Murmis and Portantiero 1973), and a "populist regime" (Laclau 1978). The educational histories about the UON emphasized its contribution to the democratization of higher education or its demagogic and lower quality education.

The research I started in 1988 was interested in the role of the students' movement, comparing the students from the UON and from the traditional University of Buenos Aires, which had been radically aligned with the opposition to Peronism. These antagonistic interpretations were part of the actors' rhetoric and of the way in which they presented their positions and their struggles. At that time, the dominant historiographical interpretation was a critical one. Studies done by Wiñar (1970) and Tedesco (1971) had concluded that the main drive behind the creation of the university was a political one. Through an analysis of economic data of the period, both authors pointed to the lack of need of qualified technical cadres and the low technical complexity of the industry at that time. Also, through following the low level of payment of industries of a tax created to support technical education, they stated that there was no interest or need by economic forces to have a technical university for workers. Particularly Tedesco emphasized the

hypothesis that education was serving a political function and not an economic one, in an open debate both with human capital theories and Marxist reproductive ones. Education was independent from economic variables and was serving political needs, be it the ones from the government or the ones from the popular classes—to be included in a body of legitimate knowledge and credentials.

The group in which I was doing research at that time had a different agenda.⁷ Educational history had to be read as a social and cultural history, de-centered from the State, and had to study continuities and ruptures. If Peronism in particular had been subjected to readings of either/or, radical break/total continuity (De Ípola 1989), then the group was set to produce nuanced interpretations that looked at the specificity of education. For example, the UON had rarely been considered a university, and its statutes or professorships had not been looked. It had been too easily dismissed as a demagogic creation, but there was almost no data about who taught there, who the students were, the curriculum, the internal organization, or its results.

The sources had to be, then, more diverse than the ones considered by previous histories. I looked at parliamentary debates and legal decrees, but also reviewed university sources (official journals both from the University of Buenos Aires, the “legitimate” and traditional one, and the UON), accounts and pamphlets of students’ associations, and texts by engineering professional associations. At some point, and related to the fact that most of the archives of the Peronist era had been destroyed by the military dictatorship, I decided to interview former students.

What I found was that there was a large professional movement that preexisted Peronism that was very important in the organization of the Workers’ University. If its first President had been a union leader, Cecilio Conditti, its vice president was an engineer, Pascual Pezzano, who was a relevant figure in the field of engineering. Having directed the most prestigious industrial school in the country, he defended the specialization of engineering against the general orientation of traditional universities, which the University of Buenos Aires defended until 1958 (cf. Dussel and Pineau 1995). Pezzano had been very active in the 1930s and early 1940s in disciplinary congresses and in educational journals, advancing the renovation of orientations and the regionalization of teaching to meet local needs, against the generalist engineers who were dominant in traditional university and professional associations. At the UON, he brought with himself a group of industrial engineers that were also recognized in their fields. While Conditti gave Perón

⁷ Some notes for a prospective intellectual history. The group was organized at the University of Buenos Aires by the late Cecilia Braslavsky, who had studied at the Democratic Republic of Germany (DDR) and had done her PhD work on the expansion of primary schooling in Latin America using Robert Alt’s category of “monopoly of education.” We read and discussed at large Brian Simon’s social history of education in Britain. I worked closely with Marcela Mollis, whose interest was the history of universities and was central in locating the UON within higher education, and with my friend and colleague Pablo Pineau, who studied trade unions. Mollis had just returned from Japan, and that added multiple perspectives to the group. I was a senior student at the BA in Educational Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires and benefited from a research fellowship for students recently created.

the first chair of the university, naming him its first professor, other faculty had sufficient academic qualifications. In an interview, a former student told that

There were some peronist professors, but we resisted them. We wanted to be taught seriously. We fought so that two professors we had, which were peronists and very bad teachers, were changed, and we won.

In my research, I took up a long tradition of studies around university politics and students' movements that date back to the 1920s in Latin America (Portantiero 1978). But I was also interested in the new sociology of curriculum, and my readings of Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Tom Popkewitz made me think about the hierarchy of knowledge that this new university was trying to establish. Also, Ivor Goodson's use of the sociology of professions and of Bourdieu's notion of field for the history of curriculum was also helpful for problematizing the established interpretation (Goodson 1988). Herbert Kliebard's discussion on the impact of vocational education in the USA helped me think about the oblique effects of vocationalism in the traditional school system (Kliebard 1990).

With this framework, I studied the UON's study plan and organization. One of its remarkable features was its regionalized structure. It had a central branch and regional campus that were to be established according to "the needs of the national industry." For example, in an Andean province, Mendoza, there was a specialization on "anti-seismic constructions"; in Córdoba, "aeronautic industry"; in Tucumán, "chemical industries" and "rail constructions." There were also offers on textile industries, sanitary works, mechanical constructions, car motoring, electromechanical constructions, electric installations, and many others.

All classes were to be in the night shift, from 7 to 11 pm, considering that the students were workers. The curriculum included labor legislation, industrial hygiene and security, and two courses on unions and workers' legislation.⁸ But these courses were less than 20 % of the weekly schedule; most of the curriculum focused on specialized subjects. The classes were supposed to be active, hands-on, and there were traces of progressivist pedagogies in the didactic guidelines that I was not expecting.

Regarding the student population, the data left was scarce and did not supply much information. I could gather that, by 1955, there were 1,887 students, 30 % of which came from the CNAOP schools and the rest from the traditional and preexisting industrial schools. One of the interviewees said that most of the students were workers, but another one said that they were middle- and mid-low class students, employed in tertiary services. While I could not find conclusive data, the proportion of students coming from the traditional industrial schools supports the second view of middle and lower classes as the primary component of the student body.

⁸ The name of the course was "Sindicalismo justicialista y legislación obrera," "justicialista" being the official name of the Peronist party. So the course was overtly a partisan syllabus on the role of party unions.

The interviews gave some hints about what happened between 1955 and 1959. When Perón was overthrown by a military coup d'état in 1955, the UON was intervened by the military. For a while, according to the testimonies, there was uncertainty about the continuity of the university. Due to the pressures of the students' movement and also of some of the faculty, the Ministry of Education created a Commission to consider its case and decide on its continuity. In 1956, the provisional president of the UON addressed the students to talk about the change of denomination, from Workers' University to that of Technological University. In his speech, he said that, if their students were technical cadres from the industry, it was "natural" that the University received that name. With this movement, the dictatorship intended to separate the university to its link to Peronist rhetoric and liturgy, and this separation was central to its institutional survival (Mollis 1991). The students' movement supported this change in their periodicals; according to the testimonies, they decided not to graduate until the change of denomination was settled, worried that their degrees would not be legitimate (Dussel 1990). In October 1959, more than 4 years after the Peronism was overthrown by a military coup, a law was passed that granted recognition to the National Technological University as part of the system of national universities.

My own interpretation sought to illuminate the multiple agents that were at play at that time. While the established version had neglected the works of professional groups and the relevance of disciplinary conflicts, these appeared to be central both to the creation and to the survival of the University after the military coup. Also, the students' movement, generally romanticized for its leftist politics, appeared aligned with traditional forces that defended a particular status quo for the institutions of knowledge. Marcela Pronko's work, published more than a decade later than my research, showed another important group that had remained invisible, even for me: that of Catholic groups. The Catholic Workers' Circles, active in those years and influential in the Peronist movements, brought the experience of Belgium's Workers' University and advocated for a higher education option for unions. This group, which combined political, religious, and pedagogical dynamics, seems to have been central to the advancement of this type of institutions (Pronko 2003, p. 24 ff.).

State educational policies then appear less as the product of univocal forces and more as the result of changing terrains of struggles and of possibilities, and of agents that configure themselves in these struggles. Moving beyond the opposition between continuity and radical break, I could interpret the creation of the Workers' University as an event in which several strategies converged, and which found a course momentarily in the Peronist government, soon to reorganize themselves under different lines. Certainly, Peronism was an adequate catalyst, and it added the presence of unions, a political discourse that placed the working classes as principal actors of the nations, and a cultural politics that challenged the existing hierarchy of knowledge (cf. James 1990; De Ípola 1989; among many others). But my point is that the research illuminated that this event could not be reduced to Peronism/anti-Peronism. The interpretative narratives had to look at other layers and dynamics such as the curriculum debates in the field of engineering and the students' movement that had played an important role in educational policies.

Educational Policy as Seen from Below: Educational Micro Policies and the Materialities of Schooling. School Uniforms

My second example has to do with school uniforms in Argentina, and it implies a change of scope and scale from the analysis done in the previous section. School uniforms are educational policies that are part of the school “marginalia,” apparently not central to policy as the curriculum, school fees, or entrance exams, and yet they have been important in configuring school identities and power relations (cf. Meadmore and Symes 1997). The regulation of clothing is part of a legal order that is made of minor decrees, some of which have not the full force of law but which nonetheless shape daily practice, and which get their enforcement power through many informal ways (teacher training, pedagogical advice, fashion, and taste, among others) (cf. Hunt 1996, 1999).

School uniforms in Argentina, which are white smocks that resemble physicians’ attire or lab coats and are used over street clothes, have been traditionally interpreted as the result of egalitarian policies.⁹ The assumption was that, with the same clothes, everybody would look alike in schools, and uniforms would erase, at least temporarily, the traces of social inequalities. Oral and press accounts presumed that they had been created in the 1870s, by the person who is considered to be the “founding father” of common schooling in Argentina, Domingo F. Sarmiento—a version that was taken up by some scholars as well.¹⁰

White smocks were used in Argentinean schools all throughout the twentieth century, and they persisted through dictatorships and radical democracies. When I was starting my doctoral research, the teachers’ unions, involved in a dramatic struggle for higher salaries, gave away white smocks as symbols of public schooling to those who supported them. These uniforms continue to be, to this day, a significant marker for public education, and parents and children refer to the pride they have when kids wear their white smock in their first day of class (cf. Fernández 1999). However, the white smocks had not been subject to specific research, except from some clip notes in newspapers and isolated paragraphs in histories of education (cf. Puiggrós 1990).

Why did I choose this topic? Some professors in Argentina told me it was a waste of my time, smocks being inconsequential and unimportant. Serious scholars had to study laws, documents, statistics, and curriculum. But white smocks were part of my own educational biography. Having experienced the donning of uniforms, and lived through a repressive dictatorship that obsessively controlled my external appearance, I knew that there were other components in uniforms besides social inclusion, and that stains, bad smell, or untidiness in the smocks had consequences on how children were considered and classified by teachers and principals. This was an important drive in my investigation and was reaffirmed

⁹ Egalitarianism is a political discourse centered on equal political rights. In the case of nineteenth-century republicanism, it was based on the notion of inclusion in a homogeneous polity (cf. Nique and Lelièvre 1993).

¹⁰ Georgette Magassy Dorn, Chief of the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress, wrote that “Sarmiento introduced the white uniform worn by students today” (Magassy Dorn 1993, p. 83).

by a Foucaultian theory that emphasized bodies as the site of power and that looked at disciplinary regimes to understand the production of homogeneous bodies (Foucault 1984). This framework, as well as my own experience of a strong public consensus, led me to challenge the idea that uniforms had been produced exclusively from above, and to problematize their emergence.

But personal biography did not stop at my school years in Argentina. As the historian as exiled described by Siegfried Kracauer, I was doing my research in a country where egalitarianism and school uniforms had not crossed paths. In the USA, uniforms had been donned for minorities, generally those who were deemed incapable of self-government by fashion and taste¹¹ and whose regulation was supposed to come from the outside (Lomawaima 1995). They were associated with distinction (as the preppy schools) or with inequality (Indian boarding schools), and most of the times they were resisted as an intrusion on personal freedom; at any rate, they were hardly seen as a symbol of an egalitarian polity.

The strategy I chose to undertake my study was a comparative history of school uniforms. I wanted to read and conceptualize these cases together; I believed the comparison would tell me something that I could not grasp only by looking deeper at one case. I am not sure I was conscious of that at that time, but I find that this option helped me keep my research questions open. The Foucaultian framework was inspiring but it could also become a straight jacket; uniforms could be (too) easily read as technologies totally aligned with disciplinary regimes of power, in their anonymity and impersonality, in their working from the outside to the inside, in their production of fixed categories, in their interchangeability. Interpretation could become, paradoxically, as transparent as that of historicists’.

Comparison, international and also throughout time, proved a good choice for finding differences. In a quote that would have helped at that time but that I found only recently, Haun Saussy says that comparativists “are likely to want to accentuate the particular inflections taken on by [global modern] culture in its various local destinations, for without particularity, what is left to compare?” (Saussy 2001, p. 163). True, there are comparativists who only look for the same. But I was only briefly interested in world institution theories as a method of comparison (cf. Ramírez 2003); it might have been that the large amount of data they collected was way out of my reach, but I also think that the historical and anthropological sensitivity for particularities was more appealing to my experience of exile and estrangement. I could “see” that uniforms expanded as a universal technology with schools, and at the same time, that they worked differently in each country.¹²

¹¹ “As a form of self-government rather than rule by coercion, liberal governmentality elicited voluntary compliance through the mechanisms of fashion and taste” (Poovey 1998, p. xx).

¹² This paragraph needs to be qualified, because it is a central part of research. What is it that the researcher “sees”? How is it connected to her or his own biography, emotions, and affects? I refer to the first pages of Stanley Cohen’s *States of Denial*, a wonderful example of the opaqueness of what made some people “see” the injustice of some situations such as apartheid, while other people “saw” the same things and did not interpret them in that way (cf. Cohen 2001). Research includes affects, inclinations, and sensitivities, in many more ways than one can account for; but it is advisable to be aware of how they play in one’s own focus and questions.

The historical comparison brought up other questions. One issue that puzzled me was why the policy of donning uniforms had not been adopted everywhere (notably, the USA did not adopt them as universal policies until the 1990s, and then, only some school districts followed them). But there was also the question of why uniforms had taken such different forms: *le tablier* in France, which was homemade and had dark colors; the *gray babi* in Spain; the *guardapolvos* (dusters) in Argentina, which were white, industrialized, and had different models for boys and girls; and in Uruguay, the smocks with *moña azul*, blue ribbons used by boys and girls. These differences led me to consider translation as an important category for analyzing how a particular object or technology traveled across countries and times, and how it became domesticated into local cultural forms (Appadurai 1996; Latour 1988, 2005).

But the comparison could also be done with other pieces of clothing and other types of regulation. I decided to study the disciplining of bodies through clothing regimes, analyzing the role of fashion in the production of technologies of the self, and locate uniforms as particular objects or technologies within the regulation of clothing (Joseph 1986; Steele 1989; Symes and Meadmore 1996). One important reading at the beginning of my work was the history of sumptuary laws by Alan Hunt, who traced the regulation of the use of velvet or of colors in early modern times; it helped me understand how social boundaries were produced through clothing (Hunt 1996). Also, Philippe Perrot's genealogy of the austerity of appearances of the bourgeois that linked the black suit with Calvinism brought the religious discourses together with the political and social transformations in ways I had not considered before (Perrot 1987). I looked at histories of fashion (Perrot 1994; Roche 1994; Binaghi Olivari 1991), but also at histories of the regulation of clothing tied to moral discourses (Valverde 1989) and histories of the transgression of these vestimentary codes (Garber 1998, *Vested Interests*). I tried to find the models in which the white smocks were inspired and surveyed the history of medical clothes (Blumhagen 1979; Pellegrin 1991), of academic vestimentary codes (Davidson 1990; Hargreaves-Mawdsley 1963; McVeigh 1997), and of children's attire (Cunnington and Lucas 1978, among many other).

The history of the body and of sexuality was another important source for my inquiry. As said before, the Foucaultian framework was determinant in this respect, but both the history of the body and of sexuality were and are vibrant fields of scholarship that went far beyond any simplistic reading of that theory. Particularly Georges Vigarello's history of the *dressage* of the body, of the right posture as a pedagogical power, which traced the moral, health, and political discourses, as well as the objects and technologies (school desks, gym apparatuses, prosthesis, and the like) that have tried to shape the body from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, was useful as a model for a long time-span study (Vigarello 1978). His later histories of cleanliness and of the discourses on the healthy and the unhealthy (Vigarello 1988, 1993) were also important references for my own research. Social hygiene was an important discourse by the end of the nineteenth century; in my look for understanding more about it, I bumped into Bruno Latour's *The Pasteurization of France* (1988), which opened a different conceptual framework to work with, and helped me interrogate the medical discourses and the "war on microbes"

declared by Pasteur and his acolytes in their relation to the white smocks donned in Argentinean schools.

In Latin America, I found oblique yet important references to uniforms or fashion in literary histories and in the history of sexuality. For example, Francine Masiello's work on the production of citizenship as a matter of style was quite important: "How to act as a modern person in the nation was set out through prescribed behaviors and through standards of dress and speech. They all conferred a limited range of identities upon which individuals as a part of a fledgling democracy. . . . In this way, they regulated the style of being a citizen" (Masiello 1997, p. 220). Good taste became, following Masiello, "a social regulator, a way to control abuse and excess" (Masiello, p. 224). Jorge Salessi's study of the medicalisation of society, particularly of the immigration issue and of homosexuality, was also relevant for understanding how expert knowledge was turned into political and populational categories (Salessi 1995).

These readings were not done before the archival work but most of them ran parallel. Eventually, they were central to my ability to read through the sources with many more concepts and questions that I had at the beginning of my research. For example, Valverde's work on Victorian morality and the anxiety about the "love of finery" of women (1989) guided me to read teachers' accounts about clothing and state regulations under a new vein. I also read their narratives about children looking for signs of this anxiety about decorum and cleanliness, and how these turned into moral and political categories that classified children—as I have seen through my teachers' doing.

This scholarship also broadened my archival work. If I began my research looking for legal decrees and official periodicals, I soon found that I had (and wanted) to look at other texts: educational journals, pedagogy and school hygiene textbooks, books of manners that prescribed clothing, autobiographies of teachers, school pictures, and children's and popular magazines. They all gave me hints about their extension and their inscription in moral, political, and economic discourses. I looked at commercial ads to understand their availability and circulation in different social strata. I had to learn to look at pictures, date them more precisely, and understand what they showed and what they obscured, something that later became a research problem in itself for me (cf. Dussel *in press*). The archival work was done at many libraries, as many as I could visit those years.

I also wrote e-mails to authors I was reading and was fortunate enough to engage in an interchange with them, particularly with Alan Hunt and Daphne Meadmore. And I counted with the help of friends and of colleagues that sent me news clips, articles, and books that spoke to my research. School uniforms are, as someone once told me, a good cocktail topic; each one of us has some memories or opinions about it, and if one asks around, one will probably find many ideas or clues that have not appeared before. That is what I did, and it helped. But, besides the enormous generosity of friends and colleagues, what organized this somewhat chaotic corpus were the theoretical categories I was using: disciplining of bodies, regulation of clothing, translation, and difference.

What did I make of all this work? I will focus on the Argentinean case for the sake of this text (cf. Dussel 2001, for the US and early modern Europe). Contrary to the popular belief that school uniforms had been established by Sarmiento in the 1870s, I found no trace of uniforms in public schools until the first decade of the twentieth century. The first dress codes that were established were informal regulations that appraised cleanliness and decorum (Szuchman 1988). By the mid-nineteenth century, schools and educational authorities began to oblige students to comply with rules of hygiene and to wear “appropriate” attire, but what exactly “appropriate” meant was unclear.

One story was particularly interesting. Among the 65–70 teachers who went from the USA to Argentina to work in normal schools between 1869 and 1890, in a sort of “importation” of human resources, there was William Stearns, a University of Chicago alumni, who was hired to head the new normal school at Tucuman, in northwestern Argentina. The letters he wrote to his brother portrayed several aspects of daily life, among which clothing issues were common.

“The poorest children here, wrote William sometime between 1875 and 1877, go entirely naked or at most with only a ragged shirt, and even those of the middle classes wholly unwashed and uncombed and dressed in clothes which we should think fit only for beggars. . . . By refusing to allow anyone not decently clothed to enter the school, we have produced a wonderful change. The school has the reputation of being very far ahead of any other in the city and the parents rather buy new clothes than lose the opportunity to send their children here. We have some 200 children in the graded school and pride ourselves upon the change we have effected in their manners and appearance”

(quoted in Houston Luiggi 1965, p. 89).¹³ Clothes were charged with social and moral overtones and acted as a regulator and a marker of citizenship and inclusion in the social body.

These dress codes, informal as they were, collided with some other policies. Given the slow progress of literacy and school attendance rates, many districts ruled out the possibility of excluding students from schools. In September 1865, the General Director for Schools passed some instructions that asked teachers to “avoid . . . that any children is left out from school with a frivolous pretext; always giving preference to those who are in the most need” (*Anales de la Educación*, Sept. 31, 1865, p. 51). A few decades later, a rule from the National Council of Education stated that: “It is prohibited to principals and teachers . . . to oblige students to come to school with uniform garments, . . . or even do the slightest mention of this issue” (undated decree, ca. 1890s, *Digesto Escolar* 1920, p. 191).

However, the trend towards uniforms prevailed, and by the beginning of the twentieth century several schools were using them, with a remarkable coincidence in its design: the *guardapolvo* or duster. Interestingly, many people claimed to

¹³ Changes were not limited to the clothing of students. One alumni said that she “remembered with a smile the way in which some of the North American teachers dressed themselves, foreign to that era and costumes, in short skirts.” The fashion of ankle-length walking skirts was quite a scandal in the provincial cities (Houston Luiggi 1965, p. 90).

have invented the *guardapolvos*. Among them were Pablo Pizzurno, general inspector of Schools for the capital city; Julia Caballero Ortega, a professor of manual skills in a suburban school; Antonio Banchemo, teacher of 6th grade in 1906 in a central school in Buenos Aires; the professor Pedro Avelino Torres, from an experimental school in Buenos Aires; and Matilde Figueira de Díaz, who has been included in the “Dictionary of Argentine Women” because of the invention of the white apron in 1914 (cf. Dussel 2001, for a detailed account). I found these claims in disparate sources: biographical dictionaries, educational journal, and newspapers.

Medical doctors and school inspectors also started to recommend using the *guardapolvos* at that time. For example, the chief inspector for School Hygiene said that “smocks would help prevent . . . contamination by germs . . . if they are left in schools, and do not come back and forth from home to school. In that way, it would be a great means for preventing the irradiation of infectious diseases in schools” (Sisto 1915, p. 565). It was established that a daily inspection of children were to be performed, looking at hands, nails, teeth, ears, neck, and head. Clothes, shoes, and tools brought by the student should also be surveilled, to ensure their cleanliness and tidiness. There would be a morbidity record for each student, indicating name, infectious diseases, other diseases, and vaccines (Sisto 1915, p. 563/564). This recording and individualizing can be seen, as Foucault described it, disciplinary power at work.

But this creativity at the level of teachers and inspectors was soon to become a centralized strategy, sanctioned by legal decrees. The first official rule to talk about the white smocks is from 1915 and it did not actually mandate uniforms but encouraged them. I found an important nuance: smocks were mandatory for teachers but not for students. It was then considered as a “good practice,” because “besides teaching the students to dress simply, it will also suppress the competency about who is better dressed among school personnel” (December 23, 1915, *Circ. 101, Expediente 19*). Echoes of the sumptuary laws and the regulation of the “love of finery” can be found in this phrasing.

In 1919, only 4 years later, another measure was passed that established that parents’ associations would provide uniforms to the families that lacked the resources to buy them, so that they didn’t suffer “any violence of an economic order.” After recommending the use of smocks during school hours and in school activities, it said that: “Smocks should be considered as uniforms characteristic of school attire, and in analogous conditions to textbook and school materials, in relation to their provision to children who do not pay school fees” (November 1 1919, in: *Digesto Escolar* 1920, p. 724). After that, more than two decades of informal policies (through PTAs, donations, provision of uniforms along with school material, teacher training, and expert advice in educational journals, among others) followed that paved the way to universalizing school uniforms in public schools. School pictures, which I traced through the journal of the National Council of Education, *El Monitor de la Educación Común*, show uneven levels of school uniformation until the 1940s. I did not find any decree instituting *guardapolvos* as mandatory, and while this absence might be due to the lacunae of the archives (which, in the case of Argentina, have been ransacked by the many

dictatorships), I suspect that it was never issued, as it might have been contradictory with national laws of compulsory and tuition-free schooling. But this speculation might need more archival work in local archives, which sometimes have been better preserved of political turmoil.

The interpretation I produced played with the notion of the scaffolding of discourses (Popkewitz 1998). While egalitarianism was indeed important in supporting this policy, it was nonetheless inscribed in a series that tied together austerity of appearances and consumption along with republicanism as a homogenizing polity, moral discourses as decency and decorum, social hygiene, and the moral superiority of the schooled, national body. This moral–political–economic complex was multilayered, and not univocal as the traditional interpretation had stated. The studies done by Alan Hunt (1999) and Mariana Valverde (1998) on moral regulation as combining different “repertoires” and kinds of knowledge helped me interpret this scaffolding of discourses as “the outcome of a complex of elements of governmental discourses, rationalities and practices” (Hunt 2000, p. 1). In this approach, cultural artifacts and technologies such as uniforms did not have a single meaning, but encompassed multiple series that could be combined in a strategic device.

I also tried to interpret why so many people wanted to be credited with the creation of uniforms. Were some of them lying? I’d rather think it was an idea that was “up in the air.” As Bruno Latour says, “[a] cause is always the consequence of a long work of composition and a long struggle to attribute responsibility to some actors” (Latour 1988, p. 258). I came up with the notion of a choral creation made from below: the simultaneity of their accounts might be related the availability of this idea and of this particular object (the white smock, typical of medical doctors) at that time. At any rate, this multiplicity helped debate with the interpretation that uniforms were produced by a single and centralized decision, but it seemed much more plausible to look at them as the result of “long work of composition” made within a network of discourses and technologies available at that time.

Concluding Remarks: Interpretation in the History of Educational Policy

Carlo Ginzburg, in his review of Natalie Zemon Davis’ *The Return of Martin Guerre*, discusses the role of narrative and fiction in historical research. He appraises the historian’s participation in the making of the film, an experience that she described as “an historiographic lab, a lab where the experiment did not generate irrefutable proofs but historical possibilities” (quoted in Ginzburg 1988, p. 114). Having the chance to look at actors playing with different tones of voice for a particular character, Zemon Davis, and Ginzburg through her, transformed the indicative mode of historical narrative in a conditional, acknowledging that historiographic accounts make infinite choices when they translate traces of the past into a coherent story.

The choices made by research are related, as I said in the beginning of this text, to a particular date or air in which one moves. How one looks at the text is related to the theories or categories that are current at certain moments. In her wonderful *A History of the Modern Fact*, Mary Poovey said that “issues that were not problems for past writers *became* problems for writers who returned to earlier texts” (Poovey 1998, p. 23, her emphasis). It is not that the past writers were dumb or ignorant; there is a field of visibility, a language, a horizon of problems, which are historically defined. Theoretical interpretations supposes an awareness of all the operations “implied in the simple fact of seeing” (Jacob 2006, p. 8).

In the discussion of both cases, I intended to show that it was important for my research to restudy the multiplicity of agents and dynamics involved both in the design and the implementation of educational policies, and to reassess their connections. I questioned preexisting interpretations that took for granted that the State was the key player in the definition of educational policies, be it the Workers’ University or the donning of uniforms. The “air” in which I breathed as a researcher pointed to the multiplicity and de-centeredness of the political, and I was set to look for that plurality in policy making. This plurality marked the way to look at the archives and build my corpus of documents: it was important not to stay with the official, written sources at the level of the central state; the combination of oral histories, visual sources, and many intermediate texts contributed to look for a complex grid of intelligibility.

The resulting interpretation placed educational policies in the midst of a scaffolding of available technologies and ideas, of changing strategies of agents whose behavior was not easily predictable, and of a continual rewriting of these strategies as the play of politics continued to take place. This movement was clearer in my doctoral research than in the case of my analysis of the Workers’ University, but the concern about plurality and shifts was there too.

Interpretation, then, paid attention to the movement of signs, and not to their fixation; in that respect, it is dated within theories that look for the fluid, the liquid, and the circulation and translation of concepts and belongs to this era. Is it the final, definite word on these topics, as historicists thought they had achieved? Certainly not. The work and play of interpretation never ends. But it is good enough to produce plausible arguments that account for what was possible at a given time and that prove to the extent of their possibilities that this argument is grounded on rigorous interpretations. They also expand the way for new plays and works of interpretation that will point to movements or connections one has not seen.

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5.8 Nonformal Education on Display

Karin Priem

Research Report: “The Family of Man” as a Means of Public Education?

This chapter deals with the topic in the larger context of exhibitions and public education. In the discipline of the history of education, the focus has been mainly on world exhibitions that have been analyzed as sites of traveling ideas, of the competitive display of education systems and policies, and of meaning making in general (e.g., Lawn 2009; Dittrich and Kaiser 2009). Little research has so far been carried out on visual and multimodal aspects of exhibition spaces in general, even though exhibition techniques rely on complex strategies regarding the arrangements of objects and images, the use of time and space, and how audiences are guided through these “theaters of display” (Priem and Thyssen 2013). Together with Geert Thyssen (ibid.), I have examined these issues in greater detail elsewhere. For the purpose of this essay, I will concentrate on the visual level only and analyze how images have been used as a means of cultural policy and nonformal, or public, education. The goal of this chapter is to explore how images in a three-dimensional space are arranged according to certain strategies of presentation and representation and how these arrangements emphasize what should be perceived and which meaning should be ascribed to it. The questions I will address are thus mainly related to the epistemological effects of photographic images. From a didactic point of view, images are, in fact, expected to stimulate meaning making and inspire learning; they thus become pedagogical objects. On the one hand, learning through images takes as its reference the symbolic order of society. On the other hand, the

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arrangement and the presence of images can be used to symbolize the social world and to structure and interpret reality.

My research on Edward Steichen's exhibition *The Family of Man* touches on many of these issues. So far, the exhibition has been referenced only in a few monographs and anthologies (e.g., Sandeen 1995; Back and Schmidt-Linsenhoff 2004). Most publications devote only short essays (e.g., Szarkowski 1994) or book chapters (Staniszewski 1998; Corbus Bezner 1999; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona 2008) to the project, concentrating on individual aspects of or contemporary texts on Steichen's work. This may be due to the fact that the Edward Steichen Archive (ESA) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York was unprocessed and not open to researchers until September 2011. In addition to material on Steichen's personal life, the Archive contains, among other things, correspondence, press releases, photographs, notes, and clippings concerning the planning, installation, and worldwide circulation of *The Family of Man*. Other materials—including photographs of international installations of the show, statistics, fact sheets, installation instructions, checklists, and international press clippings—had been accessible before, in the Department of Circulating Exhibitions Records (CE) and in the International Program Records (ICE) of the Archives of the Museum of Modern Art. Additional information about the photographic material is available in the catalogue of the show (Museum of Modern Art 1955).

The Family of Man was first shown from January 24 to May 8, 1955, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition was composed of ca. 503 photographs grouped thematically around subjects such as love, marriage, childbirth, childhood, play, family life, work, religious feelings, old age, human relationships, basic human needs, death, studying and learning, hunger, aggression, and war. Dramatization surely was the essence of the photographic assemblage exhibited as *The Family of Man*, and the prologue to the show, written by Steichen's brother-in-law Carl Sandburg "in a vaguely Old Testament style" (Szarkowski 1994, p. 27), was quite pathetic as well. Quoted in the introductory panel of the exhibition, it underlined the exhibition's claim for universality, "of photography as a universal language in recording the world we live in": "There is only one man in the world/and his name is All Men./There is only one women in the world/and her name is All Women./There is only one child in the world/and the child's name is All Children" (CE, MoMA Archives, NY, II.1.57.1). After its initial showing at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955, the exhibition toured the world for 8 years, making stops in 37 countries on 6 continents. The photographs included in the exhibition focused on issues, emotions, and concerns that were supposedly shared by all people and cultures around the world. Conceived in the first decade of the Cold War, the show was meant to express a universal humanism and general (Western) values such as democracy and freedom. A checklist (CE, MoMA Archives, NY, II.1.57.1) reveals that most of the ca. 503 photographs exhibited in the show were taken by American photographers and had been published before in popular US media such as *Life* magazine. This American photographic gaze on the world has been the main frame of reference for the show while at the same time indicative of how the US—and eventually the global—audience was expected to see the world.

The exhibition therefore has to be analyzed in the context of the Cold War rivalry of the 1950s and of how Western concepts of universal humanity were fabricated by means of photography and public display. According to Frances Stonor Saunders (1999), the US government, during the 1950s and 1960s, spent “vast resources” on “cultural propaganda” (ibid., p. 1), which also involved covert operations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, run by the US Central Intelligence Agency: “At its peak, the Congress for Cultural Freedom had offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances” (ibid.). *The Family of Man* most likely was not funded by the CIA, but there is evidence that the show was part of the huge propaganda machinery to promote an image of “America” or, more specifically, the USA not only among intellectuals but among all people worldwide. Not only were copies of the show commissioned by the United States Information Service (USIS) for circulation around the world; the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (founded in 1953) also strongly supported a policy of international exchange in the arts as a mission for “America.” In 1955, George F. Kennan, a US American diplomat who had a strong influence on the Marshall Plan, gave a speech to the Council members, putting particular emphasis on how to promote the national interest through international cultural exchange and on the importance “to correct a number of impressions that the outside world entertains of us, impressions that are beginning to affect our international position in very important ways” (Kennan 1956). Similar to Steichen’s principal idea of *The Family of Man*, Kennan, in his speech, referred to “cultural values, universal in their meaning” and to “artistic creation and higher forms of scholarly thought,” which in his view “remained the only areas in which it was conceded, even by totalitarians, that men of different political faith and allegiances might conceivably find a bond” (ibid.). What he implied, of course, is that US culture would be the most appealing when seriously introduced to the rest of world and when being “enriched by acquaintance with similar activity elsewhere” (ibid.). Referring to Henry Luce’s famous *Life* magazine editorial of 1941, Guilbaut (1983) thus argues that, at the end of World War II, “America was ready to lead the newly liberated world into the ‘American century’” (ibid., p. 101) and to follow an “imperialist internationalism” (ibid., p. 103) by promoting America as a model of the future. Coincidentally, the Hiroshima explosion in 1945 and the impact of atomic weapons (see ibid., pp. 101–194) gave rise to a similar new concept, created by American intellectuals and artists who saw only one way out of this state of dehumanization: to propagate a new myth, a new “religion” of essence, purity, transcendence, and the universality of man. This new concept of universal humanity fitted very well with the political claim of America’s supremacy and of American art and culture as an explicitly superior and therefore universal model for the world. As it were, universal humanity and cultural supremacy were key principles of *The Family of Man* as well.

Another characteristic of *The Family of Man* is the use of superlative figures when it comes to visitors, venues, catalogues distributed, and images involved. For

example, Steichen and his team are said to have chosen their material from out of six million photographs (Sandeen 1995, p. 41). As it is difficult to corroborate all these figures during an archival search, a wide variety of exorbitantly high figures are circulating in both contemporary texts and subsequent scholarship, thereby underlining the size and magnitude of an exhibition characterized as being beyond words. The numerical superlatives additionally (sometimes unintentionally) have helped construct the myth of *The Family of Man* as a democratic and universal show that was created not for experts, but for everybody everywhere, for the purpose of morally and politically “educating” a mass audience. In fact, Steichen looked at photography as a mirror of the universal experiences of mankind. One of the critics of the show, Roland Barthes (1964), pointed out its purely historical importance, noting that photography was an inappropriate means for generalization and objectivity. Human aspects and political values in particular, he argued, vary historically and are not as universal as Steichen’s show would suggest. Taking my cues from Barthes, I will look at *The Family of Man* as a visual strategy to construct and establish (Western-oriented) values as universal human values.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on visual politics with regard to a (sometimes global) public, which is supposed to respond in a certain way: for example, to absorb certain ethical and political values, repeat cultural formula, or support ideological beliefs. Traveling exhibitions such as *The Family of Man*—just like shows in historical or art museums or, to give another example, didactic strategies in classrooms—are means of governing the public by imagination and by using seeing as a cultural practice. This approach is based on the power of visual media, which in turn refers to a set of underlying didactic strategies enhancing nonformal education. This chapter will, therefore, on the one hand, contribute to the current research on the political impact of visual media. In addition, it will examine the cultural promotion of political values by means of nonformal learning.

The design and installation of *The Family of Man* was not neutral in terms of meaning and power, but thoroughly composed in accordance with the show’s mission. Steichen and his designer Herbert Bauer, a former Bauhaus scholar with substantial experience in the aesthetic practice of European avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1930s and related exhibition and propaganda design, were very much concerned about how the installations and modes of display would affect viewers’ experience and creation of meaning (e.g., Staniszewski 1998, pp. 1–57). The show was not only inspired by an avant-garde aesthetic, however; advertising and popular magazines, war photography, fashion photography, and documentary photography also strongly influenced the design of *The Family of Man* (e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 207–259). In addition, the images were not presented as individual pieces of art in their original format, but were chosen in accordance with the overall mission of the show. Within this particular setting, the artistic quality of an individual photographic image did not play a key role; the pictures rather had to fit into the visual assemblage of *The Family of Man* in general and were selected “to contribute pace and drama to the story” (Szarkowski 1994, p. 13). “The criterion was to portray a message through the assembled whole” (Sandeen 1995, p. 53). The exhibition techniques used by Steichen and his team were meant to create a multilayered, dynamic space that was not dependent on

fixed and limiting walls—a “theater of display” (Priem and Thyssen 2013) offering a changing flow of different views. This effect was realized by freestanding circular, multidimensional, and even transparent installations; by pictures hanging on wires far away from stationary and immobile walls; by enlarging, downsizing, and cropping images to set up either a dramatic or intimate framework of seeing; and by mounting images on Lucite or Masonite panels without using mats or frames to avoid distance and to directly involve the viewer by “eliminating the aura of high art that enforced respectful distance” (Sandeem 1995, p. 61) and “by not attempting to match the high-gloss sacralisation of the artistic photographic print” (ibid.). The design of the show can be described as a dynamic play of different forms, surfaces, theatrical light effects, panoramas, movements, and captions (Priem and Thyssen 2013). The latter—“brief quotations from the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita and legends of the Sioux nation and from Shakespeare and James Joyce and others” (Szarkowski 1994, p. 14)—did not provide any information about the photographs themselves, but were inscribing the images into the universalizing story and “grand tapestry” of the show (ibid.). One of the most spectacular installations of the show was “the pregnancy temple,” a womb-like white rotunda, half encircled by fine white curtains and giving access to a set of relatively small photographs showing birth and intimate mother-and-newborn-baby scenes hanging on transparent wires in front of a shimmering curtain. Another important aspect of the show was its independence from a traditional museum context and fixed space. The show was composed as a mobile set of elements and could easily be installed at other locations in a similar way. The venues of the show often were temporary and popular spaces created for mass audiences. Commenting on a photograph of the exhibition space in Moscow, Eric Sandeem (1995, p. 190) writes: “Many of the exhibits were encased in structures entirely made of plastic. The experimental units of fiberglass were hurriedly tested for stability in the wind by blasting a test module with the prop wash from several airplanes on a Long Island airstrip.” The novel and flexible materials of construction added new meaning to the show, promoting it as a promising symbol of the future of mankind.

Many researchers stress the major influence of documentary photography, especially of the photographs taken under the aegis of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), among them many shots that have later become cultural icons. One example is Dorothea Lange’s famous “Migrant Mother” (1936), which was also shown in *The Family of Man*. While it is worth mentioning that Dorothea Lange, in fact, played a key role in the planning of *The Family of Man* (Szarkowski 1994), it is also important to know that Steichen gained the idea for his future show when he saw one of the first exhibitions of FSA photography in 1938. In an article on *The Family of Man*, John Szarkowski, Steichen’s successor as director of the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, points out that the FSA style of documentary photography inspired Steichen to think of the “possibility of using photographs as building blocks from which one might construct cumulative and coherent meanings” (ibid., p. 18). He also mentions that it gave Steichen the idea that photography could be used as a means of propaganda (ibid., pp. 18–19).

I will now first outline methodological approaches to analyze Steichen’s show, before applying them in a second step to a selected section of *The Family of Man*.

Images and the Creation of Meaning

Photography has traditionally been associated with the notion of producing a precisely accurate rendering of historical reality. However, at least since photography's recent "discovery" as a historical source and artistic product (e.g., Tagg 1988; Mitchell 1994), there have emerged a wide range of points of departure for a more intensive exploration of this genre. In his introduction to the German translation of Svetlana Alpers' *The Art of Describing* (1983), art historian Wolfgang Kemp (1985, pp. 7–20) has presented an idea of interpretation that explicitly does not highlight the mimetic or documentary character of the visual product, putting major emphasis instead on aspects of image production. What this interpretation foregrounds are visual technologies as epistemological practices to shape what should be seen by viewers and which meaning should be ascribed to it. The approaches developed subsequently by Jonathan Crary (1990) and Hans Belting (2001) relate to viewer orientation and the history of perception and to media history and the anthropology of the image, respectively.

Unlike texts, images have a primarily visual status, which in turn is due to instruments or techniques of image production. As far as photography is concerned, this means that the emphasis lies on the importance of the camera as an instrument of perception, a means of visually describing social facts, and a specific technique of image production. This then casts a different light on the question of the objectivity and authenticity of photo-technical perception and of seeing through the "eye of the camera," which in turn has consequences for the analysis of visual sources (Priem 2006, 2009).

"The history of vision," writes Ralf Konersmann (1999, p. 18) was "from the very beginning" closely tied to a "critique of vision." Sensory vision has been regarded, on the one hand, as a means of disclosure, exposure, and production of evident proof; it stood for empirical precision, evidence, loyalty to the facts, and the establishment of certainty and authenticity. On the other hand, vision has also been associated with illusion, delusion, limitation, and deception. Konersmann thus accurately refers to the "dual structure of vision" (*ibid.*, p. 14); from an epistemological point of view, he considers this duality to derive from persistent differences between intellectualism and empiricism. He points out, however, that "modern pictorial art" (*Bildkunst der Moderne*), as well as the ongoing modification of optical instruments, meant that vision itself was interrogated time and again, with "the critique and rehabilitation of vision" engaging in a dialectical relationship (*ibid.*, pp. 30, 45; see also Crary 1990). It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that photography likewise combines both aspects: that is, it not only records the interaction and discrepancy between the image and social reality, between accurate perception and ideal, between individually and culturally preformed models; it also subjects them to critical evaluation. The claim that photography, because it does not resolve this duality but instead makes use of it, must be regarded purely as a means of deception can be refuted by arguments put forward by the scientific theorist Ludwik Fleck (1983, pp. 147–174). In his 1947 essay "Schauen, sehen, wissen"

(Looking, seeing, knowing), Fleck pointed out that scientific knowledge was subject to particular social conditions and conventions of perception, whose individual expressions he describes as “*Denkstile*” (styles of thought). For example, he provides an impressive description of how, following the invention of the microscope, the scientific definition of bacterial groups at first oscillated between different possible classifications before one particular, scientifically accepted visual image asserted itself and became firmly established, which in turn determined subsequent research. This in no way meant, however, that the development process was complete. According to Fleck, such positively sanctioned forms and attributions also lead to the discovery of new shapes and structures, which diverge from these norms and initially also appear to be in a state of oscillation. In this sense, the results of scientific research are always fundamentally determined—in both a positive and negative sense—by preexisting conventions as well as by the invention of particular measuring instruments and devices. As such, every piece of scientific knowledge is, in Fleck’s words, “a process between the individual, his style of thought, which ensues from the fact of belonging to a social group, and the object” (ibid., p. 168). Applied to photography, we can thus draw the following conclusion: similar to the situation found in an experimental laboratory, the photographic gaze isolates and fixes its object of study, and it is this process which exposes the object to attentive perception. In both cases, the result is influenced by prevailing social conditions, but this by no means makes it a deceptive illusion. Viewed from this perspective, “visual discovery through art,” as Ernst Gombrich (1982) once described it, is produced under similar conditions as scientific knowledge. In both situations, it has to do with styles of thought or conventions of perception as well as their continuation, differentiation, and possible correction using methods of isolation and detachment that are in turn subject to social, cultural, and technical conditions. For this reason, the accusation that is leveled against photography, namely, that it isolates details from their wider context in order to “strip the make-up from reality” (Benjamin 1931/1980, p. 208), can also be viewed in a positive light. A special characteristic of photography is, in fact, its potential to question the epistemic value of realistic depiction that is deemed to be objective. For “visual discoveries” are made, according to Gombrich (1982, p. 37), when “the normal relationship of recognition and recall is reversed between the picture and reality, so that we genuinely recognize pictorial effects in the world around us, rather than the familiar sights of the world in pictures.”

Bettina Heintz and Jörg Huber (2001), in their introduction to an anthology on scientific strategies of visualization, similarly discuss how scientific research is put on display. The authors underline that scientific images are not meant to represent reality in a vertical way, but rather refer horizontally to other images of the same subject, which they describe as a space of corresponding references and representations (ibid., p. 12). Scientific images are expected to compress a lot of information into a special configuration of display (ibid., p. 13) while being dependent on certain instruments and techniques of seeing and image-making. Historically, optical devices at first were considered to be more rational than the subjective human gaze (ibid., p. 17), whereas later, when the concept of modern objectivity was successfully established during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, human expertise was seen as a necessary

intervention to interpret and detect patterns of “reality” within “established traditions and horizons of display.” Similarly, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (2007) have argued that an important change in epistemological ideals took place in the middle of the nineteenth century when objectivity was established as a new ethos of research. Objectivity differed fundamentally from the preceding truth-to-nature principle of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the truth-to-nature principle constituted an ideal figure or type by combining several particular items of one species, objectivity was based on reproducing exact forms of detailed items of a species by mechanical means such as photography or microscopic analysis. According to Daston and Galison, these epistemic ideals are, however, not mutually exclusive but coexist and lead to different forms of knowledge.

With respect to photography, the significance of the camera thus becomes a key issue. A camera is not just an instrument of visual perception and observation; it is also a means of questioning vision and reality, as well as of establishing conventions as frameworks of reference and correspondence.

Depictions of Children in The Family of Man

Throughout the exhibition, the “magic of childhood” is promoted as a central human ideal, a promising link to the future of mankind, and an “eternal hope” (CE, MoMA Archives, NY, II.1.57.1). In a press release and fact sheet published by the Museum of Modern Art and dated September 12, 1955, Edward Steichen describes the first section of the show as follows:

“Photographs of women heavy with child walking rapidly in a street in Japan, a Dutch mother nursing her child, first steps of children in Germany, in India and South Africa. A small boy playing marbles in Java, a little girl splashing in a New England pond are akin, and so is the lonely and unwanted unloved child in one part of the world like another such child thousands miles away. Photographs of a father with his son in primitive Africa and another in Levittown, U.S.A., show the same kind of closeness. The essential oneness and goodness of man is mirrored in the simple direct terms of photography”

(CE, MoMA Archives, NY, II.1.57.1).

One of the last sections of *The Family of Man* was also dedicated to childhood. Most critics of the show have characterized this part as being the most sentimental and have accused the curator and his team of having created an overall illusive impression that was far from a realistic image of childhood (e.g., Corbus Bezner 1999, pp. 121–174)—an impression exacerbated by the fact that the show included only minor references to industrialization and urban life. Many photographs show scenes of peasant life and mankind’s struggle or relationship with nature, stressing purity and simplicity, which on a symbolic level have traditionally referred to childhood and Western ideas of paradise.

As the different sections of the show have been published in a catalogue (*The Family of Man* 1955), I will now single out one page (p. 189) and use the group of photographs shown on that particular page (Fig. 1) to discuss how they represent childhood.

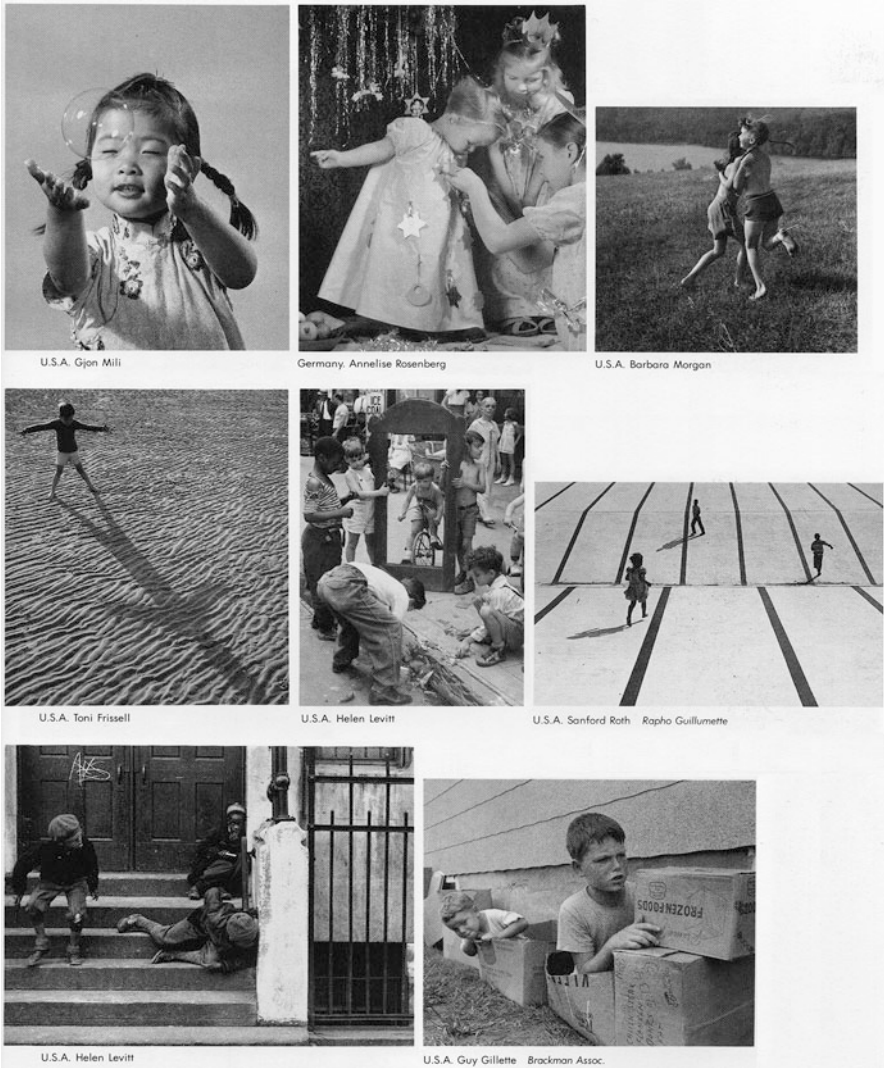


Fig. 1 Exhibition catalogue of *The Family of Man*, p. 189

The page consists of eight small photographs arranged in three rows. Seven of them show children from the USA and one photograph is of children in Germany. The page contains different photographic genres such as artistic, documentary, and journalistic photography. In the catalogue, all photographs bear captions that give the name of the country where the photograph was taken as well as the name of the photographer. The arrangement of the photographs in the catalogue is a good example to demonstrate the techniques of display used in *The Family of Man*.



Fig. 2 Exhibition catalogue of *The Family of Man*, p. 189, top row



Fig. 3 Exhibition catalogue of *The Family of Man*, p. 189, middle row

The first three images in the top row (Fig. 2) show photographs by Gjon Mili (1904–1984), Annelise Rosenberg, and Barbara Morgan (1900–1992). While Annelise Rosenberg is a rather unknown artist, Gjon Mili, a *Life* photographer, and Barbara Morgan, who is famous for her portraits of dancer Martha Graham, are well known for their work. Even if their approaches to photography differ markedly, they all refer to the previously established convention and ideal of the innocent child: a child playing with bubbles, a quintessential symbol of the fleetingness and volatility of childhood (see Schama 1987, pp. 543–546); a Christmas scene showing three angelic children; and, finally, two young children dancing happily. It is very possible that all three pictures show the children of the artists and thus have a semi-private character.

The three images in the second row (Fig. 3) show photographs by Toni Frissell (1907–1988), Helen Levitt (1913–2009), and Sanford Roth (1906–1962). Toni Frissell is an American photojournalist who worked for *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Life* and volunteered to photograph the Women's US Army Corps during World War II. Helen Levitt, another American photographer, is famous for her



Fig. 4 Exhibition catalogue of *The Family of Man*, p. 189, bottom row

documentary street photography of New York City. Sanford Roth has built his career on portrait photography of painters, writers, and actors, some of them published in *Vogue*, *Life*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. The photographs taken by Frissell and Roth take a more artistic and abstract approach: by showing children's bodies in relation to repetitive ornaments and patterns, they refer to individual variations within a series and to differences between big and small. Frissell's photo, positioned right underneath Mili's girl with the bubble, also reminds us that childhood is a short, vanishing, and transitional stage of life—which, again, is a conventional and idealistic image of childhood. Contrast this with Helen Levitt's street photograph, shot in New York in 1942. It is a very good example of documentary photography and, as such, interrogating social reality. The image shows a group of children in an urban environment: two children are holding a broken mirror, framing a small boy on a bicycle, while two others are picking up glass splinters lying on the ground, and a more cautious African-American child is looking on.

In the bottom row (Fig. 4), another of Levitt's photographs reminds us that childhood is not only white but also black, with the picture of three boys being reminiscent of young street gangs in urban areas. The second photo in the row was shot by Guy Gillette and shows the photographer's sons playing "trains." Emphasizing the imagined movement of a train by using straight lines and a close-up shot from below, this example of Gillette's early work creates a dynamic perspective. Both images put the focus on the fleeting nature of childhood rather than on sentimental images.

According to epistemic ideals, images always are both guided by and shape certain strategies of evidence, presentation, and representation. Truth-to-nature views of childhood have not vanished entirely, however. They are still part of the repertory of twentieth-century photographic images, which are expected to be objective representations of reality. On the one hand, the depiction of children can be interpreted as a means of establishing and changing cultural concepts of childhood. On the other hand, visual media, with their different strategies of image-making, can be assumed to represent, shape, and question cultural concepts. Thus it can be expected that twentieth-century images of childhood such as can be found in *The Family of Man*

continue to adhere to an ideal image of the child. At the same time, children are depicted by emphasizing individual differences and variations of visual formulae. Within this framework, my analysis focuses on twentieth-century photographs of children in order to compare and distinguish changing and ongoing practices of imaging childhood.

Some of the photographic examples I have analyzed follow conventional cultural formulae and support the concept of childhood as modern versions of a cultural ideal by linking childhood with innocence and positive concepts of the future. Other images, however, which are related to the epistemic principle of objectivity, depict ruptures and changes in this ideal of childhood by stressing individual and social differences. In contemporary art as well as in photography, we often find both principles and formulae of childhood—the idea, and ideal, of childhood and the variety of children—questioning and challenging each other.

Steichen decided to ignore cultural and social differences and, in the words of Eric Sandeen (1995, p. 53), “burrowed to a more literally radical level where . . . people could be affected at their roots.” His frame of reference was mainly an American photographic gaze on the children of the world. In the installation of his show, he and his team used cropped, downsized, and oversized images as “building blocks” of “coherent meanings” (Szarkowski 1994, p. 18), thereby following preexisting conventions and a specific style of thought. By combining images to produce a thoroughly constructed set of elements and a coherent flow of different views, Steichen created dramatic frames of reference that did not interrupt viewers’ gazes: the visual regime of his show thus established epistemological concepts of mankind that, in his view, should be seen and anticipated as evident by the viewer. Steichen’s strategy of universalizing and thus naturalizing the specific order of meaning of his show did not work fully all the time, since individual photographs in the show, by referring to the concept of objectivity and by subjecting the mission of the show to critical evaluation, undermined these conceptual aims. Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that Steichen chose his images very carefully in order to propagate an ideal that he achieved by combining corresponding though not identical or contradictory elements.

As stated in the methodological framework, acts of seeing and epistemic practices as they are realized in photography give rise to intellectual concepts and lead to different forms of knowledge. Applied to childhood, this means that knowledge created by the true-to-nature principle is based on the potential of childhood as an ideal of pure mankind. Other concepts of childhood are more committed to objectivity; they foreground contradictory images of childhood and analytically distinguish between real children in different though sometimes similar social and spatial contexts. In *The Family of Man*, deviations from the ideal (with some unintended exceptions) were usually integrated inconspicuously, with the goal of adding, together with the flexible and nonconventional exhibition design, a touch of modernity and dynamic flow of time to the overall nostalgic character and frame of reference of the show.

Photography as a Visual Method of Observation

In her book on photographic portraits of prisoners, Susanne Regener (1999) points out that these photographs, taken within a total institution, establish extremely rigid patterns and conventions of imaging criminals. In *The Family of Man*, Steichen also set up visual patterns, but utilized them in a more flexible way through different arrangements of images, materials, and spatial arrangements. By using attractive modern designs and surfaces, his concept of meaning creation was much more refined and aesthetically conscious. Still, he was extremely keen on persuading the audience of his mission and, in fact, managed to be highly successful in terms of the show's resonance. It is therefore very important to further examine the didactical aspects of the show, to analyze how images and their arrangement in time and space followed certain strategies of evidence, and how these assemblages were expected to shape the perception of “reality” and influence what viewers saw as “real,” “essential,” and “true.” To underline the enormous epistemological impact that the arrangement of images has on the order of knowledge and meaning, I will give an example of how different messages can be created by means of comparison and combination.

One of the two pictures (Fig. 5) I would like to analyze was shot by Swiss photographer Robert Frank (born 1924). In the mid-1950s, Frank travelled through the USA on a Guggenheim Fellowship to work on a photographic portrait of the USA. The result, a book entitled *The Americans*, was first published in Paris in



Fig. 5 Robert Frank,
Fourth of July—Jay,
New York, 1955/1956
(Frank 2008)

Fig. 6 Exhibition catalogue of *The Family of Man*, p. 192



1958, and many of the images, while initially drawing major criticism in the USA, have since become photographic icons (e.g., Frank 2008). None of these photographs had been exhibited in *The Family of Man*; preferring more private and intimate photographs, Steichen excluded those photographs from his show that subjected the USA to a critical gaze or portrayed the country as a particular cultural constellation rather than a universal model of mankind. I would like to compare Frank's photograph with the concluding, oversized image of *The Family of Man* exhibition (Fig. 6). Taken in 1946 by American photographer Eugene Smith (1918–1978), it is entitled “Walk to Paradise Garden.” The image is said to have been the photographer's first shot after recovering from an injury that he had incurred as a war photographer in 1945. According to Eric Sandeen (1995, p. 69), the image was also featured in a 1954 General Electric advertisement campaign. In Steichen's show, it was used to stress childhood as an “eternal hope.” It shows the two children of the artist on a forest trail, walking happily into the bright sunlight, thereby symbolizing a much better future for mankind, religious hope, and the eternal cycle of life. This message was further stressed by the caption “A world to be born under your footsteps . . . St.-John Perse.”

Robert Frank's photograph “Fourth of July,” shot on the US national holiday in 1955, displays the same pattern of childhood in an even more exaggerated manner by highlighting the white dresses of two little girls and positioning them in the center of the image. While these two figures also symbolize innocence and hope, this message is being undermined by the fact that they are walking rather forlornly towards an oversized and dominating American flag that reaches all the way to the top edge of the photograph. The extremely big flag made of poor fabric with multiple patches puts critical emphasis on the USA and its overreaching claim to represent political supremacy and a universal ideal of mankind. This claim is further challenged by the cropped male figures in the right foreground and the young adolescent on the left side, who simply ignore the flag by concentrating on

each other or turning their back on the flag. When we compare the two photographs, the message is markedly different: while Robert Frank's shot conveys a rather critical and contradictory message by depicting a specific social and historical situation, Eugene Smith's photograph is a rather trivial image that stresses purely sentimental aspects and conventional patterns of childhood that are not contextualized in a social setting. Even if Frank's photograph most probably was shot after the opening of *The Family of Man* show in 1955 and therefore could not be included in the exhibition, the overlaps as well as the differences in content are quite evident. Steichen surely would not have included both images within the same thematic block. Frank's photograph would have affected the meaning of Smith's photograph in a way that would have been contrary to, or at least inconsistent with, the overall mission of *The Family of Man*. The show has a strong tendency to naturalize and universalize specific views without giving the viewer too much contradictory information about the particularity of the images and their social settings. This is why the show was able to project a largely unbroken American view of the world. In terms of education, it is important to analyze the manifold possibilities of images to manipulate the creation of meaning by making use of epistemological mechanisms like the ones shown here.

On Display: Epistemological Rationales of Photography and Their Didactic Impacts

This chapter has dealt not so much with the question of how exhibitions concretely affect potential viewers and are received by different audiences (e.g., Priem and Thyssen 2013), but how they are deliberately created as visual displays and sites of public education in order to convey coherent meaning. The focus has not been on the learner, but on the didactic rationale behind the selection and design of images in the context of exhibitions. I have analyzed *The Family of Man* as a thoroughly composed visual learning context by referring to methodologies and theories of the visual that focus on epistemological rationales, the dual structure of images, and material issues of image production. This approach emphasizes the selection of photographs and their arrangement in thematic blocks as a visual policy that in turn focused on photography as a universal language by subtly creating a coherent framework of reference. Within this framework, Steichen and his team managed the dual structure of photography—an accurate rendering of reality on the one hand and a depiction of an ideal on the other hand—by consciously selecting and combining the images. Many of the photographs displayed in *The Family of Man* did not convey specific contextual information and therefore abstained from communicating irritating messages, which in turn would have fostered critical inquiry into notions of particularity or cultural diversity. Modern exhibition techniques such as minimizing, cropping and enlarging images, mounting them on panels, and arranging them in thematic blocks, helped not only to exclude contextual

information and suppress difference and diversity but also to present visual statements of a more private or intimate nature. It was this visual mix that created the seemingly timeless atmosphere of the show.

From a didactic point of view, images in general play a key role in education and instruction. According to the German philosopher of education Klaus Prange (2005), all modes of education can be reduced to gestures of display that demonstrate what should be seen and learned. Within an educational context, activities such as persuading, motivating, punishing, threatening, supporting, or explaining are always based on something that either was or is demonstrated or displayed in the classroom in a literal or symbolic way. By means of literal or symbolic display, the recipients pick up meanings they had not considered before. The recipient or learner thus always has to learn *something*, and this subject of learning is filtered and prepared for the classroom and other learning spaces by using techniques that are similar to exhibition techniques, thoroughly planned operations of display, and the epistemological principles involved. In classrooms as well as in other spaces of learning, the learning outcome is carefully anticipated by didactic strategies that are expected to guide the learner towards what he or she should hear, see, feel, and experience. It is therefore difficult to draw a straight line between the didactics of the classroom and the didactics of exhibitions like *The Family of Man*, between classroom didactics and ways of creating scientific models, between didactics and commercialism, persuasion, and other modes that highly determine what should be seen and learned. Putting things on display is never a neutral activity and always happens in a mediated way within a specific social context and power structure. It is obvious that teaching and learning are based on a certain order of meaning and often take place in hierarchical spaces (e.g., Bennett 1995). In fact, schools and curricula can be characterized as sites of symbolic domination (Bourdieu 2001), where students are often expected to follow the didactic strategies of evidence without questioning how they learn and what they are expected to see. Schools are, after all, spaces of cultural tradition and conventions of thought.

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Genre 6 Philosophical Approaches

Introduction

Yusef Waghid

If we consider that interpretation is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of text which might in some way be confused, incomplete, cloudy, unclear, and seemingly contradictory in one way or another (Taylor 1985, p. 1), then interpretation is constitutive of what makes a philosophical approach to educational research what it is. A philosophical approach to educational research is “seeing something as something” or a matter of interpretation—that is, making clear meanings of texts (Cavell 1979, p. 354). It is interpretation that accounts for that which is strange, mystifying, puzzling, unclear, and contradictory and which cannot be distanced from a philosophical approach to educational research (Taylor 1985, p. 17). In several ways, the authors of the eight chapters in this genre attempt to explain learning, teaching, curriculum, evaluation and assessment, educational organizations and leadership, equity, justice, and diversity, policy, and nonformal education—all interrelated educational fields that draw on philosophical approaches to educational research. We try to make sense of, and provide some understanding of our thoughts, speeches and writings in relation to readings and expressions of texts we have authored and perhaps lived in our lives. Our work has been presented as living agents in this text in relation to how we have experienced our situations in terms of certain meanings. In turn, our narratives recounted here are in turn interpreted by the explanations we proffer for our actions. As aptly put by Taylor (1985, p. 27), we meet an important condition of an interpretive science: “making sense of” our lived experiences. Of interest in the practice of interpretation is the agency of the narrators in this philosophical genre. In our own interpretations as captured and reflected in our narratives, we share our capacity for thought, speech, and our desire to search for meaning. Through our interpretations, we share our understandings, attitudes,

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and justifications in relation to the social practices in which we happen to work. Hence, our interpretations are intersubjective meanings, “ways of experiencing action in society which are expressed in the language and descriptions constitutive of institutions and practices” (Taylor 1985, p. 38). I now offer an exposition of the interpretive stances adopted by ourselves as we endeavor to give meaning to our educational research approaches vis-à-vis our specific educational fields.

Lesley Le Grange’s poststructuralist stance on interpretation through his explication of learning is nuancedly informed by his recent analysis of the work of Deleuze and Guattari. He adopts the view of Deleuze and Guattari that concepts are created and always in becoming—that is, there is seemingly no end to how concepts are constructed in relation to the social context in which they become. In short, for him, interpretation as philosophical inquiry means making sense of concepts as they become in sociohistorical, real-world contexts. Commensurate with the approach of inquiry used by Deleuze and Guattari, he endeavors to reappropriate Thomas Kuhn’s concept of paradigm as exemplar, Turnbull’s concept of science as performance, and Jegede’s concept of secured collateral learning in his attempt to transform the notion of secured collateral learning. In a way, his interpretation is aimed at making possible new ways of doing and becoming that can alter classroom practices, in particular learning. His interpretive approach to educational research is evident in his annulment of particular hegemonic Western understandings of learning that do not take into consideration what is indigenous, other, and different.

Yusef Waghid’s pragmatic stance on interpretation is couched through his philosophical engagement with university teaching, in particular his critical analyses of the seminal works of democratic education theorists such as Habermas, Benhabib, Callan, Nussbaum, Marion Young, and Cavell. His interpretation of teaching as a deliberative activity is examined in relation to practices such as compassionate imagining and responsible action. Central to Waghid’s philosophical analysis of democratic education in relation to university teaching is that the practice of democratic education cannot be realized through belligerent engagement alone but also manifests more profoundly in teaching if situated within other related actions such as showing compassion and being responsible. Waghid’s stance proffers a view of interpretation aimed at cultivating pedagogical activities along the lines of communitarian and responsible action—that is, action aimed at actuating pragmatic change in university teaching.

Christine Winter’s deconstructive reading of (geography) curriculum policy foregrounds interpretation as a response to the notion of enframing educational research as technology. In a deconstructive way she argues that enframing of technology leads to the valorization of specific standardized educational research methodologies in the form of “methodolotry.” And, because enframing closes down the possibilities of other thoughts and actions about the concept of education and of social and economic life, for example, the ethical and political, she considers it (enframing) to be a problem. In other words enframing educational research is to render it as totalized, structured in pre-calculated ways, and limited to certain orthodox operations and therefore closed to new possibilities. She troubles her initial philosophical approach to educational research which was preoccupied

by an enframing of the educational research process, that is, as necessarily “comprehensive, rigorous and systematic.” For her, enframing obscures other substantive ways of thinking and doing as it is too focused on empirical data collection, analysis, and interpretation; compartmentalization of “the ethical” at the operational level; linear, step-by-step technical process; and a preoccupation with outcome/impact. Instead, drawing on Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas, she makes a cogent argument for an encounter with the Other which opens the possibility of becoming an ethical being, open to alternatives and unfettered by the pre-suppositions of orthodox, enframed research. It is the opening of thought beyond domestication, she avers, that moves educational research towards the unexpected, the uncalculated, where multiple voices are heard, and a different language is summoned, a language that is open to the future, to something unthinkable.

Guided by a philosophical analysis of Mouffe’s treatment of liberal democracy as a site of conflict and struggle in relation to citizenship competency tests in Colombia, Andrés Mejía’s chapter focuses on the presence of exclusions and inclusions in such evaluations and assessments. That is, his philosophical analysis of evaluation and assessment aims to accentuate the tensions in a universalist approach to democratic citizenship education that couches the practice as something that recognizes all individuals as equal and that assumes that they all share the same conditions that enable them to be citizens. He illustrates through identifying tensions that appear in his object of analysis vis-à-vis tests for national citizenship competencies in Colombia that different interpretations resulting from accommodation of political conflict should be introduced in the various decisions that give substance to politics in a liberal democracy. More specifically, in his analysis he summons up various suggestions for policy and action in educational evaluation and assessment in which the possibility of political conflict and struggle is protected, particularly as regards citizenship education and its evaluation in Colombia. As such, he firstly argues for the need to promote other forms of assessment on different levels (especially in municipalities, schools, and universities) that can exert a real influence on the kind of citizenship that is actually taught in educational institutions; and secondly, through minimalism, he argues for the need to make explicit the inclusions and exclusions present in the current tests.

Janet Orchard’s focus on educational organization and (school) leadership is informed by a notion of desirable democratic leadership which she avers is possible within the existing structures that commonly regulate schools. Premised on the idea that notions of organizational leadership “do not float freely in the discourse of textbooks of educational administration or in the prescriptions of technical primers of school management,” she develops interpretations of the concept in relation to the particular context(s) in which they are situated. Her philosophical approach is both interpretive and interdisciplinary, founded on sociological methods in tandem with philosophy of educational research. She draws on Taylor’s “justification of belief” as a form of interpretive inquiry to develop a defense of critical and democratic school leadership. Her philosophical leaning towards philosophy of educational research in relation to democratic school leadership is applied in different ways such as through clarifying concepts, highlighting logical

contradictions, considering values and leadership, asserting what should be the case, setting out a practical alternative, and anticipating likely concerns and addressing them. Her investigation makes three new contributions to knowledge. Firstly, by extending arguments for democratic school leadership on direct or deliberative lines to representative forms of democratic school leadership; secondly, by resolving a paradox between school leadership and learning, both at the level of theory and in relation to pedagogy; and thirdly, she proffers an interdisciplinary argument when seeking to interpret education policies and practices within the sociopolitical context in which they are situated, as well as the power of a theoretical argument informed by empirical data. The alternative account of leadership that she proposes is that while individual school leaders should be competent and efficient at the tasks they undertake to do on behalf of others, their actions should be consistent with the values and beliefs of the particular society in which their leadership practice is situated.

Penny Enslin and Mary Tjiattas focus on a case study where they show how methods of philosophical interpretation can illuminate fundamental questions concerning education, justice, and democracy, more specifically of a deliberative kind. Through analytical interpretive research called “reflective equilibrium”—a method made famous by Rawls—they engage coherently with evolving positions on social justice in relation to equity, justice, and diversity. Their often speculative work develops a defense of qualified universalism, because they remain convinced that, aside from its conceptual strengths (including its ability to respect many of the considerations advanced in favor of opposing, anti-universalist positions), such an approach is indispensable to addressing contemporary problems of justice in education, both domestically and globally. In the main, their interpretive endeavor attempts to resolve the tensions between current theoretical positions and the demands and constraints imposed by contemporary global political, ethical, and educational issues.

Through drawing on the terminology of Foucault, Maarten Simons’s study of governmentality uses a specific analytical frame that focuses on processes of governmentalization. His philosophical approach to the interpretation of policy documents and instruments aims at understanding the role of information for education policy of the Flemish government in the current global/European context and for schools in the Flemish policy context. His philosophical approach to interpretation is not hermeneutical. The aim is not to come to an understanding or to grasp the true meaning of particular policy decisions, policy measures, and polity texts by taking into the account the historical or social context, the intentions of actors, or a particular systematic logic. Instead, he applies an interpretative analytics that offers a “cartography” that “maps” the present focusing on what is said and done and what allows it to be said and done. This Foucauldian approach of interpretative analytics assumes that questions about legitimacy—for instance, debates about adequate information or relevant quality indicators for education—only come to the foreground if a (self-)understanding in terms of comparison, quality, and information circulation has emerged.

Stefan Ramaekers's philosophical report attempts to address particular developments in the area of parenting support (specifically in Flanders) from the end of 2009 until now. For him, interpretation is at work at "every stage" in reporting on developments regarding parenting support in Flanders. That is, interpretation is not so much what has emerged from his research but rather "the coming about of the argument" itself. This leads him to posit that doing philosophy is, in an important sense, always personal. And, the philosophical writing of parenting support that he presents in his chapter is a kind of writing that always already locates and involves him as a person, thus accentuating the dimension of being human as one becomes immersed in philosophical research in education.

In light of the remark that all educational research of a philosophical kind is constituted by our humanity is to acknowledge doing interpretive work is a matter of bringing into play our individual "singularities" that situate our endeavors in what Agamben (1999, p. 81) refers to as a "potentiality." To say our philosophical work has potential is to say that our philosophical endeavors have the potential to do something—that is, produce more nuanced meanings, better understandings, or provide more substantive justifications. And, by doing the latter would imply that our interpretations have brought about an alteration in thought, speech, text, or form of living. Simply put, our interpretations have given rise to a "becoming other" (Agamben 1999, p. 179), albeit other ideas, practices of new possibilities for being. The kind of potentiality mentioned here should not be conflated with having realized an actuality that points to mastery and conclusiveness. Rather, to say that our work has potentiality is to say that our interpretive ways "give itself to itself" (Agamben 1999, p. 184)—that is, there is always more to learn, more to understand, and more to know in reference to the improbable, the unexpected, the unpredictable. In a way, our philosophical work presented in this volume is situated within our own potentialities.

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6.1 Indigenous Students' Learning of School Science: A Philosophical Interpretation

Lesley Le Grange

Introduction

There has been some interest into inquiring about learning in Philosophy of Education over the past decade or so. These inquiries reflect an array of philosophical strategies and diverse emphases on learning. For example, in 2003 a special issue of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* (JOPE) focused on upholding the integrity of teaching and learning. This special issue emerged as a response to Alasdair MacIntyre's argument that teaching is not a practice but an important ingredient of all practices. In one of the articles published in this special issue, Hogan (2003) argues that learning (along with teaching) is a distinctive way of life. Such a view of learning sees it, "as an unfinished and unfinishable undertaking" (p. 221). In presenting his argument, the author draws inspiration from "Socrates of Athens" and also draws on insights from more contemporary works, in particular Lyotard's notion of performativity. As is the case with much contemporary work in Philosophy of Education, a single philosophical strategy cannot necessarily be identified in Hogan's work. Traces of conceptual analysis might be evident (clarity of expression and economy of words), deconstruction of learning associated with performativity, and a normative–ethical strategy evident in the central argument about what learning ought to be—"a distinctive way of life."

Another inquiry into learning is that of Biesta (2004, 2006) who focuses on the discourse of life-long learning—a concern with what he terms "a rise of a new language of learning." Biesta (2004) argues that the emergence of a language of learning is not an expression of a single underlying agenda, but should rather be understood as the unintended outcome of a range of different developments:

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theories of learning, the silent explosion of learning, and the erosion of the welfare state. Theories of learning refer to developments in the field of the psychology of learning and specifically the emergence of constructivism and socio-constructivism. Constructivist theories of learning shift the emphasis from teacher to learner, since they are premised on the view that students actively construct knowledge and understanding, and that knowledge cannot be transferred intact from teacher to learner. By the “silent explosion” Biesta (2004, p. 73) refers to the mushrooming of nonformal kinds of learning such as “fitness centres, sport clubs, self-help therapy manuals, internet learning, self-instructional videos, DVD’s and CD’s etcetera.” The rise of a language of learning is also associated with the decline of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism. The welfare state provides all citizens (rich and poor) with health care, security, education (it claims to provide education, but what it mainly provides is schooling), and so on. Biesta (2004) argues that within the neoliberal state, “value for money” (p. 33) has become the key principle in many of the transactions between the state and taxpayers. The state’s role has shifted from provider of the mentioned goods to taking on a monitoring role with tighter systems of inspection and control and prescriptive protocols over education—what Ball (2003) refers to as a rising culture of performativity/accountability. In this context, Biesta (2004) argues, parents are viewed as purchasers of the services that education/schooling provides for their children, and the suitable name for the consumer is therefore the learner. Biesta (2004) argues that one of the main problems with the new language of learning is that it makes possible the redescription of the process of education in terms of an economic transaction, that is, the learner (who has the needs) is the consumer, the teacher or education institution the provider, and education becomes a commodity. Viewing education as an economic transaction dilutes education processes to technical concerns of efficiency and the effectiveness of such processes, neglecting questions concerned with the content and purpose of education, which Biesta (2004) argues should form part of the education process—that asking questions about the content and purpose of education are important educational questions. As in the case of Hogan, no single philosophical strategy is employed by Biesta. Biesta (2004, 2006) analyzes concepts, he deconstructs (lays bare the multiple layers of a new language of learning), and employs ethics in his argument that a language of learning limits the possibilities of being and becoming.

A further example of an interest in learning in Philosophy of Education over the past decade was a special issue on *New Philosophies of Learning* (Cigman and Davis 2008) published in *JOPE*. The special issue comprised several sections which focused on the following topics: brain-based learning, learner categories, ICT and learning, the enhancement agenda, noncognitive intelligences, and students, teachers, and reflection. Given the focus on “new philosophies of learning,” much of the focus of the special issue is on the analysis of concepts (clarifying the meaning of concepts). For example, in his article Howard-Jones (2008) clarifies what learning is from the view of neuroscience and from the view of education. Similarly, Goswami (2008) clarifies the principles of learning from a cognitive neuroscience perspective and explores its implications for teaching.

The brief review into learning by philosophers of education and the strategies they employ serve as a useful background to what will be reported on in this chapter. In this chapter I shall report on a different aspect of learning, that is, how indigenous students learn school science. The way(s) in which indigenous students learn about natural phenomena through their own sociocultural interpretive frameworks conflicts with school science which is Western based, potentially causing cognitive dissonance. Moreover, I shall provide a particular interpretation of this research that uses Deleuzo–Guattarian concept creation as a philosophical strategy rather concept analysis. This strategy does not focus on what a concept is, what it ought to be, but what it might become. The rest of the chapter is divided into the following parts: part 1, the project (non-Western students' learning of school science), and part 2, interpretation (concept creation). I “end” the article with some parting thoughts.

Part 1: The Project

Non-Western Students' Learning of Science

The inquiry reported here is a response to a complex problem concerning the learning of school science in an African context. I conducted the inquiry firstly in critical response to the school effectiveness movement. The focus of school effectiveness research (SER) is on how school factors influence scholastic achievement of students. I argued that SER has shortcomings because factors outside the school such as students' sociocultural frameworks impact on what happens inside schools (see Le Grange 2007). Secondly, I conducted the inquiry to extend research conducted on this issue over several decades. Thirdly, I conducted the inquiry response to a challenge presented by postapartheid curriculum frameworks in South Africa, which mandate that indigenous knowledge forms part of all school subjects.

The issue of conflicting world views is of course not unique to Africa. It is a challenge faced by all indigenous peoples in countries that have become Westernized. Even in Western societies, different world views interact and play out in educational contexts. For example, what a student learns about the world through religion may be different from what he/she learns in school science. In the United States of America (USA), there is, for example, an ongoing debate on evolution versus creation and to what extent opposing views should be included in the school curriculum. For non-Western students interaction between two world views characterizes much of their school experience, complicating the learning process and potentially resulting in cognitive conflict or, as the literature describes it, cognitive dissonance/perturbation. Importantly, in Africa south of the Sahara, schools are the sites where most students first experience the interaction between African indigenous and Western world views. Therefore it might be necessary for teachers working in these contexts to be aware of this interaction and understand the

way it could complicate the learning process. By extension inquiry into this interaction could provide significant insights. According to Jegede (1999, p. 119), the culture of a learner's immediate environment plays a significant role in learning and determines how concepts are learned and stored in the long-term memory as schemata.

The past three decades have witnessed much research conducted on complications indigenous students experience when learning science (see, e.g., Ogawa 1986; Ogunniyi 1987, 1988; Jegede 1996, 1999; Jegede and Okebukola 1989; Jegede and Fraser 1990; Okebukola and Jegede 1990;). A summary of key findings of reported research on how indigenous students learn science shows that:

- Sociocultural background has a greater effect on learning than subject content.
- The indigenous world view inhibits the initial adoption of Western science by students.
- Indigenous (non-Western) students are involuntarily selective when making observations in science classrooms.
- The indigenous learner might explain natural phenomena in ways that appear as non-rational in the perception of Western science, but the learner experiences no contradictions in his/her conceptual system.
- Knowledge learned about school science and through traditional ways is compartmentalized by the learner giving rise to what Wiredu (1980, p. 23) has termed "a kind of ethnic schizophrenia" (Adapted from Jegede 1999, p. 128).

Jegede (1999, pp. 128–129) identifies two important implications of these findings. Firstly, any science curriculum that does not take particular account of the indigenous world view of the learner risks destroying the framework through which the learner is likely to interpret concepts. Secondly, an indigenous learner can perform excellently in a Western science classroom without assimilating the associated values. As Jegede (1999, p. 129) writes: "[A] 'good' scientist at school can at home be a 'traditionalist' without any feeling of cognitive perturbation or dissonance." The latter claim will become clearer when Jegede's theory of collateral learning is discussed later.

There is a renewed interest in indigenous knowledge and school/university science (see, e.g., Ogunniyi 2004; Le Grange 2004a, b) in postapartheid South Africa. This interest is the consequence of greater prominence given to indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) internationally and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge as a principle underpinning all versions of postapartheid curriculum frameworks. In the most recent version of the national curriculum, Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS), the following is said about indigenous knowledge: "Valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution" (DBE 2011, p. 5). The relationship between indigenous knowledge and science in this curriculum is evident in one of the three specific aims of CAPS for Life Sciences which states: "Specific Aim 3 . . . relates to understanding the applications of the Life Sciences in everyday life as well as understanding the history of scientific discoveries and the relationship between indigenous knowledge and science" (DBE 2011, p. 13).

The body of literature that has been produced over the past three decades, the reality that indigenous knowledge systems reside among the majority of South Africans, and the fact that the topic has been given attention in postapartheid curriculum frameworks provide reasons for exploring the topic in greater detail. To specifically explore how indigenous students learn school science, we turn to Jegede's theory of collateral learning.

A Theory of Collateral Learning

Jegede (1995, 1999) posits that a duality of thought is created in the memory and schemata of indigenous students when they learn Western science, because of the resilience of the indigenous knowledge framework. It is also a way they use to cope in a learning environment that is hostile to what indigenous students bring to the science classroom. He argues that this situation results in collateral learning. Jegede (1999, p. 133) identifies four types of collateral learning: parallel, simultaneous, dependent, and secured. Importantly, these types of collateral learning should not be viewed as disparate but rather as occupying a continuum, and that "a student could be helped to progress through them for meaningful learning to occur" (Jegede 1999, p. 133).

Parallel collateral learning occurs when students acquire and maintain opposing schemata about a concept and idea in their long-term memory when learning new science concepts. The learner does not experience conceptual conflict, but readjusts the memory to accommodate changing contexts of learning. Jegede (1999, p. 134) writes that parallel learning is particularly evident when indigenous students first come into contact with school science and that these students allow the new information to coexist in their schemata while they are still attempting to make sense of them. With respect to simultaneous collateral learning, Jegede (1999, p. 134) points out that for a concept to be embedded in the long-term memory of a learner, the information needs to be processed over a period of time. Therefore, at the point when students are exposed to a new concept in the science classroom, they might still be processing information in relation to this concept that they learned at home or in their cultural/environmental setting. A situation arises when students simultaneously learn about a concept from two different world views. Simultaneous collateral learning thus places students in a position to assess similarities to and differences between ideas from different world views in relation to the concept being learned. Dependent collateral learning occurs when schemata from one world view are presented which challenge those of another world view enabling the learner to modify existing schemata. No radical restructuring of the existing knowledge base occurs, but learning of a new idea is triggered by what is already known. Jegede (1999, p. 134) writes: "This means that a currently held belief (indigenous or otherwise) is held tentatively to be altered by the construction of new knowledge from the new schema or the rejection of a current one." Secured collateral learning involves recognizing that acquiring knowledge or an intellectual

skill is a gradual and incremental process rather than a single event. To ensure that this prolonged process of learning is effective, the learner has to resolve what he/she might experience as cognitive conflict or mental dissonance in the knowledge base embedded in his/her long-term memory. In other words, the indigenous learner has to resolve the mental conflict created by the Western science learned and the indigenous knowledge base brought to the classroom. The process of resolving the cognitive dissonance culminates in the learner evaluating seemingly disparate explanatory frameworks and “draws from them a convergence towards commonality” (Jegede 1999, p. 135). He writes: “This strengthens the learning process and secures the ‘new conception’ in the long-term memory” (Jegede 1999, p. 135).

The discussion on collateral learning demonstrates the point made earlier that, rather than being seen as disparate, the four types of collateral learning should be viewed as a continuum against which science learning can be understood in a sociocultural framework. I aver that Jegede’s (1995, 1999) thesis of collateral learning contributes greatly to theoretical debates on science learning in non-Western and multicultural contexts. Moreover, his work has practical significance for policy makers and science teachers who perform their work in such contexts. However, much of his discussion frames the African indigenous world view and Western world view as being disparate. These world views are disparate only if science or knowledge is understood as representation. However, they are not disparate if science is also viewed as performance. I shall argue that science is both representation and performance, and that if science as performance is emphasized, greater credence might be given to Jegede’s notion of secured collateral learning. Science as performance is discussed next.

Science as Performance

I argue that Western science and indigenous knowledges could be viewed either as disparate epistemologies or as complementary frameworks depending on whether one views science/knowledge as representation or science/knowledge as performance. In his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn (1970) identifies two distinct notions of the term paradigm, namely, paradigm as disciplinary matrix and paradigm as exemplar. The former denotes the “entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (Kuhn 1970, p. 175). The latter refers to some sort of element in that constellation, “the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as the basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science” (Kuhn 1970, p. 175). Turnbull (2000, p. 8) points out that Kuhn’s (1970) first use of the term paradigm (the main focus of his book) is somewhat analogous to a global theory such as Newtonian physics and is subject to revolutionary change. The second use (exemplar), on the other hand, is closer to the standard meaning of the term—“a sample problem solution which can be extrapolated to other problems” (Turnbull 2000, p. 8). Exemplars are based on

agreements about which kinds of problems are sufficiently similar so that they can be treated in the same way. The implication of this is that disparate problems can be perceived as being similar and known techniques and solutions can be applied to them. Turnbull (2000, p. 8) notes that exemplars are the product of tacit knowledge that is learned by doing science rather than by acquiring rules for doing science. Table 1 below illustrates a representationalist perspective of knowledge, where African indigenous knowledge is viewed as distinct from Western science. The table does not include all items that Ogunniyi (2004, pp. 292–293) incorporated. A few items are included for illustrative purposes.

To borrow Kuhn's words, "the entire constellation of beliefs values, techniques," and so on shared by members of traditional African and Western communities is perceived as distinctly different. Separating knowledge systems/world views conceptually helps us to think and learn (i.e., for heuristic purposes). However, there is a danger of our constructions/representations being perceived as mirroring reality to the extent that we try to make reality fit representations of it. For example, I remember that as a university science student, when asked to sketch objects that I had observed with the aid of a light microscope, I (and my fellow students) often turned to the textbook diagram of the object to measure the accuracy of my work. As a student of science, my confidence was not in the work I had performed (what I drew from what I had observed), but in how accurately it resembled the representation(s) of the object(s) as it/they appeared in a textbook. School and university students learn early on to view science as representation to the neglect of science as performance. What students do not learn is the situated messiness of science and, for that matter, the situated messiness of all knowledge production processes. Furthermore, in representations of Western and African indigenous knowledges,

Table 1 Assumptions underlying science and indigenous knowledge systems

Assumptions underlying indigenous knowledge systems	Assumptions underlying Western science
Indigenous generalizations have causal, personal, rational/non-rational, and logical/nonlogical dimensions	Scientific laws/generalizations are causal, logical, rational, impersonal, and universal
Language is important as a creative force in the workings of both the natural and the unnatural worlds	Language is not important to the workings of natural world
Indigenous knowledge is a critical part of culture	Science is culture-free
Facts within an indigenous knowledge corpus are both tested and experiential	Scientific facts are tested observations
Indigenous knowledge is based on a monistic world view	Science is based on a dualistic world view
Generalizations within the indigenous knowledge systems are relative statements which do not purport to have universal application	Scientific generalizations (laws and theories) are declarative statements with universal application
Humans are capable of understanding only part of nature	Humans are capable of understanding nature

Adapted from Ogunniyi (2004, pp. 292–293)

Western science often is portrayed as superior, universal, and as not having the “cultural fingerprints” that appear to be much more conspicuous in other knowledge systems (Gough 1998, p. 508). Also, representations of Western science are used as criteria for declaring “other” knowledges as nonscience. A representationalist perspective on knowledge therefore produces an incommensurability perspective, that is, that Western science and indigenous knowledges are incompatible or that indigenous ways of knowing may be recognized as a particular way of understanding the world, but that it is not science. A representationalist view of knowledge is reflected in the CAPS for Life Sciences:

“All knowledge stems from views on how the world works. One of the differences between modern science (and technology) and traditional indigenous knowledge systems is that they have their origins in different world views. Students should understand the different cultural contexts in which indigenous knowledge systems were developed (DBE 2011, p. 17).” However, understanding knowledge production as performance enables seemingly disparate knowledges to work together so as to produce new knowledge spaces, what Turnbull (1997, p. 560) terms “third spaces” or “interstitial spaces.” It is widely recognized by sociologists of scientific knowledge and philosophers of science that, even though knowledge systems may differ in their epistemologies, methodologies, logics, and cognitive structures or in their socioeconomic contexts, a characteristic that they all share is their localness (see Latour 1988; Rouse 1987; Shapin 1994; Turnbull 1997, 2000). Moreover, knowledge is not simply local but located/situated, that is, it has place and creates space. When knowledge is produced, it is assembled from heterogeneous components and given coherence through the deployment of social strategies and technical devices. As Star (1989, p. 388) writes:

[Knowledge production] is deeply heterogeneous: different viewpoints are constantly being adduced and reconciled . . . Each actor, site, or node of a scientific community has a viewpoint, a partial truth consisting of local beliefs, local practices, local constants, and resources, none of which are fully verifiable across all sites. The aggregation of all viewpoints is the source of the robustness of science.

As mentioned, the common element of all knowledge systems is their localness. However, their differences lie in the way they are assembled “through social strategies and technical devices for establishing equivalences and connections between otherwise heterogeneous and incompatible components” (Turnbull 2000, p. 13). As Turnbull (1997, p. 553) writes:

Some traditions move it and assemble it through art, ceremony and ritual; [Western] science does it through forming disciplinary societies, building instruments, standardisation techniques and writing articles. In both cases, it is a process of knowledge assembly through making connections and negotiating equivalences between the heterogeneous components while simultaneously establishing a social order of trust and authority resulting in a knowledge space.

Viewing knowledge in this way enables seemingly disparate knowledge traditions to be integrated so as to disrupt the dichotomy between Western science and African indigenous knowledge. In short, science as representation refers to: abstractions such as theories and laws; the idea of a scientific method; descriptions of the

world in textbooks; and so on. Science as performance, however, refers to the doing of science, that is, that science is a human and social activity that is messy, heterogeneous, and situated.

I aver that effective science education in South Africa (and similar contexts) depends on understanding how non-Western children learn. Jegede's thesis of collateral learning provides useful insights into how indigenous students learn Western science. His thesis has important implications for teachers' work and teacher education programs. Firstly, teachers need to understand the importance of not denigrating or discrediting the indigenous knowledge that students bring to the classroom because it serves as the framework against which they learn science and also provides the trigger for learning science. Secondly, the four types of collateral learning provide teachers with a framework to mediate and scaffold indigenous students through different phases of science learning. Importantly, national curriculum frameworks provide legal enablements for facilitating processes towards secured collateral learning, since indigenous knowledge systems form part of the discursive terrains of all learning areas/subjects. However, secured collateral learning might only be possible when science is viewed not only as representation but also as performance.

But how might students be scaffolded through the different phases of science learning? Jegede and Aikenhead (1999, p. 55) suggest that the teacher needs to take on the role of cultural broker, that is, he/she should help students mediate or negotiate cultural borders. They suggest that in some instances the teacher needs to be a tour-guide cultural broker and in other instances a travel-agent cultural broker. When cultural border crossing (from life-world culture to school science culture) is difficult for the learner, the teacher needs to take on the role of a tour-guide, whereby the teacher takes students to the principal sites in the culture of science and coaches them on what to look for and how to use it in their everyday lives. In doing so, the teacher uses an extended repertoire of methods. In other instances where students require less guidance when border crossing, the teacher may take on the role of travel agent, whereby the teacher provides students with incentives such as topics, issues, activities, or events that create the need to know the culture of science. In other words, border crossing occurs through academic bridges and less through guidance. Scaffolding students through parallel and simultaneous collateral learning would require the teacher to play the role of tour-guide, whereas scaffolding students through/from dependent learning to secured collateral learning might require the teacher to chiefly take on the role of travel agent. Needless to say, both approaches assume that learning/teaching occurs within an ecocultural paradigm, that is, that science content used in classrooms strongly relates to and uses the life world of the learner as the focus and starting point of learning. Furthermore, both approaches are dependent on interactive teaching strategies. By way of illustration, two interactive strategies will now be discussed.

In South African classrooms, students could experience cognitive dissonance when learning about certain phenomena in science classrooms. For example, the

scientific perspective that lightning is caused by the discharge of electricity between clouds or from a cloud to the earth may be in conflict with students' cultural understanding that lightning is caused by, for example, witchcraft. Two strategies may be useful in helping students to deal with cognitive perturbation in this instance. The first strategy is what Bajracharya and Brouwer (1997, p. 436) termed "a narrative approach." This approach involves arranging students in small group discussions on questions such as, "Is lightning caused by witchcraft?" What this approach does is to provide to a small degree, a conceptual ecocultural paradigm that can serve as the basis for the teacher to take on the role of cultural broker. The second approach is one that was introduced by Aikenhead (1996), where border crossing is made concrete by asking students to divide the page in their notebook in half to form two columns: "my ideas" and the "culture of science ideas." To return to the lightning example, students would record their own ideas and beliefs about lightning in the one column and in the other column what they learned about lightening in the science classroom. This strategy/activity enables the learner to consciously move back and forth between the everyday world and the world of science: "switching terminology explicitly, switching language frameworks and conventions explicitly, switching conceptualizations explicitly" (Jegade and Aikenhead 1999, p. 57). The teacher is able to assess students' recordings and navigate his/her own changing roles of tour-guide and travel agent so as to facilitate students' border crossings. These strategies will help students through the first phases of collateral learning, but secured collateral learning is evident when students are able to write about their ideas about lightening on one page, with only one column.

In summary, I have argued that much of Jegede's work and his thesis of collateral learning remains focused on the representational aspects of knowledge, in the sense that Western science and indigenous knowledge are seen as disparate. I suggest that, although science is representation and that it is useful to distinguish between Western science and indigenous (at a conceptual level) knowledge, it is also important for science to be viewed as performance. When the performative side of science is emphasized, then it is understood as a situated activity which connects people, sites, and skills: science is locally produced through processes of negotiation based on the social organization of trust and not empirical verification/falsification. Viewed in this way, it is possible to compare seemingly disparate knowledge traditions more equitably—in other words, such a view decenters modern Western science—that modern Western science is one way of knowing and not the way of knowing. Science as performance provides the basis for secured collateral learning and as such the basis for effective science education in (South) Africa. In this instance, the focus should be on doing science—on science as an activity (how it is performed). Viewing science as performance shifts the angle of vision on the problem of cognitive dissonance in science classrooms. But, how might we interpret this work philosophically? I turn to a discussion on this next by offering an interpretation using a Deleuzo–Guattarian philosophical strategy, concept creation.

Part 2: Interpretation (Concept Creation)

Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 5) point out that the philosopher is the concept's friend. By this they mean that philosophy is not only an activity that consists in "forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts," but more rigorously, it is the discipline of creating concepts. For them, philosophy is also about putting concepts to work in new ways (Stagoll 2005, p. 50). Deleuze argues that Western philosophy has tended to merely use concepts as abstractions for categorizing phenomena—to express the essence of phenomena (Stagoll 2005, p. 50). Individuals would therefore be labeled, ranked, and measured according to a norm (concept). But what do Deleuze and Guattari mean by a concept? For Deleuze and Guattari, a concept is not a label for naming things (objects or phenomena in the world). Rather, they are creations that bear testimony to the positive power of thinking as an event of life (Colebrook 2002). In other words, philosophers create concepts to transform life—concepts do not represent life. Importantly, they distinguish between concepts used in everyday life and philosophical concepts. Deleuze's theory of concept creation only has application to philosophical concepts and not to everyday concepts of recognition, such as flowers, bicycles, tables, and trees. For Deleuze philosophical concepts are "vital concepts"—concepts that have to be created. In the creation of "vital concepts," the concept posits itself and object simultaneously. This is different to everyday concepts of recognition, such as the concepts of sun and moon—a philosophical concept is self-referential (Smith 2012, p. 128).

Moreover, Smith (2012, pp. 122–123) points out that from a Deleuzian perspective, concepts do not have an identity but only a becoming. He shows that even in Deleuze's own corpus, concepts such as intensity undergo their own internal mutations. Concepts for Deleuze are singularities/multiplicities. For Deleuze, philosophers are just as creative as artists. The difference lies in what they create. For Deleuze, philosophers create concepts, artists create sensible aggregates of percepts and affects, and scientists create functions. One might raise questions about Deleuze's crude distinction about what philosophy, art, and science create. Smith (2012, p. 127), however, points out that the point of the distinctions is to provide a point of reference from which to assess and explore the resonances and exchanges (or the mutual becomings) that take place between the three domains. As Smith (2012, p. 127) elaborates:

Concepts . . . are necessarily inseparable from affects and percepts; they make us perceive things differently (percept) and they inspire new modes of feeling in us (affect) . . . thereby, modifying our power of existing.

Holland (2005, p. 52) points out that for Deleuze the activity of concept creation is forced upon the philosopher rather than initiated by him/her. For Deleuze there are three ways in which thought is provoked. Holland (2005, p. 52) contends that in his early works, it was paradox/logical contradictions that provoked Deleuze's thoughts—in other words, it was thought itself that provoked thought. The second provocation is associated with Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari, which saw the locus of stimulus to thought shifting outside of thought and also outside of

philosophy. The provocation of thought arises from fields ranging from biology, geology, physics, music, and so on. Holland (2005, p. 52) argues that the third kind of provocation arises from the connection between philosophy and its sociohistorical context. In this instance the nature of the problems is not philosophical but the solutions or articulations that are furnished are philosophical. Put differently, thought is not provoked by philosophical problems but by problems forced upon the philosopher by its real-world context. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994, pp. 99–100) write:

Actually, utopia is what links philosophy with its own epoch, with European capitalism, but also already with the Greek city. In each case it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point. Utopia does not split off from infinite movement: etymologically it stands for absolute deterritorialization but always at the critical point at which it is connected with the present relative milieu, and especially with the forces stifled by this milieu.

So, for Deleuze and Guattari philosophy (through concept creation) is about proposing solutions to problems faced by humanity at a given time. They contrast philosophy with science, which they argue aims to capture states of affairs as they are—science aims to mirror reality—to produce accurate descriptions of the world. In contrast, philosophy aims at transforming the world—or our understanding of the world. It is in this context that Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 84) write: “Philosophy does not consist of knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure.”

But, how does all of this relate to learning by indigenous students? Deleuze (1991, p. 33) argues that in order to respond to any event, one needs to understand its underlying problem. The evolution of organisms should be understood as a response to a problem. For example, the evolution of the eye should be understood as an organism’s problem in responding to light (Colebrook 2002, p. xxxiv). Similarly, the creation of concepts should be understood as responses to problems. The concept collateral learning and its four types should be understood as a response to a problem. At a micro level the problem concerns how indigenous students learn school science, which is embedded in a cultural framework that is different to the sociocultural framework in which they have been socialized. This could potentially lead to cognitive dissonance, impeding their learning of (school) science. However, the problem is broader than this. The problem should be understood as challenges faced by postcolonial societies and, in this particular case, also a postapartheid society. Colonialism and European imperialism has denigrated the knowledges of indigenous peoples across the globe, and the homogenizing and domesticating effects of globalization might further limit the becomings of indigenous peoples generally, but more specifically the young. At the same time the work postcolonialists, feminists, sociologists of science, philosophers, and others have opened up ways of viewing science differently so that it can be decentered—be viewed as one way and not the way of knowing. Globalization also affords possibilities for the formation of new solidarities—and in this regard we have witnessed the internationalization of indigenous peoples and

their knowledges, for example. In postapartheid South Africa, the promotion of indigenous knowledge, including its incorporation in the school curriculum, potentially opens up new pathways for the becoming of the young. The problem is how to open up multiple becomings of the young and avoid indigenous ways of knowledge from being absorbed in what Foucault (1972) referred to as a “Western cultural archive.”

The philosophical activity of creating concepts such as collateral learning and science as performance needs to be understood as a response to the problem outlined above. As such, the approach is akin to the third provocation that Holland (2005) identifies, where philosophy connects to its sociohistorical context—“what links philosophy with its own epoch” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 99). The concepts collateral learning and science as performance might be understood as philosophical articulations in response to problems of a real-world context.

From a traditional Western approach to philosophy, the concept collateral learning would be viewed as representing students' real experiences—that is, that the concept captures the essence of the phenomenon—what is actually occurring in the minds of students. With reference to the inquiry reported on in this chapter, the four types of collateral learning serve to categorize phenomena and could be used as a norm against which learning would be assessed. Such a view would hold that when concepts change and/or their meanings change, it occurs only so as to grasp reality more accurately. However, for Deleuze and Guattari, concepts are not extractions or abstractions of reality. Rather, concepts are created so as to transform life—concepts do not lie outside of life but their creation should be understood as events of life. From a Deleuzo–Guattarian perspective, the concept collateral learning does not represent the experiences of students but makes a new way of understanding school science learning in postcolonial Africa possible—a new way of learning that overcomes the problem of cognitive dissonance. It makes possible holding in parallel seemingly disparate world views, and secured collateral learning makes possible the integration of disparate world views. Moreover, it makes new school science practices possible that will change teachers' actions and open up new possibilities for the becoming of students.

For Deleuze, a concept has no beginning or end, only a becoming. His interest is not what a concept is but how it works and what it does. The four types of collateral learning, parallel, simultaneous, dependent, and secured are not merely representations of different indigenous students experience when learning school science or accurate descriptions of the phases that indigenous students experience (as Jegede might be suggesting) as they learn school science over time. Rather, the four “types” of collateral learning are part of the becoming of the concept of collateral learning. A becoming, needless to say, is influenced by learning theories such as constructivism but more importantly created in response to a real-world problem of cognitive dissonance experienced by indigenous students. The becoming of the concept has material effects on what happens inside school science classrooms.

As noted, for Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy does not only involve the creation of new concepts but also involves putting concepts to work in new ways.

In their works they reappropriate several concepts of great philosophers and put them to work in new ways. As Stagoll (2005, p. 51) writes in relation to Deleuze:

Henri Bergson's concepts of duration and intuition, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz's monad, Hume's associationism, and numerous concepts from literature, film, criticism, science and even mathematics are reworked and put to work in new and creative ways.

In line with the approach used by Deleuze and Guattari, in the inquiry I reported on earlier, I reappropriated Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm as exemplar, Turnbull's concept of science as performance, and Jegede's concept of secured collateral learning to transform the notion of secured collateral learning, making possible new ways of doing, being, living, and becoming and having transformative effects on classroom practices. Moreover, such a notion of secured collateral learning dissolves the boundaries between modern Western science and indigenous knowledge, moves beyond the binary oppositions produced by a representationalist view of science, and blurs the boundary between philosophy and science. The methods of science are not merely there to capture the world—do not only grasp the state of affairs as it is—but are creative/productive. As Law (2004, p. 144) writes:

... method is not just what is learned in textbooks and the lecture hall, or practiced in ethnography, survey research, geological field trips, or at laboratory benches. Even in these formal settings it also ramifies out into and resonates with materially and discursively heterogeneous relations which are, for the most invisible to the methodologist.

Moreover science as performance produces new knowledge spaces in which new knowledge is produced in new ways. For example, Aborigines in Australia's Northern Territory have for many years through their own performative modes mapped their country by identifying every tree and every significant feature of their territory. Today some Aborigines are doing the same using the latest in satellites, remote sensing, and geographical information system (GIS). By representing their local knowledge on digital maps, they are able to make their ways of knowing visible in Western terms—"a new knowledge space which will have transformative effects for all Australians" (Turnbull 1997, p. 560). Similarly, in South Africa San trackers are being equipped with digital devices (as part of the CyberTracker program) to record animal sightings, a local example of traditional African ways of knowing working together with sophisticated Western technologies (Le Grange 2009).

Summary

Over the past decade or so, there has been some interest into inquiring about learning on the part of philosophers (of education). By way of introduction, in this chapter I refer to some of these inquiries. For example, I refer to Hogan's (2003) argument that teaching and by association learning is a distinctive way of life; Biesta's (2004, 2006) critique of the rise of "a new language of learning"; and a special issue

of JOPE which focused on “new philosophies” of learning. I argue that the mentioned inquiries into learning focus in the main on the following philosophical strategies: concept analysis, deconstruction, and ethics—or at least there are traces of these strategies evident in the inquiries. However, the central focus of the chapter is on a different issue with respect to learning, that is, how indigenous students learn school science. The issue is pertinent because the sociocultural framework (which is indigenous) into which learners are socialized is different to the cultural framework of school science (which is Western based). The upshot of this is that indigenous students might experience cognitive dissonance when learning (school) science.

Jegede (1995) posits a thesis as to how indigenous students learn school science, which he refers to as collateral learning. He identifies four types of collateral learning: parallel collateral learning, simultaneous collateral learning, dependent collateral learning, and secured collateral learning. Briefly, collateral learning occurs when students are able to evaluate seemingly disparate explanatory frameworks and draws them together towards commonality. I argue that Jegede's thesis remains underpinned by a representationalist view of science and argue for science as performance so as to give greater credence to the idea of secured collateral learning. In a Deleuzian sense I reappropriate Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm as exemplar, Turnbull's concept of science as performance, and Jegede's concept of secured collateral learning to transform the notion of secured collateral learning, making possible new ways of doing, being, living, and becoming. The reworked concept, secured collateral learning, is the child of all three concepts.

In the interpretation of the inquiry into indigenous students' learning that I report on in this chapter, I use Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical strategy of concept creation in lieu of more traditional strategies as those listed earlier. In so doing I argue that Jegede's notion of collateral learning (including its four types) is not representations or abstractions of reality that accurately describe what students are experiencing, as traditional approaches to Western philosophy would have us believe. The four types of collateral learning are concepts that represent the essence of what students are experiencing. Rather, they are philosophical articulations that are aimed at solving problems in a real-world context. Moreover, philosophical concepts do not exist as abstractions outside of reality—creating concepts are events of life—they transform life. In this instance the creation of the concept collateral learning enables new ways of learning for indigenous students and produces new classroom practices and new becomings for students.

And if concepts do not have an identity, only a becoming, then the concept collateral learning is always in the making—always becoming. So, I cannot finish the unfinishable. I part with Kappelar's (1986, p. 212) words, “I do not really wish to conclude and sum up, rounding off the argument so as to dump it in a nutshell for the reader. A lot more could be said about any of the topics I have touched upon . . . I have meant to ask the questions, to break out of the frame . . . The point is not a set of answers, but making possible a different [philosophical] practice . . .”

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6.2 Teaching and Learning for Citizenship in a Postapartheid South African University Classroom: An Interpretive Interlude

Yusef Waghid

Teaching and learning in postapartheid university classrooms have been intended to produce teachers and students who could contribute towards cultivating democratic practices in society, considering the country's history of segregation and discrimination in the public sphere. Much of the research that I have embarked on over the past decade and a half involved foregrounding the view that deliberative teaching and learning ought to be fostered in university classrooms and that this can open up the possibility for responsible human action. I argue that responsible action involves producing citizens who act deliberatively, compassionately, and justly. Only then it might be possible to produce a society which takes seriously global cosmopolitan norms that integrate what is local, and vice versa. I show my attraction to the philosophical method of interpretation by situating my arguments in interpretive reflections of Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, Martha Nussbaum, Amy Gutmann, Iris Marion Young, and Stanley Cavell on what it means to act responsibly in and beyond university pedagogy. Simultaneously, I show how interpretation has become central to my own exposition of what it means to cultivate deliberative, compassionate, and cosmopolitan citizens.

Moreover, the interpretive lenses I bring to my reflections on deliberative teaching and learning in university classrooms are constituted, firstly, in narrativism or telling stories (Fay 1996). According to Fay (1996, p. 13), our stories are in part constituted by the interpretive assumptions people (in this instance, students and I) bring to particular classroom settings—that is, they are

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shaped by the expectations, memories, beliefs, desires, and cultural prejudices that constitute these assumptions. Secondly, I use MacIntyre's (1999) notion of "detachment," that is, to detach oneself from one's own reasons to revise or abandon them in light of what others with whom one engages—in this case, the aforementioned authors of texts—have to say. MacIntyre (1999, p. 96) argues that we come to know when we are able not just to evaluate our reasons as better or worse but also when we detach ourselves from the immediacy of our own desires in order to "imagine alternative realistic futures" that might give rise to unexpected results. This implies that it would be inconceivable to read texts as master works that should not be engaged with and not to stand back from one's rational judgments about what one's understanding of these texts is. Detaching oneself from one's own reasons in relation to one's evaluation of texts suggests that these texts cannot be treated uncritically and uncontroversially. The mere fact that one acts through evaluation and detachment brings into question the underlying assumptions of texts that one reads and analyzes. Thirdly, I use Greene's "dialectic of freedom" (1988, p. 14) whereby one can arouse students "to go in search of their own"—that is, to provoke students to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, and to pose their own questions. This "dialectic of freedom" that ought to exist between a student and his teacher presupposes a critical relationship whereby a teacher distinctively orientates the student in such a way that he (the student) takes the initiative, discovers new possibilities, looks at things as they could be otherwise, and moves beyond with the awareness that such overcoming can never be complete (Greene 1988, p. 5). When students are taught to think about what they are doing and to share meanings with teachers or their critical friends, it is unlikely that their writing will be confusing and muddled. Similarly, when students are taught to conceptualize in order to search for undisclosed possibilities and alternative meanings—to look at things as they could be otherwise—the potential is there on the part of students to engage scrupulously and carefully with texts and even to take texts into systematic controversy. In short, freedom implies that students have developed capacities to imagine alternative possibilities and that their teachers have succeeded in establishing spaces in which meanings can be shared, understood, reflected on, and contested. This implies that freedom does not become a preoccupation with self-dependence or self-regulated behavior, but rather an involvement with others—a relationship. The upshot of this "dialectic of freedom" in a relationship between a student and his or her teacher or supervisor is that the students would develop a passionate desire to speak and write their own words; and a teacher or supervisor would carefully and respectfully evaluate the work of his or her students. In other words, students and supervisors are not merely functionaries in an instrumental system geared towards turning out theses (products) that meet the standards of quality control, but rather free participants in a highly esteemed academic enterprise—one in which students and teachers mutually assert their autonomy and "prepare the ground for what is to come" (Greene 1988, p. 3).

Introducing the Research: Democratic Citizenship Education in University Education

Over the past 15 years, I have been extensively involved in teaching deliberative democracy at a local university in terms of the seminal thoughts of four prominent theorists: Jürgen Habermas’s notion of persuasive action, Seyla Benhabib’s idea of reflexive action, Iris Marion Young’s conception of communicative action, and Martha Nussbaum’s idea of compassionate action. In this section, I set out to challenge some of the blind spots in these theorists’ conceptions of deliberative democracy, arguing that their accounts of action with respect to achieving the most persuasive argument, reaching a temporary consensus, telling your story, and recognizing the vulnerabilities of others, can potentially compromise what deliberative democracy ought to be like (my first interpretive move). With reference to university teaching and learning, I make an argument for distress, belligerence, and responsibility in/through pedagogical action. In this way, university teaching and learning could cultivate deliberative democratic citizens.

Postapartheid university education in South Africa has adopted an outcomes-based education approach aimed at actively engaging teachers and students in pedagogical processes. For many university teachers, such an approach to education represents a definitive break with the transmission mode of education. According to the transmission mode, teachers merely transmit knowledge, and students are expected to consume such knowledge uncritically—that is, at most times without questioning or challenging. Consequently, many of the teachers at South African universities (23 in total) who wanted to move away from the transmission modes of teaching and learning became attracted to democratic education—that is, that approach to education that favors teacher and student engagement. In this section, I argue, firstly, that democratic action in university classrooms based on/derived from the theoretical understanding of four prominent scholars (Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, Iris Marion Young, and Martha Nussbaum) has the potential to engender much-needed deliberative engagement. However, I show that implementing the theoretical positions of these scholars uncritically could potentially undermine what deliberative engagement ought to be. Secondly, therefore, and with specific reference to university education, I show how Eamonn Callan’s ideas on distress and belligerence could enhance deliberative engagement in classrooms. Thereafter, with reference to a moment in my teaching with education students, I offer an account of how belligerent deliberative engagement can be cultivated, in particular focusing on students’ reflections (my second interpretive move).

Habermas’s Discourse-Oriented Theory of Democratic Action

A discourse-oriented view of democratic action involves intersubjective communicative processes aimed at securing compromises, consensus, or fair bargaining based on a preponderance of “the better arguments” (Habermas 1996, p. 24). Put

differently, persuasive argumentation which can engender shared compromises, mutual consensus, or fair bargaining foregrounds a discourse-specific view of democratic action. In this way, Habermas proposes that deliberation unfolds on the basis of producing “the better arguments”—those arguments that rely on the citizenry attempting to produce reasons that are publicly more defensible than those proffered by others. For instance, students in a university classroom engage in communication with others whereby they offer reasons in defense of particular points of view. Those students whose views hold sway in the classroom—those views that others have found more convincing than their own—are said to be the most persuasive ones. And, on the basis of intersubjective agreement, some students accept that others’ reasons can change their initial opinions and preferences—that is, others’ reasons can persuade them into accepting that their initial opinions and preferences are no longer appropriate. In this way, a shared consensus is attained based on what most of the students consider as the better arguments. However, such a discourse-oriented view of democratic action, more specifically deliberative engagement, presupposes that all students are eloquent and capable enough of producing the better arguments. And this is not necessarily the case. One may find that some students might hold more persuasive views than others, but that they cannot articulate these as eloquently and convincingly as others can their views. What follows from this is that some students might not necessarily be able to articulate what might in fact be more persuasive opinions. Habermas’s account of a discourse-oriented deliberative engagement does not seem to be plausible enough, as it cannot ensure that “the better arguments” will prevail—a situation which could, in turn, potentially undermine deliberation because such action is meant to engender the most substantive points of view. Following a strict form of discourse-oriented democratic action might at times silence more substantive opinions or preferences, because searching for “the better argument” at the level of plausible articulation could subvert more reasonable views. For example, some students might persuasively argue that violence could bring about democratic change in a country, while other students might have better reasons to explain why violence subverts democracy but may be unable to eloquently articulate their substantive arguments against the use of violence to achieve democracy. Hence, Habermas’s view of deliberative engagement does not seem to be adequate to engender defensible forms of democratic action. For this reason, I find Seyla Benhabib’s view of democratic action complementary to Habermas’s conception of democratic action.

Benhabib’s Reflexive Account of Democratic Action

Seyla Benhabib’s account of democratic action builds on Habermas’s discourse or consensus-oriented view of deliberative engagement. Whereas Habermas’s idea of democratic action favors the achievement of consensus based on “the better arguments,” Benhabib extends this view to one that challenges the conclusions

arrived at by consensus or unanimity (Benhabib 1996, pp. 77 and 87). Her idea of democratic action is underscored by a condition of reflexivity whereby the outcome of deliberation is not fixed, but can be revised and subjected to reexamination—that is, debated, questioned, and criticized (Benhabib 1996, p. 72). In this way, even the consensus that is attained should not be considered as the conclusive outcome of deliberation, but rather a temporary consensus until more reasonable judgments have been attained. Such a reflexive account of democratic action would not silence or curtail dissenting minority viewpoints that a strictly consensus-oriented approach to democratic action would dismiss. In other words, reflexive democratic action, referred to by Benhabib as “egalitarian reciprocity,” would allow both minorities and dissenters the right to challenge the outcome of public deliberation (Benhabib 1996, p. 79). By implication, even “the best arguments” should be subjected to revision and reexamination, perhaps at a later stage; therefore, the outcome of deliberation is considered as an interim consensus until more reasonable opinions and preferences confirm or overturn previously held views. With such an idea of deliberative engagement in mind, it could be that students who previously held views that violence could bring about democratic change might have their views revised and reexamined on the grounds of more substantive views that might not support or advance their views on violence and democracy. The point is that these students’ views on violence generating democratic change only remain valid until they are persuaded to alter them by the more reasonable views of other students.

Now, although Benhabib is mainly concerned with not excluding minorities and dissenters from deliberation, she seems to fall short of achieving this aim, because even the revised and reexamined views still depend on how convincingly these arguments are articulated. What follows from this is that the most eloquent students’ views would still be in the ascendancy, which does not necessarily avoid the problem of excluding perhaps more informed yet unstated or inadequately articulated views. Therefore, I support Iris Marion Young’s suspicion of a discourse theory of deliberative engagement, or more specifically of deliberative democracy.

Young’s Communicative Account of Democratic Action

Iris Marion Young’s idea of inclusive democratic (inter)action attends to virtues or a set of dispositions of communication—greeting, rhetoric, and narrative—in addition to the contents of arguments in order to achieve an “enlarged conception” of democratic engagement (Young 2000, p. 79). Greeting, she claims, precedes the giving and evaluating of reasons in dialogue whereby participants publicly acknowledge and recognize one another. Simply put, greeting refers to those moments in everyday communication—that is, “Hello,” “How are you?,” as well as forms of speech—which lubricate discussion with mild forms of flattery, stroking of egos, deference, and politeness such as handshakes and making small talk before

commencing with business (Young 2000, p. 58). In other words, greeting is a communicative moment of taking the risk of trusting in order to establish and widen the bond of trust necessary for a discussion to proceed in good faith (Young 2000, p. 60). This makes sense for the reason that if teachers and students do not acknowledge and recognize one another as worthy of listening to, deliberation might be stunted quite prematurely because the parties refuse to engage one another as dialogical partners. For instance, if university teachers refuse to listen to students' diverse views on an issue, the practice of presenting and evaluating arguments would not begin to unfold.

Young claims that rhetoric should also accompany argument, by situating the argument for a particular audience and giving it embodied style and tone (2000, p. 79). In other words, rhetoric concerns the manner in which arguments are made as distinct from the assertive value of the arguments. The good rhetorician is one who attempts to persuade listeners by acceding to others that they are the "judges" of arguments, rather than claiming herself to "know" (Young 2000, p. 69). For instance, in rhetorical style, a university teacher might request her students to carefully consider a view on justice and await some of their responses to the concept—a matter of producing alertness for the sake of ensuring democratic (inter)action.

Narrative or relating stories is considered to be a means of giving voice to kinds of experience that often go unheard. For instance, at the institution where I work, several non-Afrikaans-speaking students often feel excluded and marginalized when some academics teach and provide class notes only in Afrikaans. In this case, storytelling by the students to each other and to wider publics as to why such practices constitute an injustice with respect to their learning could enlarge thinking about the problem of language use at my institution. In this way, listeners (academics) can hopefully learn about how their own position and actions appear to others from the stories they tell (Young 2000, p. 76).

I share Young's view that practices of greeting, rhetoric, and narrative can complement argument. I am also less skeptical about these virtues of communication devaluing or dismissing central normative concerns about argument, in the sense that such forms of communication can potentially be superficial, insincere, and merely aimed at gaining the assent of others through flattery and not by reason. What concerns me more is the fact that narrative in particular still requires people to articulate their experiences (and at times eloquently) in order that others should listen attentively to such experiences. The point I am making is that it seems rather unlikely that the individual testimony of a student who relates a sense of wrong without some manner of justification can resolve, for instance, the language dilemma at my institution. For this reason, (democratic) action also requires that university teachers in particular recognize the vulnerabilities of others (including the injustices students might experience) and not just the probative strength of students' reasons. It is here that I find Martha Nussbaum's account of compassionate action to be an enabling condition to achieve democratic action.

Nussbaum's Account of Compassionate Action

Martha Nussbaum (2001) raises the question of what positive contribution emotions such as compassion can make in guiding deliberation among university teachers and students. Her main argument in defense of compassion is that the latter ought to be the emotion which should be most frequently cultivated when people embark upon democratic action in public life (Nussbaum 2001, p. 299). For her, deliberative engagement ought to be occasioned by the impulse to treat others justly and humanely—with compassion. Certainly in South African universities—where diverse students of advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds (black and white) are beginning to deliberate about matters of public concern such as crime, victimization, homelessness, job discrimination, unemployment, domestic violence and abuse of women, poverty and lack of food, political alienation, alcoholism and drug abuse, and the absence of good prospects—certain practical judgments have to be made by students about these variants of their public and personal lives. Invariably, judgments to be made will be based on students' perceptions of other's distress, undeserved misfortune, suffering, injustice, plight, disability, and disease. It is in this regard that compassion becomes a necessary condition to deliberate about such matters. Compassion not only prompts in people an awareness of the misfortune or suffering of others but also pushes the boundaries of the self outward by focusing on others' suffering that might be the result of no fault of their own (Nussbaum 2001, p. 299).

Nussbaum's understanding of compassion as painful emotional judgment embodies at least two cognitive requirements: firstly, a belief or appraisal that the suffering of others is serious and not trivial, and that persons do not deserve the suffering; and secondly, the belief that the possibilities of the person who experiences the emotion are similar to those of the sufferer. I shall now discuss these two requirements of compassion in relation to the way that students and university teachers ought to deliberate rationally (which includes being good listeners), yet at the same time also cultivating in them the concern to be just and humane towards others—to be compassionate.

Firstly, insofar as one can become serious about the suffering of others, one believes them to be without blame for the kind of undeserved injustice they might have suffered, and one recognizes that the person's plight needs to be alleviated. Many students who are perhaps blameless for their inability to pay university fees due to their parents not having enjoyed economic prosperity after decades of apartheid require the compassion of others. In such circumstances, deliberation at universities should rather take the form of ascertaining what could be done to ensure that students who do not have the finances to study remain part of the university community, rather than finding ways to penalize or at times humiliate them. So compassion requires blamelessness on the part of students who are unable to pay university fees, as well as onlookers who can make judgments about the need to expedite the flourishing of the students in question. Similarly, a university teacher has compassion for students with an impoverished schooling background

not necessarily of their own creation (parents could not afford to send children to more affluent and organized schools or to pay for the services of extramural tutors, as is the case in South Africa). Such a university teacher recognizes the need to find creative ways to assist disadvantaged students to come to grips with difficult concepts in their studies and at the same time acknowledges that the unjust education system to which these students might have been exposed is no fault of their own. One could argue that all students should be treated equally and that no student should receive preferential treatment in terms of additional pedagogical support. But then this would be to ignore the undeserved unequal education many students, certainly in South Africa, have been—or might still be—subjected to.

Secondly, compassion is best cultivated if one acknowledges some sort of community between oneself and the other, understanding what it might mean for one to encounter possibilities and vulnerabilities similar to those of the sufferer: “[One] will learn compassion best if he [she] begins by focusing on their sufferings” (Nussbaum 2001, p. 317). Again, “in order for compassion to be present, the person must consider the suffering of another as a significant part of his or her own scheme of goals and ends. She must take that person’s ill as affecting her own flourishing. In effect, she must make herself vulnerable in the person of another” (Nussbaum 2001, p. 319). What this recognition of one’s own related vulnerability means is that students who might have a clear understanding of, say, concepts in a philosophy of education classroom and become impatient with their peers for not grasping such concepts should imagine what it would mean for them to encounter difficulty with concepts. Likewise, university academics teaching philosophy of education should become more aware of what it means for students to encounter epistemological difficulty. In the words of Nussbaum (2001, p. 319), “the recognition of one’s own related vulnerability is, then, an important and frequently an indispensable epistemological requirement for compassion in human beings.”

In essence, compassion brings to the fore the intellectual emotions of people in ethical deliberation. It is simply not sufficient to educate by just focusing on deliberative argumentation and narratives without also cultivating compassion. Deliberation and narratives prompt students and university teachers to question meanings, imagine alternative possibilities, modify practical judgments, and foster respect and critical engagement—a matter of doing interpretation. Yet it seldom brings into play those emotions of people that are necessary to make it worthwhile to continue the dialogical interaction. If one is going to ignore the pedagogical vulnerabilities of the weak, very little will be done in the direction of meaningful education. So we also need compassionate students and university teachers.

But an overwhelming application of compassion in relation to democratic action could potentially reduce the rigorous forms of argumentation required in deliberative engagement. For instance, it is one thing to recognize that some students have physical and epistemological (including articulation) vulnerabilities and that, when they articulate their narratives, university teachers ought to listen to their voices. This, however, does not mean that one should merely accept everything students have to say, if they do not offer reasonable and sufficient justifications for their views. I cannot imagine university teachers in South Africa accepting feeble

arguments by students to use violence against alleged racists. Likewise, I cannot agree with views which advocate the establishment of a Black Native Club movement that aims to advance the interests of only African blacks in academe to the exclusion of whites, coloreds, and Indians. One ought to listen compassionately to the claims of some black academics who allege that they still encounter exclusion and marginalization in the higher education sector. But establishing a movement on the basis of excluding others, who might have similar common aspirations to rekindle the voices of the marginalized (vulnerable), would undermine democratic action—that is, as South African academics, we should collectively oppose exclusion and other forms of discrimination in higher education. And, in order to do so, university teachers and students cannot do so just on the grounds of compassionate action whereby we recognize the vulnerabilities of one another and others without forms of democratic engagement that bring to the fore our most substantive opinions and preferences. Hence, I am attracted to the cultivation of distress, belligerence, and responsibility in democratic action as supplementary virtues to deliberative argumentation, narrative, and compassionate action.

In Defense of Callan’s View of Distressful and Belligerent Democratic Action

Callan (1997, pp. 221–222 and 73) makes a cogent case for democratic action as being constituted by at least the following aspects: cohesive identity, public deliberation, and responsibility for the rights of others. Firstly, democratic action, particularly in pluralistic free societies, makes urgent the task of creating democratic citizens who share a sufficiently cohesive identity (Callan 1997, p. 221). By this Callan means that such a conception of democratic action “honours the sources of diversity that thrive within the boundaries of a strong common citizenship, and yet supports a judicious tolerance to ways of life that conflict with some of its demands.” The pursuit of a collective identity without discounting the differences of others could do much to prevent ethnic hatred and religious intolerance (Callan 1997, p. 221). My focus is on Callan’s view of democratic action as a way to prevent ethnic hatred and religious intolerance. (South) Africa’s past history has been marred by ethnic violence and religious bigotry—Zulus fighting Xhosas and Afrikaners resenting English-speaking peoples in South Africa, Muslims and non-Muslims attacking and hurting one another in Nigeria, and the Zimbabwean government confiscating white farmers’ property and evicting them. It is here that teaching and learning can provide enabling conditions for democratic action, more specifically pursuing a pathway to collective political identity. This implies that university teachers should not merely listen compassionately to the narratives of students, but actually encourage a spirit of living together in diversity—that is, through dialogical action, university teachers and students should together establish dialogical opportunities that take into account people’s linguistic, cultural, ethnic,

and religious commonalities and diversities. The idea of finding a dialogical space for the sharing of different people's commonalities is based on the understanding that people need to learn to live with the otherness of others whose ways of being may be deeply threatening to our own. And by creating a dialogical space—referred to by Benhabib (2002, p. 127) as “intercultural dialogue”—in which people can enact what they have in common and at the same time make public their competing narratives and significations, they might have a real opportunity to coexist. In this way, they would not only establish a community of conversation and interdependence (i.e., they share commonalities) but also one of disagreement (i.e., they do not share commonalities) without disrespecting others' lifeworlds (Benhabib 2002, pp. 35, 41). Put differently, when teachers and students are engaged in a conversation underpinned by interdependence and disagreement, they engage in democratic action with a collective identity—they share commonalities. And educating students to become democratic citizens involves creating civil spaces in which they can learn to share commonalities and to respect the differences of others.

Secondly, Callan (1997, p. 215) favors a conception of public deliberation characterized by the distress and belligerence (i.e., a rough process of struggle) of confrontation that will naturally give way to conciliation as moral truth is pieced together from the fragmentary insights of conflicting viewpoints. For him, the idea of public deliberation is not an attempt “to achieve dialogical victory over our adversaries but rather the attempt to find and enact terms of political coexistence that we and they can reasonably endorse as morally acceptable” (Callan 1997, p. 215). Through public deliberation, participants disturb doubts about the correctness of their moral beliefs or about the importance of the differences between what they and others believe (a matter of arousing distress), accompanied by a rough process of struggle and ethical confrontation—that is, belligerence (Callan 1997, p. 211). If this happens, belligerence and distress give way eventually to moments of ethical conciliation, when the truth and error in rival positions have been made clear and a fitting synthesis of factional viewpoints is achieved (Callan 1997, p. 212)—this is an idea of public deliberation, with which I agree, where no one has the right to silence dissent and where participants can speak their minds. In the words of Callan (1997, pp. 201–202), “real moral dialogue (as constitutive of democratic action), as opposed to carefully policed conversations about the meaning of some moral orthodoxy, cannot occur without the risk of offence, an offence-free school would oblige us to eschew dialogue.” It does seem that some university teachers, when listening compassionately to students' narratives, become culpable of steering the conversation in a way in which preference is no longer given to the substantiveness of articulated views. Rather, these teachers seem to focus on who the students are and not also what they substantively have to say. I am sometimes inclined to listen to students' claims about how difficult it is to write a section of a thesis to the extent where some students attribute their incapacity to produce argumentative writing to not having been taught argumentation in their undergraduate studies. Of course, this might be true. But then to have reached the stage of thesis writing, one should at least know what it means to write a lucid, substantiated, and coherent argument.

For this reason, it would not be inappropriate to confront and even offend students. Simply put, tell students that their writing is not good enough and that they could do something about improving it.

Thirdly, Callan (1997, p. 73) does not merely call for the recognition and respect of other's rights (whether civil, political, and social) through democratic action, but also stresses the importance of taking responsibility for the rights of others. In his words, taking rights seriously means "accepting appropriate responsibility for the rights of others, not just making a fuss about our own" (Callan 1997, p. 73). For instance, people who champion the right to employment in South Africa also consider just as important the cause of others to take responsibility to meet the needs of those who are jobless. Such an understanding of democratic action could potentially extend the mere recognition of, and respect for, other's rights to a position whereby we assume appropriate responsibility for the rights of others. In South Africa, with the new neoliberal market economy influencing universities—in particular coercing universities to offer inter- and transdisciplinary programs—many departments and academics are beginning to work together under the guise of deliberative engagement. However, such working together is mostly geared towards designing and developing programs that have a market orientation in terms of which graduates stand a better chance of being taken up in the competitive job market. What invariably happens is that students become more and more self-centered and narcissistic about their own individual futures and prospects at the expense of national interests, without deliberating what their collective contributions could be in shaping the future of their country. Most of the students whom I have encountered doing a Postgraduate Certificate in Education reason as follows: "I want to be a teacher so that I can secure a job." Very little is said about how prospective teachers ought to deliberate about improving schooling in order to produce better citizens or what ought to be done about turning schools into environments that are more conducive to learning and teaching. On the one hand, it seems as if university teachers produce materials mostly aimed at equipping students with universal skills that match the requirements of the world of work and not with what it means to be educated in a transformative society. On the other hand, some students narcissistically acquire formal qualifications that seemingly prepare them for the labor market, but which do not instill in them qualities that can help build a better country—one free from social oppression (drug and alcohol abuse, gangsterism, human rights abuses), economic marginalization (unemployment is rife among the majority of the previously disadvantaged), and subtle forms of racist exclusion (the most lucrative jobs are still occupied by those who were privileged in the past). The point is that unless universities become havens of deliberative discourse aimed at producing a better future for all South Africans, we would not have seriously engaged with the challenges of the unexpected—that is to say, our deliberative efforts have not been responsible enough. In fact, they have been biased towards perpetuating injustices. Therefore we have acted irresponsibly. In this regard, Arcilla (2003, p. 149) makes the point that university teachers and students need to take more responsibility for the social context of their education.

This brings me to my comment on how we can act more responsibly. In the first instance, education is a human or social science, which is to say that the theories that characterize it cannot be disconnected from the culture within which they are produced. In other words, education cannot be understood in isolation from processes of immense cultural (regional, historical, and temporal) change. It therefore is not possible to establish a theory of education that is culturally transcendent, because it involves a number of practices between which there are parallels, but which do not themselves share unifying characteristics (Uljens 2003, p. 43). So, simply to assume that one has to accept a universal understanding of education exclusively along the lines of Enlightenment thought is to be insensitive to alternative views, in this instance, views from African traditions. Yet my argument is that being culturally sensitive to African traditional thoughts and practices does not mean that one has to abandon a universally enlightened idea of, say, democratic action. It is here where I would argue for efforts to communicate between rival and perhaps competing traditions—a matter of acting responsibly, since we would be nurturing an idea of education with which genuine African universities should become involved.

Thus far, I have attempted to show (through interpretation) how democratic action can be widened by making a case for distress, belligerence, and responsibility as additional virtues to encouraging narratives and listening compassionately. Only then would teaching and learning in South African universities become more deliberative and responsible. With the aforementioned theoretical frameworks of deliberative engagement in mind, I now proceed to a moment in my teaching that will hopefully foreground my deliberative encounters with students of philosophy of education.

Data Construction: Pedagogical Encounters with Students of Philosophy of Education at a Local University

This section of the chapter is an attempt to show how deliberation is used in university classroom pedagogy to engender in students a commitment to become responsible citizens of a postapartheid South Africa. Firstly, I show that, through deliberation, controversy can be attended to with specific reference to three incidents in my country: alleged racist practices at a university; an instruction by the minister of education to introduce a pledge of allegiance in public schools; and xenophobic attacks on foreigners. Secondly, I show that deliberation alone cannot guarantee responsible citizenship. Students also need to be taught to have compassion for the vulnerable other. Finally, I argue that cultivating citizenship through deliberation offers much hope to counteract blindly patriotic sentiments and to engender cosmopolitan justice.

At the beginning of each academic year I teach a module in philosophy of education to postgraduate students in their final year of a professional teaching

qualification. The theme of this academic module is entitled “democratic citizenship education.” The module aims to elucidate meanings of democratic citizenship education such as teaching students—about to become high school teachers—to use aspects of democratic citizenship education in their classroom practices. The demographic composition of the class over the past 15 years is overwhelmingly white (90 %), whereas blacks constitute the minority. One of the reasons for this anomaly in a country where the majority of the population is black is the fact that many black people do not speak Afrikaans—considered to be the dominant lingua franca used at the institution where I work. This brings me to my first strategy in educating students to become deliberative inquirers. The pedagogical moment I focus on in order to illustrate how democratic citizenship has been taught over many years happened during the year 2008.

Education as Deliberation

In 2008, at the time when I commenced with the teaching of deliberation, three issues surfaced dramatically in my country: racism, blind patriotism, and xenophobia. I introduced students to three video clips of incidents related to these phenomena. They were then asked to give an account of why racism, blind patriotism, and xenophobia are societal ills that should be eradicated. Working in groups, the students had to justify to one another why racism, blind patriotism, and xenophobia are detrimental to the process of cultivating responsible citizens after decades of apartheid rule. What ensued was that some students gave an account of their explanations of why these societal ills surfaced, while other students, in turn, would critically evaluate these explanations. After this these groups of students offered their arguments against racism, blind patriotism, and xenophobia to the entire class. Randomly, I asked students to respond to other students’ reasons, thus taking one another’s reasons into systematic controversy. Critically evaluating one another’s reasons has always been done through listening to what the other had to say before agreeing or disagreeing with the other, and this is then followed by giving an account of one’s own reasons. As the university teacher, I eventually considered the reasons offered by the students before giving an account of my own reasons, after which the students could evaluate my reasons. Sometimes, students became annoyed with other students for what they perceive to have been an articulation of ill-conceived reasons. It was my task to emphasize that respect demands that we can disagree (even belligerently) with one another’s reasons and that we have to tell one another when we think the other is wrong. Thus, through listening, evaluating, and reevaluating one another’s reasons, deliberation was fostered in the university classroom.

However, what sparked much heated controversy in the class was the remark by a white student that the racial prejudice and racist actions perpetrated by five white students against elderly, black workers at a university residence (in 2008) can be seen as a response to the killing of some white farmers in the country. One of these

five white students urinated into a prepared meal for black workers to show how gullible and ignorant black people are in the country. Of course, the humiliation of people should not be tolerated because their human dignity is undermined. Similarly, the brutal murder of some white farmers is an abhorrent and barbaric act. However, to argue that racially degrading behavior can be justified as a response to the farm killings is not only an ill-conceived argument but also the expression of an irresponsible view. It is at this point when even white students belligerently disagreed with the views of a fellow white student. The most defensible argument raised against this ill-conceived view was the argument used by Amy Gutmann (2003), which recognizes that freedom of expression should not be left unconstrained when an injustice to others is perpetrated. The white student who attempted to rationalize the racist incident suffered some kind of distress, which is not unusual for the kinds of deliberations we encourage in the class. The debate became very heated, and one might have expected students to leave the classroom. Yet conditions of deliberation had already been engendered in the class for some time, which meant that such an act was not necessary.

The point I am making is that even when deliberations are belligerent and distressful, students should continue to participate in them. As mentioned earlier, Eamon Callan (1997) makes the point that the idea of deliberation does not entail an attempt to achieve “dialogical victory over our adversaries,” but rather to find ways to morally coexist (Callan 1997, p. 215). If belligerent deliberation happens, university teachers and students can speak their minds, and they are then also prepared to take risks that will prepare them well to enhance justice in their society.

Education as Compassion

In February 2008, the Ministry of Education released a revised pledge to be recited in schools that reads as follows: “We the youth of South Africa, recognising the injustices of our past, honour those who suffered and sacrificed for justice and freedom. We will respect and protect the dignity of each person and stand up for justice. We sincerely declare that we shall uphold the rights and values of our Constitution, and promise to act in accordance with the duties and responsibilities that flow from these rights.” When I asked the PGCE students to comment on this pledge, many white students argued that the pledge makes them feel guilty for past apartheid injustices for which they had not been responsible. I agree that the present generation of white PGCE students was not responsible for South Africa’s apartheid past and should not be made to feel as if they had been the perpetrators of such injustices against human beings. Many of these students are in their early twenties and thus were barely 10 years old when the first democratic government came to power. But then the question should be asked whether by recognizing the injustices of the past, it can be assumed that they perpetrated a wrong themselves. Some black students felt that recognizing

injustices of the apartheid past does not seem to be a detrimental practice. Again, some white students put forward the argument that honoring those who suffered for justice and freedom actually means that they should honor those black people who had been liberation fighters and now serve in the African National Congress-led government. Some white students raised the point that honoring those who suffered and sacrificed for justice and freedom in this way would be problematic, because the activities of some black activists actually violated human rights as well, specifically some of the bombings that killed innocent (including white) bystanders.

It seemed as if the students did not want to be reminded of South Africa's past, as they did not want to bear the burden of being responsible for the previous racist government. Therefore all the students agreed that respecting and protecting the dignity of each person (black and white) and upholding the rule of law were vital. Not a single student (black or white) denied the fact that people should be respected on the basis of their humanity. These students were specifically concerned about every person in the country who suffers vulnerabilities such as poverty, unemployment, and prejudice (including sexism, racism, domestic violence, and stigmatization as a result of HIV and AIDS). For these students, reducing and eradicating such vulnerabilities is tantamount to preserving the dignity of people.

During our deliberations about the revised pledge of allegiance to be implemented in public schools, the students were introduced to the seminal thoughts of Martha Nussbaum. As has been mentioned earlier, Nussbaum (2001, p. 299) argues that deliberation ought to be impelled by the emotion that moves one to treat others justly and humanely—with compassion. It is understood that compassion focuses on others' suffering. Our deliberations about the pledge of allegiance in relation to compassion brought to the fore the intellectual emotions of people in ethical deliberation. The students agreed that it is simply not sufficient to educate by just focusing on deliberation without also cultivating compassion. Deliberative argumentation prompts students and teachers to question meanings, imagine alternative possibilities, modify practical judgments, foster respect, and develop critical engagement. Yet it seldom brings into play those emotions of people that are necessary to make it worthwhile to continue the dialogical interaction. If one is going to ignore the pedagogical vulnerabilities of the weak, very little will be achieved in the way of meaningful education, that is to say, action with unpredictable and unintended outcomes. What the classes in philosophy of education clearly emphasized was that, in our universities and schools, we also need compassionate students and teachers.

Education as Cosmopolitan Justice

Our deliberations in the philosophy of education classes were extended to reflections on cosmopolitan justice when the growing xenophobia in South Africa took an ugly turn in May 2008. Not a single student made any approving comment about the

xenophobic attacks on “foreign nationals” (immigrants) that resulted in 62 people dead, 670 injured, about 47,000 displaced (28,682 displaced persons in 99 sites across Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape) (The Times, 10 June 2008), and many returning to their native countries. Areas most affected by the xenophobic attacks were townships in Cape Town (Du Noon, Masiphumelele, Khayelitsha, Lwandle, Macassar, Mitchells Plain, Nyanga, Ocean View, and Soetwater) and Johannesburg (Alexandra, where the violence started, Diepsloot, Zandspruit, Primrose, Tembisa, Reiger Park, Tokoza, Hillbrow, Jeppestown, Thokoza, Themisa, and Cleveland). Although the government claims that attempts to curb xenophobia have been successful, there is still growing concern that immigrants might not be reintegrated into the local communities.

The question that we addressed in the philosophy of education class was: How can cosmopolitanism combat xenophobia? Cosmopolitanism recognizes the rights of others to “universal hospitality.” Simply put, others have the right to be treated hospitably. For Benhabib (2006, p. 22), hospitality, in a neo-Kantian sense, “is not to be understood as a virtue of sociability, as the kindness and generosity one may show to strangers who come to one’s land or who become dependent on one’s act of kindness through circumstances of nature or history; hospitality is a right that belongs to all human beings as far as we view them as potential participants in a world republic.” Such a right to hospitality imposes an obligation on democratic states and their citizens not to deny refuge and asylum to those whose intentions are peaceful, particularly if refusing them would result in harm coming to them (Benhabib 2006, p. 25). So, if the intentions of Somali entrepreneurs are peaceful (and there are many of them in South Africa), it would be considered their right to be treated hospitably and all democratic citizens’ obligation to ensure that these immigrants enjoy such a right.

Our main task in the philosophy of education class was to answer the question about what such a cosmopolitan approach to education entails. Firstly, considering that cosmopolitanism involves the right to temporary residence on the part of the “stranger who comes to our land” (Benhabib 2006, p. 22), it follows that public schools in South Africa cannot deny access to children of immigrant communities. In most cases, they are not refused. However, some children are excluded in subtle ways, considering that the language of instruction, for instance, is not in the mother tongue of these immigrant children. In fact, in the black township of Kayamandi (in Stellenbosch, South Africa), African children find it difficult to cope with non-mother tongue instruction in public schools. Three Belgian teachers once requested a mediator to assist them in teaching children in Kayamandi to participate in art and cultural activities. And taking into account that local school children find it difficult to cope with a different language, it would be extremely challenging for immigrant (say Somali) children to adapt to the public school life in their country of temporary sojourn. What cosmopolitanism thus demands is that immigrant children should be taught initially in their mother tongue before they are assimilated into the broader public school life. Or, alternatively, they should simultaneously learn the language of instruction and be supported in doing so. The point I am making is that one should not take for granted that people with immigrant status would fit

naturally into the public structures of their adopted countries or countries of temporary residence. They have to be initiated gradually into social and public life on the basis of a sense of obligation on the part of democratic states. Failing to do so—for example, denying immigrant children gradual access to public schools and thus depriving them of developing and exercising their capacities—would amount to treating others unjustly. The upshot of this view is that if my Malawian student’s children, who are attending the local Kayamandi school, are not treated hospitably by, for example, being initiated gradually into public school life by South African teachers and other learners, then the teachers and learners are not abiding by their obligation to treat others humanely—that is to say, justly. This unfavorable attitude towards immigrant others would not only retard interaction and cooperation among different people but also impede the education for social justice project that the Department of Education in South Africa so dearly wants to implement in public schools. This is because the consequence would be that these immigrant children and their parents will invariably develop a mistrust (as is seemingly the case with my Malawian student and his children) of the public school sector—a situation which, in turn, increases their suffering (discomfort) and perpetuates what Iris Marion Young (2006, p. 159) refers to as “structural social injustice.”

Secondly, “the right to have rights” prohibits states from denying individuals citizenship rights and state protection against murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts such as persecution (whether political, cultural, or religious) (Benhabib 2006, p. 25). So, if Somali immigrant children wish to wear their head scarves in South African public schools, following “the right to have rights” notion, these children cannot be discriminated against if they wish to do so. Asking these children to remove their scarves, which they might consider as important to their religious and cultural identity, would be a matter of treating them unjustly on the grounds that their right to be different would be undermined.

Thirdly, one of the main arguments that emanated from our classroom deliberations is that “hospitality” can only manifest itself if South African local communities can begin to offer a welcoming hand to the beleaguered immigrants by supporting their integration into our society and by providing them with protection against possible criminal attacks.

In essence, cosmopolitanism and its concomitant agenda of the hospitality that ought to be afforded other human beings (especially from immigrant communities) in many ways complement the duties and responsibilities associated with the activities of democratic citizens. Unless countries (such as South Africa) and their peoples recognize the rights of others to be treated with dignity and respect, and not suppress their rights, the achievement of justice will remain remote from the minds and hearts of people. I have argued that South African public universities and schools can do much to promote these norms, which would inevitably consolidate and extend the just actions linked to the implementation of a democratic citizenship agenda.

The Role of Interpretation in This Research

In this section, I use some of the seminal thoughts of Stanley Cavell (1979), particularly his ideas on “living with skepticism,” to show how interpretation further manifests in my research. I point out that teaching students skeptically might engender moments of acknowledging humanity within the Other, attachment to the Other’s points of view with a readiness for departure, and showing responsibility to the Other—all practices that require some form of interpretation, understanding, and reflection about one’s self in relation to the Other.

Acknowledging Humanity Within the Other

Central to one’s connection with the Other is the view that one has to acknowledge humanity in the Other, of which the basis for such action lies in oneself: “I have to acknowledge humanity in the other, and the basis of it seems to lie in me” (Cavell 1979, p. 433). One’s engagement with postgraduate students ought to be shaped by an acknowledgement that they be considered as fellow human beings. In acknowledging others as human beings worthy of respect, one should simultaneously acknowledge oneself as a person who should exercise respect. This is what I think Cavell (1979, p. 435) has in mind when he claims: “[A]nother may be owed acknowledgement simply on the ground of his humanity, acknowledgement as a human being, for which nothing will do but my revealing myself to him [her] as a human being, unrestrictedly, as his or her sheer other, his or her fellow, his or her semblable. – Surely this is, if anything, nothing more than half the moralists who ever wrote have said, that others count, in our moral calculations, simply as persons; or that we have duties to others of a universal kind, duties to them apart from any particular stations we occupy.” One considers oneself to be students’ “semblable” who invites them to a form of life in which one recognizes their humanity. In this way, one’s engagement with students through recognizing their otherness is an interpretive act because one makes particular assumptions on the grounds of how they supposedly present themselves to one. In fact, acknowledging students’ humanity does require some form of moral judgment (interpretation) about their humaneness.

Attachment with a Readiness for Departure

If one were to perform one’s duty to others as human beings, should one engage in social practices with something, say, morally just in mind? Teaching students to connect with issues of civility, following Cavell, makes us “open to complete surprise at what we have done” (1979, p. 325). In other words, teachers and students

can be initiated into practices about what is morally good for society but with the possibility that what is perceived as good for society is always in the making, continuously subjected to modifications and adaptations. For instance, it may be morally good for society to produce work about advancing belligerent educational encounters at some stage in its history—and we may decide this in advance. But when hostility emanates among people and makes interactions to be such distressful confrontations that may result in excluding the Other, we may want to suggest that peoples' distressful encounters be constrained. That is, our students' deliberations should be about what is desirable for society, with the possibility or readiness of departing from such practices if the situation arises—that is, advocating belligerence in deliberations might not always be desirable for the public good. The point I am making is that to cultivate in ourselves and others the view that we can be attached to a position momentarily and become detached from it again requires some form of reflecting on/about one's stance towards the position. So, in deliberative encounters, the possibility exists for people to think about, think through, and think beyond a particular position; otherwise one would not become attached or detached from a position at all. This means that interpretation about deliberative encounters between teachers and students determines the adjustment of one's particular views in relation to others and of particular points of view.

Responsibility to the Other

Cavell's remark "we are alone, and we are never alone" is a clear indication that one does belong to a particular group (being alone with others, i.e., "we") and that, by virtue of being human, one bears an internal relation to all other human beings—especially those who might not belong to the same group as one. This internal relation with my fellow human beings does not ignore my answerability/responsibility as to what happens to them, although I do not belong to the same group as they do. As a member of a particular cultural group in society, I cannot just impose my views (albeit religious or political) on others, for that in itself would deny that there are others in different positions (with different cultural orientations) than mine. Doing so would be doing an injustice to others. But being answerable/responsible for what happens to them means that their views are acknowledged, although I might not be in agreement with them. Rather, one conceives the other from the other's point of view with which one has to engage afresh (Cavell 1979, p. 441). As a person who belongs to a minority ethnic group in society, I should acknowledge the majority ethnic group's views, although I might be in stark disagreement with them. But in so doing, I do not compromise my relations with others, for that would mean a complete breakdown of society. From my own cultural vantage point, I might find another group's views repugnant (what Cavell would refer to as living my skepticism), but this does not mean that I view this group as outcasts unworthy of any form of engagement. That would be an abdication of my responsibility. The point I am making is that as a human being, I can

firmly distinguish between the values that constitute the practices of the cultural group to which I belong and the values that inform social practices other than mine—that is, in an interpretive way, I learn to understand the social practices of postgraduate students, and in turn they endeavor to understand my practices. Thus, when we (students and I) exercise our responsibility towards one another, we are in fact acting as interpretive beings—the latter depending on how the students and I engage with and respond to one another.

In demonstrating one's responsibility towards others, one immediately acknowledges one's capacity for intimacy with others—thus limiting one's idiosyncratic privacy. It is for this reason that Cavell (1979, p. 463) claims that “human beings do not necessarily desire isolation and incomprehension, but union or reunion, call it community.” Our private actions may lead to a betterment of our communal actions. I might privately contemplate to do something about improving human relations between foreign nationals (say from African countries) and South African citizens in my neighbourhood, but doing so autonomously without also penetrating the thoughts of other community members may not necessarily contribute towards a desired action. If my privacy remains restricted to me with the intention not to exercise my responsibility to others, my practices would remain unshared and separated from the people with whom I happen to live. So, my privacy opens a door through which someone else can tap into my thoughts—which might be of benefit to society. But if my privacy is prompted by narcissism, the possibility that others might gain something valuable for the good of society might be stunted. If I were to think about social practices in an interpretive way, I should acknowledge the private efforts of individuals, yet simultaneously not avoid the possibility that their private actions can be of good public use.

In a Cavellian fashion, university teachers ought to be responsible human beings with regard to their students. Responsibility towards one's students implies that one has to create opportunities for them to think, argue, and reflect about their texts—all practices that point to interpretation.

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6.3 Language, Meaning, and the Other in Curriculum Research

Christine Winter

In this chapter, I examine the problem identified above by looking at a curriculum project I carried out in an English secondary school in 2008/2009. I worked over a period of 5 months with two geography teachers to develop and teach a curriculum unit for a class of 12–13-year-olds. The project was located within two technologies—one of performativity (relating to school compliance with national curriculum policy and attainment targets as well as with researcher career development) and the second of orthodox educational research methodology. Both are driven by a neoliberal politics where the culture of measurability, competition, and economism exerts a keen presence. I suggest that the problems I identify in the chapter arise from the misconception of the way language operates to curtail the possibility of both research and education.

I begin the chapter by proposing the arguments underpinning the enquiry, drawing on the work of three philosophers to help me, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas. I contextualize the school-based curriculum project in the second part of the chapter, describing its focus and explaining its rationale, as well as explaining the rationale for my involvement. In the third part, I focus on two issues of particular concern and interest which arose in the conduct of the project, namely, researcher positionality and data analysis before trying to imagine things differently in the chapter's final section.

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Enframing by Technology

The dominant “toolbox” idea of educational research crops up in many publications under titles like *How to Do Your Educational Research Project*. In such publications, methodology is discussed through a standardized lens of reflecting on methods, evaluating their strengths and limitations, and clarifying their underpinning assumptions, while methods are portrayed as the procedures or tools for collecting empirical data. Data, analyzed and interpreted according to a prespecified program, lead to findings which show “what works” (not, usually, “what doesn’t work”) in educational practice (Smeyers and Depaepe 2006). The logical, technical language and organization of thinking in this mode show how educational research is “ruled by machinery” (Smith 2006), in other words, how it operates when it is in the grip of technology. The danger is that technology, attractive as it is for its assumed power of prediction and promise of solution to all educational problems, has failed to deliver on both counts to date. Worse than this, it has unobtrusively closed down thinking about alternatives.

According to Heidegger, there is more to technology than meets the eye. The way to open our minds to a better understanding of technology, to reveal its essence, is by questioning it in certain unorthodox ways. He proposes an approach he describes as “questioning concerning technology” (1977, p. 3). Beginning with the definition of technology as instrumentalism (providing a means to an end) in the hands of humans, he soon admits that this definition singularly fails to reveal its essence. His preferred approach is to reveal the essence of technology through a careful critique of the notion of causality that underpins it, by means of a consideration of how things come to be or how they “come forth into presencing” (p. 9). Presencing or bringing forth is about how something comes into existence or appears in the world within nature or as a result of human action. This presencing or bringing forth into existence involves a process of revealing which gives rise to what the Greeks described as *aletheia* or the correctness of an idea, or “truth.” But, as Heidegger so aptly puts it, “What has the essence of technology got to do with revealing?” (p. 12). Heidegger thinks of technology as a kind of metaphysics or rule book governing the presencing, bringing forth, or revealing of what is in the world. He gives the example of modern technology, like the mining of minerals or modern farming techniques that are ordered or controlled by the rules of efficiency—maximum yield at minimum cost. He claims that humans, without realizing their complicity, play a key role in this totalization by technology, in this efficient ordering and revealing, to the extent that they make it the norm and never question it. They become part of the process and the process takes on a life of its own. Heidegger calls this process “enframing.” Enframing of technology is more than thinking about technology and technological processes or the application of technological methods. It “organises being, structures consciousness” (Stone 2006, p. 536). It is “the box that we find hard to think outside of” (ibid, p. 542).

In the context of educational research training for graduates in the USA, Stone argues that enframing of technology leads to the valorization of specific standardized educational research methodologies in the form of “methodolotry.” Enframing is a problem because it closes down the possibilities of other thoughts and actions about the concept of education and of social and economic life, for example, the ethical and political. In the grip of technology, educational research is totalized, structured in pre-calculated ways, and limited to certain orthodox operations. If we wish, like Heidegger, to have a “free relationship with technology,” if we wish to know its essence, we need to think about and question technology’s metaphysical power to order and control. Heidegger believes the essence of technology can be known by the kind of questioning, thinking, and reflection that invoke, through art, new possibilities of thought that lie outside the “box” of orthodox educational research. This is the way to shake off metaphysics, to bring forth into presencing, and to reveal the truth.

Language and *Différance*

Acknowledging his debt to Heidegger for questioning the metaphysical foundations of our thinking by drawing attention to the ontico-ontological difference, Derrida argues that Heidegger does not go quite far enough in his proposal (Derrida 1981, pp. 9–10). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argued that although we believe we know what we mean when we talk about “being,” actually, we do not. Heidegger’s challenge is “to raise anew the question of the meaning of being” (Heidegger 1962, p. 1). His thesis rests on the difference between what he describes as “being” and “Being.” The idea of being (lower case “b”) concerns what is, in other words, what entities are in the world. For example, at the moment in my room, there is a desk with a clock and a mug. These are entities which exist—they are intelligible as things which are. I comport myself towards them as I work. Science gives us the ability to name and describe the characteristics of differentiable entities through its concepts and language. Any inquiry into what these entities are is understood by Heidegger as “ontical” or “fundamental ontology.” But Heidegger’s notion of Being with a capital “B” is something quite different from knowing what an entity is in terms of its predicates. Being (upper case B) concerns what it is for those entities to be. Heidegger’s project is to inquire into the way that Being manifests itself and, by so doing, to clarify the meaning of Being, to understand what determines entities as entities, and to determine the basis on which entities are always understood. This second project is described by Heidegger as “ontological” or “regional ontology.” Heidegger wishes to go back a step prior to scientific inquiry, language, and concepts to find the “truth” of Being. Derrida challenges Heidegger’s quest for the originary meaning of Being because he recognizes that Heidegger’s quest is set within “a system of languages and an historically determined ‘significance’” (Derrida 1974, p. 23), which does not embrace the main tenet of Derrida’s work—that of *différance*. Instead, Heidegger, while claiming to denote

the difference between being and Being as his critique of metaphysics, at the same time, looks to and privileges the “gathering” or “belonging together” of thinking (language) and being in his search for the originary “truth” of Being. The revealing of difference in Heidegger’s account occurs through the notion of “belonging together” or “gathering” “as the mutual tending towards each other of being and thinking, which belong to each other in order to be manifest, even as thought is always the thought of being” (Caputo 1997, p. 152). Derrida’s opinion is “exactly the opposite.” “Once you grant some privilege to gathering and not to dissociating, then you leave no room for the other, for the radical singularity of the other” (Derrida 1997, p. 14). Derrida denounces Heidegger’s celebration of “belonging together,” of unity between what is and human thought because, by privileging association and gathering (in other words, sameness), Heidegger denies dissociation and disjunction, closing down the movement towards pluralism and a democracy to come.

Questioning concerning technology provides a good example. Heidegger’s questioning of the metaphysics of technology (enframing) as an ordering, controlling force with which humans unwittingly collude, opens a space for thinking differently about technology. Heidegger views the bringing forth of this different way of thinking as occurring through the belonging together (*Versammlung*) of being and thinking that reveals, through art, the “truth” of the matter (Derrida 1981, p. 11). But Derrida sees a problem in this, since Heidegger simply ends up repeating metaphysics on another level, by moving from the ontico-ontological difference to the unity or gathering of being and thought, to arrive at the “truth.”

Derrida’s neologism, *différance* picks up on Heidegger’s thinking at the point before being and thought unite and gather towards truth. By making unity and gathering tremble, Derrida irrupts the metaphysics tied up in that very relationship between being and thought, disturbing the hubris of truth, thinking afresh, and opening a space for the incoming of other thoughts. By the orthodox account, the language of educational research (methodology, methods, empirical data) is assumed to correspond with clear and stable meaning (self-presence) and is not open to questioning. Reading the orthodox account deconstructively, however, challenges this view by revealing *différance* through the metaphoricity or play of traces operating through language (Derrida 1974), opening a space for the unfolding of different meanings which are not pinned down by the metaphysics of presence. Enframing of technology confers on educational research methodology a metaphysics couched in the standardized procedures, technical language, and systematic programs of the educational research handbook or manual, promising an economy of returns but, at the same time, blocking the emergence of something inventive, unexpected, and uncalculated—the “pure gift” that is not part of a system of exchange—as an infinite and unconditional ethical responsibility (Derrida 1992; Caputo 1988). Enframing of technology thus conceals as much as it reveals. Emmanuel Levinas offers two directions of thought which cast further light on concealment, bringing forth beyond the given, “truth” and ethics in the context of orthodox educational research methodology.

Language and Ethics

In the first direction of thought, enframing of technology in educational research methodology involves what Levinas describes as “autonomy” (1987, p. 48). In this mode, the educational researcher draws meaning from within the totality of what educational research is, what it is known to be, what is self-present as consciousness, and what is the same. The problem is that what is limited by enframing of technology and therefore constrains thinking otherwise and encourages closure. In the second direction of thought, called “heteronomy,” the researcher moves beyond the totality of what educational research is, what is known, towards the unfamiliar, the strange, and the other. The movement towards the other is “the fundamental movement, a pure transport, an absolute orientation, sense” (1996, p. 52). Levinas does not understand sense as a meaning or signification which serves as a response to a personal need or desire but as a unique orientation towards or understanding or recognition of the needs of the Other (Autrui). This relationship with the Other is a primordial experience which occurs before Being, before metaphysics, and before consciousness. It involves the subject, empty of any thought, facing the Other. It manifests in the encounter with the human face. The face is abstract, naked, and “without cultural ornament.” It bears no prior disposition because it exists outside the order of the world, outside what already is known to exist. The encounter with the face is the summons to “think beyond what one thinks,” of “thinking more than what is thought” (Levinas 1996, p. 55), an opening towards Infinity, where the ego is overpowered, consciousness of totality ceases, and ethics begins. The encounter with the Other involves an ethical movement which renders the subject as responsible for seeing and being beyond the given. Sense is revealed in the emergence of the other, in the ethical responsibility of the I, the responsibility of the I to answer the summons of the other, in the form of morality:

The calling into question of oneself is in fact the welcome of the absolutely other. The epiphany of the absolutely other is a face in which the Other (Autrui) calls on me and signifies an order to me through his (sic) nudity, his denuding. His presence is a summons to answer. The I does not only become aware of this necessity to answer, as though it were a particular obligation or duty about which it would have to come to a decision; it is in its very position wholly a responsibility or a diachony . . . (Levinas 1996, p. 54)

It is through the encounter with the Other that the researcher questions herself, finds an humility, and gives. This opens the possibility of becoming an ethical being, open to alternatives and unfettered by the presuppositions of orthodox research. The ethical is thus not confined to considerations of respondent confidentiality, sponsorship, or researcher ontology and epistemology. Ethical problems cannot be anticipated and prevented prior to the start of the research through the process of vetting and clearance by an ethical review panel. The ethical is not only recognized as permeating every element of the educational research project; the ethical extends to abandoning reflection and “going beyond the given.” In order to escape the foreclosure permeating educational research methodologies, reflection on the given is to be avoided because it brings consciousness back to the self, to the

same, to preexisting subjectivities (Levinas 1996, pp. 56–57). It is in the idea of “consciousness without return,” without return to the same, that Derrida and Levinas are interested, and this involves a very different language to that used in the description of the curriculum research project which follows.

The Curriculum Project

The project was initially conceived in 2008 as a way of experimenting with some ideas I had developed through my deconstructive reading of geography curriculum policy at the secondary school level in England (Winter 2009). In an article, entitled *Places, spaces, holes for knowing and writing the earth: the Geography curriculum and Derrida’s Khora*, I attempted to read the 2007 Geography National Curriculum policy differently, to open it up to new ways of thinking about the configuration of subject knowledge. Having presented my thoughts on paper, I was curious to find out how they played out in the school classroom. I constructed the project design, was successful in obtaining funding from the university where I worked, and enlisted a secondary school and two geography teachers (Sally and John) who taught in the school, as participants. The school-based project began in December 2008 and was completed in April 2009. It consisted of the development and teaching of a geography curriculum unit focusing on the topic of coasts for one class of Year 8 students (aged 12–13 years) Key Stage 3 (KS3).¹ The framework of the curriculum unit was made up of a scheme of work and individual lesson plans focusing on a nearby stretch of coast with which most students in the school were familiar through family holidays, a study of its physical characteristics, a study of one specific coastal town, and a field visit to parts of the coast. In one part of the curriculum project, the class of students was divided into groups of four to research a particular aspect of the town of Whitby—a seaside town on the northeast coast of England and a popular holiday destination for many students. Each group researched one of the following topics: Captain James Cook (the “explorer” who learned his seafaring skills as an apprentice in Whitby), Whitby Jet (a semiprecious stone found locally and used for mourning jewelry in Victorian England), Whitby Abbey (the history of which goes back to AD 657), and the novel “*Dracula*” by Bram Stoker (partly written and based in the town). The project aimed to refresh the geography curriculum and introduce challenges to student learning by encouraging thinking about a familiar coastal location in ways that were unexpected, inventive, and unknown. The deconstructive approach involved thinking beyond the established boundaries of the subject and its interpretation through school curriculum policy as a means of writing the earth (“geography”) differently. We looked beyond the physical–human geography binary; broke the disciplinary divide between geography, history, literature, geology, and cultural studies; and opened up students’ imagination through activities involving

¹ Key Stage 3 refers to the National Curriculum in England program of study for children aged 11–14 years.

students' family members, unsolved mystery, playfulness with language, and calling on the emotions (Winter 2009, 2013).

I restrict deliberation in this chapter to the enframing of technology with respect to areas relevant both to the purpose of the chapter and to the three-fold perspective on the relationship between being and human thought described above. These areas are pressures of performativity in the school/education research community, researcher positionality, and orthodox education research methodology. Other influences, as well as curiosity, drove my concern to shift the focus of my research interest from an understanding of the ethics and politics of language and meaning in school curriculum policy texts and geography subject knowledge to the school environment. I realized, only gradually, that deconstructive reading of geography policy texts was successful up to a point of providing critique and possibilities of alternative approaches, but these remained paperbound, not yet thought about in the context of a school classroom. The accusation of critique with a only few stabbing suggestions for new policy and/or practice possibilities was well deserved, giving rise to my questioning my ethical responsibility to open up possibilities for teachers and students in classrooms. There were, as well, enframing forces at work. My developing understanding of the field, text-based enquiries, and publications provided a place within the educational research economy, because my publications ticked the relevant boxes of contemporary currency, at the same time as providing a track record of relevant "theoretical" publications to underpin any future external funding application. And yet another three boxes in my research profile remained tick-less: "collaboration with user groups" (i.e., school practitioners and students), "user impact," and a practice-based "pilot study" on which a future external funding proposal might be based. Developing, with teachers in a school, and teaching a curriculum unit would, I surmised, allow the remaining preparatory criteria for accreditation as a fund-seeking researcher to be achieved. I recognize the instrumentalism driving my own ambitions and undertakings up to this point, easing my conscience by the prospect that shaking out the metaphysics of traditional approaches to curriculum policy and practice in a school would do some "good" by opening up thinking to new and exciting possibilities. Although acutely aware of the power of the performativity agenda in respect to my own ethics as researcher working in an HEI, I remained unaware, initially, of the economy of performativity associated with the research school's agreement to participate in the study. This only came to light after the end of the school-based phase of the study.

Although, looking back on the period of school-based research, I recall only a few occasions when the project teachers mentioned reasons why the school was keen to participate in the project, further reflection, an Ofsted² report and GCSE³ examination results published just prior to the project, revealed the goals the school wanted to achieve through participation and, moreover, explained why the project was steered in certain directions. The Ofsted report stated the need to raise students' attainment levels across all subjects at KS3 by developing the curriculum

² Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, i.e., the School Inspection Service in England.

³ GCSE stands for the General Certificate in Secondary Education, a 2-year program of study usually taken by students aged 14–16 years.

to meet students' needs, to introduce more challenging lesson activities, and to improve their learning skills. Following a meeting in school at the time of the project, one of the project teachers reported that the headteacher described the school as "coasting," meaning "underperforming," "under-attaining," and not applying adequate effort to improve GCSE results, which were below the regional average. In the specific case of geography, recruitment to the GCSE course was declining each year and deregulation of national curriculum requirements meant that several schools had chosen to move from discrete subjects (of geography, history, and religious education) at KS3 to an integrated curriculum focusing on a competency-based rather than subject-based humanities curriculum. The project teachers identified themselves as geography subject specialists, firmly rejecting the idea of replacing the subject-based KS3 curriculum with one focusing on generic learning skills. Their participation in the project was driven, then, by four key performance goals: to improve the next Ofsted assessment by addressing the points raised by inspectors; to increase GCSE attainment levels by introducing into the KS3 curriculum topics which would be revisited in KS4; to stimulate recruitment to geography GCSE by offering an attractive and innovative new curriculum which included a field trip in Year 8; and, finally, to resist the threat of the introduction of an integrated KS3 curriculum by strengthening the popularity and increasing standards of attainment in the subject. The technology of performativity exerted a strong pressure on the whole school and on the project teachers, leading to, as Stone described earlier, the box that it was difficult to think outside of.

I planned and executed the project according to orthodox educational research textbook rules—developing the research questions, reviewing the literature, establishing the theoretical framework, making methodological decisions based on my positionality as researcher, analyzing and interpreting the data, and discussing the findings. My ethical review application highlighted, among others, the need to protect the respondents' and school's identities, guard them from harm, and carry out member checks and store the data securely. I tape-recorded planning meetings and individual interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students and collected curriculum material, students' work, and observations from lessons. I also kept a research diary. All the meeting and interview data was transcribed and filed, digitally and in paper copy. When, after an intervening period of 2 years, I returned to the data to analyze it, I described my relationship to it in the following way:

I realised the danger that treating the "data as given" reduces it to an inert raw material awaiting the application of procedure; that the tight framing of the project with certain instrumental goals and time frame in mind shapes the end result; that an assertive, logical analytical procedure applied to "the data" serves as a one-way track to fast and efficient completion that can easily overlook the messiness and the ethical importance of the whole experience. (Winter 2013, p. 92)

I realize now that my approach to the study was preoccupied by an enframing of the educational research process as if it were in the grip of technology, in other words, as necessarily "comprehensive, rigorous and systematic" (Winter 2013, p. 192). This enframing operated to obscure other ways of thinking, not only about the research process but about the substantive context, life, politics, and

ethics of the project, the school, and education itself. I'll develop the analysis further by discussing two key notions which surfaced during the conduct of the project: first, researcher positionality and, second, data analysis and interpretation.

Researcher Positionality

I have already “fessed up” my vested interests in relation to the curriculum project. Such an explicit statement about my stance as researcher is, according to the positionality debate important, because of the claim that “rigorous” research acknowledges the researcher’s stance in order to fend off accusations of bias. All research is constructed by humans who bring their “baggage” or understandings to the act of research, and an acknowledgement of this helps to move the research through an explicit account of how her stance influences herself as a researcher, towards robustness. In line with the positionality movement, I reflected critically on how my personal background, professional loyalties, politics, and values shaped my decision to design and carry out the curriculum study in a particular way. As a former geography teacher and teacher educator who has maintained a keen interest in curriculum policy change over the last 25 years in England, I argue for what I called an “inventive geography curriculum” in all schools, for increasing teacher responsibility for geography curriculum making, and for reducing prescribed content and political control.

I began the research project by unwittingly adopting the latter of two “positions” which emerge under the heading of “researcher positionality” in some accounts of educational research. These two “positions” serve to crystallize into a binary the way in which people understand educational research. At one pole of the binary, there are “facts” based on truth and objectivity. The underpinning argument goes like this: there exists a reality outside the self that is external, objective, and independent of humans, as a “given.” This argument gives rise to the idea of a researcher who can investigate the world accurately and neutrally in pursuit of the truth. It relates to the idea of a God’s-eye view of the world. I rejected this position in my study. At the opposite pole, human values arising from the researcher’s ontology and epistemology influence research. These values find expression through the researcher’s methodological stance. The second argument goes like this: reality is socially constructed, subjective, arising out of human thoughts, values, actions, and power relations. It gives rise to the idea that each researcher constructs his/her own knowledge and this is the source of truth. The assumption here is that everyone has the right to her/his own opinion and that authority is distributed on an individual basis across the population. This latter position is the one I adopted in the design of my research project, but it raised certain questions: Is an Heideggerian technology at work here to naturalize these two positions in polarized terms and, in so doing, to conceal other ways of thinking? Is there a danger that such positions become hardened and that they stand in the way of thinking clearly about other rather complex things going on in the project?

Both positions make very broad claims, and they do this in abstract terms. It’s worth considering whether these claims become inflated because of this—that is, whether they part company with the way that the terms “objective” and “subjective”

are more commonly used. Thus, perhaps it is better not to ask about objectivity in this general way but rather about the way we use “objective” (“truthful,” “factual,” “scientific”) within the contexts of particular areas of our lives. It is true that the curriculum project involved two teachers and a class of 13–14-year-old students. It is true that Whitby is a coastal resort on the northeast coast of England. Nonetheless, some things do seem to be subjective, in the sense that they are matters of personal taste. For example, in the case of preference for tea or coffee, this does seem to be a purely personal matter. But in the case of ethical matters such as the rightness of plans to mine for potash in the North York Moors National Park, the views people hold are something more than preferences, they relate to facts and values, and people can be expected to support these views with reasons. Where we are into reason-giving, we can look for what is right—even if we accept that we shall not be able in many cases to come to definitive answers or ways of proving what is right. The point is that our reason-giving is orientated towards objectivity—not that there is a right or wrong to the matter.

It may be a mistake, therefore, to think of a sharp dichotomy between objective facts and subjective values. When we look at what seem to be purely factual matters carefully, we find that they in turn presuppose certain values—if only in the sense that these statements are selected from the infinite number of things that we might have said about the world. For example, it’s a fact that the research school received a disappointing Ofsted grade, but this doesn’t mean anything without the institution of Ofsted, and Ofsted inspections of schools (like all human practices) have values built into them from the start. You can’t get away from values (or Ofsted).

Regarding the picture of social constructivism and subjectivity, are these two concepts entirely compatible as bedfellows? Do things (personal preferences, self-identity, individual value system) start in the individual, or are they already socially constructed—that is, by something beyond the individual (the public world of the community)? If the individual is the source of truth, this sounds as though it is not possible to criticize the individual or to show that she is wrong. This is counter intuitive, and it is difficult to see how we could live with this in practice as any criticism would be taken as a personal insult. Of course, it is the case that research and other learning are advanced by people and that people are individuals. So perhaps the problem is thinking of this knowledge as something “in people’s heads” rather than being something “out there.” People need brains (in their heads) to think, but it is a mistake to think of thoughts as already in existence in people’s heads, as if they were words written on sheets of paper, filed in folders in the cabinet drawers of our brains. Our thoughts characteristically take the form of words, and words are first and foremost things that are spoken or written (i.e., they are public). It’s through hearing them spoken or seeing them written that we come to have them as thoughts; in other words, their meaning comes into being.

The objectivist/subjectivist binary is an example of Levinasian autonomy referred to earlier, where meaning is drawn from an existing order or totality of consciousness of what is. The epiphany of the face is a visit by the other, and the other makes preexisting consciousness unavailable as ethics steps in. The encounter with the other in the curriculum project serves to arrest the slide of the researcher

into an extreme position of subjectivism, narcissism, and egocentricity, which can be seen as a form of piety leading to a confessional, religious duty or the “methodolatry” to which Stone alludes. In this approach, there is a danger of adopting an overconfident understanding of self that panders to self-indulgence (Hodgson and Standish 2006, 2013), sensationalizing the researcher’s personal story, and losing sight of the move towards truth. Instead it is important to see the ways that “researcher positionality” may have become inflated by enframing of technology and to return it to more realistic contexts of use. While it is crucially important for the researcher to be sensitive about the way she looks at things and makes decisions about the research, recourse to introspection and inflation can be avoided by attention to the variety of practices in the research situation, recognizing their complexity at different levels of significance. The context of the research is very important and has to be engaged with in depth. But it is also crucial to think about the research using ordinary judgments, to try not to dissect and identify the various contributory facets of the researcher and use these to explain why and how she/he relates to the research. This is because to do so is an infinite project and can never be completed because the researcher is so multiply faceted, experience is so immediately present, and language is so unstable. What is required in research is careful attention to the detailed description of educational practices and the clarity of expression (perspicuity) that lead us to step beyond the frameworks (like the objectivity/social constructivism binary and the idea of positionality) that shape our ways of thinking. The second point of interest to surface during the project concerned the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Analyzing the Analysis

I collected, systematically and rigorously, a large amount of data during the course of the project. This data consisted of textual transcriptions of planning meetings and 1–1 interviews with teachers and of focus group interviews with students and of curriculum resources, students’ work, lesson observation notes, and my research diary entries. In the following analysis of the analysis, I examine one small section in each of the four student focus group interviews because these offer a number of interesting opportunities to think about whether the procedures of the research process, in other words, the technology of enframing, took over the interviews in ways that concealed and constrained other ways of thinking and how the interview language arose and how it was interpreted. In the first two lessons at the start of the project, the students were encouraged to explore people’s perceptions of the stretch of coast under study—the northeast coast of England from Whitby to Spurn Head—as a way of increasing familiarity. They constructed a short questionnaire survey to collect data about their family’s and friends’ knowledge about this stretch of coast. The rationale and activities for the two lessons can be found in the [Appendix](#). The four focus group interviews, each with 3–4 students, were conducted towards the end of the project in an otherwise empty classroom in the school at a time when the remaining class members

participated in a geography lesson in a classroom nearby. The “interviewees” sat around a table with the tape recorder in the center, and were asked fairly open-ended (“semi-structured”) questions, intended to give opportunities for unexpected responses to arise. In the section of the interview focusing on the questionnaire survey, the four main questions I posed in turn to each of the student focus groups consisted of: (1) What did you think of the activity of making a questionnaire? (2) What happened in your group? (3) What happened when you took the questionnaire home? And (4) what was the point of the questionnaire? The approach to analysis I adopted was a basic thematic analysis, as described in Vulliamy and Webb (1992) which involves the identification of recurring themes, omissions, and anomalies in the interview transcript via a ten-step procedure (pp. 216–217).

It is at the point of the application of a supposedly robust technique to engage with the transcript in the form of “data as given” (Standish 2001, p. 506) that the problems start, since the system itself takes over from a more nuanced understanding of the words and from consciousness of what words do and how they do what they do in relation to meaning in a text. In applying a robust technique, the words in the transcript assume the form of chemical substances in a laboratory that can be mechanically identified, classified, and reduced to a manageable state for storage and later use. The instability, scope, and metaphoricity of language are lost as the researcher corrals the data under themes which address the research questions and provide “valid” findings to meet the study’s aims and objectives. This approach illustrates Heidegger’s enframing and hints of the self-presence of which Derrida writes and the autonomy of Levinas. I’m not suggesting that this thematic analytical approach should be condemned out of hand. In the transcript under examination here, systematic thematic analysis revealed some interesting commonly held views from students about their engagement with the questionnaire activity, categorized under the recurring theme of “the other.” It appears that, taking the transcript at face value, all the students enjoyed working on the questionnaire for the following main reasons: you get to know other people’s thoughts and likes about the place (10); the activity was different from regular geography homework (6); you learn about other people, not just for yourself (4); and it brought back memories for other people (3). Students reported that it was a good way to learn because it made you think, it was fun, and it got everyone involved—the class and family members.

The Other

Would Derrida and Levinas be pleased to see the attention paid to the other and to difference in these “results”? On the one hand, at the general level, the project did welcome the other (*avenir d’autre*), in respect to thinking beyond the traditional conceptualization of geography by engaging with other disciplines, like history, literature, linguistics, and postcolonialism. The project also broke away from the orthodoxy of the physical/human geography binary, introduced group-based research projects, involved family members and computers, and gave more

responsibility to students than was usually the case in geography lessons. Yet, the project could have pushed further against the enframing by technology in other ways, for example, by attending to the other members of the class who were not included in the focus groups interviews, those whose voices were not heard, and those who were not comfortable with the curriculum but didn't have the opportunity or the inclination to speak. Other considerations might concern the others of the places we studied, for example, Whitby. Who are the poor, the homeless, the disadvantaged in this seaside resort which holds fond memories for the families of students?

On the other hand, Derrida and Levinas require us to move one stage back from thinking about the other in terms of the conceptual frameworks of subjects, the excluded and marginalized. Derrida offers hope of thinking more radically from another space:

...we cannot really say that we are 'locked into' or 'condemned to' metaphysics, for we are, strictly speaking, neither inside nor outside. In brief, the whole rapport between the inside and outside of metaphysics is inseparable from the question of finitude and reserve of metaphysics as language. But the idea of the finitude and exhaustion of metaphysics does not mean that we are incarcerated in it as prisoners or victims of some unhappy fatality. It is simply that our belonging to, and inheritance in, the language of metaphysics is something that can only be rigorously and adequately thought about from another topos or space where our problematic rapport with the boundary of metaphysics can be seen in a more radical light. (Derrida 1984, pp. 111–112)

For Levinas, the other space is a stage back from being, a stage back from that metaphysical finitude by which language has us in its grip. In that primordial space beyond being, before ontology, before culture, and before language, there is nothing other than the gaze of one human being looking at the face of another human being. This is the infinite responsibility to the other; in other words, this is ethics (1996, p. 58).

What does Levinas' thinking about Infinity mean for school performativity, school curriculum, and curriculum research? It is not possible to predict in advance the other of these educational configurations that are so deeply ingrained in our psyches. All we can do is imagine the possibilities. These may be the imaginings of an educational world which is not enframed in a performative culture dominated by targets, goals, and outputs in the race for the top of the school league table or in the race for the career development of educational researchers. Instead, attention is diverted to careful observation of what happens in classrooms, schools, and, more widely, education with an appreciation that what happens is delicate, complex, unstable, political, and ethical. This is not a world in which curriculum researchers are so preoccupied with their ontology and epistemology that they lose sight of injustices taking place through curriculum policy and practices. Instead, everyone becomes a curriculum researcher and is absorbed by curriculum problems, what they are, where they arise, and why. This is not a world in which university curriculum researchers breeze into a school classroom twice a week for 5 months and then breeze out to write up and publish their findings. Instead, students and teachers become curriculum researchers, and curriculum imaginaries arise from the interests and commitments

of the school members and its local, national, and international communities. This is not a world in which the researcher conducts “data collection,” through predetermined questions and student responses recorded and later transcribed and analyzed, as a separate activity from the everyday life of the classroom. Instead, the school community is constantly engaged in curriculum conversations as embedded contingently in the curriculum experience. This opening of thought beyond domestication moves us towards the unexpected, the uncalculated, where multiple voices are heard, problems are sought not addressed, difficult issues arise with no immediate solutions, and a different language is summoned, a language that is open to the future, to something unthinkable. We need to pay patient attention to passing thoughts that can’t be forced or hurried. We need to slow down, to wait for fresh thoughts to emerge. We have no clear ideas of what ideas might arise. In this space, we encounter the face of the other which allows us to see ourselves as we are, preoccupied by career progression, confessionals, self, and finding “what works” as a result of a logical and rigorous research design, neat and manageable research questions—in other words, hubris. Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas disturb our complacency about what is, who we are, what we do, our curricula, and our educational research methods, reminding us of our responsibility to the other, encouraging our humility.

Appendix

Lessons 1 and 2 Knowing the Coast: making the questionnaire, analyzing, and presenting the results

Rationale

In these first lessons on coasts, the aim is to build upon students’ existing knowledge by exploring perceptions of the stretch of coast that is nearest to the school and is probably the most familiar coast to the Year 8 classes—the NE coast of England (from Whitby to Spurn Point). We want to move from the traditional way of teaching and learning about the coast to encourage the students to develop their own research skills through a small enquiry into interpretations of real coastal places and spaces. The first lesson involves students making their own group questionnaire which they will use to gather information about what their families, neighbors, and friends think about and feel about places along this stretch of coast. The activity will raise students’ (and their respondents’) awareness that people have different knowledge and experience of places and that these are important for geographers to find out about and to understand.

Students will work in groups to develop geographical questions to help them to collect information about people’s interpretations of coastal places. This will involve creative thinking in order to construct the question and predictive thinking in order to anticipate how to collate, analyze, and present the results.

In the second lesson, students will analyze the results of their questionnaires and decide how to best present them in a way that the findings can be disseminated to as wide a range of audience as possible, including their respondents. Students will reflect on the survey and on whether carrying out has changed their views of what geography is about.

Key question: What are people's knowledge and experience of the NE coast of England?

Activities

1. Recap

- What is a coast?
- What sorts of coasts do the students' know?
- Which is the nearest coast to school?
- What do students know and feel about this coast?

Resources: map of NE coast Whitby to Spurn Point with coastal places marked.

Students jot down some facts and feelings about particular places along the coast.

2. Making the questionnaire

The aim of the lesson is for students working in groups to make a questionnaire to use with family, neighbors, and friends to find out what different people know about and how they feel about the stretch of coast from Whitby to Spurn Point.

Resources: guidelines for making the questionnaire.

Groups of students draft a questionnaire and pilot it on other groups.

Students collect data from family and friends and bring completed questionnaires to next lesson for analysis.

3. Analyzing and presenting the questionnaire results

The aim of the lesson is for students to collate the questionnaire results, analyze them, and decide on the best way to present the data, e.g., a wall poster, a paper copy, and/or electronic version.

4. Conclusion

What do the results show?

What is interesting and/or surprising about the results?

Did any issues about places along the coast that emerged in the findings?

What further research would the students carry out if they had the opportunity?

What have the students learned by carrying out the survey?

Has it influenced their ideas about what geography is about?

Students may be interested to post their favorite place (with a photograph) to the Geographical Association My Places webpage:

<http://worldwise.geography.org.uk/myplaces/instructions.asp>

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6.4 The Open Space of Liberal Democracy: Interpreting the National Tests of Citizenship Competencies in Colombia

Andrés Mejía

A Research Project About Evaluation in Education

This paper reports on a project in which I attempted to produce a critical interpretation of the national tests of citizenship competencies that are currently administered in Colombia. Both citizenship education and its assessment are topics of great interest in education today, as can be seen in the UNESCO declaration of the four pillars of education in the twenty-first century, one of them being learning how to live together (UNESCO 1996). Additionally, various governments have instituted some form of citizenship education—under different names and guises—as a mandatory component of the curriculum in schools and even universities. In Colombia, for instance, the Constitution that was proclaimed in 1991 and the General Law of Education that followed in 1994 made it one of the responsibilities of every institution of formal education in the country, private or public, to teach its students the Constitution and educate them as citizens in the Colombian democracy. But of course, this interest in some form of education of the individual *as a citizen* is not new, as its roots can be found in a systematic way in the Enlightenment (Heater 2001), but perhaps even as far back as classical Athens. In Colombia, the constitutional mandate for citizenship education has been implemented in different ways throughout the years, a fact that in itself reflects different interpretations of what the educated Colombian citizen should look like according to the Constitution. Public policy is the result, or perhaps the enactment, of particular interpretations made in particular places and moments in time.

Besides its inclusion in the curricula of schools and universities, citizenship has also made itself present in educational assessment. At an international level, tests

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have been constructed and administered at least since 1971 (Torney-Purta and Amadeo 2013). In Colombia, the Colombian Institute for the Assessment of Education (ICFES) has been testing citizenship competencies in school children in grades 5 and 9 since 2003 and since 2012 in university students who are about to graduate. And of course these tests, as an element of public policy, carry in themselves an interpretation of the idea of citizenship in the Colombian democracy.

These interpretations of the educated citizen are, however, not completely transparent. That is, despite the declarations that can be found in the official documents by the Ministry of Education (2004; 2011) and ICFES (2013), the elements of public policy in themselves—if read attentively enough—can tell a story of citizenship and citizenship education that may refine, add to, or even contradict the official story. It is with this purpose that I wanted, in this research project, to produce a critical interpretation of one of these elements of public policy in Colombia: the national tests of citizenship competencies. My interpretation is an appraisal of the ways in which these tests have interpreted the idea of an educated citizen in Colombia. My ultimate purpose was to help us—concerned citizens, educators, policy makers, and researchers from Colombia and elsewhere who are interested in citizenship and citizenship education—understand the ways in which these tests in particular, but more generally elements of public policy, can produce meaning by embracing certain conceptions and ideologies but also by rejecting or ignoring others.

This research project, then, produced an interpretation of an interpretation. In this sense, it could be seen as operating on a second level, as a kind of meta-interpretation that needs to escape the messiness of everyday educational practice and take critical distance from its object of study in order to see it from above and grasp its sense and meaning by means of establishing its connections and relations with other concepts, institutions, and perspectives. In fact, however, the project was almost quite the opposite. I have been involved in this construction process, together with a number of other academics that come from various disciplines such as education, law, political science, psychology, and sociology. Of course, this involvement may raise suspicions about my possibility to be critical and not simply try to defend my own work at all costs. This is a reasonable concern, but it should not be used to reject my project and its results *a priori*. With this caveat, the reader should be able to tell by herself, at least to some extent. But there are other things worth saying concerning this issue. Firstly, it is not my intention to carry out a case study that truthfully and systematically depicts the process of construction of the tests as well as the theoretical framework that accompanies it. My main purpose is to use this as an example that will allow me to illustrate the more general conclusions that I want to advance in this paper. Secondly, I rather see this analysis as humbly suggesting the limits of the political model that underlies the Colombian Constitution—as well as many others—and of citizenship education and its assessment. Thirdly, this particular and ongoing process of constructing the tests in Colombia is inevitably vulnerable to the fact that, as documented by Levinson (2004) and by Levinson and Berumen (2007) for the particular case of citizenship education, governmental decisions are hardly the product of a single unified ideology. In this case, the team that has been participating in the construction of the tests rarely achieved pure moments of consensus, and in practice many decisions ended up being the result of accommodation.

This last paragraph is by way of acknowledging that my approach to the question under discussion is informed by my own practical experience; it comes out of my educational biography. It also reflects my inclination as a philosopher of *education* to ground my philosophical work, or at least some of it, in contemporary educational practice. But I also want to stress the fact that while one may be uncritical about one's own work, that is not an inevitable fact of life. That is simply a welcome reminder. One's credibility should not be dismissed a priori as if it were a legal trial.

What Is to Be Interpreted? The Educated Citizen of the Colombian Constitution

From the start we are faced with one central decision as to what kind of citizenship education is supposed to promote and evaluate. An answer to this question will shape the way we can address any subsequent ones. The basic political ideological orientation one might refer to in a country, in order to seek orientation as to what kind of citizen to aim at, is usually expressed in its Constitution where there is one. Therefore, policy making concerning citizenship education is, at least in part, about interpreting the Constitution. In Colombia, there is some consensus regarding the fact that its Constitution is an example of the attempt to merge strong liberal ideals of respect for the individual and her freedom, as well as encouragement of pluralism and difference, with democratic values of participation and citizen empowerment (Arango 2004; Cárdenas et al. 2006; Eslava 2009). But then, what does it mean to educate for citizenship in a liberal democracy? A first approach towards an answer would be to straightforwardly refer to the central values of liberalism—for instance, with knowledge of fundamental and other human rights and of the mechanisms for protecting them—and of democracy, for instance, with knowledge of mechanisms of participation and skills necessary to achieve an understanding of issues of public concern in society at various levels ranging from the local to the planetary. According to the taxonomy proposed by Abowitz and Harnish (2006) for conceptions of citizenship in educational programs, this one would be of the liberal kind.

All the activities that constitute education, of course, would have to reflect the same values driving education as a whole. Assessment, as one such activity, would have as its purpose the evaluation of the knowledge, skills, and understandings mentioned in the previous paragraph. This means that all the various instances of assessment that take place in education—ranging from classroom assessment by teachers to standardized testing at a national level—share a fundamental common set of educational objectives that they should aim to evaluate.

Nevertheless, such an interpretation would meet important obstacles. As has been pointed out by many authors, liberalism and democracy do not naturally complement each other in a perfect way, and some contradictions, paradoxes, or tensions—with different authors choosing different words—exist between them

that establish important dilemmas for the political conduct of citizens and the state (Schmitt 1985; Mouffe 1993, 1997; Bellamy and Baehr 1993; Sartori 1994; Greaves 2008; Gaber 2009). Interestingly, while some of them predicted that this constitutive contradiction would ultimately produce the self-destruction of liberal democracy (e.g., Schmitt), others have suggested that this intrinsic tension determines its dynamic nature in which the political is constituted as a site of continuous struggle (e.g., Mouffe, and Bellamy and Baehr). There are various versions of this contradiction; but it can be said, *grosso modo*, that many of its characteristic problems stem from the facts that liberalism stresses individuality and difference, while democracy emphasizes collectivity and equality and that the protection of individual rights can sometimes be hindered by the collective decisions and self-determined modes of life of people in a community, and vice versa.

This conceptual characterization of a central tension between liberalism and democracy poses an interpretive problem for any element of public policy about citizenship education that attempts to take the Constitution as its political ideological guide: how can it reconcile the divergent tendencies between liberalism and democracy? This question is the one that I chose as the starting point for my own critical interpretive project. This choice is a departure from what could have been the perhaps easier path of using some taxonomy of approaches to citizenship education—such as those by Abowitz and Harnish (2006) and Pykett et al. (2010)—and classifying the national tests of citizenship competencies in one of them. In this case, establishing the tests as belonging to the liberal category seemed warranted; nevertheless, in such a path my analysis might have fallen short of producing more detailed and illuminating ideas that could go beyond those used for defining the categories in the taxonomy. Additionally, the depiction of the tension between liberalism and democracy as an open space that created political possibilities—as some of the aforementioned authors envisioned it—seemed to fit well at the same time as allow for a new understanding of my own experience of involvement in the production of the tests. And, as the space that it opens up needs to be filled, decisions have to be taken which unavoidably lead to the adoption of political and existential values that, at one point or another, depart either from the basic tenets of liberalism, or of democracy, or of both.

Chantal Mouffe's work was perhaps the most extensive one concerning the tension between liberalism and democracy and the political space that it opens. Therefore it seemed like a good springboard for critically interpreting the national tests of citizenship competencies. Nevertheless, I decided to also draw on a number of different authors who have written extensively on democracy, so as to have a more balanced as well as richer understanding of what is involved.

Liberal Democracy and the Colombian Constitution

The citizenship competencies tests in Colombia follow the Constitutional command that education should promote the development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for being a good citizen in the Colombian democracy and should

reflect the political commitments expressed in the Constitution. As mentioned above, the Colombian Constitution is regarded as embodying basic central principles of liberalism and democracy. In what follows, I will first describe these principles, to then shortly explain the inherent contradiction or tension between liberalism and democracy.

Liberalism

Despite the many versions and nuances of the use of the term *liberal*, some common referents seem to exist that point at notions such as those of the individual, difference, plurality, freedom, dignity, and rights. The fundamental liberal principle is seen to be that liberty is normatively basic and that any restrictions on it must be justified (Zakaria 2004). As Sartori shows (1994), the term started to be used in the nineteenth century, but liberal principles had been around for a very long time even if they were not referred to with that term. A starting point for justifying liberty seems to be the idea that each person is an individual who is different from others not only in terms of her biological characteristics but also and most importantly in her ideas of the good and worth and of how they can and should be realized. Individuals, then, must be free to pursue such different life ideals as a basic condition of their human dignity. A major political theme in liberalism will be, therefore, how this plurality of life ideals can be given the opportunity to coexist; and a central mechanism for this to happen is the granting of rights and freedoms, whose major contemporary expression is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pykett et al., in their discussion of the different discourses of citizenship education, have put it simply: “Liberals see good citizens as individuals, with rights and freedoms, who respect the rights and freedoms of others as they pursue their interests” (2010, p. 524). The fact that there are rights and freedoms effectively imposes restrictions on the conduct of both state and citizens. But it also attributes the state the responsibility to actively protect them.

The Colombian Constitution has enthusiastically embraced human rights and has declared the submission of the State to the Law (Arango 2004; Eslava 2009). The very first sentence of its first article reads: “Colombia es un Estado social de derecho” (a “social rule of law state,” or a state based on the rule of law, with a social duty). Arango remarks that the word *social* puts an emphasis on at least two principles: (1) beyond simply abiding by the law, the state has a duty to actively promote the constitutional values; and (2) the state must guarantee all human rights in a holistic way, without prioritizing or even distinguishing between first-, second-, or third-generation rights. Of course, the fact that the Constitution declares that Colombia is an *Estado social de derecho* does not mean that in practice everyone will have all their rights protected (Rodríguez et al. 2003). But it establishes a basic principle that can and that indeed in some occasions does, exert pressure on the state to attend this obligation, by means of the sentences of the Constitutional Court (Arango 2004).

Democracy

If there are differences in meaning concerning the word *liberalism*, polysemy seems to be a central mark of *democracy*. As some authors have pointed out (Sartori 1994; Cunningham 2002), this expression has been used in many different ways throughout history, in many cases in a contradictory way, and very frequently for reasons or a political nature. From ancient Greek times, democracy has been a political term, used to refer to a particular arrangement for taking decisions of public concern, that is, a sort of state (as in Plato and Aristotle). Democracy is a term coined in the fifth century BC from *demos* (people) and *kratos* (power) and seems to derive from here its most basic characteristic: that it is the people—or actually eligible citizens—who govern and represent the state, rather than single rulers or a reduced elite. This basic idea of rule by the people is connected with other conceptual referents for democracy such as participation, self-determination (of nations), and equality. Democracy implies, then, that citizens will participate—in more direct or indirect ways—in the activities of the state, which then translates that they, as a nation or society, will determine their own fate. According to Ariza (2007, p. 158, my translation),

Democracy as a social and political regime would be characterised by two essential ‘traits’: first, the possibility that societies and individuals question present laws and social institutions, and second, the possibility to transform such laws and institutions, and based on this to create new ones. Any democratic system that denies groups or individuals of any of these two possibilities is no more than a formal democracy: democracy as there mere exercise of electing a leader once in a while.

Furthermore, this citizen participation is necessarily based on a principle of equality: the idea that each citizen counts the same and has the same opportunity to influence the collective decisions taken on matters of public concern. As Watson puts it, Lincoln’s words that “no man is good enough to govern another man, without that other’s consent” embody the idea that “human equality, in fundamental political respects, is at the heart of democracy as understood in the modern world” (Watson 1999, p. 2). And as Carl Schmitt (1985) and Chantal Mouffe (1993, 1997) have pointed out, this idea also entails the definition of boundaries that separate equals from unequals: those that are effectively allowed to participate from those who are not, a distinction that occurs at various levels, the first of which is the national boundary. Democracy, then, inevitably creates sides, an *us* and a *them*, even if these sides are continually reconfigured and are, thus, dynamic, as a mark of the political.

Various authors coincide in pointing out that there is a deep commitment with democratic ideals in the Colombian Constitution (Arango 2004; Peralta 2009), especially as regards the promotion of participation. According to Peralta (2009, p. 169, my translation),

important changes were introduced in the organisation of the state: new mechanisms for the protection of the fundamental human rights and of collective rights; participation as a right that vindicates social and public interests; additionally, a new kind of participation was motivated that would make further intervention in the construction of public policy possible (in health, education, housing, or the environment). A dynamisation of an “active citizenship” is then proposed, by means of the redistribution and the resignification of roles and responsibilities of each group or actor, in defence of the public.

Now, the fact that the Constitution provides the mechanisms for active citizen participation in public affairs has not necessarily been reflected in an actual effective change in the dynamics of the public sphere in Colombia, possibly due to the weakness of its social movements and civil society (Arango 2004). Perhaps this is a matter of time. Nevertheless, still the Constitution provides a normative reference and therefore serves as a regulative ideal that has indeed guided efforts in public policies concerning citizenship education in Colombia (Ministerio de Educación Nacional 2011).

Liberal Democracy and the Relation Between Liberalism and Democracy

As various authors note (e.g., Cunningham 2002), liberalism and democracy are different species, and the links between them are not completely transparent. This is interesting, given the fact that most democracies nowadays are of the liberal kind, and as a consequence, the expression *democracy* is often used as referring to *liberal democracy* (Sartori 1994).

One of the first systematic explanations and defenses of liberal democracy was made by John Stuart Mill in two essays, titled *On Liberty* and *Considerations on Representative Government*. According to Cunningham (2002), some elements of the relation between liberalism and democracy were advanced by Mill, which continue to be seriously considered to this day. One of them constitutes a reason to think that liberalism strengthens democracy: by protecting freedoms such as those of thought and speech, citizens will be better informed and will have developed a more critical understanding to take decisions concerning the realm of the public, which is one basic tenet of democracy. It can also be contended that Dewey's (2008) idea that a mark of democracy is the greatest possible interaction among members of society is based on a similar argument (albeit in a different terminology). Moreover, I also take it that Enslin's (1999) defense of autonomy as a worthwhile educational purpose, not only in liberal societies but also in traditional ones, took this argument even further: it is only in a society that guarantees basic liberal freedoms and rights, such as those of thought and speech, that the idea of collective self-determination—a condition of democracy—can make sense at all.

Regarding the influence in the opposite direction, Mill also argued that democracy could strengthen liberalism because liberal norms would be better supported and respected if they were constructed democratically (Cunningham 2002). Even though this is a matter of an empirical nature, there is now some consensus on the idea that, at the classroom level, in general this is the case.

Another dimension in the relation between liberalism and democracy reflects how one can help solve the problems raised by the other. Agreeing with Tocqueville's concern that democracy bears the risk of becoming a tyranny of the majority, Mill also suggested that liberalism can serve to contain the possible

excesses of democracy when it turns against some of the members of society (Cunningham 2002). This view of liberalism as a form of containment for democracy, which is shared by Sartori (1994) and others, is complemented by the idea of the rule of law as a way to limit the possibly tyrannical action of the state and to protect the individual. Arango's analysis of the so-called Law of Justice and Peace, which was issued to rule the demobilization of armed paramilitary groups in Colombia, attempts to show how human rights can serve to protect the people from the possible excesses of democracy (Arango 2007).

Now, this relation of containment will give rise to paradoxes, contradictions, or tensions within liberal democracy. After the fall of the Berlin wall, Fukuyama wondered about the future of liberal democracies: "Assuming that liberal democracy is, for the moment, safe from external enemies, could we assume that successful democratic societies could remain that way indefinitely? Or is liberal democracy prey to serious internal contradictions, contradictions so serious that they will eventually undermine it as a political system?" (1992, p. xxi). Some authors in the past, such as Schmitt (1985; see also Mouffe 1997), have answered this latter question affirmatively without much doubt. But even among those who are not so fatalist, there seems to be some agreement on the fact that "certain concepts, ideals, and practices exist at the interstice between democracy and liberalism, deriving their roots from one or both yet in conflict with some element of either liberal or democratic foundational principles" (Greaves 2008, p. 59). For some authors, the contradiction can be traced back to the ideas that define liberalism as based on a principle of difference and democracy as based on a principle of equality (Schmitt 1985; Sartori 1994; Mouffe 1997; Habermas 2001). In Watson's words (1999, p. 3),

Democracy implies the consent of the governed, which consent rests, implicitly or explicitly, on the recognition of the effective political equality of the individuals who constitute the *demos*. Liberalism implies a respect for, nay, an exaltation of, the individual qua individual, which respect or exaltation is in tension with the idea of consent of the whole. This brings to light the inadequacy of a relatively common definition of liberal democracy; it is inadequate because it fails to take into account the true meaning of liberalism.

There are various versions, formulations, and instances of the contradictions (or paradoxes, or tensions) between liberalism and democracy. While some authors point at some particular issues in which democracy and liberalism seem to clash, such as humanitarian intervention (Greaves 2008), political communications (Gaber 2009), or the response to environmental problems (Byrne and Yun 1999), others have tried to theorize the basic contradiction in different terms: as an inevitable promotion of egoistic individualism that overrides the ideals of civil and human rights (Watson 1999) or as the tension between an universalistic discourse that is unable to produce politics and the configuration of the *demos* with its unavoidable inclusions and exclusions in terms of collectives (Mouffe 1993, 1997, 2005), among others.

In this paper, I am particularly interested in Mouffe's formulation because, as I will try to show, it explains, makes sense of, and is illustrated by the tensions that appear in my object of analysis here: the tests for citizenship competencies in

Colombia. Mouffe, drawing extensively on Schmitt, explains this in the following way (1997, p. 25):

By stressing that the identity of a democratic political community hinges on the possibility of drawing a frontier between “us” and “them”, Schmitt highlights the fact that democracy always entails relations of inclusion/exclusion. (...) One of the main problems with liberalism—and one that can endanger democracy—is precisely its incapacity to conceptualize such a frontier. As Schmitt indicates, the central concept of liberal discourse is “humanity”, which, as he rightly points out, is not a political concept and does not correspond to any political entity. The central question of the political constitution of “the people” is something that liberal theory is unable to tackle adequately because the necessity of drawing a “frontier” is in contradiction with its universalistic rhetoric. Against the liberal emphasis on “humanity”, it is important to stress that the key concepts in conceptualizing democracy are the “demos” and the “people.”

This way, liberalism on its own cannot be political because it can only appeal to a universalistic notion of human beings equally entitled with rights. It is paradoxical in itself that liberalism’s emphasis on difference and the individual ends up with a universal principle. But the problem for politics is that the issues about which struggles take place and decisions are made in a democracy are inevitably defined around categories that position different individuals in different ways and that create various sorts of relations between them. These relations configure social actors which constitute friends and enemies, adversaries and allies. Politics is more about groups and collectivities than about individuals. Nevertheless, the liberal universalistic discourse on rights and freedoms does have a political role to play in democracy: it can always serve as a correction on the exclusions inevitably generated by democracy. The result, for Mouffe, is that these adversarial relations are fluid, contingent, and ever-changing, as an essential mark of liberal democracy: “Liberal democratic politics consists in fact in the constant process of negotiation and renegotiation—through different hegemonic articulations—of this constitutive paradox” (1997, p. 26).

A conclusion that can be derived from Mouffe’s analysis is that the very conditions that in a liberal democracy define citizenship *in practice*—and not only formally as requirements for voting and for being eligible in government—will be neither stable nor conceptually solid (in the sense of being incontestably derived from the basic principles of liberal democracy). This way, the contradictions between liberalism and democracy open up a space of interpretation of inclusion and exclusion, around categories that define social actors.

At any given moment in time, in fact, the actual institutional and policy arrangements will reflect the momentary accommodation of the various political forces in democracy which, as part of their resources in conflict, make use of liberal principles in the “negotiation and renegotiation of the constitutive paradox.” This implication can be further developed in terms of the life ideals that individuals bring, *qua* citizens, into the conversational processes of democracy. The plurality of values and forms of life that liberalism attempts to safeguard as a result of the autonomy of the individual cannot be seen as purely matters of private concern; they inevitably express ideals about the social interactions between the different individuals that share a public space. In other words, ideals of private life carry with

them ideals of social and public life, and so the private and the public spheres cannot be neatly separated (Cunningham 2002). But then, citizenship in a particular liberal democratic community will not only be defined, in practice, by the theoretical ideals of liberalism and democracy but also by the political ideologies inscribed in the life ideals of the individuals that conform the social actors that participate in the political conflicts and processes of democracy.

This way, decisions about actual institutions and arrangements in a liberal democracy at a particular moment in time will not reflect some pretended pure political values of liberalism and democracy, as if there were no tensions and contradictions between them. Instead, different comprehensive political ideologies—different interpretations resulting from accommodation of political conflict—should be noticeably seen to be introduced in the various decisions that give substance to politics in a liberal democracy.

In the following sections, I will present the case of the national tests of citizenship competencies in Colombia. This case, as I see it, is related to the more theoretical discussion in this section in at least two ways. On the one hand, it illustrates—as it is a particular instance—the general principles developed by Mouffe and other authors. As such, it serves to explain in a better way the meaning of those general principles precisely because in a particular practical context they are connected with other elements with which, collectively, they acquire some meaning. Therefore it is a *vehicle* for interpretation. On the other hand, it is an interpretive result in itself, which can contribute to our present understanding of this as well as other contexts of educational practice. In this particular sense, it is an interpretation of an element of public policy. Now, it is important to stress that in this case philosophy takes as its object of inquiry *both* a general idea or principle *and* a particular situation or event—what Stake (2000) calls a *case*. And studying a case requires looking at the particular conditions that make that situation be what it is, in a particular place and moment in time. The next section presents such a context for the national tests of citizenship competencies, and its analysis will occupy the following one. I take it that this double relation between the general and the particular in philosophy of education is one way in which it can become relevant to practice.

The Assessment of Citizenship Competencies

A Short History

Within the current educational tendencies, in which formal evaluation has assumed a prominent place in education, the assessment of citizenship comes as a natural consequence of having acknowledged the need for an education for citizenship. In Colombia, interestingly enough, there was first a test for citizenship competencies in 2003, which was then followed by the National Standards of Citizenship Competencies (Ministerio de Educación Nacional 2004) and even later by the

publication of the conceptual framework underlying both the test and the standards (Ruiz-Silva and Chaux 2005). I take it that this inversion of the expected logical order is a sign for the great importance presently attributed to evaluation. It can stem from the fact that it is the main instrument that the government has for exercising power over the schools and universities in the country, given that the Constitution and the General Law of Education gave a large degree of autonomy to schools and universities for developing their curricula.

But citizenship tests have a long history. In some countries, immigrants who want to become nationals of a particular country have to take a test that assesses their knowledge of the country's history, geography, and constitutional principles and political procedures, as well as rights and duties. Here, the idea of citizenship is a legal one. But what I am referring to in this paper is tests of the sort that attempt to determine how good a citizen somebody is, or could be, in social and political terms, that is, to determine how much the individual resembles the kind of citizen expected of a particular society. These are sometimes referred to as *civic engagement tests*.

The perhaps best known international tests of citizenship competencies are those constructed and administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The first study was conducted in 1971 in nine countries and tested content knowledge, attitudes towards authoritarianism, the government and women's rights, and behavior concerning the discussion of political issues (Torney-Purta and Amadeo 2013). More recently, the arguably two most important studies are the 1999 Civic Education Study (CIVED) and the 2009 International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). There were 28 participating countries in the CIVED study and 38 in ICCS. Colombia took part in both of them.

According to Torney-Purta and Amadeo (2013, p. 89),

In general, civic education studies conceptualize competent democratic citizenship as encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviors (current and expected). Responsible citizens have fundamental knowledge of democratic processes, an awareness of issues in their nations and communities, and an understanding of ways to obtain and analyze information. They also participate in their communities (including volunteer activity) and in organizations (at school and in their neighborhoods), possess civic-related skills (such as cooperation in groups and effective and respectful communication), are concerned for the rights of others (as well as themselves), and are predisposed to find democratic methods to bring about change.

Moreover, the similarity of purposes between CIVED and ICCS extends to the level of the general content categories, despite the fact that some names were changed. Nevertheless, in some cases, ICCS shifted the focus of the topics that were tested, whereas in some others, it enlarged their range to include, for instance, modules that addressed topics of regional importance.

In Colombia, civic education received the name of *formación ciudadana* (citizenship education) and adopted competencies as its central pedagogical element for defining its objectives, as opposed to informational knowledge. Competencies came to be defined as "saber hacer en contexto" (knowing-how, in context) (Ministerio de Educación Nacional 2004).

The Tests for Citizenship Competencies in Colombia

As mentioned above, the first tests of citizenship competencies at a national level for children in grades 5 and 9 were applied in 2003 and then in 2005, 2009, and 2012. The 2012 test was different from the previous ones in at least two aspects: It was also applied to undergraduate students in their last year of their studies, and its structure was largely modified. Additionally, there are plans for the construction of a test for students in their last year of school (grade 11) with the same structure.

As can be seen, there are tests being applied in grades 5, 9, and 11 and in the last year of undergraduate studies, although at the time of writing this chapter, in grade 11 citizenship competencies were not included. These tests, of which citizenship competencies constitute only one of various components that include Maths and Spanish among others, are called SABER 5, SABER 9, SABER 11, and SABER PRO, respectively. The detailed results for each individual student are made public only in the cases of SABER 11 and SABER PRO and have an impact on the future possibilities for students to be accepted into university programs. For SABER 5 and SABER 9, only averages and standard deviations for each school are made public and then only for some of the areas that are tested.

The common nucleus of the citizenship competencies tests in SABER 5, SABER 9, and SABER PRO assesses knowledge and cognitive skills. It consists of four main components: knowledge of the Constitution, argumentation, multiperspectivism, and systemic thinking. The latter three are considered different kinds of dimensions, or *tools*, of critical thinking, roughly following Bermúdez's conceptualization (2008). I will not examine these components in detail here, but some description is in place. Knowledge of the Constitution refers to what it says about rights and duties, structure and organization of the state, and mechanisms for democratic participation. Argumentation refers to the skills needed to analyze and evaluate assertions, arguments, and discourses about issues of social concern. This component is closely related to critical thinking as it is conceptualized by the critical thinking movement (see Mejía 2009a). Multiperspectivism is the "capacity to analyse a problem situation from different perspectives" (ICFES 2013, p. 4, my translation) as well as to understand the various interests and perspectives in a conflict situation. And lastly, systemic thinking refers to the "capacity to identify and relate the different aspects that constitute or determine a problem situation in the social domain" (ibid.).

The rationale behind this choice is explained, *grosso modo*, in the following way:

The exercise of citizenship is understood here as more than the exercise of rights and duties, but it also includes active participation in the community that one belongs to. This way, a competent citizen knows his social and political context, knows his rights and duties, has the ability to reflect on social problems, is concerned about the issues of his society, participates in the search for solutions to social problems, and seeks the general well-being of his community. (ICFES 2013, p. 1, my translation)

A strong emphasis on participation can be seen here, which is directly related to the democratic ideal of a government *by* the people. But how does this ideal relate

to the structure of the test that we just saw, in which the various dimensions of critical thinking comprise about three fourths of it? All this suggests that the underlying premise is that for participation to occur in a meaningful way, the citizens need to have developed the skills that enable them to have a critical understanding of the social and political reality they live in.

The Decisions in the Construction of the Tests of Citizenship Competencies in Colombia and the Open Spaces of Liberal Democracy

As I have just said, it is expected that comprehensive political values beyond some possibly pretended purity of liberal democracy will occupy the space of tension between liberalism and democracy, in actual institutional and policy arrangements. And, of course, this is also applicable to those involved in the domain of citizenship education. Now, as a clarification, it is necessary to point out that this is not the same as proposing that education should be political or that it is inevitably so. Despite some voices from both inside and outside academia suggesting that politics should be restrained from entering the world of education, so that it can really focus on knowledge and learning (as documented by Davies 1999; Pring 1999; Kristjánsson 2004), the starting point in this essay is that education is political, at least in the sense that Freire (1994) argued that it is, and the more so when we are talking about citizenship education. The notion of citizenship is straightforwardly political, as it refers to how individuals relate to the state and to each other and to what role they have in decisions about issues of public concern. But this idea that education in general and citizenship education in particular are political is just a starting point for my analysis. The problem that I want to address stems from the fact that an education for liberal democracy, inasmuch as it should allow for a variety of political positions, should promote knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that are proper to its own ideology but that do not favor or dismiss any other political ideology or vision of society. But then, the space opened by the tensions between liberalism and democracy needs to be filled, in actual political institutions and arrangements, by comprehensive political values and ideologies.

It is also important to clarify that I am not intending to address the political and sociological question about whether the government can exert some pressure on those constructing or administering evaluations that test for citizenship competencies, in order to advance their own partisan goals and pursue their political agenda. The degree of independence will be something that will surely vary from one case to another, from one government to the next. It is for critical sociological and political research to determine if this is so. My analysis intends to be philosophical instead. For this same reason, I do not intend to provide all the relevant evidence that might support my assertions concerning the tests and the decisions taken in their construction. Instead of that, I will attempt to show that had the decisions

been taken differently, there would have been a different configuration in which different political values would have crept in.

A third caveat concerns the fact that my analysis is about political ideology, examining conceptions of citizenship present in the national tests in Colombia, but it does not necessarily intend to make claims about the conceptions held by those who construct the tests. In any single decision, there are many factors and dimensions involved, many of which are not ideological but correspond to restrictions of different natures.

My analysis will concentrate on four decisions that were arguably taken in the construction of the national tests of citizenship competencies in Colombia. These decisions were taken within the framework of various practical, technical, and political conditions, and therefore it would be unfair to claim that they resulted only out of the particular political agenda of the government. But regardless of their origin, they have political implications that must be acknowledged. For each of them, I will discuss the issues that are at stake, politically, that can be located in the space opened by the tension between liberalism and democracy. These decisions are (1) constructing one public test for application at a national level, (2) having a paper-and-pencil test composed of multiple choice items, (3) using a minimalist interpretation of the Constitution (the *minimalist* strategy), and (4) taking critical thinking as a set of cognitive abilities that define the *form* rather than the *content* of thinking (the *formalist* strategy).

Public Tests at a National Level

The fact that the same tests are administered to students of all conditions and in all the regions suggests an approach to citizenship which can be seen as universalistic, that is, one that understands citizenship as something that defines all the individuals equally and that assumes that they all share the same conditions that enable them to be so (Mouffe 2005). Some features of liberal democracy, especially those associated with knowledge of human rights, of the organization of the state, and of the formal mechanisms for participation, seem to be particularly well suited to this universal (or at least national) arrangement. This is what can be especially expected of a liberal approach, with its abstract universalistic discourse that assigns differences between the individuals to the private domain and assumes an abstract citizen in the public realm. However, the obstacles for becoming an active citizen in a democracy, in a genuine and not merely a formal way, and therefore the attitudes and abilities that must be developed by the students in order to overcome those obstacles are different. And this is why, as we saw before, democracy depends on categories that define social actors, collectively, which cannot be set aside by an appeal to an abstract individual. Belonging to different categories will have particular implications for the individual, which restrict or potentiate her possibilities both to lead her life in the direction she wants and to democratically participate in the construction of her society. Becoming an active citizen in a liberal

democracy is something that occurs or that one does from particular locations in a social and political network.

Of course, it is extremely difficult to expect ICFES to produce different kinds of tests that can acknowledge the differences between students regarding their opportunities and obstacles to become citizens. That might perhaps be expected from education in general, in actual classrooms, when teachers and professors interact with actual children and youth. But then, even if unintendedly, the image suggested by the national tests of citizenship competencies will be one of a general abstract citizenship which ignores the particular conditions that determine each individual's possibilities to genuinely become a citizen. Whatever specific abilities and dispositions one needs to develop in order to deal with the particular conditions one faces that affect one's possibilities to be an active citizen become in this image the responsibility of the individual and not of education.

A Paper-and-Pencil Test Composed of Multiple Choice Items

Another *technical* decision that defines the test but that has political implications consists in the fact that these are pencil-and-paper tests. One implication of this decision is that the test is restricted to cognitive abilities and skills (or competencies, in the terms chosen by ICFES), but does not look at actual behavior. As was pointed out, the general idea of the four components of the tests was to assess the students' abilities to understand and analyze issues of public interest; and, as inferred from the discourse of the Ministry of Education, its ultimate purpose was participation. Now, one can wonder, what forms of participation? Given that participation in a democracy is more desirable if the citizens are well informed—have a good understanding of such issues and can analyze them critically—one might conclude that these abilities are useful for any kind of participation. However, some forms of participation require other additional kinds of knowledge—both *know-that* and *know-how*—which are not obvious or readily available and which therefore need to be learned. For instance, voting to choose our leaders in a responsible way probably does not require much in this sense beyond being well informed about issues, candidates, and programs. But more active forms of participation—such as social control of elected leaders, social mobilization and protest, or all the ways in which civil society can have a more direct influence on decisions about issues of public concern—require knowledge of how politics works, and the corresponding appropriate attitudes, which are much more demanding than those of responsible vote.

The conception of citizenship present in the test is defined *by means both of what the tests include and of what they exclude*. At least in this sense, the fact that actual behavior is not included would implicitly suggest that being a citizen does not demand from the individual much beyond the ability to understand and analyze issues of public concern (within the frame of the liberal democratic constitutional principles). This is more akin to voting to choose representatives, which requires

little from the voter in order to exercise this right, than to other more active but also more complex forms of participation which demand knowledge of how to go about the different actors and interests in the political game, the sources of power, and in general the social and political world in which institutions and policy are shaped.

Again, it may be hard to imagine that a national test would be able to include the assessment of actual behavior or that government would actively promote the non-formal mechanisms by means of which politics is actually exercised in practice—the *real politik*. However, that is not the point here. I do not intend to criticize the decisions taken in this particular case, but to show how policies or institutional arrangements within liberal democracies inevitably involve decisions with political ideological implications that are contestable but cannot be resolved purely by recourse to the basic principles of liberalism or democracy.

Another implication of this decision is derived from the fact that the tests, in the knowledge and cognitive skills module, are composed of multiple choice items. In each of them, there are four alternative answers of which one and only one must be correct. This particular decision of there being one and only one correct answer puts some restrictions on the kinds of items that can be constructed and particularly on the situations that are presented and that the students must analyze. One condition for this type of items, then, is that *correct* and *incorrect* must be uncontroversial¹, in line with the fact that multiple choice tests are also called “objective tests.” If one and only one answer must be uncontroversially correct, and then the degree of complexity of the situations represented in the items must be considerably reduced so that the analysis never feasibly and realistically depends on other unstated aspects of the situation depicted.

It is interesting that systemic thinking is, precisely, about complex situations in which various elements of the situation interact, both causally and normatively, in various nonlinear ways (Forrester 1994; Midgley 2008). The items of the systemic thinking component attempt to assess whether the students are able to identify that complexity: how different dimensions in a situation interact with each other and what unexpected consequences there might be if certain actions are carried out. Nevertheless, complexity usually emerges out of the many aspects of a situation in interaction with each other, which cannot be stipulated in a short description in a multiple choice test. As a result, the complexity in those situations is unavoidably very limited. In the end, the underlying even if unintended idea is that situations of

¹ Curiously, the idea of an item’s correct answer being uncontroversial may be itself controversial. The fact that the items must have a certain degree of difficulty, so that some students will answer them incorrectly in the test, implies that *uncontroversial* cannot mean that everyone will agree. One possible way to understand it is as agreement of the experts. This would, however create a paradox: it would take us to accept some form of expert authority in matters of citizenship while at the same time citizenship in a democracy is, as we saw, declared on the basis of some kind of equality between the citizens—although some authors, such as Mill, may have suggested differential forms of participation (Cunningham 2002). Yet another possible way to take this idea of the uncontroversial is to see it as agreement after a justification has been given—which test taking assumes does not happen before the test, but which might *in principle* occur after it. I favor this latter option.

public concern have only a limited complexity and, for example, that forms of exclusion and violence that take place in them are rather easily recognizable without a deep knowledge of the situation. As a consequence, the conception of citizenship present in the tests is one that suggests that there is no need for spending the time and effort to be well informed about the social situations of public concern.

Minimalism

As we saw, it is supposed that in a liberal democracy, the only comprehensive values that are to be promoted by the state are those that guarantee the viability of liberal democracy itself. In this case, the political principles embodied in the Constitution served as those referents that specify the political values to be assessed with the tests. Further parameters for constructing this referent came from the sentences of the Constitutional Court. This is particularly obvious in the component of the test dedicated to knowledge of the Constitution and its principles.

Now, this kind of knowledge might be evaluated in different ways. One of them would be to take it as information and see if the students are able to remember it. Although in a very few cases this approach was adopted, especially when it concerned functions of particular state organisms, it was largely discarded to favor another in which the ability to apply that knowledge to assess particular situations was evaluated. For instance, given a certain situation, the student would be asked to identify the kinds of basic human rights that were at risk or effectively being violated.

A problem emerges, nevertheless, when one notices that the very application of the principles is not free from polemics. For instance, do systemic structural conditions exist that put at risk or effectively violate human rights? This question is answered differently from different political ideologies and therefore cannot be taken for granted (see Cunningham 2002). In terms of the tests, the corresponding question is whether it would be just, following the liberal democratic principles of the Constitution, to assess whether students are able to identify systemic structural conditions that violate or put human rights at risk. It was decided in this case, not before much discussion, that a *minimalist* approach would be adopted. Such approach is one which tries to only take interpretations for granted which are deemed to not be polemical, within the framework provided by the Constitution. Minimalism was particularly important because it reduced the probability that the test would be attacked from the various sides of the political ideological spectrum, as has reportedly happened in the past. But this way, for instance, systemic structural situations that put at risk or violate human rights were discarded from the tests.

Minimalism is an approach that does more than just solve the problem of keeping everyone happy—or at least not making them too unhappy. As remarked above, the tests create a conception of citizenship by means of both what they include and what they exclude. As a result, it can be said that the tests in themselves suggest a minimalist idea of the application of the principles of the Constitution

including human rights. And in so doing, presumably (rightist?) ideologies that consider systemic structural oppression inexistent or irrelevant are given primacy over (leftist?) ones that think otherwise.

It must be remembered, however, that the fact that minimalism was the choice made in this case should not obscure the fact that had it not been so, primacy would have been given to some other ideological tendency and their interpretations of the Constitution would have been favored. This openness of interpretation, which still needs to be filled, is inevitable.

Formalism

If minimalism was a characteristic that mostly applied to the component of knowledge of the Constitution and its principles, the three other components—argumentation, multiperspectivism, and systems thinking—can be more clearly characterized as the result of a *formalist* approach. These three components attempted to assess the abilities that students had developed for analyzing and understanding all sorts of issues of public interest. It was decided, as far as possible, not to evaluate what judgments and opinions the students had about such issues, but instead whether the students had certain abilities that are instrumental in the production of those judgments and opinions. So, for instance, the students are given a problem situation in which someone proposes some policy and produces an argument to justify it. They are then asked to detect logical mistakes in the argument—in the argumentation component—or to infer world views and conceptions behind the argument, in multiperspectivism, or to identify the relation between different dimensions in the problem situation. But they are not asked to give their opinion concerning what the best solution would be or how good the solution proposed is for that problem situation. In short, to adopt this formalist approach means to not evaluate *what* the students think but *how* (the form) they think.

This strategy—of evaluating *how* students reason instead of *what* their opinions are—is well aligned with the liberal principle that different substantive values must be accommodated within society and that the state must not interfere with them, as well as with the democratic principle that decision making and participation will be better realized if citizens have the ability to understand issues of public interest. Nevertheless, a closer look at this shows that it is not so easy to fully separate *how* from *what*. I have argued elsewhere (Mejía 2001, 2009b) that critical thinking abilities, such as *identifying assumptions in an argument*, are always exercised from contexts of meaning within which the critical person can make sense of the argument that she was asked to analyze. Now, contexts of meaning are substantive; that is, they are constituted by the views that the person holds in some domain. This means that different people, with the same general critical thinking abilities, will be able to provide different analyses of the same argument when it comes to complex situations. All this is very desirable, when these different

analyses provide us with different perspectives and help us see different aspects of the same situation. However, surely not all perspectives count in the same way in the same contexts, when it comes to the analysis of issues of public interest; and therefore not all assumptions that are made in an argument will be equally relevant. For instance, depending on context, noticing that a proposed policy of giving old-age citizens less priority in health care might be assuming a certain polemical conception of human dignity may be more important than noticing that it assumes that there is scarcity of resources. Furthermore, even though they are both cases of identifying assumptions, the knowledge (beliefs) and abilities that enable one to do either kind of noticing are different. I take it that this analysis resonates with Taylor's (1979) discussion of the idea that not all the restrictions that the state can impose on people's actions count in the same way for deciding how free they are. Taylor's point about the inevitability for a positive conception of liberty can perhaps be seen as one example of the inevitability of a positive conception of the public and by consequence also of the kind of critical thinking appropriate for citizenship. In a general way, it can be said that to meaningfully educate in critical thinking is not only to teach *how* to think but also to point out—and perhaps to argue—*what* is worth thinking about.

Now, in an exam made of open questions, the student may be allowed to bring her own contexts of meaning in the analysis of an argument or situation. In multiple choice items, those contexts of meaning have to be provided in advance, either implicit or explicitly. But then, what contexts of meaning should be used in the tests? In order to be uncontroversial, and combining minimalism with formalism, it has to be only very general ones that can be readily accepted by all. But then, this will effectively restrict the potential of critical thinking. Liberal democracy is ambiguous in this sense: it suggests that people should be critical, but it does not, and cannot, put too much into an idea of what critical thinking substantively should look like.

Some Implications

When one looks at liberal democracy as a political ideology, one has to acknowledge, as so many authors have, that its two supporting pillars of democracy and liberalism leave some open spaces of ambiguity and tension. When one regards liberal democracy as an actual form of political organization, a look at actual institutions and policies will show that those spaces opened by the tensions between liberalism and democracy are necessarily filled by political ideals that may threaten to undermine either one of them, or both. This is something that I have tried to show in this paper, by means of an analysis of some decisions taken in the construction of the citizenship competencies tests in Colombia.

Following Mouffe (1993, 1997), this characteristic is not something that must be avoided or the seed for self-destruction of liberal democracy; it is its constitutive condition and what restores in it the political as a site of conflict and struggle.

The citizenship competencies tests in Colombia are just one of the multiple elements of institutions and policy that are the result of just that political struggle, which has its own exclusions and inclusions.

Various suggestions for policy and action in education can be derived from this analysis, in which the possibility of political conflict and struggle is protected, particularly as regards citizenship education and its evaluation in Colombia. The first one relates to the need to promote other forms of assessment on different levels—municipalities, for instance, but mainly schools and universities, or even classrooms—that can exert a real influence on the kind of citizenship that is actually taught in educational institutions. This implies that such institutions must become sites of discussion about what citizenship should mean and the role of education in promoting it.

A second element corresponds to the need to make explicit, as far as possible, the inclusions and exclusions present in the current tests or the conceptions of citizenship enacted in the decisions taken in their construction, regardless of whether they were intended or unintended. This move would mean that the government accepts to have a visible agenda at the same time that it acknowledges its limits so that other actors can more easily participate in the definition and implementation of public policy in education. Of course, I am aware of the difficulty involved in demanding such transparency in the actions of political actors. Indeed, as Gaber (2009) has suggested, we face here one of the contradictions of liberal democracy: it appears in the world of the *real politik* as the fact that governmental communications are not usually designed to provide maximum information so that the public is well informed, but to keep a “permanent campaign.” Nevertheless, it is possible for the citizens to demand more, rather than less, transparency from the government. And it is also possible for the intellectuals, the academia, and other actors of the civil society to perform this critical role.

In the end, the sort of conflict and struggle to which Mouffe draws our attention occurs between different actors, including the state. And it is everyone’s responsibility to protect liberal democracy by means of exercising a kind of political struggle that can guarantee its own continuous existence.

Final Remarks

The research project whose results and interpretive process I have been discussing throughout this chapter is, effectively, the meeting point in which roles, concerns, and hopes of various natures converge: me as a citizen, as a philosopher researcher, and as a consultant; a concern for general principles and for an understanding of the particular; and the hope to be recognized as a serious philosopher as well as to exert the best possible influence on the practical affairs regarding citizenship education and evaluation. I think that this ambitious approach is especially apparent in some

interpretive choices and convictions that I have pointed out in various moments in this chapter. Some of these are the following:

- *Going from the general to the particular and vice versa.* My interpretation of the national tests of citizenship competencies in Colombia was made possible by the interpretive frame provided by Mouffe’s discussion of the open space of liberal democracy, so that the more general and theoretical principles illuminated the particular case. At the same time, however, by illustrating the general principle, the particular case also helped to develop the theoretical understanding of the former.
- *Interpretation from within and from without.* It is difficult to draw a clear line that separates the inner space of a situation, in which a participant is located—from the outer space of that situation, in which an external observer is situated. In this project, I, as the researcher, was positioned in such a way that I could have an insider’s knowledge of the elements and events that configure the normative and causal complexity of the situation, as well as the philosopher’s knowledge and independence (at least to a certain extent) that allowed me to establish connections between this case and other developments and conversations that have been produced in a wider academic audience around the issues of citizenship and citizenship education.
- *Interpretation of a work instead of its authors’ intentions.* As I pointed out in various moments in the discussion of the decisions involved in the citizenship competencies tests, the object of interpretation was the tests themselves, rather than the intentions that their authors may have had when constructing them. This interpretive decision is based on the idea that the elaboration and implementation of an element of public policy such as these tests is a complex matter that involves multiple factors and that only partially reflects the intentions of its authors. Eco (1990) usefully illustrates this in the case of literature, showing how even aspects that appear by accident in the production of a work—which the author may not even realize they are there—can contribute to its production of meaning. Interestingly, this very fact may have actually favored my possibilities of achieving a critical attitude concerning a product of public policy for which I am at least partially responsible, such as these tests.
- *The impossibility of meaningfully distinguishing between first-order and second-order interpretations.* Even though my research project concerned the production of a critical interpretation of the interpretation of the idea of an educated citizen in Colombia embodied in the citizenship competencies tests, in fact it at the same time uses or produces an alternative interpretation of what such an educated citizen should be like. Because of this, my argument is actually involved in the first-order conversation about the educated citizen rather than only stay on the second-order or meta-level. I am interested not only in what and how things are said about citizenship and citizenship education but in citizenship and citizenship education themselves. Accepting this involvement allows me to “get my hands dirty” and advance recommendations rather than maintain a pedantic position of a philosopher that thinks that he sees from the sky above what goes on down on the ground.

This approach, as I see it, embodies a both/and rather than an either/or attitude. After all, the very idea of interpretation seems to carry with it the possibility of listening, exploring, and, in general, being attentive. None of these is possible without a willingness to embrace rather than to dismiss.

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6.5 A “Jill” of All Trades and Mistress of One: Interpretation, School Leadership, and Philosophy of Education

Janet Orchard

Accepting that good leadership is a critical factor in the flourishing of schools, my research was concerned to argue that within the context of a democratic society, such leadership ought to be informed by democratic values. I illustrated my argument with particular reference to maintained schools in England. These are designated places that will prepare the next generation for their future lives as citizens, while established leadership practices in those same schools continue to promote an autocratic model of good leadership which centers on the agency of an individual, the “headteacher” or principal.

I considered the influence of past practice on this hierarchical tradition of school leadership and criticized its continuing presence in current policy and practice. I offered an alternative conception of good school leadership, based on democratic principles of political liberty and equality. I justified my argument on moral grounds, supported by empirical evidence from other educational researchers (e.g., Gold et al. 2003; Gronn 2003; Harris and Muijs 2005). This suggests that democratic leadership is possible within the existing structures that commonly regulate schools, although in England these structures are under threat.

I established at the level of principle what an approach to school leadership must necessarily entail if it is to be genuinely “democratic,” illustrating my argument with further examples of democratic practice commonly found in schools, for example, in initiatives intended to promote “student voice” (e.g., Fielding 2004; Flutter and Rudduck 2004), and with the inclusion of parents and guardians in decision making (Elliott et al. 1981). I also identified further—pedagogical—reasons why democratic school leadership is desirable. I argued that where activity

This is a play on the phrase “A Jack of all trades and a master of none” in English.

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within schools is coordinated in a distinctive spirit by people who are both morally committed to and practically skilled at translating democratic values into daily life, other people learn from this experience and can make informed choices about their own future behavior and moral commitments.

I concluded that schools should be free to determine for themselves how they wish to be led, within limits. Since 2004, a particular conception of good school leadership captured in the National Standards for Headteachers in England (DfES 2004) has been promoted, even though it presents a view of leadership that is in tension with democratic values. I argued that those national standards ought to be scrapped, to be replaced by a new National Framework for School Leadership. I recognized the potential benefits to schools of expert educational decision making but argued that the power of those specialists should also be held in check. I concluded that schools should ensure that strategic decisions concerning their future direction are shared widely among directly interested parties, including pupils, parents, and local citizens.

An Issue of Interpretation

My investigation was concerned with the kind of leadership that is best suited to the particular needs of maintained schools in England. I did not set out to discover reliable or consistent patterns common to successful leadership behavior through my research. Rather, I was concerned to interpret what the nature of “good” school leadership should be in a democracy in particular. Educational Leadership, Management and Administration research (ELMA) is commonly motivated by a concern to understand the nature of good practice in order to contribute positively to school reform. However, ELMA researchers do not agree consistently either on what good school leadership entails or on what measures are needed to bring about the best school leadership possible. Even the assertion just made—that the nature of good leadership should be identified if schools are to improve—is contentious.

Thus different discourses of ELMA research have developed within the field of study, and these are often in tension with each other. I used the word “discourse” in my study to refer to a narrative that is used to frame understanding of the world as it is experienced and which is expressed through language and the choice of certain concepts rather than others. In the context of research, the notion of a discourse has profound implications because it implies that the way in which experiences are interpreted by the researcher could be very different at a fundamental level from one paradigm to another. In another discourse, the research question underpinning my study would be framed entirely differently, conducted by other means, and likely reach alternative conclusions. I used the phrase “dominant discourse” to describe the narrative that frames official interpretations of experience. In schools in England, the dominant school leadership discourse emanates from national education policies formulated by central government and its representative agencies. These include: the Department for Education (DfE); the Office for

Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted); and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL).

Grogan and Simmons (2007, p. 37) identify a spectrum of such discourses within the ELMA field of study, with the critical approach (e.g., Grace 1995; Alvesson and Wilmott 1996; MacBeath 1999; MacBeath and Moos 2004) that I adopted in my study at one end of that spectrum. I assumed, as Gerald Grace argues, that notions of leadership and management “do not float freely in the discourse of textbooks of educational administration or in the prescriptions of technical primers of school management” (Grace 1995, p. 5). I assumed that concepts develop meaning(s) over time that need to be interpreted in relation to the particular context(s) in which they are situated.

Interpretive ELMA Research

There are various traditions of interpretive research already in the ELMA field of study (Morrison 2007, p. 23), but I do not engage with the detail of those distinctions here. Instead, I highlight three specific groups of existing ELMA research that exercised a particular influence on my study. These are: leadership research concerned with values in general, leadership research concerned with democratic values in particular, and critical school leadership research.

Where existing ELMA research has explored the relationship between values and leadership in some detail with reference to philosophical writing, I sought to develop this body of existing work further (e.g., Hodgkinson 1991; Bottery 2000; Haydon 2007), based on a shared interest in moral and ethical deliberation in the school leadership context. One important study has suggested that the very best formal school leaders manage both (Gold et al. 2003) although this finding has been challenged (Wright 2003). While welcoming the study in general terms, I found further difficulties with it which I explored in greater detail in my study.

A group of ELMA studies seeking to capture accounts of democratic school leadership practice (Harris and Chapman 2002; MacBeath and Moos 2004; Harris and Muijs 2005; Woods 2005) also influenced my argument. These researchers appeared to share my interest in decision making in schools which extended beyond the ranks of senior managers. It was broadly speaking interpretive, in that it does not seek to identify standardized solutions for educational reform to apply to any kind of school context.

In other respects, research studies of this kind are considerably more loosely associated than the first group which I identified. The interpretive nature of John MacBeath’s research (1999) is clear—he insists that schools should be encouraged to “speak for themselves”—but it is less evident in the work, for example, of Alma Harris. Her commitment to a broad and inclusive conception of leadership, with particular emphasis on the leadership role of teachers (e.g., Harris and Muijs 2005), is evident, but she mixes the language of “improving” schools with that of “effectiveness” (e.g., Harris and Chapman 2002).

ELMA research concerned to criticize the dominant school leadership discourse (e.g., Smyth 1989; Greenfield 1993) exercised a formative influence on the argument I developed, in particular the work of Gerald Grace (1995, 1997) (see below). Grace argues persuasively for “policy scholarship” as an interpretive and interdisciplinary approach to studying school leadership. This, rather than “policy science”—Grace’s categorization of positivist ELMA research—is needed, if the nature of good school leadership in its sociopolitical and cultural sense is to be understood.

An Interdisciplinary Project

Inspired by Gerald Grace, I decided at an early stage that an interdisciplinary approach to my investigation would be necessary, with no single scholarly tradition on its own able to do justice to the complexity of a social, cultural, and ideological interpretation of school leadership. To use a gender-appropriate variation of a commonplace phrase in English, I was a “Jill”—as opposed to a Jack—of all trades. I mean this in the positive sense that I sought to know enough about those established disciplines in the study of education most pertinent to my research questions with the aims of bringing them together in a practical and meaningful manner. However, wary that my investigation would offer only very superficial findings if it operated purely at that general level alone, I lean on one discipline, the philosophy of education, more than others.

One important reason for undertaking an interdisciplinary approach to researching school leadership is that, like other forms of human experience, it does not fall neatly into those discrete and specific social, political, and cultural categories which academic communities have constructed. In this very loose sense, interdisciplinary approach to Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) research is commonplace. It takes its lead from the subject to be investigated, not the demands of any one research method. While a good deal of ELMA research claims to be interdisciplinary in this general sense, far fewer studies are connected explicitly to the foundational disciplines in education in particular (e.g., Grace 1995, 1997; Gunter et al. 1999; Gunter 2005). My approach was more unusual still because of its strong philosophical bias; educational leadership research is underrepresented in established literature in the philosophy of education. Its unashamedly theoretical turn, being concerned primarily with an analysis of pertinent ideas and concepts, was also relatively unusual in the ELMA research field. In some respects, this was a significant limitation; were I to develop my findings further, I would seek to do so as part of a wider, part empirical investigation. However, in other respects, it presented clear advantages. I found considerable potential for creative and original thought in the intellectual space created by bringing together an unashamedly theoretical exploration of school leadership, with considerable lived experience of leadership practice. As William Blake observed, “Without Contraries is no progression” (*The Marriage of Heaven*

and Hell, 31); by “thinking otherwise,” new light is cast on what might appear self-evidently true or necessary.

While still a practitioner, working in a school located euphemistically in “challenging circumstances,” I realized that the—individualistic and charismatic—ideal of leadership with which I had been presented uncritically on a school leadership training course could be read differently with reference to *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Weber (1947)). When I had read the text several decades before as an undergraduate on a nonvocational degree course at an elite university, I had done so without realizing that this knowledge would prove “useful” in the future. Having made an initial connection between those theoretical “tools” that I had acquired during my (interdisciplinary) undergraduate degree and educational practice, I rolled up my sleeves and got to work. I found ways in which other disciplines shed further light on school leadership. For example, another substantial part of my study was concerned to think differently about familiar school leadership practices by putting them in their historical context. This was challenging, as historical research is relatively underdeveloped in the ELMA field of study (Walker 1980; Sungaila 1982; Thody 1994), although necessary. As Gerald Grace (1995) argues, the study of history offers us a sense of the regulative principles that have been inherited from the past. With reference to schooling in England, I discovered that a particular view of school leadership which had been valued in the past had been passed down to become established as a normative view of the ideal school leader. This had happened even though the view was based on stories of school leaders who were, by their very nature atypical, thus unreliable as general patterns or examples (Bamford 1960). For example, they included the four “great” headmasters: Samuel Butler, Thomas Arnold, William Sewell, and Edward Thring assessed in Roach’s (1986) *A History of Secondary Education in England, 1800–1870*. At the same time, other stories of good school leadership that had been exercised collectively by groups were either forgotten entirely or categorized either as “democratic” or “progressive” schooling rather than as leadership. There were stories to be told of resistance to the highly individualistic ideal of headship that came to predominate in schools in England as well as attempts to introduce alternative leadership traditions based on democratic values in mainstream educational practice. I applied ideas from the psychology of education too, where they have helped me to explain ideas about thinking and learning, for example, in discussing the various ways in which people learn, including from their experiences. I found sociological methods of educational research particularly helpful. In tandem with my philosophical work, I used social theory to make sense of concepts of leadership as they are practiced in the context of schooling.

I have alluded already to the work of German social theorist Max Weber and how I found his analysis of authority particularly helpful. Furthermore, I found that those difficulties which contemporary sociologists of education have identified in the dominant school leadership discourse (e.g., Ball 1990, 1998, 1999; Hatcher 2004, 2005) resonated with my own concerns. I found Stephen Ball’s description of the role of the educational foundations invaluable in seeking to justify and clarify

the approach I had taken to my research. Ball argues for the researcher establishing a “critical distance” (Ball 1998) between those particular examples of policy and practice they might encounter directly and other possible but currently abstract alternatives that exist at the level of principle.

A Philosophical “Leaning”

Within this more general sociopolitical and historical analysis of school leadership, I sought to become a “mistress” of one foundation discipline in particular, the philosophy of education. Like other academics in that field, my main concerns were overwhelmingly moral in their character. Note how I litter the introductory account of my research with references to what ought or should be the case, with matters of “principle.” Philosophy has been defined as “rational critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind” (Quinton 1995, p. 666) in three areas of intellectual enquiry: the general nature of the world, the justification of belief, and the conduct of life. While the conduct of life was a particular focus in my study, I strayed into the other areas just identified. For example, “justification of belief” is a theme that Charles Taylor pursues (1985a) and which I draw upon to position my argument in relation to other critical school leadership studies. I referred to a wide range of existing literature in my study, both in general philosophy and the philosophy of education. Here I use the term “general” to describe philosophical literature reflective of a broad academic discipline. Examples of general political theory I referenced included classic texts in the history of western philosophy (e.g., Aristotle 1953; Plato 1987; Mill 2006) alongside work by contemporary political philosophers (e.g., Harrison 1995; Wolff 1996; Swift 2001). General philosophers may direct their theoretical concerns to educational issues in particular (e.g., Brighouse 2002, 2003; Swift 2003), making a valuable contribution of one kind to the philosophy of education. I took their arguments to support a characteristically democratic account of school leadership. I also drew on early work by R.S. Peters while still a general philosopher to argue that people should only be denied a right to consideration in decision making when there was a reasonable and relevant distinction which warrants their exclusion (Benn and Peters 1959).

“Philosophy of education” describes a specific, applied form of the discipline which relates more general moral or epistemological questions to educational examples or considers how the process of thinking rationally and critically through educational problems might shed light on various difficulties. For example, I dwelt on claims other ELMA research makes about “shared” or “distributed” school leadership (e.g., Harris and Chapman 2002), analyzing the use of language where this was unclear. I pursued research into the principles of school principals (Gold et al. 2003) where the theoretical underpinning the study invited further attention.

Philosophy of Education and ELMA Research

Next I explain in further detail how this philosophical leaning applied to the research I undertook. I identified six distinctive but related contributions which general and applied philosophy could offer my research. These were:

- Clarifying concepts
- Highlighting logical contradictions
- Considering values and leadership
- Asserting what should the case
- Setting out a practical alternative
- Anticipating likely concerns and addressing them

Clarifying Concepts

One recurrent role that philosophy played in my study was to clarify the use of concepts and ideas where these become muddled in the language of practice and public policy. For example, I set out organizing principles that allowed the moral worth of competing notions of leadership found in the ELMA literature to be evaluated. In this way philosophy supported both other forms of educational research and the formation of social policy, by making the sense of words clear where their meaning had become obscured or distorted. Hence, I considered in detail the National Standards for Headteachers (DfES 2004), as few authors within the ELMA field have addressed difficulties with standards at this conceptual level within two national education systems; two honorable exceptions are Anderson and English (English 2000; Anderson 2001), who raise the matter in the *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. I developed my critique by applying relevant critical observations made by philosophers of education about other policy initiatives. I referred to Richard Smith’s (1999) damning indictment of “effectiveness” in management and Andrew Davis’s (1998) dissection of the claim that direct causal links can be traced between educational professionals’ activities and attainments by pupils that are measurable.

Highlighting Logical Contradictions

“Democracy” was a particularly significant concept for my study. I drew initially on the work of general political philosophers to define and explain the term simply. I went on to offer an extended account of what democracy characteristically entails, i.e., adherence to two principles—political liberty and political equality—rather than practicing any one specific model or type of democracy. This distinction is important yet missing elsewhere in the ELMA literature (e.g., Woods 2005) where

use of the word has become somewhat muddled. I drew on authoritative sources in general philosophy to suggest how the term might be applied meaningfully with reference to the particular example of publicly funded schooling in England. Where I highlighted logical contradictions, I did so in the spirit of being constructive. I was influenced in my approach to policy analysis by David Bridges (1996), who seeks potential benefits as well as likely difficulties in competence-based assessment and, likewise Christopher Winch (1996), who identifies good moral reasons—a concern for pupils' welfare as well as the stewardship of relatively scarce public resources—why the work of educational professionals should be held to account, if not in the way that policy makers have indicated. In being constructive, neither Bridges nor Winch pulls his punches; each spells out quite clearly what conceptual difficulties belie the respective schemes they are assessing.

Considering Values and Leadership

One point which recurred through the study was this: that while various accounts of school leadership may be possible, some are undesirable in a democratic society and ought to be debarred. Acknowledging that notions of competence and capability are necessary attributes of educational professionals, including those in positions of formal authority in schools, nonetheless notions of good school leadership cannot be reduced simply to matters of competence. A significant body of existing research in the ELMA field already emphasizes the importance of values to educational leadership, with the best practitioners being both technically skilled and possessed of finely honed moral judgment (Gold et al. 2003). I pursued this idea further, suggesting that practical wisdom along the lines pursued in neo-Aristotelian thinking is what characterizes very good school leadership, rather than a privileged form of knowledge that unusually morally and intellectually insightful individuals might demonstrate. This argument built on earlier work in the ELMA field of study, to the effect that values have a critical role to play in the quality of school leadership (e.g., Hodgkinson 1991; Bottery 2000; Gold 2004), but developed it, emphasizing the importance of democratic values in particular. I argued that two dimensions, one formal and another which I described as “informal,” needed to be included in interpretations of leadership that inform policies for English schools. This being the case, practical wisdom is a quality to be developed in all rational citizens, not only a few. However, the moral qualities that senior leaders in positions of formal authority need in schools are the dominant concern of existing discussion.

Asserting What Should Be the Case

The value of clarity in applied philosophical work extends to include those arguments which identify a more desirable alternative. In my case, I was concerned to develop an argument for school leadership practiced in the context of a democratic

society being rooted in values of liberty and political equality. I drew both on work in general political philosophy (Berlin 1958; Benn and Peters 1959; Taylor 1985b; Harrison 1995; Wolff 1996; Swift 2001; Mill 2006; White 2006) and philosophy of education to inform my discussion (sort out references). In putting this argument, it was important to address a common concern over the practical application of democratic principles to educational practice. Typically, this suggests that while democracy may represent a laudable ideal, it is nevertheless unworkable in this context (e.g., Tooley 1995, 1996; Eason 2007). I used established philosophical arguments to defend democracy against its detractors (e.g., White and Bridges, Swift and Woolf), given its value is recognized so widely, if not universally. Despite its imperfections, I argued, democracy represents the best means currently conceived of by which to organize society.

I made a further argument to support democratic school leadership on principle based on a concern with matters of pedagogy. I referred to work in the philosophy of education concerned with moral education (e.g., Dewey 1916; Haydon 1997; McLaughlin 1999) to argue that those values which pupils develop while at school are influenced through the means by which it is organized. This being the case, those values mediated through its leadership ought to be consistent with the accepted norms of the context in which the school is located, which in the case of English schools consists of democratic values.

Setting Out a Practical Alternative

Philosophy can help not only to assert what ought to be the case at the level of principle but to offer an outline of what that alternative conception of practice ought to be like, for example, by conducting a thought experiment. In my study, I explained how and why representative democratic school leadership might be introduced—in the case of English schools, at least through a rigorous overhaul of existing structures and practices. The philosophical dimension to my enquiry was complemented by existing theoretical arguments (e.g., Ranson 1993, 1994; Woods 2004, 2005) and empirical evidence (e.g., Court 1998, 2003; Flutter and Rudduck 2004) developed by educationalists from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. I used arguments to propose a National Framework for School Leadership (NFSL) along similar lines to those that have been used elsewhere (e.g., White 1990; O’Hear and White 1991) by philosophers to argue for a statutory national curriculum. I argued that the NFSL would identify general principles—rather than “standards”—of leadership that all schools would be required to follow. It would legislate for greater power to influence decision making at a local level among ordinary citizens at the expense of quasi-autonomous agencies appointed by national government and their advisors. At the same time, the NFSL would be informed by a commitment to representative democracy, with tiers of government in place to hold the actions of schools and their local leadership to account.

Anticipating Likely Concerns and Addressing Them

Given the ideological assumptions underpinning the proposals that I have outlined, it is reasonable to expect that difficulties and objections will be raised to them. In the context of a democratic society, whereby value pluralism is actively encouraged, moral and political philosophy have an invaluable role to play in modeling a reasonable response to ethical disagreement. I anticipated what the likely objections to my proposals would be and articulated them sympathetically. I found an existing philosophical debate concerning the democratic control of schooling (e.g., Jonathan 1985, 1989; Ranson 1993, 1994; Tooley 1995, 1996) particularly useful. It helped me to identify potential problems with the conclusions I had reached and, in turn, to develop arguments that showed those objections were found wanting. A second aspect of my alternative proposals for school leadership that was likely to attract negative comment came from a different source. For those who contend that a child's moral education is a private matter and the responsibility of her parents, not a public body like a school, my contention that moral education takes place through school leadership will be unacceptable. Again, a number of philosophers, separately or in dialogue with each other (e.g., McLaughlin 2000; Tooley 2000; Sennett 2003; Stern 2007), have considered this kind of argument before, and I drew on these well-modeled examples in my discussion of the pertinent issues.

What the Analysis Revealed

I was concerned to explore a major paradox and contradiction (Grace 1995) at the heart of schooling in one national education system at the start of the twenty-first century. Although my study was in one sense particular to that context, it shed light on issues that are of relevance and concern to other education systems too. The case for democratic school leadership that I pursued revealed a number of important issues. Through the care I had taken to immerse myself in an established philosophical literature dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, I found that the theme of democratic school leadership had largely been overlooked within the philosophy of education since David Bridges's (1979) and Patricia White's work (e.g., White 1982, 1983) in the early 1980s. Michael Fielding's consideration of school leadership as one aspect of more radical approaches to state education (e.g., Fielding 1984, 2001, 2004) represented an honorable exception to that observation. My investigation makes three new contributions to knowledge in this field. First, I took Patricia White's earlier argument for democratic school leadership on direct or deliberative lines in *Beyond Domination: An Essay in the Political Philosophy of Education* (1983) and pursued a related but distinct argument for representative democratic school leadership. Secondly, I resolved a paradox identified by Gerald Grace (1995) between school leadership and learning, both at the level of theory and in relation to pedagogy. Thirdly, the interdisciplinary nature of the argument I made is relatively unusual in philosophy of education. I demonstrated both the

value of working across the educational foundation disciplines, when seeking to interpret education policies and practices within the sociopolitical context in which they are situated and the power of a theoretical argument informed by empirical data.

My research also showed a parallel neglect of philosophical methods in the field of Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA). I demonstrated how theoretical argument could help to frame future study more coherently, as well as help to interpret the results with greater logical clarity. I critically reviewed ideas that are established descriptors of practice in ELMA research, for example, shared and distributed leadership, and demonstrated how the relative worth of these different, potentially competing accounts of good practice might be evaluated on moral grounds. Concerned to establish what it is that makes school leadership good, I demonstrated how the moral and political philosophy of Aristotle as he develops it in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1953) can help to explain those distinguishing qualities that have been found (Gold et al. 2003) in the practice of the best formal school leaders. While Aristotle’s ideas have been applied before to describe the qualities of good school leadership (e.g., Bottery 1992), my analysis was innovative because I teased out the distinguishing qualities of good school leaders, given the democratic context in which their practice is situated. Although various specific approaches to democratic school leadership are possible—hence the argument I made for a national school leadership framework rather than a more prescriptive account of the best practice—I highlighted the necessary commitment to political liberty and political equality that is implicit to a notion of good leadership in this context.

This being the case, I qualified the common perception that good headteachers are key to school improvement. I accepted that the professional competence of those in formal school leadership roles matters but that this does not offer a sufficient account of good school leadership on its own. In a democracy, it is wrong at the level of principle for the many to depend on the few for direction, I argued. Therefore, good school leaders need to hold certain moral commitments rather than others and be able to translate these beliefs into their professional practice. In making this argument, I highlighted a considerable and long-standing moral shortcoming in state-maintained schooling. Not only did I pursue a theme that is of considerable intellectual interest; I constructed a case for social reform. Moreover, I did so in an area of great practical importance, not only in England or indeed the UK as a whole but in any democratic country concerned with the moral education of its future citizens. Too often, decisions about schooling are made by too few people. Accepting that the detail of how schooling might best be run should be entrusted to experts—including educational practitioners, policy makers, and researchers—at the level of strategy, ordinary citizens are entitled to a greater say in determining what education is for. This is particularly the case with regard for the needs and wants of individual children and young people and the communities to whom they belong.

Good leadership concerns a process by which decisions ought to be made as an end in its own right, not just as a means to achieving other desired ends. The capacity to contribute to good leadership in this second sense is something all normal people may achieve given the opportunity to learn how to do so.

This requires a combination of lived experience, theoretical learning, and structured reflection on practice. As well as the civic responsibility of participating in school leadership, education to support this role should be a right. I argued that children and young people should learn what leadership is while they are at school as well as how it is done, through both the taught and hidden curriculum. Misconceiving leadership in this way creates issues at the level of policy and in individual schools. First, leadership is often conceived of in terms of the agency of individuals and their effectiveness. My study affirmed the importance of the effectiveness of individuals—qualities that individuals bring to formal leadership positions which do make a difference to the way in which they undertake their role—but argued that it is a moral matter not just an instrumental concern. The implications of this finding for the continuing professional development of educational professionals include how awareness of the moral and ethical dimensions of professional practice as well as more instrumental concerns might be fostered.

For example, good school leaders need to be able to distinguish between actions informed by appropriate and inappropriate moral values, given the sociopolitical context in which their work is situated. Furthermore, good school leaders will need to be prepared for their role as civic educators through the hidden curriculum of the school. These programs of continuing professional development would be supported well by extending the existing bank of case studies (e.g., Elliott et al. 1981) which illustrate democratic school leadership at work. Secondly, although the quality of professional work undertaken by individuals in positions of formal authority is significant, good leadership also depends on having structures in place that foster a collective commitment to the future flourishing of the school as an organization. I sketched out very briefly the principles that might inform a new National Framework for School Leadership, arguing that these were ideas that needed a future project to develop them further.

In summary, I found that English schooling culture in the twenty-first century continues with a major paradox and contradiction at its heart. It is still designated the cultural agency for “making democracy work,” still involved, at specific periods with explicit pedagogical projects intended to enhance education for citizenship, yet its own practice—as this thesis has demonstrated—remains “largely undemocratic” (Grace 1995, p. 65). I reached this conclusion at the end of a complex and demanding study which took a long time to complete. At a personal level, I could rejoice that my argument continued to be relevant, moreover, that no one else had completed a very similar project first. I consider next whether that effort was worth it, particularly as I am skeptical that my findings will enjoy much impact.

Why I Chose This Approach Rather than Any Other

A Critical Voice

One important reason for pursuing my chosen topic along these lines was the example other researchers set. In *School Leadership: Beyond Educational Management*,

Gerald Grace (1995) analyzes the dominant school leadership discourse critically, through historical, sociological, and philosophical lenses. I adopted a different balance of philosophical to sociological argument to Grace, and I did not undertake any field work. However, I was impressed by the ability Grace showed to combine academic depth and rigor with engaged concern for the subject of his study.

Patricia White (1983), in *Beyond Domination: An Essay in the Political Philosophy of Education*, shares similar concerns about the implications of school leadership as it is commonly practiced in England and the implications for democracy. White not only identifies similar moral concerns but articulates them in clear, no-nonsense terms. In “our world,” she observes (1983, p. 9), there are no “super-people” expert in the good life in detail for others; and even were such “super-people”—who knew unerringly what the good was—to exist, why would they be morally justified in taking control over the affairs of other people? White’s approach to applied philosophical research is at once scholarly and useful, written in a style that is at once rigorous and accessible to nonphilosophers.

I accept that this style of approach to philosophy of education on its own would be no more helpful to the interpretation of education than a purely general approach to philosophy (Hirst in Hirst and Carr 2005). Applied philosophy engages with contemporary issues and problems with an eye to what is feasible and possible given practical circumstances. Theoretical philosophy focuses on clear articulation of abstract concepts and values. Theoretical philosophy is valuable to applied philosophy; without it, engaged or applied philosophical work could lose sight of general philosophical principles and become, as Stuart White (2009) suggests, hostage to the vagaries of conventional or commonsense wisdom. Meanwhile, were all philosophical work conducted at the level of principle, the value of this thinking to everyday life would never be realized, as Patricia White (1983) has emphasized. That philosophy of education could be valuable to reflection on my everyday life as an educational practitioner came as something of a surprise. Like many beginning teachers in England at the end of the 1980s, an appreciation of theory had evaded me during my PGCE course. However, with nearly a decade of professional experience on which to reflect, I engaged with educational theory once again and found this to be an empowering and uplifting experience. Texts I have just identified gave legitimacy to the discontent I felt while caught up in the dominant leadership discourse. This discourse has changed very little since the late 1980s. Take, for example, a speech to the National College for School Leadership Annual Conference 2009, made by its chief executive, Steve Munby, who declared

Being an effective leader means we first have to believe in our own leadership; to fully accept the fact that we are in charge. We put on the mantle of leadership. (Munby 2009, p. 2)

He argues for particular qualities that outstanding individuals must demonstrate if schools are to respond to those “profound challenges” faced in the early twenty-first century (ibid. 1) in ways that will enable pupils to flourish. I accept that the quality of work contributed by key individuals in senior positions of authority in schools is one important factor in their likely success. I recognize the importance of authority in schools and that the way in which it is exercised matters. However,

my interpretation of what “quality” in school leadership entails is rather different from Munby’s. I am clear—where he is ambiguous—that those qualities and skills which distinguish very good school leaders from others are acquired through nurture rather than nature. Good school leaders are made rather than born, with their aptitude for leadership depending on the education those in leadership positions receive and the quality of their reflection on professional experience.

This remains an unfashionable view. The National Standards for Headteachers (DfES 2004) emphasize:

the key role that headteachers play in engaging in the development and delivery of government policy and in raising and maintaining levels of attainment in schools in order to meet the needs of every child.

In England ordinary citizens enjoy relatively little direct influence over the direction of decision making in education, leaving considerable power in the hands of educational professionals. At a local level headteachers, like the linchpin of a wheel (White 1983), hold schools together so that all action revolves around them. Nonetheless, I have come to understand in my own mind what I consider leadership to be about and am able to apply that to my own practice as a teacher and educator, albeit now in a university rather than school-based context. I feel I can talk about leadership with clarity and integrity when I reflect on practice and policy with those beginning teachers who are my students. Moreover, my material is organized and my case is made, should anyone in the future be concerned, as I was, with the paradox of autocratic leadership practice in a supposedly democratically governed school system.

A Political Matter

To lead a school that is located in a democratic context well requires specific value commitments. These—rather than other values—should inform both the agency of those key individuals and the structures within which their leadership activity is conducted. However, I found that those values have been sidelined in the dominant discourse and that going back to much earlier studies, outside more recent work in the ELMA field, was needed to reconnect reflection on school leadership with those political and moral dimensions to educational practice, as well as to analyze it. While existing research conducted in the ELMA field has been concerned to investigate values and school leadership in general, it has paid insufficient attention to the place of democratic values in particular in accounts of good school leadership suited to democratic societies. This is not to denigrate that earlier work. Mike Bottery (1992, 2000) had usefully connected and articulated a notion of good educational leadership influenced by Aristotelian notions of virtue (1953). Anne Gold (2004) had linked abstract ideas from her reading of the field to concrete examples of very good school leadership practice. Their relative neglect of political matters in order to pursue other issues of importance has enabled me to bring my

own counter-story into the spaces they have left, without having to generate entirely new material.

My study is likely to prove of interest to those concerned with democracy and school leadership in various education systems across the world. The principles of democratic school leadership which I developed could be adapted to their needs and do not depend on the particularities of English schooling. For those readers familiar with traditions of democratic school leadership and governance better established than those in England, the ideas I developed identified principles of particularly good and successful leadership practice within those alternative contexts. Where there is pressure within those systems to move away from democratic school leadership, my argument reinforces moral reasons why the status quo ought to be argued for.

Co-constructors of Ideas

Another very important dimension to the way in which I approached my research was its conversational turn. I was influenced in the direction I took, not only by books and journal articles but through ongoing dialogue with people who embody those ideas. Like Bruner (1996), I conceive of learning in simple terms according to four “Folk Pedagogies” and recognize them in the learning I have undertaken as a researcher. The “Folk Pedagogies” Bruner draws attention to are:

- Learning propositions through traditional forms of didactic teaching
- Learning from example or modeling, particularly associated with forms of vocational learning including apprenticeship
- Learning in groups that co-construct knowledge together
- Learning through critical engagement with knowledge that has been constructed in the past and has stood the test of time

I have acquired factual knowledge about educational leadership and research in the field through reading, attending conferences, and holding conversations with others. Moreover, I have learned from the example that others have set how to conform to certain academic conventions in my own academic work. I have particularly, though not exclusively, drawn on studies that are congenial to the concerns of my research and rooted in similar moral assumptions. Learning to interpret educational research, policy, and practice as part of a community of academic practice was another important aspect of the research I undertook. In the earlier stages of my research that community of academic practice was dominated by the foundational disciplines, particularly though not exclusively philosophy of education, I was influenced by work that members of that community undertook which related clearly to the concerns of educational policy and practice, although other work impressed me that was more or less directly relevant and useful. Without a clear sense of community members being keen to specialize in philosophical work in depth, I could not have enjoyed the experience of immersion

in a very particular and often rigorously conducted form of expertise in action. One potential danger that strong communities of academic practice face is the potential of becoming too inward looking, preoccupied with affairs that are internal to it for their own sake and of little concern or interest to the world outside. Given my concern to apply philosophy through engagement with the wider field of educational studies, I benefited considerably from membership of a second academic community—within a much smaller education department, as part of a Social Sciences Faculty within another research-intensive UK university—at a later stage in my research and once my identity as a philosopher of education was established.

The advantage to my research of belonging to a disciplinary community of academic practice corresponds with the learning which Bruner describes as a process of critical engagement with knowledge that has been constructed in the past and which has stood the test of time. The foundational disciplines offer intellectual resources of this kind, enabling the researcher to analyze, in my case, school leadership, drawing on intellectual traditions based on ways of structuring knowledge which have stood the test of time. I have in mind the notion of knowledge in the “intersubjective” sense that Bruner uses, rather than regarding linguistic structures as forms of knowledge that offer final and essential definitions of what is the case conceptually.

Taking philosophy of education as one example, I find it helpful to treat the foundational disciplines as entities whose boundaries are fluid and which do not own exclusive rights to certain forms of intellectual activity. For example, philosophers need to recognize that while analyzing language may be characteristic to the work they do, it is not exclusive to them. In my research, I strayed into theological reflection when it became apparent that to interpret those common assumptions which underpin conceptions of leadership found in English schooling, I needed to dwell on the quasi-religious nature of the language in which those ideals were expressed in the dominant discourse.

If the disciplines are taken to operate along the lines of “language games,” as Wittgenstein describes them (in the *Philosophical Investigations*), rather than possessing an essential core, they display certain “family resemblances” of the kind I identify for philosophy of education in my research report (see above). Philosophy of education, like other foundational disciplines, comprises a “complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing” (PI 66). It is a “form of life” or practice as much as a way of thinking (note my comments above about embodiment), that is, rule governed (note my definition of what philosophy necessarily entails).

Once the intellectual efforts of an educational researcher are spread across several of these disciplinary language games, rather than concentrated on one discipline in particular, it may be inevitable that the quality of their work according to the terms set out by the discipline in its own right will be compromised. I do not claim to have made an original contribution to general philosophy through my research project. However, what I have achieved is a rich, interconnected understanding of school leadership from engaging with education as a wider field, at the levels of theory, policy, and practice.

I suggested earlier (see above) that a good deal of ELMA research is interdisciplinary in a weak sense of taking its lead from the subject to be investigated, not the demands of any one research method. Although there are advantages to this approach, nevertheless I have also alluded to a lack of coherence in a good deal of interpretive school leadership which might be addressed were a stronger sense of engagement with the disciplines in evidence. I note too the relative priority afforded purely interpretive and critical approaches to Educational Leadership, Management and Administration (ELMA) research, compared to more quantitatively orientated approaches in the field, for example, in terms of which projects attract funding. I am not optimistic that those broader questions about what leadership means, who it should include, and why, given the wider sociopolitical context in which those schools are located is democratic, will be addressed in a large research project in the near future. This is a pity; our collective knowledge of the history of school leadership remains so thin that we know very little in general terms about how leadership was practiced in the past, beyond the example of outstanding individuals, most notably Thomas Arnold; and there is an urgent need for philosophers to make a contribution at the level of theory to issues in public policy concerning democratic governance and schooling.

What Was the Role of Interpretation in This Research Study?

The ideas reflected in my research were first formed when I considered becoming a senior school leader. Professionally ambitious, I was not interested in adequate or competent headship: I wanted to do it extremely well. Yet no principal from my own teaching experience captured the approach to leadership to which I personally aspired. This was the case, even though in other respects I was fortunate to work with senior school leaders who were successful and experienced professionals. Part of my frustration stemmed from the experience of collaborative leadership as a middle manager within the same school system. Within curriculum areas of schools, it seemed possible to ensure that decisions were made democratically within the confines of that more immediate sphere of influence where those individuals concerned were committed in principle and understood how to practice those values. The approach could be time-consuming, particularly in the short term, but yielded positive results. Experienced practitioners contributed their complementary skills and perspectives, making careful, considered choices. We honored the commitments we made collectively, presumably because we had all agreed to them. In short, we led both wisely and well.

However, this approach did not appear to translate to senior and whole school leadership because, in English schools at least, decision making tends to be dominated by the headteacher. Although they may consult other people through the process, invariably they determine the final outcome, operating a form of benign

dictatorship. This situation is commonly justified on the grounds that headteachers as “experts” are uniquely well placed to know “their” school’s best possible future. In my research, I challenged this assumption on pedagogical and moral grounds, arguing that maintained schools in England should be led democratically. I did not bring a particular conception of the democratic school to my argument, nor did I attempt to define a “one size fits all” account of the democratic school leader. Rather, I argued that in a democracy local groups should determine for themselves how they wished schools to be led, within the constraints of a national framework for school leadership. On this representative account, while specialists take responsibility for aspects of school leadership in detail on behalf of society, at a strategic level all those people with a direct interest in the future of a particular school should be consulted.

What Interpretation Involved for Me Personally

Situated but Not Parochial

I was concerned to establish at the level of principle the nature of “good” school leadership in a democratic society. I drew on the specific example of schooling in England with which I was very familiar in order to develop an argument which will also be of interest and relevance to a wider readership. My study benefited from the richness of immersion in one particular educational context in order to illustrate themes with a much wider application. The method and structure of the study I undertook is readily adaptable to an investigation of leadership in another context. The argument I developed—that learning takes place from the experience of leadership in a school—holds true whether or not the particular setting concerned is democratic. Furthermore, the method and structure could also be used to frame the investigation of an entirely different topic entirely. I am considering how it might be adapted to a completely new and different investigation of teacher education, with particular reference to English schooling.

My ability to interpret the context was enriched by my experience through immersion in that practice, as a teacher and pupil as well as citizen. Although ultimately this degree of exposure to practice was invaluable, at the beginning of the study, this closeness also proved difficult to navigate. Had I been aware of the approach when I started out, I might have been drawn to John Elliott’s notion of philosophy as a form of action research (1987). On the other hand, while the passage from practitioner to researcher was long, demanding, and difficult, ultimately it was rewarding. It is as though I am bilingual, fluent in both “practice speak” and “lingua academica.”

One practical difficulty created early on in the study by close engagement with professional experience was being too busy with the demands of “doing” educational practice to meet the demands of “doing” educational research. I had to move

beyond the idea that being a researcher was a form of self-indulgence, a hobby rather than “proper” work! A more significant obstacle was a strong sense that something needed to be done about the way in which leadership was being promoted in English schools. While a powerful motivation for initiating a research project, it impeded my sense of “critical distance” (see above) from that which I was attempting to analyze.

The process of initiation involved a good deal of listening to and learning from others who had made a similar journey before me, either through personal conversation or by engaging with their ideas in articles and books. My evolution as a researcher was hastened when my professional identity shifted from classroom practitioner. To me, applied philosophy conducted well makes considerable demands both in terms of interest and academic skill. The practice and general theory of that to which philosophy is to be applied—in this case education—must be understood rigorously and the same degree of attention focused on general philosophy as well. I did refer directly to my personal experience of schooling in England at strategic points in my study, in particular to create plausible examples of what school leadership practice could be like in this context in the future. I was concerned to counter the perception that democratic educational practice is an unattainable ideal, by demonstrating that there are glimpses of it already working in established practices. However, I also took great care not to rely too heavily on my partial perspective, developing a priori philosophical arguments first that could be illustrated with reference to my own experience where this corresponded to findings of more rigorously conducted empirical research. For example, when identifying the ways in which schools might interpret a need to respect the “student voice” in decision making, I used my own experiences to support Michael Fielding’s argument (2004) that these initiatives may not in practice enable young people to influence in any significant way the future direction that strategy takes.

Situated on Thresholds

Applied philosophy is certainly no poor relation to a “purer” form of academic enquiry. The applied philosopher is required, Janus-like, to stand on the threshold of two distinct but related areas of study, looking in both directions. Moreover, the applied philosopher may need to be prepared to pursue their enquiries across academic disciplines if they are to understand the subject of their research in the particular context in which it is situated, and these may extend beyond the established foundational disciplines. For example, I was concerned in my research to analyze the word “vision” in the dominant school leadership discourse. In addition to using resources in general philosophy and the philosophy of education, I took into account the clear influence that religious belief has had on everyday English language that is used by people to articulate their understanding of an imaginative and creative form of thinking which characterizes very good leadership. Allusions to the Book of Proverbs Chapter 18, “for without vision the

people perish,” are made by people whether or not they consider themselves personally to be religious. I drew on my academic background in theology to consider what might be meant by such a remark.

However, the theory/practice threshold was not the only one I occupied. I was committed intellectually to working across and beyond the foundational disciplines in educational studies in an attempt to do justice to the complexity of a social, cultural, and ideological interpretation of school leadership. In so doing, I made life very difficult for myself, feeling myself pulled in several directions at once and struggling to do justice to the various and complex strands to my investigation. I did bring capacities to the project from my first degree, although ironically philosophy was not one of these! In particular, I was confident in my background in history and I am proud as a philosopher of education to have been able to reappraise the influence of Thomas Arnold on the developing notion of the “headteacher” in English schools, having engaged in some depth with an eclectic range of relevant historical literature. Were I to undertake this or a similar project again, I would be less overoptimistic about my capacity to keep quite so many disciplinary “plates” spinning at the same time. That said, with practice, my plate spinning much improved.

Situated as an Underdog

I was aware that as a researcher engaged in a theoretical analysis of ELMA research within a tradition of ELMA research that was critical of the dominant discourse, I was likely to attract a good deal of moral support but miss out on the material benefits I might have enjoyed had I chosen to research this topic from another perspective. The philosopher Charles Taylor (1985a) accepts that basic, elemental patterns in human activity exist and describes the “product” of researching these systematically as “brute data” (1985a, p. 19). However, Taylor argues that analyzing “brute data” alone will yield a very limited understanding of human behavior, given that it is constituted in such large part by beliefs or layers of meaning with which human behavior becomes invested. During my long engagement with empirical research in the ELMA field, I did find a good deal of research in the interpretive tradition. Nonetheless, a good deal more of it made positivist assumptions and was keen to bracket out those questions of value and meaning which I take to be necessary if what makes a school or its leadership good is to be appreciated.

I assumed from the outset that notions of good leadership are contested, influenced by the sociopolitical context in which they are situated. Thus, I did not accept the notion that certain behaviors essential to the best school leadership in all circumstances can be identified through carefully structured empirical research. Like Grace (1995, p. 5), I saw considerable limitations to research that has sought to isolate and describe general patterns of management behavior that might characterize all successful organizations, including schools. While other

ELMA research has raised awareness of the role that their values play in the agency of school leaders, I highlighted the role that values play in determining how that notion of agency is itself socially constructed. These are not ideas or methods of research that are likely to prove attractive to a number of grant-making bodies or policy makers.

Why Interpretation Proved to Be So Valuable

Nonetheless, interpretation was key to the findings of my research. First, it informed the distinction that I came to make between notions of “leadership” concerned with an office or specific position of formal authority in one sense; and in another sense, leadership concerns the influence that some members of a social group exercise over other people informally. Second, I was also concerned to locate the notion of leadership in the task or activity of “organizing the group effort,” rather than associating leadership with the personal qualities and characteristics of particular individuals. I did not discount the importance of individual people in leadership roles who have a valuable role to play in any democratic account of leadership. Even very direct forms of democracy may delegate key functions of the group effort to key individuals for limited periods of time. What is critical is the principle that all members of the group are equally entitled to a say in those matters which concern them, with no group member becoming too powerful.

The alternative account of leadership that I proposed developed from the following assumption: that while individual school leaders should be competent and efficient at the tasks they undertake to do on behalf of others, their actions should be consistent with the values and beliefs of the particular society in which their leadership practice is situated. This requires in turn that the construction of that formal role, the expectations that others have of the competent school leader, should also be informed by those values. For schools in England, these principles are democratic.

This also requires citizens in democratic societies to accept that educational professionals on their own cannot be held responsible entirely for school leadership. I pointed to examples of practice whereby democratic principles had been translated to arrangements in schools so that pupils, teachers, parents, and members of the wider community were already included in decision making. If we accept that one of the aims of education is to “make democracy work” as Grace suggests, these promising practices need to be developed and more systematically applied.

As Gerald Grace has observed (1995), schools remain designated places where young people should be prepared for citizenship. The National Curriculum for England and Wales states that every young person while at school should

develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for their self-fulfilment and development as active and responsible citizens. (DfES 2007, p. 1)

Yet while a linchpin tradition of leadership persists, the learning from experience that takes place runs counter to the promotion of democratic values.

Conclusion

Good school leadership cannot be reduced to the implementation of processes by which specified outcomes, including positive examination results and university entrance, may be achieved by pupils in optimal numbers. Leadership is a form of moral education which initiates members of a social group into certain behaviors and skills, attitudes, and dispositions associated with the particular social practice in which they are engaged. Nor is this phenomenon limited to life at school; it also operates in the world at large, presenting myriad opportunities for civic education both in school and in the wider community.

Thus, if learners are to be prepared for their future lives as citizens, they need exposure from an early age to the cultural norms assumed by democratic society. This includes, although it is not limited to, their experience of school leadership. They will learn from the models of formal school leadership practice to which they are exposed as well as through opportunities to participate personally in informal school leadership activity. Through interpretive methods, I developed an argument along these lines which applied theory to a significant problem that has implications, not only for educational policy and practice as it is now but in the future. Given its particular tradition of autocratic leadership practice, truly “radical” change to schooling in England is needed; yet only a very serious engagement with “thinking otherwise” about such practice will trigger such a change. A more nuanced distinction needs to be drawn between the kinds of school leadership that relies on the opinion of experts and that which requires deliberation involving all directly interested citizens. However, these moral and political questions will not be addressed adequately while interpretive ELMA research continues to be sidelined.

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6.6 Philosophical Approaches to Educational Research: Justice, Democracy, and Education

Penny Enslin and Mary Tjiattas

In this case study we show how methods of philosophical interpretation can illuminate fundamental questions concerning education, justice, and democracy. In line with the project of the handbook, we set out to demonstrate how developments within our work on education, justice, and democracy over the last decade can be attributed, at least in part, to the use of such methods.

Although we will abide by the spirit of our brief and talk about research methods and procedures as though they can be explicitly set out and consciously and intentionally followed, we wish to signal at the outset that these forays are essentially reconstructive rather than descriptive. Philosophical thought is an activity that is not easily captured in an algorithm, however complex, or even by an analytic account of its constituent parts. Certainly, it is possible to identify “methods” that are invariably present and can be cited in attempting to describe the procedures of philosophical investigation. But the employment of such methods is really a tacit affair and so only partially corresponds to what is said or claimed in the attempt to capture it. This is also why philosophical pedagogy itself, at all levels, includes both courses in logical argumentation, on the one hand, and a systematic exposure to historical and contemporary discussion of the central issues in the various subfields of philosophy. Students are required to model processes of analysis, distinction making, argument construction, and criticism by close examination of the work of others. Although instructors may from time to time make methodological observations, this is not ever to the fore. We suggest that

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the reason for this is that any methodological pronouncements are partial at best and tendentious at worst.

As we show how philosophical interpretation illuminates both educational policy and debates about education in the public sphere, we will draw the reader's attention to examples of how philosophy interprets by making sense; elucidating, explaining, arguing, and analyzing concepts and arguments; discerning and critiquing assumptions; making distinctions; and conducting thought experiments. Our chapter will draw selectively from our previously published examples of the kind of interpretive research that exemplifies a philosophical approach.

Framework and Methodological Approach

Our engagement with the issues mentioned above emerged from our own educational backgrounds and careers, particularly our shared interest in political philosophy. Though our research and teaching has drawn on much else in the history of philosophy that illuminates education, politics, and society—from Plato to Foucault—the kind of political philosophy we learned to practice is largely located in the analytical style, especially as influenced by the work of John Rawls. Rawls's accounts of justice and of liberalism (1971, 1993) have set the agenda of so much of political and moral philosophy since the early 1970s. While many have challenged details of his work, it has defined much of the debate, including in philosophy of education's attention to themes that embrace justice, democracy, citizenship, equality, inclusion, and diversity. These issues acquired a specific aspect and significance in the context of South Africa after apartheid, where the pursuit of justice and democracy in and through education had also long been an urgent problem demanding analysis. But even engaging with these questions from within and later outside South Africa could never be separated from the global context as a frame for both the educational problems and the philosophical debates that now reflect increasing integration across national boundaries.

As we explain in more detail in the following section, the Rawlsian framework provides both substantive guidelines deriving from a broadly Kantian political philosophy centered on impartiality and equality and a methodological approach that we believe is especially well suited to philosophical research, namely, "reflective equilibrium." The method of reflective equilibrium made famous by Rawls and oft-invoked by philosophers, when pressed to describe their procedures, fits, we believe, what we do. It assumes not only that tensions between particular judgments and general principles inevitably occur in the course of deliberation but also that such tensions are the motor driving the development of interpretations and explanations in philosophical work. Some (e.g., Sandel 2009, p. 28) have gone so far as to say that such clashes are at the source of the "impulse to philosophy."

This process of mutual accommodation between concrete issues and the ways in which we conceptualize them is one that is widely employed in moral and political philosophy and in normative philosophy more generally. General principles and

theoretical accounts do not, in this domain, provide fixed, determinate answers to more particular positions and judgments. Correspondingly, considered judgements are not taken as fixed, but are, rather, provisional starting points in moral reflection, to be revised as the process of seeking reflective equilibrium proceeds. Philosophical labor is, then, a matter of bringing abstractions to bear on more concrete concerns, e.g., applying principles to cases, determining whether alleged similarities and dissimilarities between cases are relevant or salient. In this way, the development of positions on substantive issues goes hand in hand with that of an analytic framework. Reflective equilibrium allows for the simultaneous and interdependent development of substantive and methodological positions. Much of our grappling with specific issues and themes that we discuss below can be construed as developing substantive positions on particular issues while modifying the framework we initially adopted.

Of course, the notion of reflective equilibrium, which effectively describes a provisional goal of inquiry, provides only very general guidelines concerning how to achieve coherence and consistency between our many beliefs (and levels of beliefs). It leaves much room to fill in the specific procedures that make the attainment of such an endpoint likely or probable, and such methodological inquiry is itself open-ended and ongoing.

Starting Points

Philosophical research, like a lot of academic work, proceeds within a conceptual space with well-defined delineations. We find the framework developed by Rawls especially useful both for articulating the questions we address and working out the range of possible responses to them.

For many contemporary political philosophers, Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) is the field's defining and most influential work. Recent discussions have called it "... a sophisticated, deeply complex, and revolutionary theory of justice for democratic societies" (Voice 2011, p. 2), claiming (Maffettone 2009, p. 7) that it has changed the "dictionary of political thought." These accolades attest to the ongoing centrality of Rawls's work and point to the sources of its influence: it has both set the substantive agenda of contemporary political philosophy and provided a methodology that has become entrenched in the discipline.

Substantively, social justice theory, the centerpiece of Rawls's work, focuses on the most basic and formative institutions of society (social, political, and economic), namely, those which exert pervasive influence on the choices, life prospects, and opportunities of individuals. The central aim of *A Theory of Justice* is to specify the conditions under which the basic structure of society is just the principles that would ensure that activities of the basic institutions result in just outcomes or, as Rawls puts it, that the terms of cooperation are fair and that burdens and benefits of social cooperation are fairly distributed.

Principles of justice define the fundamental terms of association, agreement, and forms of social cooperation, which regulate and determine the distribution of wealth, income, goods, and opportunities in society. In addition, they mediate both intimate and non-intimate relations between people, providing the means by which they discharge at least some of their moral duties to one another. For Rawls, this requires that the principles be endorsable by free, equal, reasonable, and rational people. Significant features of Rawls's theory of justice include its commitment to moral equality, respect for the dignity of persons through recognition of rights, the moral constraints that determine the fair distribution of benefits and burdens of social and economic activity, and reasonable agreement as the central method of justification. Formulated as two ordered principles, his conception of justice is tailored to (1) guarantee fundamental individual liberties, assigning them inalienability and absolute priority, and (2) embody an egalitarian ideal of social cooperation based on reciprocity, ensuring fair equality of opportunity and demanding that any inequalities benefit the worst off.

In parallel with his project to set out and elaborate a theory of justice, Rawls presents an extensive, evolving, and multifaceted moral methodology (which is intended to operationalize reasonable agreement as a method of justification). Perhaps best known is his contractualist argument to show that the two principles of justice would be agreed to by reasonable people under fair conditions of choice, i.e., it shows they are rationally grounded, universal moral principles applied impartially across cases or, in Kant's terms, universalizable. Rawls realizes that it is not enough simply to claim that the principles he proposes would be the ones that reasonable persons would accept. In order to show that such agreement would take place and moreover constitute a moral justification of the principles, he constructs a hypothetical "original position" in which parties to the agreement (representatives of actual individuals) operate under reasonable constraints on choice (corresponding to exclusion of information about morally irrelevant individual interests) that ensure that they consider the matters under discussion from the point of view of all, so making decisions and choices that are fair. Under these constraints, rational parties will choose principles that would guarantee equal basic liberties and equality of opportunity and that would permit inequalities only if they benefitted the worst off. Moreover, Rawls insists that the principles chosen under conditions of constraint also match our considered judgments about justice in reflective equilibrium. If not, the constraints in the original position must themselves be revised. So the contract device itself and our beliefs about justice must be in reflective equilibrium with what we believe about justice (Daniels 2008). The structure of the original position is itself justified by employing the method of reflective equilibrium (Scanlon 2003).

The method of reflective equilibrium, the most general feature of Rawls's moral methodology, is evident in his construction of the original position. It is a (dynamic) coherentist approach to justification of claims that deems a belief or judgment justifiable if and only if it is consistent with other well-established constituents of the relevant system of beliefs. Reflective equilibrium thus supplies a heuristic goal of normative investigations: investigations into the right and the good

incorporate but go beyond simple conceptual analysis (or what McGinn (2012) calls “decompositional” analysis). They need to answer questions not merely about the meaning or definition of concepts but about the connections of a particular analysis with other concepts that feature in our beliefs (and so require both “compatibility analysis” and “connective analysis” (McGinn 2012)). Reflective equilibrium is thus designed so that the analysis of concepts progressively corrects and refines relations between the elements of the web of concepts. In addition to providing a method of justification, reflective equilibrium is also a method of belief revision. In effecting clarifications, and making concepts and their relations more explicit, corrections ensue. Attending to the compatibility between concepts draws attention to inconsistencies and hence the need to resolve them.

The starting point of this endeavor, for Rawls, is our pre-theoretical “considered convictions of justice” (1971, p. 18), from which we move towards principles that capture them. We then test principles against our considered convictions. We repeat this process until our judgments and principles are reciprocally coherent. This, in sketchy outline, is essentially the procedure involved in narrow reflective equilibrium. In later work Rawls extends the notion (wide reflective equilibrium), to include the testing of considered judgments and principles against alternative accounts of what justice requires, so moving from mere coherence of our own judgments to engagement with others. He envisages that this will ideally issue in a comprehensive moral view that “. . . would survive the rational consideration of all feasible moral conceptions and all reasonable arguments for them” (1999, p. 289). The “evolution” of reflective equilibrium from something resembling a formal decision procedure in narrow reflective equilibrium to something increasingly interactive or in wide reflective equilibrium which seeks to establish reasons we can present to others as considerations they can be expected to share reflects the interpersonal aspect of Rawls’s contractualism of his later work (Maffettone 2009, p. 113).

An example of reflective equilibrium at work substantively is Rawls’s later work (e.g. 1993), concerned to show how liberalism, in engaging with opposed positions, can both defend and clarify its central concepts, e.g., how its insistence on universal principles can be rendered compatible with pluralism in contemporary democracies via the notions of public reason and the overlapping consensus (of reasonable comprehensive doctrines). Public reason, the main function of which is to provide a public basis of justification (Rawls 1993), seems particularly apt to modern society with its array of different (and sometimes incommensurable) ideas of the good life. It also goes hand in hand with institutions and practices that connect the exercise of political power to a system of public reasoning among citizens, understood as free and equal (Cohen 1996, p. 96). Reasonable people are “. . . willing to govern their conduct by a principle from which they and others can reason in common” (Rawls 1993, p. 49 n.1).

Shared political values and ideals need to be animated through a discursive framework that allows for genuine democratic deliberation between citizens (Rawls 1993, p. 390). The idea of public reason has been construed (e.g., Scanlon 2003), as the result of reflective equilibrium. It generates a discursive framework that addresses requirements for social unity in a pluralistic democratic society

through an account of how decisions are made and how disagreement is to be handled. Only if “reasonable” citizens who are committed to different comprehensive doctrines endorse the same political conception of justice can there be stability in pluralistic societies. Thus wide reflective equilibrium is now seen in action in identifying public reasons, namely, those that provide the basis for an overlapping consensus and for the construction of an account of democratic legitimacy (Rawls 1993, p. 391). One of our own attempts at wide reflective equilibrium has been our ongoing interpretive engagements with the work of theorists who adopt a variety of (evolving) positions on social justice and who, moreover, are committed to maintaining a meaningful connection with concrete social and political issues. Our own work draws on, integrates, and modifies their views. We hope that our reflections below on our research project convey the process of coming to terms with the rich material they proffer, the ways it allows for continuous refinements and reformulations of the questions that we consider.

We have applied the tools and resources of political philosophy to educational issues in relation to three broad sets of concerns raised by liberal feminism, global democracy, and cosmopolitan justice. Each of these presents a challenge to what may be taken to be the standard framework in political philosophy. Although each foregrounds its own substantive ethical and political questions, generally speaking, all of these domains of inquiry raise the question of whether the framework of political philosophy has the resources to accommodate important forms of diversity. This is an issue which many contemporary political philosophers have grappled with, most famously Rawls himself. It is, arguably, what motivated the shift in his overall position from comprehensive to political liberalism, a development that can be taken (with Scanlon) as a paradigmatic example of reflective equilibrium at work. As Scanlon (2003, pp. 160–161) describes it, Rawls from the very beginning took a just society to be one whose institutions are justifiable on the basis of standards acceptable to all, and this fundamental idea persists throughout his work. However, with the recognition of reasonable pluralism, he no longer can rely on principles central to his comprehensive liberalism, and he modifies his position in order to meet the requirement of providing principles acceptable to all (replacing comprehensive values with political ones). Effectively, as Scanlon sees it, Rawls moves from the fact of reasonable pluralism, via the process of reflective equilibrium to a refinement of his earlier ideas of legitimacy.

This account resonates for us, because worries about inclusion shaped the way in which we examined and subsequently modified the standard framework in order to address vital questions raised by the contemporary political context. For example, we have addressed questions of how liberal feminists should envisage the project of fostering fundamental liberal goals in the face of challenges by proponents of diversity and inclusion, of the forms that democratic participation should take in a globalized world, and of how cosmopolitan institutions could accommodate inclusive participation across multiple sites and levels. In doing so we have suggested ways in which problems stemming from the pluralism of conflicting values might be addressed.

Research Report

The Westphalian principle, that sovereign states do not intervene in each others' affairs and hence that questions of social justice are strictly a domestic matter for nation states, has been steadily eroded. This has prompted the emergence of globalist political theories that have challenged standard liberal accounts to show how their commitment to moral egalitarianism can be reconciled with particularism about political responsibility. How, in Scheffler's terms (2001), can communal identification be reconciled with globalization and its pull towards integration within a coherent theory of justice? So we have focused on the question of national borders as divisions of basic significance in ethics and political philosophy. In short, we examine a range of ways of construing the relations between universal and particular values and principles and how they connect to fundamental debates about cultural relativism and the politics of recognition and work out their implications for questions of identity and ultimately for central educational issues like the fostering of common citizenship, autonomy, and intercultural understanding (Enslin and Tjiattas 2008, 2009a, b). We are sympathetic to observations like that of Bohman (2007), who says that globalization requires that many basic categories of democracy need to be "rethought in the plural": the people, the public, citizenship, human rights, federalism, and the possibility of a transnational polity. We find the view that theories of social justice emphasizing redistribution on the one hand and those emphasizing recognition on the other are mutually exclusive and too restrictive and that a more satisfactory framework can be achieved by integrating the perspectives of different universalist theorists, in part by proposing more nuanced analyses of social justice in terms of which there is not a dichotomous relation between these conceptions of justice.

With respect to educational issues, we have looked at how lifelong learning and the campaign for Education for All should be interpreted if they are to play a role in providing educational prerequisites for inclusion in a just and democratic polity (Enslin and Tjiattas 2009a, 2012). In so doing, we have found ourselves engaged in a process of mutually adjusting conceptions of democracy, from a relatively narrow, instrumental conception to a deliberative conception, and of learning, from instrumental and economically driven to a conception centered on the development of practical rationality of citizens, required if lifelong learning is to contribute to the development of capacities for citizenship: public reasoning and justification.

In exploring both justice and democracy in our more recent papers (Enslin and Tjiattas 2012, 2015), we take the "fact" of globalization to heart. With respect to democracy especially, we discovered that an "analysis of the normative foundations of global democracy" (Tinnevelde and De Schutter 2009, p. 6) calls for radical reconstruction within political thought, where theorists along with others are still entranced by national borders. What form should democratic participation take in a globalized world? This led us to consider novel interpretations of democracy, e.g., democratically deliberative polyarchy, and cosmopolitan institutions that need to accommodate inclusive participation and to start to think about how to develop an account of global legitimacy that does not invoke the authority of the

nation state. Much of the work in this area is speculative and thought experiment dependent—although we do attempt a sustained account of the European Union (EU) as embodying promising institutional structures.

We found public sphere theory as developed within critical theory (Habermas, Benhabib) to be a useful starting point, perhaps able to suggest deliberative decision-making mechanisms that meet conditions of participatory parity on a global scale. But it would need to be reinterpreted along the lines suggested by Cohen and Sabel's (2006) conception of a "directly deliberative polyarchy." The remaining and crucial question is how to develop the corresponding deliberative citizenship. Preparing citizens for a directly deliberative polyarchy calls for wide participation and capacities for problem solving that will make global institutions democratically accountable, for "globalization from below." Critical discussion of the role of transnational institutions needs to be complemented by serious and thoroughgoing investigations of concrete global issues (Singer 2002; Sachs 2008) and broadened understanding of the situation and perspectives of others.

In retrospect, it is clear to us that a unifying theme of our research has been to develop a defense of universalism that takes into account but withstands some of the major objections to it. In part this is because in recent years anti-universalism has become a *sine qua non* for respectable positions in philosophy of education, largely motivated by a concern with diversity and inclusion (reflected in the dominance of a set of related trends: identity politics, the politics of difference, and the politics of recognition as well as the broad trends of postmodernism, postcolonialism—and from a different quarter, communitarianism).

We have resisted this anti-universalist presumption, developing a defense of qualified universalism, because we remain convinced that, aside from its conceptual strengths (including its ability to respect many of the considerations advanced in favor of opposing, anti-universalist positions), such an approach is indispensable to addressing contemporary problems of justice in education, both domestically and globally. We are concerned about the retrogressive implications of overstated sensitivity to the dangers of some types of anti-universalism. Preoccupation with avoiding universalism obstructs possibilities of addressing the effects of globalization, and it fails to acknowledge the extent to which the international system is now constituted by a human rights framework (Benhabib 2007). Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), we have entered a phase in the evolution of global society that marks a transition from international to cosmopolitan norms of justice, which limit state sovereignty and accrue to individuals in a worldwide civil society, obliging states to treat them as moral and legal persons, in accordance with human rights standards. These features of the cosmopolitan order prompt Benhabib (2007) to ask, with reference to Rawls and noting that the UNDHR is a document that comes closest to international public law, how philosophers can continue to limit the application of human rights norms and standards in spite of such international agreements. Our research on liberal feminism as well as justice and democracy in global education echoes Benhabib's call for such belief correction, as we have tested prevalent principles, theories, and concepts against the emerging global order.

Universalism and Liberal Feminism

Our extended process of thinking about how to conceive of the universality of the normative perspective, especially in the face of diversity of cultural practices and norms, began with developing a version of liberal feminism that promotes autonomy and equality for girls and women. We have argued (Enslin and Tjiattas 2004, 2006) that a viable universalist liberal feminist education is able both to accommodate a thin and so defensible form of multiculturalism and to leave room for critical perspectives as well as understanding of different ways of life. Such a qualified accommodation of difference, for us, still allows for “liberalism with spine” (Macedo 2000). The work of Martha Nussbaum and of Susan Moller Okin demonstrates different ways—sometimes in disagreement with each other—in which liberal feminism addresses demands to accommodate and protect diversity, showing how universalist feminism can foster fundamental liberal aims in the face of culturalist opposition. Both address the demand for recognition of cultural and other differences, working from the concern that uncritical deference to difference is dangerous to women and girls. Their internal critique of liberalism from a perspective that takes gender as a strong focus has arguably led to refinements in liberal aspirations, especially brands of liberalism that have attempted to be gender neutral.

Okin’s essay “Is multiculturalism bad for women?” (1999) raised many of the issues at stake between liberal feminists and multiculturalists, asking what liberal states should do when minority cultures or religions ask for special rights that are at odds with the norms of gender equality that the majority culture supports. Okin argues that when cultural minorities press for recognition of their traditional ways, they aim to control the personal, private domains of marriage and the family and to continue to socialize women into unquestioning acceptance of their traditional status. Liberal states, she argues, should not simply accept demands for recognition of the minority culture and should pay attention to the status of women in these groups. Policies about group rights should pay special attention to the views of these groups’ less powerful members, emphasizing that individual rights should be exercised as well as the desirability of cultural alternation towards gender equality.

Nussbaum shares Okin’s view of the potential of cultures and traditions to change, stressing (1999) that they are internally diverse and also emphasizing the role of powerful members of groups who proffer cultural excuses for violating women’s rights by appealing to tradition. Her *Sex and Social Justice* (1999) is an extensive elaboration of a feminist universalist position based on the principle of human dignity as a central value that grounds moral claims that limit illiberal and non-liberal conceptions of the good. Her liberal feminism is committed to global as well as national justice. Her central human capabilities are open to local interpretation, but Nussbaum eschews normative cultural relativism and believes her approach makes room for a reasonable pluralism (1999, 2000). Capabilities are “multiply realizable” (2000, p. 105). Drawing fire from cultural relativists, Nussbaum’s brand of universalism insists that it attends to diversity; pluralism and respect for difference are themselves universal values (2000, pp. 31–32).

Nussbaum's unease with Rawls's liberalism finds his list of basic goods (including liberties, opportunities, and wealth) that should be justly distributed falls short of ensuring people's well-being. People's varying needs prompt her to look to capabilities and functioning rather than primary goods as the focus of distribution. Furthermore, Rawls's free and equal contracting parties in the original position fail to take human diversity into account, and she prefers a conception of the person that also draws on Aristotle and Marx as well as Kant. But Nussbaum nonetheless insists that hers is a form of political rather than comprehensive liberalism. Okin's liberal feminism does not follow Rawls into political rather than comprehensive liberalism, though like much political theory in recent decades, his theory of justice is a target in developing her own, feminist, expression of liberalism while deploying some of Rawls's key concepts. In another statement of her stance that multiculturalism is bad for women (1998), her conclusion is stronger in resolving the tensions between feminism and multiculturalism, arguing that the state could make it clear to members of groups who assert their right to continue their traditions even if they violate the rights of some individual members that these practices will not be tolerated and may be punished if they persist.

The ideal of a "gender-free society" pervades Okin's work on culture and the family. She uses Rawls's original position differently from Rawls, applying the different principle to the family, also insisting that inequalities in the family contribute to the unequal distribution of goods in the wider society. This has implications for a liberal feminist interpretation of education and its values and practices. In *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (1989), she argues for a future society free of gender which she sees as is in line with mainstream liberal conceptions of social justice. Taking gender as "the deeply entrenched institutionalization of sexual difference" (1989, p. 6), Okin's argument for a gender-free society envisages that there would be no rigid sex role prescriptions in both public and private life, enhancing equal opportunities and creating an environment in which children are able to develop a sense of justice. In her critical evaluation of the public/private distinction common in mainstream liberal theory, she argues that the notion of the family as a private sphere that should be free of intrusive government measures entrenches vulnerability for women and children. Focusing in the first instance on structural change in institutions, Okin's elaboration on Rawls's treatment of the family as a school of moral development leads her to see this part of the basic structure as a site of inequality and injustice, especially in the developing world. A genderless family would be both more just and "a more favorable environment for the rearing of citizens of a just society" (1989, p. 183).

Nussbaum too embraces a brand of liberalism that builds on and departs from Rawls's liberalism, including his restriction of political liberalism largely to one society and to a society's basic structure. Her account of social justice proposes extensive strategies by the state and other bodies to change both the family and other institutions to address the place of women in society and the comprehensive doctrines that underpin them. In defending her list of capabilities as the result of years of discussion in many contexts and across cultures represents, she argues, using Rawlsian terminology, for an overlapping consensus. In doing so she

stipulates that although implementation of the capabilities approach should be left to internal interpretation and application within different nations, sometimes it is appropriate for international agencies and other governments to promote human capabilities, even if political and economic sanctions may be necessary.

The theme of education features prominently in Nussbaum's work; she declares that opportunities for education are the most important for women's life chances (1999, p. 100). The education of girls in particular should aim to foster their capabilities to the full, and its attention to countering assumptions of non-entitlement should include promoting images of "worth and possibility" (2000, p. 288). The worldwide problem of low levels of education among women and girls obliges nations to make their education a high priority, with richer nations obliged to support poorer ones towards raising educational levels. While sensitive to questions of sovereignty, Nussbaum defends support for NGOs operating internationally, especially those promoting literacy, while opposing traditionalist objections to the education of women. But women's education also requires opportunities for secondary and higher education, including knowledge of the sciences and education for world citizenship.

Okin's liberal feminism exposes the role of gender discrimination in education as well as gender inequalities in access to educational opportunities. She also comments on moral education in schools and families though, however evocative the idea is, what a gender-free world demands of formal schooling is less developed in her writings. In her focus on how a theory of justice needs to be adjusted, she attends more to domestic justice, especially in the workplace and the family, rather than to global justice. Whatever their different emphases and priorities, between them their liberal feminism has been a formidable critical response not only to gender injustice. It has also exposed some limitations of Rawls's liberalism and creatively extended some of his central innovations, testing his method, principles, and concepts by applying them to the case of gender. For us, liberal feminism exemplifies reflective equilibrium at work by effecting substantive belief correction about gender, justice, and education, though its extension of principles of equality and freedom to women achieves a form of recognition largely confined to justice within national boundaries as traditionally understood (although we acknowledge that both our liberal feminist philosophers' work includes a transnational focus). So convinced have we been by the case for liberal feminism and the requirements it makes of education that our project subsequently moved on to other causes and concepts, to boundaries beyond those that cut across the genders, from universal application of basic liberal principles to gender injustice to universalism on a global scale.

Universalism and Justice

The "fact" of globalization, the increasing interconnectedness of the world, and the integration of previously independent basic structures call for a reconceptualization of even the most basic concepts and norms of political philosophy. This stems from

the idea that the locus of political authority can no longer be uniquely situated within the nation state. In our work we explore two interconnected but distinct set of questions, centered on justice and democracy, respectively.

In exploring the implications for education and global citizenship that have arisen from the burgeoning literature on global justice (e.g., Moellendorf 2002; Pogge 1989, 2002), we have adopted the position that moral duties are owed to all, without restriction; duties of justice have global scope, and there is no principled way to confine duties of justice to compatriots alone. This, we have argued (Enslin and Tjiattas 2008), has implications for the distribution of goods like education and, perhaps more controversially, for certain kinds of duties of intervention on a global level. In Moellendorf's argument for the global reach of duties of justice, claims of sovereignty can no longer be taken as grounds for blocking those of rights and the correlative duties they imply. Global duties exist and can be ascribed to certain relevant agents. For Moellendorf duties of justice are associative; duties of cosmopolitan justice exist because the circumstances that give rise to duties of justice exist globally. The increasing political and commercial activities that bring people into contact with one another have a global impact, and state boundaries are no longer reliable boundaries of common interests. Taking this line of argument further than most, Pogge (e.g., 1989, 2002) has argued not only that there are duties to aid those who suffer as a result of global inequality. He insists, too, that anyone who participates in the shaping and sustaining of a global order slanted in favor of some to the detriment of others also has a duty to influence the global order for the better, to compensate those adversely affected. Poverty in developing countries is the result of the ways in which developed countries have constituted the global order to suit their own interests.

Applying these claims to education, we have argued that global association creates duties to make access to schooling and beneficial educational outcomes, a major issue of international justice, with the potential to enable developing economies to compete more equally with those of wealthier countries. Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) can be applied to those problems, with radical implications. If applied globally, his concept of "fair opportunity" can be interpreted to provide for more attention to be paid to those in less favorable social positions (1971, p. 100), to improve the long-term prospects for the least advantaged by allocating educational resources with the aim of equalizing global access to education, which, for Pogge (1989, p. 180), is a particularly appropriate way to reform unjust institutional arrangements. The redistributive duty to alleviate educational disadvantage requires the alleviation of the huge differences in expenditure on education between rich and poor countries. In this way proponents of cosmopolitan justice have enacted the process of reflective equilibrium by interpreting Rawls' difference principle in ways he did not originally intend.

We have developed our argument that global justice in education requires a shift in emphasis from recognition to redistribution through an ongoing commentary on the campaign for Education for All—primarily its goal of universal primary education. Drawing on Fraser's challenge (1997, 2003) to the prevalent assumption that recognition should be given priority over redistribution as a category of justice,

we have shown how global trends in educational development have reflected a justified shift towards redistribution, while also arguing that redistribution, recognition, and also representation can be viewed as complementary categories.

The agenda set at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 committed international organizations and 146 governments to universal basic education. Centrally, the goal of the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO 2000) was free, compulsory primary education for all children by 2015. The emergence of this agenda, accounts of its underlying principles and strategies, and ongoing analyses of progress towards its achievement exhibit three features that we have explored in developing our interpretation of global justice.

First, the Dakar agenda was based on a mutual endorsement of universal basic education for all citizens in all the signature countries, emphasizing education as a basic human right, the key to stability and peace as well as sustainable development, and a prerequisite for effective social and economic participation, especially in the face of globalization (UNESCO 2000, Article 6). In similar global terms, the earlier Jomtien Declaration treated the basic need for learning as a universal responsibility. Both these initiatives can in turn be traced to the establishment of UNESCO in 1948, with a global agenda alongside those of UNICEF and the UNDP to support education worldwide, embedding education in a wider development agenda and reducing childhood mortality and poverty. Dakar Framework's restatement of the earlier commitments in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child to education as a human right reflects a universality of scope (Caney 2005) by urging that education be made universally available and the universality of human rights as "commonly accepted humanistic values" (Article 12; our emphasis). So the Expanded Commentary to the Dakar Declaration describes the millions of children without access to either primary or early childhood education as "an affront to human dignity and a denial of the right to education" (UNESCO 2000 Article 1.6).

Second, the framework emphasizes the need for resources to deliver universal basic learning, calling for an increase in external finances, through grants, debt cancelation, and debt relief. In doing so it noted that the Jomtien Declaration had called on the world community to augment the national budgets of the world's poorest countries to enable them to overcome constraints preventing the realization of basic education for all their citizens (Article 10.1). This continuing problem of a lack of resources is highlighted in subsequent EFA Monitoring Reports (e.g., 2008, 2010) leading to further calls for increased international support for the EFA campaign, in spite of some growth in aid for basic education after 2000. This emphasis on what we see as greater justice in redistribution of resources from the richest to the poorest countries is also an expression of recognition as a principle of educational justice. We interpret the observation in the campaign's 2008 Monitoring Report that constituencies like indigenous groups, migrants, and people with disabilities have less access to education than others as recognition that certain groups suffer maldistribution. This is not to the exclusion of more standard forms of recognition; the campaign allows for cultural norms to be renegotiated. The 2008 Global Monitoring Report argues that cultural norms that reduce access to

education need to be addressed, while espousing values that are universal in both justification and scope.

The global financial crisis, described in the 2010 Global Monitoring Report as a threat to improved contributions from both donor countries and private sources, is a significant setback to the campaign's target of universal primary education by 2015. But international collaboration towards the 2015 goals has also exhibited a third feature crucial to our account of global justice. The growth of multilateral initiatives and structures since UNESCO's foundation has involved governments, specialized agencies of the United Nations Organization, and nongovernmental organizations in significant forms of collaboration that support our stance that the nation state is no longer the default unit of analysis for interpreting the meaning of social justice. The international consensus on an agreed set of development priorities, with education at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals and the Global Campaign for Education, marks not only a global set of norms of justice, mechanisms for donor coordination, and recognition of universal primary education as a global public good. New actors in transnational networks now share multinational initiatives with national governments and international organizations, civil society, and advocacy networks (Mundy 2006; Jones 2007), in a global architecture that transcends the authority structures of nation states. While governments of nation states remain primarily responsible for funding and managing domestic educational provision, they are also now partners in pursuit of international development goals. And action and rule making with global reach is not confined to education; it is matched by similarly dense transnational interactions in labor regulation, economic security, and the environment.

In discussing the example of the Education for All campaign, we have illustrated our claim that a universalist conception of justice should prioritize redistribution ahead of recognition. This demonstrates an actual case of an attempt to forge a more just global order, implying in turn a shift from construals of social justice and of the principle of inclusion cast in purely domestic terms—a conceptual correction to the web of concepts involved in reflecting on justice in education. We will return to justice as representation to illustrate our universalist interpretation of the complementary concept of democracy.

Universalism and Democracy

In earlier work on democratic inclusion (Enslin et al. 2001), we defended a deliberative model of democracy and argued for a demanding (vs. minimalist) conception of democratic participation that accorded a central and indispensable role to deliberation and a robust conception of civic education as a way to meet the conditions of participatory democracy. In part, our emphasis on public reasoning in developing an account of democracy was motivated by a theoretical consideration, namely, that democratic arrangements be expressions of the general will and that all affected (subject to) binding collective decisions be afforded the opportunity

to participate actively in decision making by presenting reasons for proposals that culminate in joint agreements. But it was not coincidental that our interest in this problem peaked at a crucial time in the history of South Africa, namely, its transition to being a legitimately democratic country. Fully subscribing to the view that the importance of democracy lies in its justificatory and legitimating roles—including its authorization of power—we found Rawls’s ideal of democratic politics to be a fitting starting point. We proceeded by comparing and contrasting his views with those of Benhabib (1996) and Young (1996), who introduce, respectively, the important notions of a public sphere with fewer restrictions on debate and of communicative democracy that accommodates a range of styles of deliberation.

Our later work on democracy (Enslin and Tjiattas 2012) is built on our earlier deliberative stance and led to the question of whether the deliberative model of democracy could be extended beyond the boundaries of particular states and to the further questions of whether we needed (1) to modify our analyses of legitimacy and justification and (2) to work out more “logistical” questions of the structures of democratic participation in a global context.

It is worth mentioning, given our brief here, that our work on global democracy was significantly different from that on global justice. In contrast to the situation with respect to cosmopolitan justice, the literature on the global democracy domain is rather sparse. We became aware that in order to carry out the task described above, we would have to do considerably more than evaluate standard positions and apply them to new problems. In fact, we came to discover that the gap in the literature was closely linked to one of the central challenges of developing a transnational conception of democracy, as a result of which we would have to engage in extensive conceptual construction. In addition, we needed to address a particularly intractable resistance in the form of a widely held and largely unrecognized assumption, viz., that the nation state is a *sine qua non* of democracy. This is not only deeply entrenched in our culture, but political theorists and philosophers do not seem to be any less susceptible to its allure. It functions as an impediment to imaginative thinking, what Bachelard (1938) called an “epistemological obstacle.” Political theory in general seems unable to renounce the idea that the public sphere is located within the nation state—or that the “basic structure” is necessarily domestic and that democratic practice (inclusion, participatory parity) is intrinsically tied to it.

However, the fact of globalization is proving to be a sustained source of pressure on the idea that democratic requirements and practices apply only within the nation state and that national citizenship alone sets the bounds of inclusion. It leads to the questioning of deeply entrenched assumptions that questions of political legitimacy involve only the members of bounded states. Current geopolitical facts have the effect of unsettling the problematic of democratic political thought. In the post-Westphalian context, it becomes evident that we are affected not only by the basic structure of one’s own society (Pogge 1989, 2002). Globalization drives a wedge between affectedness and political membership. This requires that the meaning of inclusiveness undergo change, since its identity with political citizenship in a

nation state is no longer justified. A few notable exceptions among political theorists (Bohman 2007; Fraser 1997, 2003; Kuper 2004 inter alia) are sensitive to these changes and have accepted the challenge they imply. They have initiated attempts to address two kinds of questions: conceptual ones focusing on relations between democracy and globalization and more practical ones concerning the forms that global democratic institutions and practices would need to take if participatory parity is to extend to all potentially affected by global arrangements.

Among others, the central conceptual questions are: Will the same notions of legitimacy or justification apply to domestic and global political contexts? What form nontraditional political spaces must take in order to meet requirements of inclusiveness and political authority? How is the legitimacy of decisions to be demonstrated and achieved in nontraditional political spaces, those in which participants don't make up a "demos"? Who constitutes the "justificatory community" (Cohen 1991), and What is within the scope of its jurisdiction? Can cosmopolitan institutions overcome the obstacle of democratic deficit that seems an inevitable consequence of their vast scale? Can such relationships exist outside of well-defined cooperative schemes?

The train of thought that generates such questions calls for more than mere conceptual analysis, even when very broadly construed (see McGinn 2012). In order to answer questions about how democracy should be redefined for transnational settings, and to deflect skeptical objections to the possibility of such democratic arrangements, we felt pressed to consider what kinds of institutions may be envisaged that would provide the space for it to occur.

The idea of cross-border publics advanced independently by Bohman (2007) and Gould (2004) seems to be a promising starting point in thinking about institutional design. As Bohman sees it, the traditional role of a public is to allow for collective deliberation to influence a state's sovereign power. In transnational politics, demos exercise a democratizing effect through dispersed communicative networks. Although the idea of a cross-border public sphere made up of informal networks suggested by Bohman and Gould is an important starting point, contributing to the construction of intersociative democracy, such networks are not in and of themselves sufficient for global democracy. Although social movements can be important precursors to democratic organizations, on their own they do not supply all the conditions of how, in Dewey's terms "the inchoate public may function democratically" (1927, p. 327). In other words, they don't explain how the public sphere acquires authority—normative powers that allow it to inaugurate and sustain legitimate institutions.

Something like a transnational democratic constitution is required that would integrate networks so as to transform them into sources of authoritative decision making. This is the animating vision behind Cohen's and Sabel's notion of "directly deliberative polyarchy" (2006), a governance structure that incorporates decision making of institutions at various levels and a plurality of (disaggregated) authority structures. Within such a structure, public deliberation could clearly claim legitimacy. Pogge similarly (2002) imagines a multilayered institutional scheme characterized by "vertically dispersed" powers of sovereignty. And Kuper (2004, p. 45) describes a

“system of plurarchic sovereignty” embodied in “a complex global institutional configuration.” All of these proposals would meet the important requirement for global political inclusion—that it secures conditions of nondomination (Bohman 2007, pp. 30–31)—while allowing the structures normative powers established and distributed within a framework of institutions.

The idea that authoritative transnational structures could feasibly emerge is resisted by many on the grounds that political authority is intrinsically tied to the state. Our response is that normatively speaking, the principles of constitutional democracy are inherently universalistic and thus cosmopolitan; basic human rights are not derived from citizenship or nationhood, and we are not entitled to discriminate against people who are far away. Thus there do not seem to be principled obstacles to realizing constitutional principles in polyarchic structures. This is a crucial point, because the novel forms of authority embodied in these structures allow for transnational institutions that are authoritative and for deliberative legitimacy outside of the boundaries of nation states. Polyarchic structures support distributed will formation and dispersed institutional structures. They can be expected to foster new forms of citizenship: multilayered, and complex, which allow all members of global society to be included.

We have followed a number of theorists in exploring the possibility that the European Union could provide a model for a more universal transnational structure. Bohman (2007) cites the EU as a good example of how a reflexive, democratic, transnational order might work in a diverse polity with a constitutional framework that recognizes political rights as human rights and provides for nested and collaborative forms of decision making. As such it demonstrates the possibility of what Fraser (2003, p. 126) calls “governance without government.” Much of the recent work of Habermas is concerned with outlining a model of global governance that eschews both a realist rejection of any such proposal and cosmopolitan insistence on a world government that would replace national states. Developments in Europe that have replaced treaty-based alliances with transnational institutional procedures are taken to be important exemplars.

Habermas wishes his work on European integration to be seen against the background of a Kantian-inspired, cosmopolitan model of global governance (2009, p. ix). Individual and political basic rights apply in principle to relations between states, organizations, and individuals across national borders. The acceleration of globalization underlines the need for political regulation above the national level, and the financial crises of the past few years is compelling evidence that economic globalization poses political challenges that can be met only through concerted responses by the international community. Inclusive, representative global political institutions provide the only hope of bringing the rampant anarchy of globalized markets (which have outstripped competences of even the most powerful governments) under control. Habermas insists that the call for such institutions is not tantamount to a call for a world government superseding nation states. A supranational global regime tasked with enforcing human rights and a transnational regime concerned with regulating matters of collective concern, e.g., global economic crises and climate change, are necessary complements to nation states.

As a proponent of deliberative democracy, which ties democratic legitimacy to the reasonable nature of opinion and will formation (Habermas 2009, p. 138) (formation of political will is channeled through the filter of discursive opinion formation) and the cooperative search for solutions (145), Habermas finds it incumbent to address the question of whether and how public communication could operate above national level or, as he puts it, whether a Europe-wide public sphere is possible (xvi). The realization of deliberative democracy (and the legitimacy which it accords) requires a democratic procedure that includes all possibly affected on equal terms (146). He envisages the emergence not of a higher-level, supranational, public sphere superimposed on existing national ones but a process in which existing public spheres become responsive, or permeable to one another in such a way that people are informed about and are able to respond to and influence issues of joint concern, i.e., he anticipates the transnationalizing of existing national public spheres. In spite of the opposition of Euroskeptics and the evident hurdles of achieving the constitutionalization of the Eurozone, Habermas believes that “graduated integration” remains a viable goal, and he defends a deliberative model of transnational democracy and an associated Europe-wide public sphere. We would concur with the view that, far from signaling the end of the EU as a political project, the crisis of financial regulation is accelerating the growth of institutions in governance that will deepen European political integration. And we see EU as a case that stretches traditional assumptions and theories about the meaning of democracy.

As a model for more universal democratic structures and public spheres, EU thus interpreted demands much of citizens and of citizenship education, and we have argued that these demands should apply globally. In extending our cosmopolitan conceptions of democracy and justice to critical examination of the meaning and scope of democratic inclusion in education, we have asked what capacities citizens need as members of a post-Westphalian public. We endorse Gutmann’s proposal that the aim of democratic education is the inclusion of citizens in conscious social reproduction, including the shaping of social structures (Gutmann 1987 quoted in Crittenden 2007, p. 13). And like Gutmann we see learning to deliberate as key to the goal of educating all—globally and of course including women—to participate in the collective project of shaping their society. In doing so we have, as already noted, seen merit in models of public reason proffered by Rawls, Benhabib, and Young, which we have explored as all offering instructive ways of interpreting deliberation as providing the capacities for democratic inclusion in contexts that are both diverse and unequal. Each treats reason and justification, variously conceived, as central to political legitimacy.

All depictions of deliberative democracy presuppose that individual citizens’ participation in civic decisions demands a capacity for individual thought as well as a general understanding of the economic and political context in which those decisions are made. So a deliberative conception of citizenship education holds that a democratic state has a duty to enable its citizens to meet these requirements, which are considerable and take us far beyond the interest-based understandings of democracy (widely reflected in neoliberal positions on citizenship), to which deliberative theories were a response.

Our cosmopolitan conception of the changed global context presses these demands further; in the post-Westphalian world of global association, educating citizens to participate in decisions for the good of the nation state and its members, assumed to be in competition with the interests of citizens of competitor states, can be seen to be inherently unjust, once unequal international power relations are acknowledged. Here the global inequalities in access to primary schooling noted above—as well as secondary and higher education—become doubly problematic. Power imbalances in global politics include inequalities in the capacity of different states to educate their citizens and so to equip them for democratic participation in both domestic and international decision making, including asserting demands for global justice against the most powerful states. A problem of both justice and democracy is that global publics will provide advantages to citizens who have enjoyed the greater educational opportunities that will give them preferential access to the know-how they need to use global structures to their own advantage. Preparing citizens for global deliberation by all—with the capacity for wide participation and problem solving that this implies—thus becomes even more demanding than deliberative public reason in the nation state. The kinds of transnational agency required for “globalization from below” demand a citizenry that is sufficiently informed and motivated to be able to engage a range of institutions and issues involved with global issues and also to be aware of the needs and perspectives of others and of how their own actions affect them too. The new forms of inclusion this implies do not, and do not need to, disregard local and national obligations. The frame of the nation state is simply no longer sufficient on its own to enable democratic citizens to address matters of shared concern. Our critical stance on conceptions of lifelong learning that assume the persistence of the nation state as the unit of distribution of education (Enslin and Tjiattas 2012) applies as much to all levels of educational provision, globally; and Nussbaum’s liberal feminist arguments, noted earlier, about the importance of literacy as well as primary, secondary, and higher education can thus be seen to apply as much to the education of boys and men.

These claims bring our interpretation of global democracy full circle back to justice and the complementarity between these two concepts in our work. They lead us to conclude that the capacity to be represented in global structures, not just in the Westphalian electoral systems standardly assumed by default to mark democratic spaces, is necessary to both justice and democratic inclusion. And possibilities for achieving greater degrees of both justice and democracy depend crucially on education.

Philosophical Interpretation and Reflective Equilibrium

As we look back on the processes involved, it seems clear to us that insofar as we were engaged in an interpretive endeavor, the project described here consisted of attempting to resolve the tensions between current theoretical positions, their key

concepts and principles as well as their underlying assumptions, and the demands and constraints imposed by the contemporary global political, ethical, and educational issues we were attempting to address.

In our work we have attempted to show, often by discussing tensions between values, commitments, and allegiances, how philosophical reflection and concrete issues influence each other in an ongoing dynamic way. Although positions defended in pursuit of reflective equilibrium are held provisionally, we have developed and defended substantive liberal positions on gender, justice, democracy, and education, influenced strongly by but also in disagreement with Rawlsian liberalism. We think that our attempt to employ the philosophical method of reflective equilibrium has allowed us to argue that we can defend cosmopolitanism as a form of universalism, in a way that is sensitive both to actual conditions and circumstances—domestic and global—and to fundamental normative concerns, and to look critically at questions of global educational policy and its attendant structures and institutions. As Benhabib (2007) hopefully notes, new structures, norms, and policies mean that local and global are now imbricated, and new spaces that stretch the political imagination are continuously opening up.

This last observation leads us to conclude with a caution. In commenting on how he envisages the future of philosophical work on one of our central topics, Daniels says (2008, pp. 345–6):

The content of a theory of global justice and the justification for it can only emerge from the work of a generation of thinkers and doers grappling with the problem. The process will involve working back and forth between judgments, based on arguments and evidence, about what is just in particular practices or decisions of the operation of international agencies or rule makers and more theoretical considerations. We need time for reflective equilibrium to do its work.

Daniels captures the open-endedness of reflective equilibrium well. While the goal of philosophical interpretation may be well described by the idea of reflective equilibrium, we do not, of course, see it as an endeavor that can be completed. For our part, we concede that we have retreated from our earlier insistence that cosmopolitan justice requires redistribution so that all children everywhere enjoy equal access to education. We have not yet decided on the extent to which nation states and their institutions should remain a legitimate site of democracy and justice. Nor have we settled on a preferred account of public reason from among those we have described here.

In this respect philosophical interpretation may be like other genres of research in education. But perhaps one of the most obvious ways philosophy differs from other disciplines is that research is not just a matter of applying conceptual tools to the material of a different order or kind; rather the very objects of investigation are at least to a large extent themselves conceptual in nature and contestable. So the very interpretation of the idea of interpretation would be an appropriate topic of dispute.

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6.7 Education Policy from the Perspective of Governmentality

Maarten Simons

Presentation of the Research Report

The Research Project: Focus and Major Findings

Studies of governmentality address the field of education policy at the level of the enacted modes of government and self-government. Governmentality is a neologism introduced by Michel Foucault and refers to a perspective on the assembly of particular rationalities and forms of thought (“mentalities”) with specific technologies and strategies to govern (Dean 1999). “To govern” is to be understood in a very broad sense: the structuring, guiding, or shaping of people’s behavior in very different contexts and in very different areas (including the structuring or shaping of human beings as subjects). Except for a specific approach of educational policy, the point of departure of studies of governmentality is a particular concern for the present and for how we live the present. This paper reports on a research project that focuses on a particular region of what is considered to be important in “our” present education: the collection and distribution of feedback information (Simons 2007, 2014). I start with a short clarification of that concern in order to present the main findings of the study.¹

An increasing number of activities in the context of educational policy can be placed under the heading “to inform people” and “to get informed.” For example, the inspectorate in Flanders (Belgium) sees it as her task to spread information about

¹ For the summary of research findings as well as for specific arguments about methodology and theoretical assumptions, I draw largely on previously published work throughout the article. The sources are listed in the references at the end of the article.

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the performance of schools.² International assessment studies, like PISA and TIMSS, and European benchmark reports inform the Flemish government about the performance of educational systems. Through electronic newsletters, principals and teachers in Flanders are informed about recent legislation and examples of good practice concerning administration, innovation, and teaching. And journals are used to inform teachers, parents, and students about a wide range of educational issues such as the experiences of teachers in the classroom, the results of recent and relevant research, the implications and assumptions of new policy measures, published lists of recent initiatives in teacher training, etc. In short, it feels as “we”—and this “we” includes the author of this article—are permanently in need of information.

The research focuses on the current need of information by studying in detail the role of information for the Flemish government (and its educational system) in a global/European environment, on the one hand, and for schools in the Flemish context, on the other hand. The general question guiding the research project is how and to what extent the evident exchange of information mentioned above (and its supply, demand, and use) can be regarded as the articulation of a particular governmental regime. In line with the perspective of governmentality adopted in the study, this requires an analysis of the kind of information that is regarded as being indispensable today, of how actors within the field of education come to understand themselves and how this self-understanding installs the need for a specific kind of information, of how (Flemish) government comes to understand (and justify) its role and task in terms of collecting and offering information, and finally of what kind of power is involved in the governmental regime that puts information central stage.

Drawing on the analysis of European policy discourses and instruments and the circumstances of current educational policy in Flanders, the study concludes that an ongoing circulation of “feedback” information becomes of strategic importance in the current mode of governing. Procedures such as the “open method of coordination” and the resulting European benchmark reports as well as initiatives to create an “information-rich environment” for Flemish schools aim at collecting and distributing feedback. Feedback has become of strategic importance for national governments, as well as schools who have come to understand what they are doing as a performance in a competitive environment and have come to identify learning as a fundamental force to optimize this performance. As far as they have taken up this managerial relation to themselves and seek to govern/manage themselves accordingly, feedback information from their environment and regarding their performance is being experienced as a permanent need to orient their learning towards competitive change. In short, the study clarifies that when feedback is experienced as needed in order to inform and orient the learning process of states and schools towards optimal performance, the ongoing exchange and circulation of information are of strategic importance. The strategy at stake is to secure an optimal

²The analysis is limited to the current state of affairs in the Flemish community with the Flemish government being responsible for education within the federal state of Belgium.

performance for each and all and acts upon the “need for feedback” and “will to learn” of the actors involved. As the analysis of the policy documents and instruments indicates, this “need for feedback” and this “will to learn” are experienced as real and fundamental. However, they should not be regarded as organizational or anthropological universals. Although often conceived in this way, these are “singular, historical experiences” emerging within the current regime of “conduct on conduct” (Foucault 1984a, p. 13). The “need for feedback” (on one’s performance) and the “will to learn” (in order to improve one’s performance) are both the effect and instrument of a governmental regime that seeks to secure optimal performance.

Based on these findings, the study also formulates a thesis concerning the exercise of power in the present regime where the “conduct of conduct” takes shape as “feedback on performance.” The main component of this regime is a particular conduct or self-government of schools on the one hand and the requirements of the central government on the other hand. Part of this self-government is to control one’s performance (as a school, as a state) by using information from the environment that circulates through information media. The study clarifies that the mode of self-control and self-surveillance does not merely function according to the disciplinary strategy of the panopticon (Foucault 1972, p. 270). Modern panoptical power sought to discipline human beings through an internalized gaze of the other (i.e., the normalizing gaze of experts). Like inmates in a prison, pupils in a school, laborers in a factory, and patients in a clinic came to understand themselves in terms of normality and normalized development under the gaze of experts (teachers, managers, doctors). The panopticon referred to a form of power that works through the observation and surveillance of the many by the few, where the few (those in power) are often not visible. According to Foucault (1972, p. 298), this modern form of power is quite different from the classic form of power in the spectacle. In the spectacle of public punishments, as well as in the theater, for example, the many observe the few, and this observation is meant as to control the masses. Mathiessen (1997, p. 219) refers to this as the synopticon and argues that our present “viewer society” combines both panoptical and synoptical mechanisms: “Increasingly, the few have been able to see the many, but also increasingly, the many have been enabled to see the few – to see the VIPs, the reporters, the stars, almost a new class in the public sphere.”

The study argues that power mechanisms in the governmental regime of feedback performance indeed deploy mass spectacles. The instruments of information offer images of performance or best practice and organize a kind of spectacle. The arena of education, and its performance, is rendered visible to all. Thus, instruments of information function as a kind of “mass” media that allow the many (schools, states) to watch and observe the few (cf. Vinson and Ross 2001). What is being watched in this synoptical configuration is a spectacle or arena of the best performers or those representing in an exemplary way optimal performance or “good conduct.” Yet at the same time, it is through this spectacle, and its potential of feedback, that each of those who are watching comes to know her/his own performance. As such, the spectacle of performance orientates each and all and puts schools and states in a position in which they are able to monitor and orient themselves, and it creates the information-rich environment that is indispensable in order to satisfy the need for feedback and learning for optimal performance. Above all, the spectacle of performance puts states

and schools into a position in which they long themselves to become an image of good performance, to be part of the happy few being watched and admired by the many, and to be a champion themselves.

However, the synopticon only partly makes current power mechanisms intelligible. The study takes a further step by formulating the thesis that the paradigmatic articulation of today's power is perhaps to be found in the technique of 360° feedback (Simons 2014). As a management tool, 360° feedback puts the employee in the middle of a feedback circle composed of all relevant actors in the employee's environment: managers, subordinates, friends, family, customers, etc. The ideal situation is when the employee's self-evaluation coincides with how all others evaluate his or her performance. It promotes a kind of self-government where one submits oneself permanently and voluntarily to the gaze of others—and actually installs a dynamic in which one's own gaze and that of others merge. Its logic of operation is not the panopticon nor the synopticon. The panopticon is the paradigm of disciplinary power and works according to a logic where the few in the middle of the circle continuously observe the many, however, without the many necessarily having to know whether there is actually someone observing. This is “the power of surveillance.” The synopticon instead is the paradigm of sovereign power, where the many observe the few in the middle of the circle whose punishment or gratification is set as an example. This could be called “the power of the example” and, in its current form, “the power of performance spectacles.” 360° feedback takes elements of both the synopticon and panopticon but works differently. What is installed is a permanent and collective gaze while staging oneself in the middle of the arena and turning one's life into a performance spectacle in need of an audience to become real. The driving logic of “the power of feedback,” that is, the moment when feedback actually turns into a power mechanism and the circle closes, is when feedback decides on who and what one is and wants to become.

To conclude, the current governmental regime studied in the research project seems to be first and foremost accompanied by a power mechanism that turns feedback on performance into an indispensable navigation tool. Because power is involved in the governmental regime of performance, this is not necessarily bad but is potentially dangerous (Foucault 1984b, p. 386). And it is especially dangerous because the message becomes “perform, or else” (McKenzie 2001; Lyotard 1979) and because it becomes very difficult for us, in how we reflect upon ourselves and upon education, not to be part of it.

The Research Perspective

The analysis draws upon the work of Foucault in two related areas: firstly, on the analytics of government as “conduct of conduct” and, secondly, on the “ontology of the present.”

From a Foucaultian perspective, government is to be regarded as a form of “conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1982, p. 237, 2004a, b) or a more or less calculated and rational attempt to direct human conduct by the application of particular

technical means. An “analytics of government,” Dean (1999, p. 23) explains, “takes as its central concern *how* we govern and are governed within different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate and are transformed.” The assemblage and operation of these regimes of government can be analyzed by focusing on three related dimensions: the governmental rationality or program at stake, the “*techne*” of government being used, and the type of governable subject involved (cf. Foucault 1978a; Gordon 1991).

Governmental rationality refers to the mode of reasoning about how and why government takes place, the role of agencies and the justification of their authority, the entities to be governed, and the “*telos*” of government. It is important to stress at this point there is no single and universal governmental rationality. For instance, the perception of problems as social problems (e.g., accidents, illness), the reflections on the nation state as an agency that should organize social insurance, and the objectification of governable subjects as social citizens are all features of a particular governmental rationality (Rose 1999). This social governmental rationality however is quite different from a neoliberal reasoning that considers the nation state as an agency that has to organize and manage an enabling infrastructure for citizens to invest in themselves in order to protect themselves against risks (Rose 1996; Dean 1999).

A second dimension of analytics in a regime of government is the “*techne*” of government. This encompasses the instruments, procedures, techniques, and tools that are combined and used in order to accomplish the governmental objectives. Taxation and financial support are examples, as well as procedures of auditing and quality assurance. The focus on the technological dimension of governing however exceeds the common policy instrumentation (stick, carrot, sermon) at state level and includes a focus on the multiple instruments (e.g., benchmark reports), techniques (e.g., testing), and procedures (e.g., open method of coordination) enacted in multiple locales. Furthermore, the focus of the analytics is on the operational effects of governmental technologies, that is, how they shape the conduct of actors through what they make them do.

Finally, in order for people and organizations to be governable, they have to come to understand themselves in a particular way, to experience particular issues as relevant, and to govern or conduct themselves accordingly. As such, a regime of government presupposes a form of self-government in order to accomplish its goals. Within the social regime of government, for example, people have to understand themselves as being part of an entity with its own regularities (called “(civil) society”), as being protected by a central state, and to also experience their personal well-being as being connected to the progress of society as a whole and to govern themselves accordingly. This social form of governable self-government and governable self-understanding is quite different from what is at stake today. At present, regimes of government presuppose, for instance, that we come to understand ourselves as citizens who can and should invest in themselves in order to be “employable” and to perform well in networks and environments and to experience “choice” as a fundamental, human faculty (Miller and Rose 1997). At this point, it is important to stress that the aim of the

analytics is not to understand or explain the particular agency and underlying motives of multiple and different actors involved. The focus is, as explained by Rose (1999, p. 21), the space of thought and action for a particular self-government or conduct to emerge and hence the “conditions of possibility and intelligibility for certain ways of seeking to act upon the conduct of others, or oneself, to achieve certain ends.” As such, the scope of the analytics presented here is the space of thought and action for a government and self-government in the name of information to emerge.

The last remark is closely linked to a second area where the study draws upon Foucault: the critical concern or care for the present (Foucault 1980, p. 108; cf. Rajchman 1991, p. 141). Foucault (1982, pp. 231–232, 1983, p. 448, 1984a, p. 573) used the concept “(historical) ontology of the present” in order to describe in a general way the aim and focus of his work and in particular his perspective on government as the conduct of conduct. In short, his aim was to make our present understanding of the self (others and the world) and our present experiences less evident and to show how our self-government is being shaped within a particular governmental regime. In *Histoire de la sexualité*, for instance, his point of departure was the present experience of sexuality as something that is fundamental, as something that can be oppressed, and as something that can and should be liberated in order for people to find their true selves (Foucault 1976, p. 16). Consequently, his objective was not to reveal what sexuality really is about but how, at a particular moment in history, “we” came to understand the inner self in terms of (possible repressed and to be liberated) sexual drives. It is the constitution of this “we” or this particular form of subjectivity and this particular mode of self-understanding and self-government in terms of sexuality that was the focus of his research. In short, sexuality is not conceived as a kind of (anthropological) universal, but as a singular, historical experience emerging within a particular governmental regime. As such, Foucault’s focus is the (historical) conditions of possibility in order for sexuality to be experienced as meaningful.

In a similar way and as explained in the beginning of the article, the point of departure is our present experience of information and feedback in order to understand within which governmental regime it emerges. Thus, what is at stake, according to Rose (1999, p. 20), is “introducing a critical attitude towards those things that are given to our present experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable” and “to enhance the contestability of regimes” that seek to govern us. As a result, the aim is to draw attention to what is familiar (i.e., our present need for feedback) and exactly what is often invisible (i.e., emerging power mechanisms) due to this familiarity (Foucault 1978b, pp. 540–541). In this context, Foucault’s claim that “knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting” is illuminating (Foucault 1984c, p. 88). The objective hence is not to increase our understanding by revealing hidden truths. Cutting refers to the (indeed almost physical activity) questioning of who we are and what we regard as fundamental in our understanding of ourselves and the world. Knowledge that cuts “introduces a discontinuity”; it cuts in our present and how we live and govern the present.

The Research Frame

The reported study of governmentality along this perspective draws on a specific analytical frame that focuses on processes of governmentalization and entails a specific approach to the interpretation of policy documents and instruments.

The main research interest is to understand the role of information for education policy and the Flemish government in the current global/European context and for schools in the Flemish policy context. In order to explain how a governmentality perspective allows to address these issues, additional analytical clarification is required. Drawing upon the terminology of Foucault once again, the concepts of the “governmentalisation of the state (Flanders)” and, in close relation to this, “governmentalisation of Europe” have to be introduced (Masschelein and Simons 2003; Walters 2004).

A main characteristic of the birth of the modern nation state, according to Foucault (1978a, 1981), is not the “etatization of society” but the “governmentalisation of the state.” This means that the state is to be conceived as a complex of centralizing governing relationships aimed at conducting the conduct of people (both as individuals and as a population). As a result, the birth of the modern state as a governmental state implies the emergence of a particular reasoning about the role of the state, its tasks and responsibilities, as well as its objectives and the entities to be governed. Furthermore, as Foucault (2004a, b) has elaborated in detail, the governmental state and its rationalities and mentalities have continually transformed throughout history: a governmentalization in the name of “reason of state” in the early modern period, in the name of individual freedom and security (and finding its intellectual articulation in the reflections on political economy) in the modern era, and in the name of “the social” in the twentieth century. Foucault (2004b) noticed a new phase in the governmentalization of the state in the second part of the twentieth century, and meanwhile many scholars (Gordon 1991; Rose 1999; Dean 1999; Olssen et al. 2004) have elaborated on this. The role of the state is no longer approached as a central agency of government that should intervene in society in the name of “the social” and in order to align individual freedom and social welfare (Rose 1999). Instead, the state today is increasingly regarded as a managerial agency that should enable an entrepreneurial type of freedom (at the individual level and at the level of organizations, communities, etc.) through, for example, marketization and investment in human capital and in collaboration with other agencies of governance (both local and global, public and private). This “advanced liberal” (Rose 1996) governmentalization of the state should be kept in mind in order to understand the current concern for information of the Flemish educational policy. Yet, this new phase in the governmentalization of the state is connected to a new phase in the governmentalization of Europe. Although in the reported research the focus is limited to Europe and its member states, processes of governmentalization both more local (e.g., public/private partnerships at regional and local levels) and global (e.g., transnational organizations) can be studied as well (Perry and Maurer 2003).

Instead of regarding Europeanization as a gradual process of integration ultimately resulting in a kind of “etatization” of Europe, we look at it in terms of a governmentalization of Europe (Masschelein and Simons 2003). Different mentalities, rationalities, and governmental procedures have emerged from the creation of the Coal and Steel Community to the present objective to make of the European Union “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy” (Walters 2004). From the 1980s onwards, and focusing on the creation of single European market and ultimately of a single currency, the role of Europe and the entities to be governed (such as the member states and their economies and financial policies) become rationalized and reconfigured in terms of “harmonization” and the “mutual recognition of national standards” (Barry 1994; Walters 2004, p. 166). As such, harmonization functions as an art of European government, and it constitutes the European Union and its institutions and experts as central agencies of coordination, i.e., of harmonization of the conduct of member states. Moreover, this governmentalization of Europe in the name of harmonization is connected with a governmentalization of (member) states. “Europe” and “Brussels” enter in a particular way governmental rationalities and mentalities of member states, that is, they come to understand their standards, capacities, and resources in relation to other member states and European norms and as being more or less in harmony. Thus, in analyzing, for instance, the open method of coordination, it is possible to address intertwined developments at the level of the governmentalization of Europe and the governmentalization of member states.

The Approach

A study of processes of governmentalization (both at the level of Europe and member states) premised on the assumptions of an ontology of the present includes a particular approach to interpretation. In line with Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), the approach can be called an “interpretative analytics” for there is a concern to depict the conditions of possibility and intelligibility for the current discussions about the role of information in policy making to emerge. The approach to interpretation therefore is not hermeneutical. The aim is not to come to an understanding or to grasp the (true) meaning of particular policy decisions, policy measures, and polity texts by taking into account the historical or social context, the intentions of actors, or a particular systematic logic. Instead, the point of departure is that particular practices and the circulation of (feedback) information are to be considered as meaningful today and are part so to speak of our common lifeworld: it makes sense to reason about the collection and circulation of feedback information, to use techniques of benchmarking, and to ask for information about one’s performance as a member state and school. The question then is what are the conditions of possibility at the level of governmental reasoning, technologies, and self-government for these discursive and nondiscursive practices to become meaningful. Thus, instead of asking who or what is imposing for what reason a particular meaning to these practices, it should be asked for who, that is, for what form of

subjectivity and within what sort of governmental reasoning the circulation of feedback information becomes meaningful and even indispensable.

Furthermore, the objective of an interpretative analytics is not to look for “sources of meaning” behind or below the written (policy) texts and the policy instruments adopted in order to confront policy makers and other actors in the field of education with the true meaning of their words and the real reasons for the decisions that are taken. Contrary to such a kind of vertical interpretative move from surface to depth, the presented interpretative analytics includes a horizontal move and remains at the surface of what is given in experiences and practices. Hence, instead of an explanation based on a deep interpretation, the study is a “cartography” (Deleuze 1986) that “maps” (Flynn 1994) the present or, as Rose (1999, p. 57) puts it, an “empiricism of the surface” focusing on what is said and done and what allows it to be said and done. A cartographic description thus seeks to describe the governmental rationality, technology, and modes of self-government that are enacted in how the Flemish government positions itself within the European policy context and towards Flemish schools. Methodologically speaking, this requires to bracket the authorship and any contextual information of documents and policy instruments. These de-authorization and decontextualization allow to approach what is done and what is said as discursive and nondiscursive events and to put them side to side in order to map specific patterns and processes. By putting different documents (e.g., communication of European Commission, policy declaration, European report, etc.) and instruments and procedures (e.g., open method of coordination, benchmark graphics, etc.) side to side, what becomes visible is their interrelatedness in a field of discursive and nondiscursive practices whose “meaning” escapes the actions and attributed reasons of those involved. The effectuated field allows for a description of common discursive patterns (e.g., forms of argumentation, conceptualization, addressing problems and framing solutions, visual schematization, etc.) and technological processes (e.g., modes of operation, procedures, instrumentation, etc.) as part of emerging ways of governing and ways of thinking about governing. As a consequence, a cartographic account of the state of affairs has not the form of an explanatory report on formal structures and general mechanisms nor that of a story that gives meaning to actions and decisions in narrative terms. The map instead traces the characteristics of the technology and reason of current modes of governing by taking current practices of governing as a point of departure.

In line with an interpretative analytics that aims at a cartographic account of the state of affairs, specific sources are to be searched for. The data collection does not follow the exemplary logic of a case study design. A case study—also a single case study—has a fixed point of departure (general theory, (hypo)thesis, domain, entity, etc.) and assumes a predefined unit of investigation that allows to decide on a well-defined and exemplary practice. The assumed logic of unity and difference, and the presupposed horizon of the particular and universal, is not in line with an ontology of the present. The practices that make up the state of affairs regarding education policy in Flanders articulate who we are today and, hence, are not to be treated as an exemplification of who we are today or of what is the case. This means that what

comes into account for sources to be interpreted is everything through which current governing is enacted and, more specifically, in which the current need for information is manifest. As a consequence, the regional ontology of the present results in a cartography that does not make global claims. Due to that point of departure, the decision on practices to be investigated is to a certain extent arbitrary in time and space. In an ontology of the present, a decision has to be taken about what is considered to be “today” and “we.” For this study, it is indeed the researcher’s present—both in space and time—that motivates the decision. The focus thus is on policy-related practices at the level of the Flemish government and specifically during the first part of legislation period of Frank Vandenbroucke, minister of education between 2004 and 2009. This should however only partly to be considered as arbitrary, for what motivates this study is exactly the assumption that the logic of my personal self-understanding is not different from the logic of the self-understanding of others; it seems as “we,” today, are in need of specific information. It is the experienced self-evidence of information and feedback that constitutes the “we” and “today” and hence orients the researcher to particular practices.

Sources and Process

Two types of sources are collected and interpreted for the study: textual and technological materials. The textual material includes the policy declaration of the minister of education, policy notes of the minister that explicitly reflect about challenges to and developments within policy making today, the memoranda of new legislation, and a selection of European policy documents (communications and reports and narrowed down to education and training and the open method of coordination). For the technological material, the focus is on the enacted instruments, techniques, and procedures (and related discursive practices) where collection and distribution of information is of major importance: benchmark reports, rankings, reports on examples of best performance, assessment tests, testing grounds, and coordination procedures in view of European harmonization. Despite the analytical distinction between the textual and technological, the collected material is approached as practices that articulate how governmentalization takes shape today. Text thus is approached as a discursive practice. It is not regarded as a medium to transfer meaning or ideas about reality and, hence, not to be interpreted by looking for the intentions (on the side of messenger), by asking how reality is represented (on the side of the content) or by focusing on the reception of the content (on the side of audience). In a similar way, the technological material is not approached as a set of tools used by someone with specific intentions in order to arrive at certain objectives. Instead, these materials are considered as being part of practices that make up our current world, and since these technologies and this language is used, they make sense to us or have meaning for us. Hence, the question is not which meaning actors impose on particular texts or how they use particular technologies, but what kind of self-understanding from the side of the actors is

“required” for these practices to be meaningful and hence for these texts and technologies to make sense.

Applied to the research project, the interpretation process of the material follows three steps. The first step aims at an understanding of the kind of information that is suggested to be indispensable or required today and, based on that, an understanding of how the actors within the field of education have to come to understand themselves (and others) for this information to become needed and even to be indispensable. In answer to these questions, the study clarifies that the promoted and required information is “feedback information on performance” and that the Flemish government comes to understand itself as a calculating agency that embraces specific “managerial virtues”: a readiness to learn from comparison, to benchmark, to collaborate in order to compete, and to be proactive or reactive. The second step then focuses on how (Flemish) government comes to understand (and justify) its role and task in terms of collecting and offering information. An interpretative analytic of the sources allows to describe a governmental rationality which renders both educational policy and the educational system intelligible in terms of performance in a competitive, international environment that frames the state as a competition or performative state with a managerial and enabling role and that regards optimal performance as a governmental target. Through technologies such as benchmarking and the collection of practices of good performance at an international level, the new governmental state explicitly tries to satisfy its need for feedback, to orient itself within a competitive environment of nation states and to learn from comparison for the sake of optimal performance. The interpretative analytics also clarifies that part of this governmental rationality is a mode of thinking in which the Flemish government defines its role towards schools that are in “need of feedback” and hence where the centralized collection and distribution of feedback information on school performance becomes a critical issue; mutual learning, based on the stories of best performing schools, becomes regarded as a solution for optimal change in a competitive environment. The third step attempts to describe the kind of power that is involved in the governmental regime that puts information central stage. By drawing on literature that discusses several modes of power, this step aims to grasp the power mechanisms—that is, how power actually works—when the “conduct of conduct” takes shape as “feedback on performance.” In this synthetic research step, the study elaborates on how current processes of governmentalization are accompanied by mass spectacles and its images of best performance (through which each state and school are able to orient and optimize their own performance) and ultimately how power relations seem to culminate in full-circle feedback mechanisms.

An important aspect in the three steps of interpretation and the ultimate presentation of the results of the cartography is the particular way of developing and using concepts. For the cartographic account of the form of self-understanding, the emerging governmental rationality, and the mode of operation of technologies, the study is not relying on an existing conceptual framework or theoretical terminology. The implication is that a crucial part of the interpretation is finding and—to a certain extent—inventing a terminology that does justice to the investigated state

of affairs. Examples of invented terms are feedback on performance, managerial virtues, need for feedback, and competitive state. This terminology is rather close to the vocabulary used in the investigated practices; however, at the same time, it is used in a different way. The unusual use of common terms should be regarded exactly in line with the specific approach included in an interpretative analytics. The introduction of an academic terminology that circulates outside the examined practices often comes down to an interpretation from the outside. In that case, what is interpreted is assumed to be invisible because it is an underlying structure or not yet recognized intention or source of meaning. An interpretative analytics also assumes something remains invisible. But it is invisible because it is all too familiar and because that familiarity or self-evidence is always reinforced when being engaged in practices (Foucault 1978b, pp. 540–541). In that sense, the analytics includes an interpretative act from the inside, by taking fragments of the vocabulary of these practices as the point of departure but using it exactly to describe, for instance, the installed rationality, the emerging form of self-understanding, or the patterns of power. Linking common terms, managerial or feedback, for instance, to aspects at the level of self-understanding, virtues, or need, for instance, is an attempt to make the familiar unfamiliar. Another operation used in the cartography is to combine concepts that are often kept separate in current discourses, such as “competitive state.” While common understanding considers the political and economic to be distinct spheres, merging the lexicon of these spheres allows to point at the constitution of new entities and new modes of reasoning. The merging however does not seek to indicate that the borders between previously distinct social fields have collapsed nor points at structural tensions or contradictions, but attempts to describe the new modes of reasoning as singular events that install a specific logic and strategy.

Reasons for Choosing the Governmentality Approach

Within the field of policy studies that have education as their major concern, there is a wide range of approaches depending on the disciplinary background (sociology, political theory, philosophy, etc.). This study could be located within the genre of critical education policy studies. Before discussing the value and contribution of the governmentality perspective for the critical study of education policy, a short sketch of the critical orientation in education policy studies is presented (see also Simons et al. 2009).

Critical Education Policy Studies

It was the book *The Policy Sciences*, edited by Lerner and Lasswell in 1951, that can be regarded as programmatically setting the scene for the social sciences' orientation to public policy in the welfare state. Especially after the devastating effects of World War II, with the expansion of communism and the economic crisis,

social scientists in the West were eager to actively support the development of the Western democratic state and its public policy. Lerner and Lasswell's book expressed Western social scientists' commitment to improve the social and democratic basis of the state by studying issues related to such phenomena as full employment, equality, and peace and to optimize the effectiveness of public administration and organizational structures. The educational reforms during the 1980s and 1990s, and specifically the confrontation with the neoliberal and neo-conservative governments in the USA, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, acted as a "catalyst" for the development of a new "genre of policy studies" (Troyna 1994, p. 3; Trowler 1998). The studies at the beginning of the 1980s were mainly rooted in the research tradition interested in power, politics, and social regulation in and around schools and particularly confronting the crisis of the welfare state and the public role of education. In line with the broadened field of study, these scholars not only petitioned policy makers and educational administrators with their research but combined academic work, policy engineering, and social criticism (Hammersley 1994).

Focusing on the context and impact of the educational reforms relatively ignored by regular political and social scientists, educationalists and sociologists of education hence developed from the 1980s onwards their own particular policy studies (see Prunty 1984). Echoing the term "policy orientation," the notion "critical education policy orientation" can be used to describe their distinctive scope (Simons et al. 2009). Despite the diversity and despite what has been referred to as a condition of "theoretical eclecticism" (Ball 1997; Ozga 2000), they share the following features: the policy studies express specific educational, moral, and social concerns; they adopt a broad conception of policy, including politics, the mechanisms of power, and the relation with the wider social context; and the studies include diverse forms of critical advocacy related to a concern for education in society—that is, "the public and its education." At one level, this is far removed from Lasswell's policy orientation and the problem-solving focus developed in line with that orientation. However, at another level, the critical education policy orientation is perhaps still close to that program, for underlying Lasswell's orientation towards policy was a deep concern with democracy and public policy.

From the 1990s onwards, and in view of the challenges of contemporary society, the critical orientation was considered in need of "de-parochialization" (Lingard 2006) and a "recalibration of critical lenses" (Robertson and Dale 2009). Several challenges had to be faced. One important challenge became the concepts "education" and "policy" themselves. Current discourses on the global knowledge economy, lifelong learning, and (global) governance are clearly challenging the education-, school-, and government-oriented vocabularies (e.g., Fejes and Nicoll 2008). In relation to the fields of lifelong learning and human capital investment, the least one could say is that the terms "education" and "education policy" have become something that have to be clearly defined. Related to that, researchers start to globalize their research agenda and broaden the often state-oriented methodological and theoretical approaches. An important aspect here is that a particular kind of global policy analysis, comparative education, and international benchmarking

has become itself part of the assemblage of the global policy field (Nóvoa and Yariv-Marshall 2003). Critically oriented research hence had to come to terms with the practice of comparison and comparative educational research and the underlying assumptions regarding commensurability and the role of modern states. One particular challenge that is related to governing through comparison is the role of the nation state in education policy and the reemergence of the problematic of the state in the global policy field. Dale and Robertson (2007), for instance, suggest that the nation state should not be located at the level of the “explanans” but the “explanandum” and that scholars should take into account different overlapping “scales of politics and policy.” Here, scholars start to focus on the new policy actors that enter the global scene, how states are being repositioned and how they come to develop national education policies embedded within a competitive global/European framework (Lawn and Lingard 2002). This leads to a next set of challenges: the many guises of post-welfare policies. An interesting observation in that regard is that aside from the so-called liberal policy makers, also social democrats and “third way” political administrations came to rely on policy measures previously classified under the general term neoliberalism (Ball 2008). Measures related to output control, managerialism, and responsabilization did not disappear with the change of political coalitions. The widespread use of measures and policy options previously associated only with neoliberalism actually leads to a situation where social democracy can no longer be identified with social justice and neoliberalism can no longer be used as a synonym for social injustice (Seddon 2003). A final set of important challenges arises from the changed relation between research and policy making, particularly with the advent of the so-called evidence-based policy and related movements of evidence-based practice in teaching during the 1990s (Young et al. 2002). Confronted with evidence-based policy or the “governmental re-articulation of *analysis for policy*” (Lingard and Ozga 2007, p. 6, italics in original), the critical education policy scholar can no longer only be oriented towards the field of education policy but also towards the evidence-producing research fabric that becomes part of policy making.

The reported research study in this paper should be located within this line of critical educational policy studies and seeks to address several of the mentioned challenges. The study elaborates on the observed shift from the so-called welfare state to the “competition” (Yeatman 1994; Cerny 1997), “evaluative” (Neave 1998), or “performative” (Ball 2000) state and pays special attention to the way state government reformulates, justifies, and develops education policies within the global field of governance. As a consequence, it is important to locate this role within a European context and to focus on modes of governing and policy instrumentation beyond the classic state-centered approaches. The perspective of governmentality allows to address exactly those issues. The focus on processes of governmentalization helps to understand the state as what has to be explained instead of what is explaining current policy. Furthermore, the perspective of governmentality avoids a single focus on policy rhetoric but includes an analysis of governmental technologies and reasoning and how new entities and modes of self-government emerge.

Governmentality Studies

The work of Foucault has already played for a rather long period a role in educational research and in social and political theory of education. It is impossible to give an overview of all the—philosophical, historical, and sociological—uses of Foucault in educational research (Simons and Masschelein 2007). Yet, it seems that the teaching of Foucault on governmentality during his courses at the Collège de France in 1977–1978 and 1978–1979 has given a new impetus to critical education policy studies. One can rightly refer to studies of governmentality as a kind of new subdiscipline within the humanities (Dean 1999, p. 2). However, the term discipline may not be fully appropriate since it might mask the huge diversity of these studies, both in terms of research domain and in terms of method (Rose 1999, p. 9). What they share, however, is an interest in forms of governmentality, minimally conceived of as the strategies of governing people and governing ourselves. In this line of research, several scholars started to focus on processes of governmentalization in education and particularly in relation to educational policy and to restructurings in the wake of the so-called neoliberal and neoconservative governance (see the collection: Peters et al. 2009). Their focus is not in the first place on how education policy takes shape (e.g., policy process, political context) nor on the issue of legitimacy (e.g., institutional conditions, juridical procedures) but on how governing actually works and the kind of regimes of government that emerge. By addressing the regimes that emerge, it is possible to describe what was and is happening “to us” and “through us,” that is, how specific forms of self-government—for instance, articulated in the “need for feedback”—actually enact and stabilize specific modes of governing.

Despite the substantial amount of studies on governmentality and education, critical debates of studies of governmentality are widespread. Speaking broadly, studies in view of governmentality seem to fall apart into two registers. On the one hand, there are governmentality studies that are merely descriptive but incorporated within the broader domain of sociological and political analysis. In this register, an ongoing debate seems to be whether and/or how studies of governmentality can rely more on empirical methods in order to be able to grasp the “reality” of governmentalities (and not merely what they refer to as “the programs”) and to reveal the resulting contradictions and tensions (and not merely questioning what is self-evident) (Dale 2004). On the other hand, studies of governmentality seem to be integrated within broader critical programs that want to resist political, cultural, and social hegemony (and ultimately the consequences of different sorts of capital accumulation). In this register, ongoing debates include the issue of how agency (and the possibility of resistance towards forms of hegemony) can be thought of in the context of an analysis of governmentality and how the described processes of governmentalization can be explained by drawing upon materialist or idealist social and political theories (see also Reichert 2001; Osborne 2001).

Giving shelter to studies of governmentality in both disciplinary registers is tempting precisely when the particular critical heart is removed from these studies:

a critical concern with the present, that is, the critical ethos that is distinctive for an ontology of the present. The ethos is related to what according to Foucault is “the art of not being governed like that and at that cost” (Foucault 2007, p. 45; see also Foucault 1978a, b). Critique therefore is not to be regarded as the outcome of a theoretical standpoint that allows to take distance from the present in order to judge it, but a movement of conversion towards what in our experience presents itself as necessary or self-evident. It is a critical movement that is expressed in a question such as: “who are we for whom feedback has become indispensable to decide on who we are and what we should do?” As far as the critical attitude underlying these studies indeed is a kind of virtue or ethos (Butler 2004; Simons et al. 2005) and not the more common theoretical or normative attitude, the temptation to integrate studies of governmentality within one of the two registers is somehow understandable. The two disciplinary registers, then, are often welcomed as providing a sound intellectual and methodological context or an explicit normative foundation (e.g., Fraser 1981; Habermas 1985). Although we recognize and understand this temptation, this kind of integrationist and assimilating attitude towards studies of governmentality ignores their very heart: the concern with or vigilance towards how we are governed today—through governing ourselves in a particular way. The attitude of de-governmentalization—as Gros terms it—can be described in a very classical way as an “attitude of enlightenment,” that is, bringing to light mechanisms of power or speaking truth to power (Gros 2001, pp. 520–523). The distinctive public dimension of this kind of critical gesture is discussed in the last section of the paper. For the moment, I want to stress that an important reason for adopting the governmentality approach is to articulate an attitude of de-governmentalization by taking the unease with the current need for information and feedback—including my own need in that regard—as a point of departure.

The Role of Interpretation in This Study

To be able to discuss in more detail the role of interpretation in this study, it is helpful to return to some of the main findings. The interpretation of current practices in policy making starts from the question within which regime of governing a question for or concern with information on performance starts to make sense (and hence assuming that such a question or concern was not really expressed before). The interpretative analytics shows that this concern emerges when states understand themselves as competitive states, when actors in the field of education come to reflect upon themselves in terms of performance, and when policy objectives are being formulated in terms of competitive advantage. The study describes the birth of a kind of “need for feedback on performance,” and this need is interpreted as being both the effect and instrument of how we are being governed today. The “need for feedback” takes shape as part of current technologies of calculation and comparison but becomes at once an instrument in order to

justify the further collection and distribution of feedback information and to increase the overall performance. The study also indicates that the many public discussions about optimal feedback and useful performance indicators do not question the new regime of governing. These discussions and debates are interpreted instead as an indication that a way of thinking about and acting upon education that is centered around performance has taken shape. Finally, the concept of 360° feedback is introduced to articulate in a paradigmatic way the kind of power that is being exercised: feedback on performance becomes an indispensable tool to know who we are and to orient and hence govern our future actions. It is our “will to know” (our position, our performance) that becomes the engine of the governmental regime.

For these findings, the interpretation does not rely on the hermeneutical tradition. Moreover, the break with a hermeneutical approach to interpretation has an important consequence. In the hermeneutical approach—and I will take the specific approach of Habermas as an example—the issue of legitimacy or justification precedes the issue of meaning or relevance. From the perspective of Habermas, the meaning of something can be grasped if we know under which conditions something is accepted as relevant (Habermas 1985). An interpretative analytics in line with Foucault instead assumes that questions about legitimacy—for instance, debates about adequate information or relevant quality indicators for education—only come to the foreground if a (self-) understanding in terms of comparison, quality, and information circulation has emerged. In other words, part of our assumption that practices related to information and feedback are meaningful today is that they are currently debated, that is, that certain aspects are treated as in need of justification. These debates are regarded as part of current governmental reasoning and not as a symptom of its crisis of legitimacy. An interpretative analytics thus seeks to make a cartography of the conditions of possibility both regarding what we consider today to be meaningful and the rules and principles according to which we start to discuss its relevance and judge its legitimacy. It is however important to elaborate in more detail on how exactly to approach these conditions of possibility.

An interpretative analytics along the perspective of governmentality does not seek to “explain” the current state of affairs on the changed role of the state and the changed self-understanding of actors in terms of feedback. Schematically speaking, such an explanatory interpretative approach can take two different forms. For instance, one could interpret the current insistence on feedback and benchmarking as an articulation of the logic of capital in late modern societies and hence explain competitive benchmarking as an attempt to align member states and their educational system with the requirements of capital reproduction. Or one could interpret the European benchmarking as part of a political project in which member states transfer power to European institutions. The power transfer, it can be argued along these lines, explains new modes of political coordination and juridical regulation through competitive benchmarking in an attempt to safeguard both national welfare and European economic strength. What these approaches share is that something (logic of capital or political power) is assumed to be given and—while standing

behind the phenomena being investigated—allows for an understanding of its meaning through explaining its coming into existence. From Foucault, the idea is taken that in order to understand the impact of politics and the economy on society and people's life, we have to investigate how people are being governed and come to govern themselves. This is formulated very precisely by Lazzarato:

The remarkable novelty introduced by Foucault in the history of capitalism since its origins, is the following: the problem that arises from the relation between politics and the economy is resolved by techniques and dispositifs that come from neither. This 'outside', this 'other' must be interrogated. The functioning, the efficacy and the force of politics and the economy, as we all know today, are not derived from forms of rationality that are internal to these logics, but from a rationality that is exterior and that Foucault names 'the government of men'. (Lazzarato 2006, p. 1)

In order to clarify the consequence for interpretation, it is helpful to introduce Foucault's concept of "problematization." For Foucault (1990, p. 257), the concept "does not mean the representation of a pre-existent object nor the creation through discourse of an object that did not exist. It is the ensemble of discursive and nondiscursive practices that make something enter into the play of true and false and constitute it as an object of thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.)." What incites a form of problematization are clearly social, economic, and political developments in a particular period for they can render common practices problematic, that is, make it difficult to continue thinking and acting in the same way. Applied to this study, it could be said that developments at the level of the European Union or economic developments (related to changes in mode and factors of production in the knowledge economy, for instance) incite difficulties in common ways of governing education. However, the form of problematization that emerges at a given moment as an answer to these difficulties should not be approached as their direct manifestation or translation but elaborates the conditions based on which possible solutions can be proposed and debated. The focus hence is on the singular form of problematization that emerges at a given moment and that cannot be interpreted or explained as the logical or necessary outcome of given political or economic developments. The problematization of educational systems in terms of performance and the current experience of the need for feedback, for instance, should be approached in their singularity, that is, as an event. This is the "outside" or "other" that Lazzarato argues to be distinctive. The form of problematization opens up a space to think and act in a particular way, to discuss about possible solutions, and to start debates about legitimacy and relevance, and hence it installs a particular way of addressing the difficulties. The conditions of possibility investigated along the lines of an interpretative analytics exactly address the form of problematization. In that view, an interpretative analytics can be described as an act of re-problematization.

The following citation offers a point of departure to clarify in more detail the distinctive scope and objective of the act of re-problematization: "People know what they do, they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, p. 187). This citation allows to point out that the study, first, is not about a totalizing

explanation but a tracing of a singular assemblage and, second, does not aim at a foundational critique but is motivated by critique as a public gesture:

1. The descriptive, cartographic account of educational policy at the level of the enacted discursive and material practices addresses how power actually works in current forms of governing: what kind of power is exercised when governing—to be understood as “conduct of conduct”—takes shape as “feedback on performance”? The notion assemblage is useful to point out how heterogeneous practices with their own history and development connect with each other in a way that is mutually reinforcing and result in a kind of apparatus (“dispositif”) that gives shape to more or less stable power strategies and forms of problematization by which to govern people (“regimes”) (Foucault 1976). The resulted power mechanisms include a logic that cannot be reduced to the idea or doctrine of a single strategist (e.g., politician, economist, expert, etc.) and whose coming into existence is not to be explained by an underlying cause or actor (e.g., social class, state, etc.). In other words, what often escapes our attention—in our concern with distributing or collecting feedback information—is that it plays a role in the assemblage of an apparatus that works according to a logic that goes beyond our intentions. The “feedback apparatus” should be regarded, therefore, as a strategic assemblage that is stabilized and that has an intelligibility of its own and whose power operations are enacted to tackle problems in very diverse domains (Rabinow 2003, p. 54). An indication that the feedback apparatus is actually in operation is that European benchmark reports and international assessment studies, for instance, start to function as stabilizing mechanisms (Simons and Olssen 2010). The authority of these reports or studies is affirmed, and the collection and distribution of feedback gains further impetus, by the fact that they become “obligatory passage points” and hence indispensable in order to know and govern oneself (Callon 1986). Another indication of the stabilization of such a strategic assemblage is that increasingly problems in different domains are framed in terms of “lack of feedback” (for instance, about school performance), hence necessitating the production and circulation of feedback information. At this point of stabilization, it can be argued in Foucaultian terms that the current “need for feedback” (and “will to learn” and “will to quality”) functions as both the effect and instrument of an apparatus whose power mechanisms seek to secure optimal performance of each and all. This statement however is not a “totalizing explanation,” but results from an observation of the totalizing ambition of power mechanisms. Two additional methodological points have to be made regarding the description of how power works and the resulted apparatuses.

First, in studies of governmentality and Foucaultian-inspired studies in general, there is a tendency to use Foucault’s own concepts (such as disciplinary power, normalizing power) as heuristic or even explanatory tools in studying current or new practices. This mobilization of a kind of “Foucaultian apparatus” however contradicts the specific aim of an interpretative analytics. The objective is to describe practices as singular events and hence not to approach them as an illustration or interpret them as a manifestation of a mode of power existing out

there. The latter approach in fact results in a kind of deep or totalizing interpretation and often comes down to an explanation, as if the concept “disciplinary power” could explain what is going on today. Second, and as a consequence of this, the challenge is to conceptualize the exercise of power today. In describing modern disciplinary and normalizing power, Foucault introduced the concept “panopticon.” The concept however was not invented by himself but was actually used by Jeremy Bentham in 1791 for a very specific architectonic model of an inspection house. However, Foucault uses the concept panopticon in a paradigmatic way, that is, it is used to reveal the singularity of modern forms of power. As the “diagram of a mechanism of power in its ideal form,” Agamben (2002) argues, “the panopticon functions as a paradigm, as an example which defines the intelligibility of the set to which it belongs and at the same time which it constitutes.” The panopticon as a paradigm hence escapes the logic of the universal and the particular; the panopticon is not a universal that is exemplified in particular practices (prison, hospital, etc.), nor is it a particular practice that allows to get a grip on universal power mechanisms. Instead, the panopticon is the example that makes the mechanisms of power and the problematic of governing in their singularity intelligible and at the same time constitutes the field of discursive and material practices. In the reported study, a paradigmatic articulation of today’s power mechanism was explored by drawing on the technique of 360° feedback. It is an existing tool that makes the current problematic of governing intelligible and at the same time enacts the problematic.

2. The mapping of indirect consequences—that is, “what what we do does”—in terms of the assemblage of an apparatus in which feedback on performance becomes an obligatory passage point in order to come to understand oneself (as a country, a school, a teacher, etc.) leads to the critical ambition of the presented study of governmentality. As stressed before, critique should be approached in terms of an ethos of de-governmentalization that combines a “limit attitude” and “experimental attitude”; the critique of our current “need for feedback” takes shape through the description of the feedback apparatus that imposes limits on us and is at the same time an experiment with the possibility of modes of self-government beyond the imposed limits (Foucault 1984d, p. 319). This approach has to be distinguished from a foundational critique that judges the legitimacy of power mechanisms based on given principles (“limiting attitude”) or that unmasks particular strategies and tactics by recalling what is given in original experiences (“experiential attitude”). From the viewpoint of foundational critique, studies of governmentality are often judged or unmasked for their so-called apolitical character, their crypto-normativity, and the insistence on ethics and aesthetics at the dispense of politics and issues of public concern (Habermas 1985). Although often not explicitly elaborated, a critical ontology of the present that addresses processes of governmentalization does include a particular political, or rather public, focus.

The point of departure of an ontology of the present is what is considered to be self-evident today, that is, our ontological makeup or taken-for-granted modes of reasoning and related practices. The critical activity, however, is not

to debunk or unmask (what we today consider to be) matters of fact but to suspend our common, appropriate modes of reasoning and usage of objects, words, and practices. This act of suspension or de-appropriation is not about destruction. Instead, the act disrupts the set limits or followed rules, suspends the taken-for-granted economies and usages, puts something out of order, and hence displaces something in view of public use. In line with Latour (2005), the critical gesture includes a movement of “making things public”: an attempt to turn our dealing with education in terms of performance and feedback into a matter of concern and to gather people as a public around this issue. It is Dewey who explicitly links this notion of “public” with the unknown or indirect consequences of our actions (“what what we do does”): “The public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions, to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for,” and he adds, “the essence of the consequences which call a public into being is the fact that they expand beyond those directly engaged in producing them” (Dewey 1954, pp. 15–16). What is at stake then is an attempt to turn the indirect consequences of our cherished “need for feedback” into a matter of public concern. And for that reason, the study’s critical orientation is not about a form of teaching that addresses readers as ignorant citizens by revealing the matters of fact and not a form of judging that addresses readers as docile subjects by setting new limits or recalling old limits but about “invitations or public gestures” (Foucault 2000, p. 245). Critique as a public gesture aims at making things public, that is, turning the state of affairs in governing education into a matter of public concern again.

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6.8 Philosophy at Work in the Study of Parenting and Parenting Support in Flanders

Stefan Ramaekers

Introduction: Understanding and Interpreting Parenting Support in Flanders

This chapter is an account of the way in which I tried to address particular developments in the area of parenting support (specifically in Flanders). It tries to cover a designated part of research activities in a period that started, roughly, by the end of 2009 and runs until now. Strictly speaking, what I will be presenting below applies to developments in the period 2009–beginning 2012. Most recently there have been some interesting new developments regarding the organization of parenting support in Flanders (i.e., in terms of what is being called “Huizen van het kind” (Children’s Houses)). In this chapter I will not go into the latter; instead I will limit myself to work that deals with these previous developments.

What has been “generated” in terms of “research output” on these developments in parenting support in Flanders during the designated period is an expression of an interest in these developments and arises from an unease with the ways in which parenting support has been conceptualized and parenting support practices have predominantly been shaped. I cannot say when exactly my interest first manifested itself, or when I felt this unease. What can be identified is its first material traces—i.e., a very brief research proposal (one page) for developing a “booklet of examples,” submitted to the department of Child Policy of the Province of Vlaams-Brabant by the end of 2009, and a paper, written during the Christmas holidays of December 2009 and January 2010, for the annual conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (Ramaekers 2010). Regarding the research proposal I was prompted by someone working in the department of Child

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Policy of the Province of Vlaams-Brabant to “try out something in parenting support” based on a paper I had given (in Dutch), earlier that year, for parenting support practitioners and policy makers—a paper in which I addressed the trend that parents today are expected to professionalize themselves to a certain extent. I wrote the paper for the PESGB conference basically because I wanted to express my first attempts at making sense of recent developments in that particular area of parenting support in Flanders; it was a way of making clear, also for myself, what I thought was at stake.

In this chapter, then, the reader will not find an account of a more or less linear and more or less delineated research process—that is, a research process in a rather traditional sense of the word: research interest, research question(s), hypothesis, collection of data, analysis of data, and discussion. There was no clear set of research questions at the beginning; there was no hypothesis to be tested, or expectations to be explored; there was no stage that could beforehand, or can now in retrospect, properly be called a stage in which “the data” were being “collected”; nor was there a stage that could beforehand, or can now in retrospect, properly be called a stage in which data were being interpreted and interpretations were being discussed. Instead, there were (and still are) questions that (emerged) during reading, discussing, and writing; there were (and are) hunches and at times a sense of a meaningful direction in which to proceed; there were books and accounts of practices I read, websites on parenting support I browsed through, discussions I held with a number of people (both from the academic world and from the field of practice and policy), and meetings with local coordinators of parenting support I attended; interspersed with this was the work I did with Judith Suissa on parenting and the current parenting discourse (see, e.g., Ramaekers and Suissa 2011, 2012), a period of thinking and collaborative writing that was both informed by the work I was doing on meeting places (see below, I will come back to this extensively) and that gave further substance to that work; there was continuous development of understanding, clearing up of misunderstandings, and generation of new understandings throughout the entire period, up until now, and most likely for some time to come.

There is no “methodology” here either, or at least not a section in which something that can be called a proper methodology is being presented, discussed, and justified. In fact, to rehearse the words used in a book written together with Judith Suissa, “[i]t is notoriously difficult for philosophers to talk of methodology in their work, and we share the distaste of many of our colleagues for the use of this term” (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, p. xiii). The most clear account of what I do when “using” a “philosophical approach” to address an issue in education (i.e., for this chapter, particular developments in parenting support in Flanders) is embedded in Wittgenstein’s expression “supplying remarks on the natural history of human beings”—and I have put “using” and “philosophical approach” deliberately between inverted commas because I find that I am not “using” an “approach” (as if it were a tool to collect data and extract meanings from data), rather I am doing philosophy, or trying to do so. Here is what Wittgenstein says:

What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark because they are always before our eyes. (Wittgenstein 1953, I, #415)

Now, granted, there is a context to what Wittgenstein wrote here, this context being his critique of doing philosophy in a particular way as well as his account of doing philosophy in some other way. There is no space to go into that here. But I do not think I am being unjust to what he says when I say that the sense I am after in this passage is the sense in which someone is trying to describe something as clearly as possible, using many examples, putting these examples side by side. And this, in turn, is being done in order to point out something, i.e., something that has become so natural to us that we no longer see it anymore, but, crucially, something that has a certain significance for the ways in which we see the others and the world and for the ways in which we (accordingly) act towards those others and the world. In this sense, “supplying remarks” can be taken to mean as introducing an interruption, or a stutter with respect to what seems to have become so natural for us, today, that we do not only no longer seem to notice it but even seem to elevate what we are doing as the (only) right thing to do, as the very truth about (in the case of this chapter) parenting and parenting support.

Neither will the reader of this chapter find a separate account of the role of interpretation in this research process. The interpretation at work in dealing with these developments regarding parenting support in Flanders cannot be confined to some particular stage or stages of the investigative process. Rather, it is there at every stage.

I will explicitly come back to the role of interpretation at the end of this chapter and try to describe how it figured in the investigation I have been undertaking during the designated period. Below I will first give an elaborate account of what I have been doing, as a philosopher of education, with particular developments in parenting support in Flanders. It is meant to show philosophy at work in this area. This account is based, for the most part, on the paper I wrote for the PESGB conference and the report of the exploration on informal meetings for parents and their children (a report I wrote together with Philippe Noens). (The full report, in Flemish, as well as the “booklet of examples” (see below for explanation), can be downloaded from <http://ppw.kuleuven.be/ecs/les/onderzoek-1/onderzoeksproject-opvoedingsondersteuning-in-ontmoeten> (text in Dutch). The paper can be downloaded from <http://www.philosophy-of-education.org/uploads/papers2010/Ramaekers.pdf>.) I will also draw on the book (esp. Chapter 1) I wrote with Judith Suissa (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012) to elaborate on some issues here and there during my account. I will start with sketching what I call the traditional picture of parenting support—a sketch that is in itself already the result of an interpretative effort. I will then go on offering an understanding of the prominence of meeting places for parents and their children as a particular shape of parenting support, which comes down to situating this against the background of the traditional picture of parenting support (i.e., indicating why it is noteworthy, what its features are, its promises, and what is implied in its central tenets). Following from that I will zoom into a particular project that ran in 2010; this project can at once be understood as an attempt at bringing out a particular understanding of (the nature of) meeting places and informal meetings between parents and an intervention in the then dominant way of understanding parenting support.

Parenting Support: The Traditional Picture

During the recent decade and a half, parenting has increasingly become an object of public debate. The many (popular and academic) books on parenting, information evenings for parents, television programs on parenting, discussions on websites and in newspapers on the latest parenting “issues,” etc., can all testify to this. At least part of this increasing attention is not unrelated to a growing need of parenting support, as is evidenced by a number of researches (cf., e.g., Snijders 2006; Snyers et al. 2001).¹ Today parenting support is a concept that is widely known and that covers a broad spectrum of practices, initiatives, and methods (cf. Poot 1992; Nys and vandemeulebroecke 2000; Vandemeulebroecke and Nys 2002). In welfare policy in Flanders parenting support is undeniably a priority.

Parenting support can be given many concrete shapes. In the 2007 Flemish parenting support decree, the emphasis is on parenting support in terms of offering parents information about issues related to child-rearing and on giving parents specific advice about certain topics (e.g., about developmental milestones, or about sleeping routines, or about setting boundaries). Concrete practices in parenting support hence usually take the form of formally organized meetings such as information evenings for parents, workshops, etc., in which the emphasis lies on passing on information to parents and on enriching parents’ knowledge on raising children and on training their parenting skills. Almost without exception, this is something that is done in the presence of or under the guidance of some expert in the area of parenting: a (developmental) psychologist, a social worker, an educational consultant, etc.—in short persons who are expected to have the appropriate knowledge of issues related to parenting and who are offering parents guidance or even somewhat correct parents’ behavior towards their children. We could call this a “traditional” conception of parenting support—whereby “traditional” here is not meant to be taken as “old fashioned” or “out dated” but rather as “most common” and “predominant.”

A number of things stand out in this traditional conception of parenting support.² First of all, what is presupposed here is that parenting cannot do without some form of expertise. The predominant conception of parenting support is based on the premise that parents are lacking (or are in need of) knowledge or have insufficiently developed skills as it comes to raising their children, and that, hence, this

¹ Given that this chapter is an account of research activities that cover the period from 2009 till the beginning of 2012, I will also limit myself to referencing literature that was actually referenced at the time, in relation to the specific cases that were under investigation. So I will not refer to the most recent literature in this account. The point of this chapter is not to bring out particular points on parenting and parenting support today, but to try to deliver an account of the interpretive work involved when addressing particular developments in parenting support at a particular time in a particular country.

² See Ramaekers and Suissa 2012 for a fully developed account of this. The issues addressed in this chapter formed an important precursor to and became intertwined with the work I have been doing on parenting together with Judith Suissa.

knowledge needs to be imparted on them or these skills need to be taught them. The corollary of this, obviously, is that child-rearing is something for which exists a body of knowledge, that this in turn can be translated in terms of skills, and that parents can be trained in using these skills. In the predominant conception of parenting support, parents are seen as needing to professionalize themselves to a certain extent. They are called upon (summoned, expected) to actively engage with the way they are bringing up their children, in particular to prepare themselves as good as possible for what is to come, for example, by seeking out for information by reading books or going to information evenings or to attend parenting classes (cf. Lambeir and Ramaekers 2007). In short, the orientation here is one towards knowledge: parents are expected to behave as learning subjects, continually keeping themselves up to date with the latest scientific developments regarding, e.g., issues related to child development, potential disorders, etc. Good parenting thus is equaled to acting expertly, that is, to acting on the basis of scientific research. (see Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, Chapter 1, for a more fully developed account of what we there call the scientization of parenting.)

Within this picture, child-rearing is understood narrowly in terms of the things parents consciously and intentionally “do” in order to reach certain targets—something that is nicely captured by the English verb “to parent.” Raising children becomes a “task” (sic: “parenting”), whereby parents come to see themselves in a functional role. “[T]here is little notion,” Suissa argues, “of parents as people, of the parent-child relationship as constantly developing, in flux and challenging, intersecting with others and other roles” (Suissa 2006, p. 72). What is closely connected to this is the danger that child-rearing is being confined to a sphere of prevention and remediation. Within this knowledge-focused conception of parenting and parenting support, attention is almost invariably drawn to potentially problematical aspects of raising children, on potential risks and dangers on the route to adulthood (cf. Ramaekers 2009). And a parent’s “task” is understood in terms of ensuring that her child hits the necessary developmental milestone, of preventing the occurrence of potential problems and disorders by offering the appropriate stimulating and well-structured environment, etc.

Next to this focus on professionalization, knowledge, and expertise, what also stands out in the predominant picture of parenting support is the very language with which this is being conceptualized, i.e., the languages of various disciplines of psychology (developmental psychology, behavioral psychology, neuropsychology). Much of the jargon we are so familiar with today in the context of parenting support is drawn from these disciplines. Characteristic expressions here are, among others, “offering emotional support,” “enhancing well-being” (of parents and children), “accommodating children’s needs,” “creating stimulating contexts,” “enabling interactions” between parents and their children, “experimenting with taking distance from parents,” “ensuring one’s child’s attachment” or “enabling secure attachment,” etc.—and these are expressions, crucially, that are being used, in a self-evident and unproblematic way in parenting columns in magazines, in announcements of information evenings, on websites for parents, etc., as if they were an obvious part of our everyday language (see Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, esp. Chapter 1). These expressions may sound rather “neutral”

(i.e., because they sound “scientific” and (thus) “objective”), but that is only apparently so. That is, the very fact that this jargon has become an obvious part of our everyday language is far from neutral since it then also shapes our understanding of child-rearing and the parent–child relationship. The self-evident usage of the languages of the disciplines of psychology creates a particular way of looking at children and parents. These languages offer us a lens through which child-rearing and the parent–child relationship come to appear in a very particular way; they make us see (make visible/draw attention to) particular things, aspects, and elements and not others; and they accordingly direct the ways in which we act.

We could call this phenomenon a psychologization of child-rearing and the parent–child relationship. According to De Vos this has to do with the fact that the discourse of psychology, he argues, “has invaded in an unprecedented way companies, advertising, culture, politics, up to our social and family life” (2012, p. 1). The “psy-discourses,” as he calls them, “are becoming increasingly hegemonic as they furnish the human being with particular signifiers and particular discursive schemes (assigning particular positions) with which to look upon itself and its world” (ibid., p. 2). De Vos sees psychologization as all-encompassing, in the sense that, as he puts it, “[T]oday, more than ever, our understanding of ourselves, others and the world comes in psychological terms” (ibid.). And, importantly, he argues, it is not just about there being ever more psychological language in ordinary discourse but rather about psychology altering the very discursive positions of today’s subjects (cf. ibid., p. 9). It is exactly this what we mean here when saying that the languages of psychology position parents in very particular ways in relation to their children and themselves as parents, and that they make parents look at their children and themselves through a specific lens (i.e., a (behavioral, developmental, neuro-) psychological one).

The sense of expressions such as the ones mentioned above not being neutral is heightened by the realization that they assume a particular logic, i.e., a causal logic, as well as a particular kind of goal. And both logic and goal are taken for granted and imported into these very expressions themselves. As argued elsewhere, “[th]e way to understand child-rearing is in terms of a linear-developmental story, in which certain outcomes are implicitly posited as the desirable [...] end-point, and anything parents do along the way is understood as effecting the next step and, crucially, as taking us one step closer to reaching this end-point” (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, p. 14). Whatever it is parents do, this is situated somewhere on the developmental line between birth and the presupposed outcome, which today is some version of the emotionally stable child, or happy child, or confident child, or emotionally literate child. Child-rearing thus tends to be seen only in terms of the one-to-one interaction between parent and child, whereby the parent’s primordial task is to ensure her child’s proper developmental process, to support, and to stimulate this process as good as possible (cf. Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, esp. Chapter 1). At the same time the prospect of the “right” (kind of) action is underscored.

Taken together, this professionalization and psychologization of child-rearing and the parent–child relationship strongly encourage a particular kind of attitude on

the part of parents: an attitude of continuous alertness for possible opportunities, risks, and shortcomings in their children’s development (see Masschelein 2008). In order to be a “good” parent, one has to be “attentive to” one’s child’s developmental and other needs, being attentive to developmental and other opportunities. This is something that is expected especially in parents of children age 0–3, since this is, as almost all handbooks, guides, websites, etc., for parents say, and as is recently repeatedly being stressed within the context of neuropsychological research, the crucial age in terms of children’s development. Parents are increasingly encouraged “to see the technological capacities of their offspring at ever earlier ages, contributing to the compression of developmental time in the rush to competence and ‘mastery’” (Burman 2008, p. 43) (cf. also Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, esp. Chapter 1).

What tends to be lost because of this predominant picture of child-rearing and the parent–child relationship, or at least, what tends to be relegated to the background because of predominant ways of conceptualizing these is an understanding of child-rearing and the parent–child relationship that goes beyond the one-to-one interaction scheme between parent and child, an understanding in which child-rearing is (also) conceived of as introducing children into a common world, as having to do with values and norms that are being passed on to children, or better perhaps into which children are inevitably being initiated. What tends to be lost here as well is some idea of parents not only (or not just) having a functional role but of parents also being representatives of some world that they are standing for something and that they, accordingly, also have to pass on that world to their children. And connected to this, what tends to be lost is the possibility of understanding the idea of parental responsibility in ways that go beyond an understanding of it in terms of being responsible for the next developmental milestone, or for managing and balancing needs and opportunities, or for successfully performing a set of “parenting” tasks. When opening up to this broader conception of initiation into a world, other questions and issues come into the picture. What is worthwhile to pass on to our children, to the next generation? What do we want to initiate this next generation into? What place do we envision the next generation to take and to give shape for itself? Given the fact that we all inhabit the same world, how do we organize a living together of the old and the new generations? It is questions such as these—questions that, at least partly, draw on another language—that are not (or no longer) asked within the predominant conceptualization of child-rearing and the parent–child relationship.

Informal Meetings Between Parents as a Form of Parenting Support: More of the Same or Something Different Altogether?

The idea of informal meetings between parents as a form of parenting support has increasingly gained attention in the context of welfare policy and practices in Flanders. And at the outset at least, this idea promised to introduce a somewhat

different take on parenting and parenting support, precisely because the emphasis is said to lie on informal aspects (i.e., parents among one another, in casual dealings) of the (potentially) supportive meeting as against the formalized nature of predominant practices (i.e., formally organized meetings such as information evenings, parenting classes, almost invariably in the presence, or under the guidance, of some “expert”). This idea of informal meetings between parents was explicitly inscribed—albeit in one sentence only—into the 2007 Flemish decree on parenting support.

Recently, research has shown that there is a growing interest, among young parents, for easy accessible, informal forms of parenting support (cf. Snyers et al. 2001; Vermulst 2002). And research by Vandenbroeck et al. (2007) and Buysse (2008) has shown that informal social support, i.e., support from friends and relatives, is experienced by parents as supportive for their parenting. In Buysse’s survey, e.g., it has become clear “that there is in particular one source of support that seems to be experienced as supportive by all parents in all [focus] groups: the social network” (Buysse 2008, my translation). It is no surprise then that, in Flanders, many initiatives were taken that in one way or another tried to work on strengthening parent’s social networks and that focused on stimulating informal meetings among parents and others involved in raising children as a form of parenting support. The most clear-cut cases here are probably the so-called meeting places for parents and their children, such as “De Speelbrug” in Antwerp, “Baboes in Brussels,” and “SpeelOdroom” in Leuven. Meeting places for parents and their children have existed for a long time already in other countries (e.g., the “Maison Vertes” in France and the “spazio insieme” in Italy), and these have been an important source of inspiration for the Belgian cases (see, e.g., Vandenbroeck et al. 2007, 2009). Meeting places usually are houses—sometimes called “open houses”—that are reorganized in such a way as to allow a number of parents and their children to come by and spend some time there. (I will come back to this later.) One other example of a practice that explicitly focuses on informal meetings among parents is “BijtankenOverOpvoeding@Home” organized by the Gezinsbond (cf. http://www.gezinsbond.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=197&layout=blog&Itemid=403, website in Dutch). Other examples are the many kinds of mother groups, baby cafés, etc. All of these initiatives and practices are forms of parenting support that are organized as an alternative to the more formal kinds of support for parents (c.q. mostly professional advice in institutionalized settings) and can be understood as a response to parents’ expressed need for informal support and networks, as mentioned above. They can be seen as offering parent an opportunity to share their concerns and worries with like-minded people (i.e., other parents, more or less sharing the same experiences) instead of talking about (bringing up) their children with professionals.

Notwithstanding the fact that this does indeed sound promising in terms of being an alternative to formalized practices, there are some issues for concern here as well. In general, these issues have to do with the (perceived, projected, etc.) need for expertise in a meeting place and can most clearly be brought out by going into how

the role of some kind of “facilitator” or “volunteer” or “host” or “professional,” who is recommended to be present in the meeting place, is being conceived. Opinions about the role of this person differ, but it is generally agreed that someone like this person should be present. A more or less minimalistic or soft account of this role is offered in the working paper by the network of meeting places for children and parents (cf. http://www.expo.be/sites/default/files/kennisdocument/discussietekst_ontmoetingsplaatsen_voor_kinderen_en_ouders.pdf, in Dutch). It can be called “minimalistic” or “soft” because the focus is not on the professional’s expertise (in the sense of what she should “know in order to”) but on her “way of being” in the particular setting: her friendly or kindly nature and her ability to heartily welcome parents and children, to listen attentively to the parents, and children, to be there in a nonjudgmental way such that the “free confrontation” between parents and their ideas about raising children is facilitated—a number of characteristics that are thematically expressed in the concept of “reflexive professionalism” (Ibid., p. 4, my translation). This professional does not take over child-rearing from the parents, but only “facilitates” and “invites” parents to an encounter with other parents and to a reflection on their own ideas on raising children.

A more outspoken account of the role of the professional, however, can be found in a report by the Flemish government’s expert center for parenting support (EXPOO), in which it is argued that the presence of such a professional or volunteer guarantees that a meeting place is more than a place where parents meet informally, such as a park or some other kind of public space (cf. EXPOO 2010, p. 8). Though one is not very specific about what exactly the professional is doing here, it is clear that she “does” something to the place such that it does more than offering opportunities for occasional and informal meetings, but can become a place for a more formal kind of parenting support (Ibid.). It is not unexpected, then, to also see the word “competences” showing up in relation to the professional’s role (Ibid. pp. 12ff). The shift in language is telling: it is a shift from the rather general concept of professionalism to the (supposed) clarity of the concept of competences. Competences can be operationalized into specific forms of behavior and are, thus, measurable. Professionals, also, can be trained to develop these competences. A further implication is that together with the language of competences, something like the “correct” way of acting comes into view. Professionals with the right competences can ensure that what is at stake in a meeting place is enacted in the “right” way.

It is interesting to see how this shift from a more general notion of “reflexive professionalism” to a notion of the professional with certain competences is accompanied by a shift in how the meeting places themselves have come to be conceptualized. Whereas in the working paper referred to above, one speaks of meeting places as having certain “functions,” the latter report speaks in terms of the “goals” of meeting places. Again, the shift in language is not neutral: “functions” refer to possibilities, without immediately implying what should be done or what is desirable or advisable to do. “Goals” on the other hand entail a clear indication of what is desirable or advisable to do.

Granted, the latter document explicitly tries to distinguish the role of the professional in meeting places from the role of an “expert.” Nevertheless, given the shifts in language indicated it is hard not to conceive of the professional here as some kind of expert, as someone who knows what is going on and what (preferably) should be done. In as far as the professional is understood as someone who is, in a figurative way of speaking, “transforming” a place into a meeting place (i.e., a place where a particular kind of meetings is expected to take place), this place then inevitably becomes a learning environment for parents. It is hard to resist, then, seeing parents (or at least relating to them) as lacking something (the “right” way of interacting with their children, the necessary skills for talking to their children, the appropriate kind of receptiveness, or whatever) and hence to step into a relationship with them from a deficit approach.³

What this eventually comes down to is that the very encounter itself between parents here has come to be of minor importance since, despite original intentions, the emphasis still lies on the content around which the meeting is organized, i.e., possible tips and tricks, relevant facts, things parents “should know in order to,” etc., instead of on the meeting itself. That parents enter into an encounter with other parents is not valued as such, but only because it is useful/functional for meeting other targets/for achieving other aims—targets/aims that have been externally determined.

The Project “Parenting Support Through Informal Meetings”: An Attempt to Conceptualize an Alternative⁴

In January 2010 a small research project called “parenting support through informal meetings” was funded by the province of Vlaams-Brabant (a province in the Flemish part of Belgium). In this project we wanted to advance a conceptualization of parenting support that is different from the predominant conceptualization of it precisely by explicitly focusing on informal meetings between parents. Our interest was in the informal meetings or encounters themselves, specifically in what could possibly happen in these encounters between parents (as “equals”). By doing so we connected our project explicitly to the survey conducted by Buisse (cf. *supra*) and took seriously its main conclusion, i.e., that the very encounter itself is something that is experienced by parents as being supportive for their parenting.

³ A recent qualitative investigation of a practice that has many affinities with this idea of meeting places (called “BijtankenOverOpvoeding@Home”) shows how difficult it is to give substance to the role of the professional and at the same time to escape from the presuppositions of the dominant discourse. In fact, the analysis shows that despite good intentions, the practice still is driven by the very logic of professionalization and psychologization that is so characteristic of the current dominant conceptualization of parenting and parenting support (cf. Vandezande 2012).

⁴ The project was carried out in collaboration with Philippe Noens, project assistant.

Focusing explicitly on informal meetings between parents as a form of parenting support opens up pathways for conceiving child-rearing and parenting support differently than in terms of its predominant understanding and offers possibilities for other forms of parenting support. First, it allows to leave child-rearing in the hands of the parents themselves. In the predominant understanding of it, the danger is that raising one's children is—not literally speaking but in a very particular sense of the word—"taken out of" the hands of parents, "taken over" by something or someone else (i.e., the expert discourse or "professionals"). Focusing on informal meeting among parents is a way of countering this. Parenting support can then also be what it is, conceptually, supposed to be: a form of support instead of something that leans against or even just becomes a form of formal assistance. At the same time parenting support can be safeguarded from being a vehicle to convey, under the disguise of labels such as "scientifically proven," a normative picture of what good parenting is.

Second, the focus on informal meetings allows to put parenting on the agenda as an ordinary human activity (instead of the specialized, knowledge-based undertaking that it is depicted to be in the media, popular literature, etc.). Informal meetings between parents open up the possibility of an ordinary (non-problematized) exchange between parents of the day-to-day things that (can) happen in family life. Undeniably family life can be very diverse and different among parents, but there is bound to be some overlap in issues, concerns, questions, and insecurities—on bedtime, e.g., or on the many interrupted nights, or on difficult mealtimes, or on how one's oldest son or daughter is behaving towards the new baby, or on how one's son or daughter is using his or her mobile phone, or etc.—all of which can be raised/asked in a non-problematized setting of parents among one another. This is not just a setting that offers parents an outlet (in some kind of psychological sense of the word, as in "relief"), though, to be sure, it can function as such. (It is in finding acknowledgment and in experiencing recognition that parents discover a form of support, as comes out in the research report by Buisse (cf. supra).) Allowing for these "ordinary" questions and concerns to be raised is also opening up the possibility for parents to express what is important for them in their relation to their children, what is important for them (values, norms) to pass on to their children, and what they judge to be of lesser importance and to find out what the differences are with other parents. What is reaffirmed here is the idea that the parent-child relationship is infused with values and inherently bound up with the dynamic context of any individual parent and not just a matter of "doing" the "right" things. Informal meetings between parents can thus be a space that is not colonized (or at least not as expressly colonized) by an expert discourse⁵—a space that allows "for a conversation on what kinds of interaction are most valuable in a parent-child relationship, to whom and why" (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, p. 116). In these informal meetings raising children can become the subject of a moral and

⁵ See Ramaekers and Suissa 2012, esp. Chapter 2, for a more developed discussion of what is there called the third-person perspective of scientific accounts of good parenting.

cultural conversation instead of being approached as an object of technical deliberations.

Third, it allows to see raising children in a broader perspective. In the current predominant discourse, child-rearing has been situated within (narrowed down to) the one-to-one relationship between parent (mostly the mother) and child, in which anything parents (have to) do is understood as effecting the next step along the way to some desirable “outcome” (usually taken to be some version of the emotionally stable child, the safely attached child, etc.). What is left out here is a broader, societal perspective—the idea that raising children is something that is being done in a particular cultural and historical setting, in which particular values and norms hold sway—and the idea that raising children is actually constituted by a relationship between generations (and not just between one parent, teacher, educator, and some child), a relationship in which the preeminent questions have to do with what kind of values we want to pass on to the next generation, what kind of world we want to pass on to our children.

The concrete aim of the project was to develop what we call a booklet of examples of practices of parenting support (in the broad sense that we tried to advance) that could serve as a source of inspiration for all those involved in supporting parents.⁶ In order to develop this booklet, we decided to work with a think tank of relevant actors—who, in this case, were the local coordinators of parenting support on the level of the municipality. We were able to involve ten local coordinators of municipalities in the province of Vlaams-Brabant.⁷ During the term of the project, the think tank met on a monthly basis. The tasks set to this think tank were to make an inventory of all parenting support activities in each of the municipalities, to have a discussion on the rough outline of the concept of meeting/encounter we had in mind and with which we started this project (see below, I will get back to this), to discuss particular examples of practices in which encounters between parents are the focus of attention and to formulate fitting descriptions of these practices, and to contribute to selecting the practices for the booklet. In the booklet each example is presented by using a similar format: some pictures, a few testimonies from parents and/or children who were present during the activity or meeting, a brief description of the organization involved and the reasons for doing this or that activity of parenting support, and a description of the particular example that specifically tried to bring out the centrality of the encounter between parents (and children). The latter descriptions were presented in a colored frame, to draw attention to the text. Three different colors were used, but it was not explicitly explained why; rather, in the introduction to the booklet, a series of three different kinds of meetings/encounters was mentioned, more or less in passing, with each kind printed in a different color—this color referring to the colors used in the colored frames. On the basis of the discussions in the think tank, we came to

⁶ See <https://ppw.kuleuven.be/ecs/les/bestanden/Tekstbestanden/onderzoeksteksten/bronnenboek.pdf> for the examples, in Dutch.

⁷ For more information about Vlaams-Brabant, please visit <http://www.vlaamsbrabant.be/en/index.jsp>

distinguish the following three kinds of informal meetings: meetings between parents with the specific intention to provide time and space for talking about raising children, meetings between parents (and their children) in a context of child-rearing, and meetings between parents that at first sight do not have anything to do with child-rearing but that still are, in an important sense, supportive for parents in raising their children.

As said, we started this project having in mind a particular concept or conceptual framework of “meetings” or “encounters”—a concept we offered for discussion to the members of the think tank and which we tried to develop further during the term of the project. This conceptual framework was to a certain extent the occasion for this project, and at the same time it was also continuously at stake during the project (in the sense that this concept was open for criticisms and hence was continuously being reshaped during the project). Here we describe the most important elements of this conceptual framework—on the understanding that this is already a description that takes into account the critical remarks raised during the discussions of the think tank.

“Some Kind of Social Environment/Space”

As already indicated above, one of the interesting conclusions in the survey by Buysse was that parents themselves reported a lack of informal networks as well as a wish to have the opportunity to share their concerns and worries with like-minded people (i.e., other parents, more or less sharing the same experiences) instead of talking about (bringing up) their children with professionals. Buysse reports that what comes out in the parents’ stories as some kind of ideal scenario of parenting support is “a kind of social environment/space with shared responsibilities for raising children, lots of interaction and opportunities of finding support with one another” (Buysse 2008, my translation). Parents thus indicate to feel a need to have informal forms of contact with other parents, in which they can exchange tips, offer feedback to one another, and experience recognition and acknowledgment (cf. *ibid.*).

This idea/concept of “some kind of social space/environment” is an interesting and fruitful one in the context of the project that is being described here since it allows us to develop what is meant by informal meetings as a form of parenting support and to elaborate what these meetings can then entail. The concept of environment/space is a broad one, i.e., it is not limiting with regard to a particular kind of setting. It implies an openness with regard to the particular place these informal meetings can be held in as well as an openness with regard to the way in which these meetings should be held. This social environment/space can be a concrete place, i.e., a real (material) place, but it can also be a virtual place; and though it can be a structurally permanent place (e.g., a meeting place in a community center), it does not have to be such a place, since it can be a place that only temporarily functions as such a social space/environment; furthermore it does not have to be a space that is monitored by some expert or professional, though

it can, of course, be such a space. We took the focus on informal meetings among parents quite literally in this project; that is, we were not concerned with (or intended to develop) some kind of particular place; our concern was with the very informal meetings themselves, irrespective of the place which these are supposed to be held in, irrespective even of the fact whether or not these meetings are explicitly focused on (topics concerning) child-rearing, and irrespective of the fact whether or not there is someone present monitoring/supervising the meetings.

An “Unbounded”/“Unlimited” Environment/Space

If we want to take seriously the importance of informal, social support, then it is crucial that this social space is not already determined, i.e., bounded or limited by some particular conception of what good parenting is or, more generally speaking, not bounded or limited in a moral sense of the word or not bounded or limited by an idea of what is supposed to be happening in these meetings, or what is supposed to be “discussed,” but is, in a very broad sense, “unbounded.” When the space is bounded/limited, what is of importance (the diverse meanings that parents can attach to child-rearing) is already defined in advance. There is no room, or at least only limited room, for parents to define for themselves what is important for them in child-rearing, in their relationship with their children. In an important sense, parents then cannot express their own voice. Their voices are only heard, hence only count, within the contours of the framework that determines the nature of the encounter. On the other hand, in a space that is unbounded/unlimited (or in a space that one is willing to see as unbounded/unlimited), parents do in fact have the opportunity to give shape to this space and its contents themselves (instead of having to meet up with expectations regarding to what is “appropriate” to say and do within this space).

We can usefully link this up with what is already said above, about recent initiatives in this area not being able to escape the predominant discourse. An interesting challenge for recent initiatives and practices in which some idea of informal meetings is propagated exactly lies in trying to take a distance from this predominant discourse, which in the context under discussion here means trying to ensure that spaces that are offered to parents are not limited spaces, i.e., spaces in which the language spoken (and expected to be spoken) is the language of the “official” discourse on what constitutes good parenting and in which parents are incited to do exactly those kinds of things that are deemed important in the predominant discourse (i.e., stimulating one’s child’s development, doing whatever it is that is said to enhance one’s child’s self-esteem or to ensure one’s child’s safe attachment or to make sure the necessary neural connections are formed). In the words used above, it is trying to ensure that the idea of informal meetings between parents does not lead to a simple reaffirmation of the idea of child-rearing as something that only takes place within the one-to-one interactions between parent and child. Such a version of informal meetings, narrowed down to the predominant discourse, is, in the end, nothing more than yet another translation of what parents

do in terms of a “learning activity”: parents are brought together in (so-called) informal meetings so that they can learn about (issues regarding) child-rearing; informal meetings thus are taken to be “educative” for parents. And at the same time, such meetings come to form a framework within which parents can then be “evaluated.”

Informal Meetings as a Space in Which Child-rearing Can Be Given a Shape

Now, to be sure, we do not want to deny that parents can “learn” something in these informal meetings. But the problem with seeing informal meetings in terms of a learning activity is that within this conceptualization parents are being addressed as subjects that are lacking something and that have some kind of deficit—a deficit that needs expertise in order to solve it. As said, informal meetings then are in danger of becoming bounded/limited places or spaces. Put differently, places or spaces where parents meet one another are in danger then of becoming (what we would like to call) an already existing community (i.e., with more or less established rules and criteria, values, and norms), a community in which a particular concept of good parenting holds sway and in which it is already determined what counts as an issue of child-rearing. Encouraging parents to engage in informal meetings of this kind then implies that parents are primarily being shaped by the community in which they enter.

As said, we do not want to deny, or exclude, that parents can learn anything about raising children in informal meetings with other parents. But we are shifting the focus here to conceptualizing informal meetings between parents as places or spaces within which child-rearing can be given a shape, within which the very criteria about what constitutes (good) parenting can be expressed, hence (re)affirmed. Put differently, it is in the very encounter itself that the community and, crucially, what counts, what is of importance, are created. Drawing on Cavell (1979), here parents can be said to have a voice, in a full sense of the word. (And, in fact, this is precisely one way in which to conceive the idea of leaving parenting in the hands of the parents themselves.) Having a voice is not merely expressing one’s personal opinions, but is the active revelation of the conditions of intelligibility that the individual who is speaking takes to be authoritative. Informal meetings can then be understood not as an occasion for parents to “learn” from other parents but as places or spaces where parents are trying to find out who is willing to share their voice and also, importantly, to find out which voice is theirs. Having a voice, in this sense, is tantamount to seeking a community, of creating a public. This also implies that when having “found” a community (having heard one’s voice), an answer is expected to the question whether or not one wants to assume responsibility for this community (or for this voice), that is, for the claims to the world that are being voiced by this community. What happens in this kind of encounter is not “learning” in order to be able to “interact” in ways “better” than before (though, again, this need not be excluded). Rather, in this kind of encounter what comes to light fully is the idea of child-rearing as that human activity that is infused, to its very heart, with values and interpretation.

Informal Meetings as a Form of Parenting Support: Merging the Pedagogical and the Social

When conceiving informal meetings among parents in the way as described here, it can also be seen that a pedagogical reading of such meetings can no longer be (sharply) distinguished from a reading that emphasizes its social function. That is, in this idea of informal meetings, child-rearing and some idea of living together come together. Child-rearing is no longer that activity that takes place within the confines of a one-to-one relationship between parent and child, but immediately and inherently pertains to the question of living together in a community (parents with children, parents and other parents, families, the old and the new generations, etc.). Child-rearing is then freed from the pressures of a one-sided (psychologized and professionalized) discourse and can regain a sense of openness, i.e., as that human activity in which the idea of seeking (and working on) a place for the new generation in a community takes center stage.

Looking Back: The Role of Interpretation

In this chapter I deliberately did not want to include a section called “results” or “impact of the research.” For one thing, this would go against what I said in the introduction to this chapter, i.e., that interpretation cannot be confined to some particular stage, but that it is there at every stage. In this final section I will explicitly develop what I mean by this, on a more theoretical level by referring to how interpretation has been working in my investigations.

What I am trying to convey here is actually quite close to (or closely modeled on) the way Gadamer, while elaborating how Heidegger has described the hermeneutical circle in *Being and Time*, is rendering understanding in terms of a working out of one’s fore-structures or fore-conceptions (2004/1965, pp. 269ff): “. . . interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation.” It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to fully develop a reading of Gadamer’s hermeneutic. Here I want to emphasize two elements of how Gadamer describes the way interpretive understanding is achieved.

First, when trying to understand and interpret something—in Gadamer’s writings this is mostly a text; in the research described above, this is the more lucid “thing” called parenting and parenting support—we never approach this something in an “objective” way, if that is taken to mean “detached,” or “neutral,” or “unbiased,” but we always approach it with a particular set of meanings, some of which we may be conscious of and some of which we may not (yet) be aware of. Gadamer calls this set of meanings our “pre-understanding” or also our “prejudices.” “Prejudice” should not be taken in a negative sense (as in being judgmental or being prejudiced about something), but in a more literal sense, as a preliminary judgment, “a judgment that is

rendered before all elements that determine a situation have been finally examined” (Ibid., p. 273).

Second, this set of meanings or prejudices is not just a “perspective” one can take, or a “position” one can assume, but is something that has shaped the interpreter’s take on the world in a very deep sense. The concepts “perspective” and “position” imply too loose a sense of what an interpreter’s pre-understanding is. For pedagogical purposes Gadamer’s concept of prejudices or pre-understanding is sometimes explained using the example of a set of glasses the interpreter is wearing (as a concrete instance of what a “perspective” is), the suggestion being that the interpreter can only see what she sees because of the set of glasses she is wearing; without this set (or with a different set), she would be seeing something else, or perhaps nothing. What this misses, however, is the sense that one’s pre-understanding is not something that one has as the result of an act of free will and is not something that can be changed at will—as if it is “this” or “that” perspective one can take at will. Put differently and in a positive way, what the interpreter (subjectively) sees or intuits or understands is inextricably intertwined with the intersubjectively upheld meanings of the community of competent language users the interpreter has grown into over the course of her life. These intersubjectively upheld meanings make up what the world is for us and “determine” what is true and false, beautiful and ugly, good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate, just and unjust, green or red, round or square, etc. Gadamer refers to this as the tradition one is situated into, the tradition one has grown into. To be sure, this does not mean that the subject growing into a tradition can only repeat or reproduce what the tradition is passing on to her. Gadamer explicitly, and rightfully so, emphasizes an element of active involvement on the part of the subject. “Even the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated. It is, essentially, preservation, and it is active in all historical change” (Ibid., p. 282). I take this to mean that the set of pre-understandings that the interpreter “uses” to approach something is passed on by the tradition she finds herself in, shaping her in fundamental ways, and is simultaneously also “constructed” by the interpreter on the basis of the events of her individual life course.

To put this more in terms of how the editors of this book have put it, when I say that in the above investigations interpretation is there at every stage, I mean this to be taken in the first and third sense of the four senses of interpretation spelled out by the editors of this collection—interpretation “as understandings which are brought to the research” and as “our attempts to analyse, to make sense of, or to give meaning to the evidence, argument, scholarly work, and other material that we collect in the process of enquiry.” To be sure (and as should be clear on the basis of what I have described above), I also worked with and on interpretations by other people—the second sense pointed out by the editors, i.e., interpretations as the material someone is working on. What I want to bring out when saying that I find that in my investigation interpretation is there at every stage is an intertwined version of the first and third of these senses. If interpretation is the set of understandings one brings to the research (the first sense), then I am inclined to

emphasize in this that this set of understandings is there *all the time, throughout the research*. So it would be a bit misleading to say that my investigation—the “research”—set off “from” a deliberative interpretation (as understandings that I brought to the research). Rather, my very interpretation (as understandings) itself of the policy documents, texts, and papers on parenting support and meeting places is as much part of the investigative process as any step I took after my initial account of the issues at hand. These understandings are with me all the time and continuously “shape” my interpretations; or perhaps more correctly, my interpretations are always also expressions of my understandings in the sense meant here. It will be clear then that there is no sharp distinction with the third sense pointed out. In connecting pieces, trying to make something clear, or to point out what may be interesting, trying to make a case, etc., interpretation (as understandings that I bring to the research) is presupposed and at the same time a particular understanding (or interpretation) is expressed (shown to some reader). An interpretation is, then, perhaps not so much “what has come out of the research” as rather “the coming about of the argument” itself. There is, thus, no sharp distinction between understanding and interpretation. Some form of understanding is necessary in order to be able to interpret something; an interpretation can lead to further understanding, and interpretation itself is to be seen as a manifestation of understanding.

This can be easily related to the account of parenting support I’ve given above. It should be clear by now that, for instance, the writing up of the section “[Parenting support: The traditional picture](#)” (cf. above) is not a “neutral” description of an objective state of affairs (whatever that may mean), or a literal account of what I “found” “out there.” Rather, the very writing up of that section is tantamount to developing an elaborate understanding or interpretation of (what I take to be) the traditional picture of parenting support; and the text presented is the (tentative) result of my fore-conceptions being worked out in confrontation with the material at hand (books, policy documents, conversations, etc.). As a researcher (in this case a philosopher of education), I did not come to this area (of parenting and parenting support) “tabula rasa,” but inevitably so with particular understandings (of raising children, education, parenting, parenting support, etc.), “prejudices” that made me “see” particular things and bring these together in particular ways, that enabled me to make connections and to investigate these connections, etc. And, in close connection to what Gadamer says, what “followed” from these research activities is not something radically different from my “initial” understanding, but something that is at once connected to it and an elaboration of it, an elaborate understanding, or more developed understanding, or at least an expressed understanding. Or, put differently, by the ways in which things were being connected and put together, the writing up of this “traditional picture” became an interpretation.

This interpretation can perhaps helpfully be seen in terms of a “co-construction.” On the one hand, inevitably, the culture I grew up with passed on to me a set of meanings, ways to see the world, hence shaping the ways with which I came to understand myself (as a child of particular parents, as a brother to someone else, as a student of education and philosophy, as a doctoral researcher, as a father, etc.). On the other hand, this process of passing on is not, as said, a process of

conservative reproduction; rather, the set of meanings passed on is simultaneously shaped by my experiences as a child of particular parents, as a brother to someone else, as a student of education and philosophy, as a doctoral researcher, as a father, etc. And these experiences were of a kind that at some point an unease gradually made itself felt, a sense of something not being “right”; a sense that the current account of parenting support is perhaps only part of the story; a sense that the human subject (c.q. the parent), as it is made to figure in that account, is depicted in a way that can be contested; a sense that parents are addressed in ways that do not do justice to them as ethical persons; etc. And clearly, since this interpretation/particular understanding (of what I read, hear, come across) comes “from somewhere,” the radical consequence is that someone else’s account of the same issues could have been different from mine. Doing philosophy is, in an important sense, always personal; the philosophical writing that is being done is a kind of writing that always already involves one as a person. What Annette Baier said about doing moral philosophy applies well here: “Like everyone else, I come to moral philosophy with my own prejudgments concerning what is fair and what is unfair, what is cruel and what is humane, what is arrogant, what servile, and what properly self-assertive” (Baier 1995, p. vii). To be sure, this is not something “only” personal (if by this one means “subjectivist”) but, importantly, is at once shared and personally expressed.

It should also be clear by now why this chapter does not have a separate section titled “results” (or something of the sort). Including such a section would imply a kind of closure of the kind of research undertaken here that I do not think is possible. Such a section would suggest that it would be possible to consider the issues under investigation as being “addressed” (be it successfully or not), that (more or less clear) answers could now be offered, and that the impact of the research could be assessed now. The sense of “results” and “impact” that is operative in this way is a rather straightforward empirical sense. It invites questions such as: “Have parenting support practices changed?” (Answer: Well, some have, but most haven’t.) “Have conceptions of the role of professional in meeting places changed and given occasion to alternative practical manifestations of her role?” (Answer: Hardly, I would be inclined to say at this point in time.) “Has policy on parenting support been influenced by the “outcomes” (read: interpretations) of these investigations?” (Answer: Well, some words, such as “meetings” and “meeting places,” are clearly more prominent in recent policy documents, but the context in which these words are used is significantly different from what we have been trying to bring out in our research.) Though important in its own right, this is not the kind of “impact” I have in mind. Given how I have tried to explicate what understanding and interpretation is, the only reasonable thing I can say here is that I see the “impact” of this research in terms of a contribution to the ongoing interpretation of what parenting and parenting support is. Or in words closer to Gadamer’s, the investigations described are ways of affirming, embracing, cultivating, and preserving particular fragments of the tradition I find myself interwoven with. In this sense they are small additions to the ongoing process of trying to understand and trying to get a grip of parenting and parenting support—it is the “productive element”

(Ibid., p. 296) Gadamer sees as inherently connected to the act of understanding and interpreting. And as such, they are open to further acts of (not) affirming, (not) embracing, (not) cultivating, and (not) preserving; they are invitations to another's further interpretation.

In a very practical sense, this idea of contribution to an ongoing interpretation has been enacted in the project described above. As indicated, from the very beginning, we involved a number of local coordinators of parenting support into a think tank. This allowed us to present our (then rather rudimentary) ideas about different conceptions of parenting support to those who are directly involved on a daily practical level, make good use of the discussions among the participants to "test" our ideas, and thus to further develop these ideas in more substantial ways and to "translate" these to the field of practice. What happened here is that as researchers we (the project assistant and myself) followed up on existing understandings and interpretations of parenting and parenting support and shifted the weight of some concepts in relation to others—in this case, perhaps, by reviving "old" concepts (such as "generation" and "common world") and thereby making other more predominantly present concepts temporarily disappear in the background. Doing so, however, inevitably affects the participants, who are situated in largely the same set of meanings as we, the researchers, are. They can no longer see themselves in the ways they were used to see themselves for a different meaning has been offered to them. In this sense, introducing one's understanding is an intervention into another's existence. It is because offering one's understanding can potentially be productive for another's understanding of the issue at hand that it can be a contribution to an ongoing interpretation.

To conclude, it should also be clear (at least, I hope so) that the cumulative logic of improvement that is characteristic of the predominant understanding of scientific research today fits rather ill with the kind of interpretive understanding I wanted to advance in addressing parenting and parenting support. Simply put, it is hard to say what it is we now "know more" than before, or even if we "understand better" than before. I'm happy to follow Gadamer here, once again: "It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way, if we understand at all*" (Gadamer 2004/1965, p. 296). Doing philosophical work on parenting and parenting support is, in this sense, peculiarly similar to being a parent: there never has been a final answer, nor will there ever be one, to what it means to be a parent.

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Genre 7 Quantitative Approaches

Introduction

Paul Smeyers

Numbers are everywhere: they tell us what date it is, how long I have to work, and how much money I have in my bank account. We rely on mathematics to build houses and bridges, to produce sweets and cast concrete, to calculate costs, to analyze economic trends, and to make estimations in many areas such as health care and education. Living our life without numbers, calculations, and estimations is nowadays almost impossible to conceive. But the grip they offer on “our reality” is also beset with a number of problems: more often than not they create an illusion of straightforwardness, of facts which cannot be doubted, of what cannot be denied, i.e., “what is the case.” Numbers have a seductive objectivity. We are likely to be forgetful of the presuppositions that are implied by certain uses of numbers. We tend to forget that everything starts with a choice about what one may want to focus on, i.e., a particular concept that is the beginning of our research. What is the case for things that can simply be counted gets even more complicated in statistics where various levels of measurement (nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scale) are involved. Analyzing the data according to the presuppositions of various scales and correlative statistical (often very complex) techniques for testing a hypothesis requires an in-depth understanding of probability (which itself requires mathematical insight and knowledge). The use of statistics in educational research is very widespread, as it is in many other fields of research. Sometimes, the outcomes of the analyses are critically discussed when presented in the popular media, but more often than not they are shaped as “facts.” Experts understand that things are not so simple. But where reports are broadcast on radio and television, or when figures or tables are printed in newspapers in a manner that lacks the sophistication and the nuance they require, we are on dangerous terrain: their distorting picture may be a travesty of reality. For the sake of clarity (in order to

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make it less complex), such uses could cultivate one-sidedness, prioritizing *an* image of reality at the cost of many possible other views. The lack of understanding of the purposes and limits of statistics, of the different ways they can be interpreted, is particularly damaging.

A canonical text on the history of science, more particularly of educational research, reads as follows: “One cannot understand the history of education in the United States during the twentieth century unless one realizes that Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost” (Lagemann 2000, p. xi). Apart from whether or not one agrees with this bold claim, one has to admit that the kind of research that uses quantitative, i.e., statistical, techniques, gained prestige in the twentieth century. Various often interrelated factors are responsible for this, such as the belief in and the acceptance of the assumptions of positivism, the institutional growth of the educational market, the so-called scientization of educational research, the professionalization and academization of the training of educationists, and the supremacy of meritocratic values in modern societies and the constant need to legitimate these by “objective” and “neutral” research. The use of methods of testing and statistics was at the core of Thorndike’s success story, a story based on the unshakable belief that everything can be measured. William McCall (1922)—the residing statistician at Teachers College—immortalized this unbridled trust in quantification with the well-known assumptions: (1) “whatever exists at all, exists in some amount . . .”; (2) “anything that exists in amount can be measured . . .”; and (3) “measurement in education is in general the same as measurement in the physical sciences . . .” (McCall 1922, pp. 3–5). On the one hand, these assumptions relied to a large extent on Thorndike’s educational psychology; on the other hand, once they were made explicit, Thorndike and his followers were eager to adopt them in order to further justify the way they saw research: as the antidote against all societal evils (see, e.g., Travers 1983).

Statistics are (still) everywhere. Their power and undoubted efficacy in many areas has become almost an article of faith: the more statistics we gather, the more we will know. Their use relies upon a number of presuppositions: that reality is being represented, that it can be controlled, and that its risks can thereby be managed. But by emphasizing its exaggerated use or overuse, we do not mean to give the reader the impression that statistics has only negative connotations or that it should be banned from educational research altogether.

That sort of polarized position should be opposed. Statistics should neither be seen as the golden or only road we can follow to understand educational reality, nor should their importance be disregarded when the issues to be studied require such an approach. For instance, if one is interested in a phenomenon such as “bullying” in primary schools, one might want to know how many cases of bullying have been registered, or how particular subgroups, such as boys and girls, according to age, ethnicity, various living conditions, and so on and so forth, are affected by bullying. It goes without saying that to have an informed estimate of the frequency and scope of the occurrence of a particular problem (as detailed as this can be) is quite essential in educational contexts. Policy needs to take this into account, as an element in the process of determining how important and relevant the problem is.

This not only has implications for what should be done (by whom and at what level) but also for the kind of further research that should be carried out (not to mention the quantity of research funding that should be mobilized).

Nor should a sharp dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative studies be asserted. Correlational studies (requiring a sufficiently large sample), for instance, could alert scholars to qualitative phenomena that may have gone unnoticed. Conversely, a “thick description” of a school or community of the kind normally associated with qualitative research might and perhaps should include quantitative information about the social class makeup of the school, the distribution of test scores of pupils, staff student ratios, etc. There is a legitimate place for different kinds of quantitative research within educational research or, even more broadly, within the academic discipline of education. This does not warrant a blind trust in the exclusive use of randomized field trials and experimental or quasi-experimental approaches, which have often been used in educational policy to justify certain interventions. Finally, there are a plethora of criticisms internal to the use of particular statistical techniques, but there is generally a lack of external criticism that takes into account the overall picture of what education and child-rearing should be about. Here a crucial element is the way problems are conceptualized. This has far-reaching consequences for the kind of decisions that are taken on the basis of research, and this point is often forgotten when people look at what research “tells” us—as if this were an entirely neutral or objective voice. The use of statistics requires much more than choosing the correct statistical technique, more than simply following an algorithm. Interpretation is involved from the beginning till the very end. Some chapters say more about these implicit choices than others. The chapters do highlight the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative approaches in various educational fields. Some detail first of all internal statistical discussion; others offer a meta-reflection on what has to be taken into account when using this approach to investigate the educational field.¹

Ellen Vanderhoven, Annelies Raes, and Tammy Schellens address the process of designing effective learning materials. They demonstrate the role of interpretation in research about learning by an example using a specific methodology known as design-based research. This approach involves the design of educational interventions and learning materials to improve learning. In what follows, first the reasons to choose this particular approach are explained, referring to the main characteristics and procedure of this research methodology. Next, the contribution of this research approach is illustrated by a report of a study concerning the design of effective educational materials about the risks of social network sites. The research project described gives further insight into the total process of the design-based research methodology and approach. Finally, they describe the conclusions that are drawn and discuss what is happening in terms of the role of interpretation during design-based research in general and during the design and

¹ I would like to thank Daniel Muijs and Martin Valcke for their assistance in the process of finding contributors.

evaluation of educational materials about the risks of social network sites in particular. The specific advantages of this research approach are presented, but attention is also paid to the accompanying disadvantages and challenges of design-based research in an educational setting.

Researchers have called for renewed efforts in exploring what knowledge should be taught in pre-service teacher education programs with regard to technology. In addition they have also called for renewed efforts on how to best prepare teachers to effectively use that knowledge to support teaching and learning. From the multiple ways of approaching this problem, *Anne T. Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Peggy A. Ertmer, and Jo Tondeur* have selected a two-phase mixed-methods research design. Their chapter examines how the research focus and results were selected within the chosen design. Thus it is described why and how specific populations of teacher educators and practicing teachers were selected. In addition, the chapter details why certain data sources were selected (surveys and multiple case studies—interviews, documents). The analysis of data is also dealt with, noting the various statistical tests that are run as well as the methods used for coding open-ended data. Furthermore, descriptions of interpretations of the results and how findings were established are presented.

Theory-driven evaluation is a collection of different methodological approaches that can be used by evaluators in trying to understand the impact of a reform policy: for example, program theory, theories of change, and realism. In this chapter *Leonidas Kyriakides* describes the main features of theory-driven evaluation studies. It is argued that educational effectiveness research (EER) can influence the design of different types of theory-driven evaluation studies so that in-depth answers to policy makers concerned with why specific reform policies are more or less effective can be provided. Thus, EER is seen as a theoretical foundation upon which theory-driven evaluation studies can be built. Guidelines for conducting theory-driven evaluation studies that are based on EER are provided, and a framework for designing theory-driven evaluation studies is offered. It is finally argued that conducting theory-driven evaluation studies on educational effectiveness may contribute to the establishment of a theory-driven and evidence-based approach to school improvement. The importance of this approach to school improvement is demonstrated. This implies for the author that data from theory-driven evaluation studies of educational effectiveness should guide the design of school improvement efforts.

Research evidence suggests that the idea of leadership as a panacea for all the functional ills of schooling is unfounded, however convenient the notion has been for policy makers. Good leadership is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for good schooling, and we know that principals successful in one school context do not always operate with equal efficacy in a different setting. Research on school leadership has likewise suffered from the tension between evidencing and delivering improvement and challenging and informing policy, most obviously in the dearth of research on quantifying the impact of leadership on pupil outcomes. In this chapter *Marta C. Azaola and Anthony Kelly* sift through a range of research from developed and developing countries to get an overview of interpretations apart

from the hegemony of “Western” contexts, interrogating findings in terms of how they relate to method and interpretation. The link between interpretation and methodology is theory, they argue, in the absence of which the researcher cannot be sure what has been found. The appropriateness of the latter affects the legitimacy of the former, and hence ultimately the usefulness of the research. Their review suggests that good research, from whatever cultural tradition, should go beyond the folk knowledge of anecdote to the theoretically constructive.

Many examples of educational research, including international comparative studies, have clearly documented that children’s attainments and educational careers are linked to their ethnic and cultural origins and the socioeconomic situation of their families. However, the extent of the equity gap for specific student groups varies between countries, and explanations for this also vary. In this chapter *Pamela Sammons* and *Yvonne Anders* summarize two large, longitudinal studies conducted in England and Germany that investigate children’s development from preschool age through primary education. Both studies were set up to investigate the influences of individual child, family, home learning, preschool, and primary school influences on children’s development. A core question of both studies is how far preschool and school are able to reduce the negative influence of early childhood disadvantage and thus potentially help ameliorate inequity in later educational outcomes (Sammons et al. 2013). In England the EPPSE study has tracked 3,000+ children, whereas the German BiKS study investigates in more depth the development of around 550 children. The two studies share similarities in their designs and methodological approaches, although there are also some important differences. Key results of both studies are presented and discussed in terms of the quantitative strategies adopted and the interpretation of statistical findings.

Elias Hemelsoet deals with the statistical measurement and analysis of irregular migrants in policy making. As it concerns populations that are difficult to identify, quantitative estimations are often unreliable and pose various methodological problems. Moreover, and more important from an educational perspective, while many differences are implied in a concept like “irregular migrants,” these quantitative estimations tend to homogenize the people under consideration. Within an educational framework, inclusion seems to provide a better solution to acknowledge their differences. Still, as is argued with the case of Roma, homogenization is at work in the inclusion framework too, albeit in a different way. From the theoretical approach of looking at education as an initiation into practices, the need for a different kind of “understanding” in educational research is defended. Recognition of the inherent transformative character of educational practices suggests a move from the production of “knowledge of the case” as a scientific endeavor towards an increased attention to “knowing how to go on.” Practices are not fixed entities and therefore knowledge about these will by definition be partial and temporary. But focusing on “how to go on” implies that an investigation of what exists is only a starting point. Consequently, interpretation is not only a concern when mapping practices; it should also entail the educational practice of pondering on how these practices are to be transformed.

In his chapter *Peter Bowbrick* describes an evaluation carried out by a team. The technical problems to be tackled in interpreting statistical data are discussed. It is shown how the statistical analysis is then interpreted by the team as a whole to produce a consistent and coherent report. The objective of the evaluation was to influence government policy; hence, political and micro-political pressures are also examined. The way in which readers of the report drew inferences from the report and interpreted the statistical results and then disseminated them to influence policy is discussed. Bowbrick draws attention to the serious ethical issues this raises.

In the final chapter *Paul Smeyers* focuses on layers of interpretation in quantitative educational research. Starting from various child-rearing and educational examples which are detailed and critically discussed, he questions the aim of reducing the variability of the data (a promise statistics carries). He further questions how statistics are often used to offer an explanation (that is, how independent variables are presumed to affect dependent variables). He also addresses the possibility of manipulation of data that are intended to engender policy advice. The chapter points to the strengths of a quantitative approach, but it also highlights the limitations. Particular attention is paid to the presuppositions of causality and probability. It is then argued that though attention to the particular (the opposite of generalization) has much to be said for it, it is not the only alternative when trying to decide what needs to be done. Backed up by an amended correspondence theory of truth and an awareness of the limitations, it is argued that there is nothing necessarily problematic about the quantitative approach. On the contrary, it can contribute to the process of doing justice to the multilayered complex educational reality one finds oneself in. But in order to properly do so, attention must be given to interpretation all through the process of this kind of research.

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7.1 Interpretation in the Process of Designing Effective Learning Materials: A Design-Based Research Example

Ellen Vanderhoven, Annelies Raes, and Tammy Schellens

Introduction

In this chapter, the role of interpretation in research about learning is demonstrated by a research example using a specific methodology known as design-based research. This approach supports the design of educational interventions and learning materials to improve learning. In what follows, first the reasons to choose for this particular approach are explained referring to the main characteristics and procedure of this research methodology. Next, the invaluable contribution of this research approach is illustrated by a report of a study concerning the design of effective educational materials about the risks on social network sites. The research project described gives more insight in the total process of the design-based research methodology and approach. Finally, we describe the conclusions that are drawn and we discuss what is happening in terms of interpretation during design-based research in general and during the design and evaluation of educational materials about the risks on social network sites in particular. The specific advantages of this research approach are presented, but we also discuss the accompanying disadvantages and challenges of design-based research in an educational setting.

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The Design-Based Research Approach

What Is This Approach About?

The design-based research methodology is a well-used research approach in the learning sciences (Barab and Squire 2004; Brown 1992; The Design-based Research Collective 2003) and relies on multiple sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, which are triangulated (Cohen 2011). Yet, although a design-based research approach includes several well-established research methods and is based on existing norms for sampling, data collection, and data analysis (McKenney and Reeves 2013), the approach as a whole is fairly recent and evolved only near the beginning of the twenty-first century (Anderson and Shattuck 2012). The method mostly stands out because of the goals it puts forth (McKenney and Reeves 2013): it wants to bridge theoretical research and educational practice (Vanderlinde and van Braak 2010), thereby resulting in both an increase of theoretical knowledge and a societal contribution, such as school programs (Reeves 2006). The methodology has been defined by Wang and Hannafin (2005) as

A systematic but flexible methodology aimed to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development, and implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real world settings, and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories. (p. 6–7)

This definition includes different important characteristics of design-based research that were described by several authors and summarized by Anderson and Shattuck (2012). First of all, it focuses on the design and testing of a significant intervention. It therefore starts from problems that are both *scientifically and practically significant*, as is revealed in an initial problem analysis (Edelson 2002; McKenney and Reeves 2013). Second, it involves *multiple iterations* of testing and refining of problems, solutions, methods and design principles (Phillips et al. 2012). Third, throughout all phases of the design-based research, it is involving a *collaborative partnership* between researchers and practitioners. Fourth, the research needs to be conducted in *real educational contexts*, and not in labo-settings. Fifth, next to the development of practical solutions, it results in *design principles, or “prototheories,”* that help communicate relevant findings towards other researchers and practitioners (The Design-based Research Collective 2003). Finally, another characteristic that is not explicitly apparent in the given definition is the fact that the approach makes use of mixed methods, including a variety of research tools and techniques, as integrative research with varying methods is necessary to meet new needs and issues that emerge during the process (Wang and Hannafin 2005).

Following these characteristics, the procedure of design-based research, depicted in Fig. 1, iteratively involves four sequential steps (Reeves 2006): (1) the analysis of practical problems, (2) the development of solutions based on existing knowledge, (3) evaluation research of the solutions in practice, and (4) reflection to produce design principles.

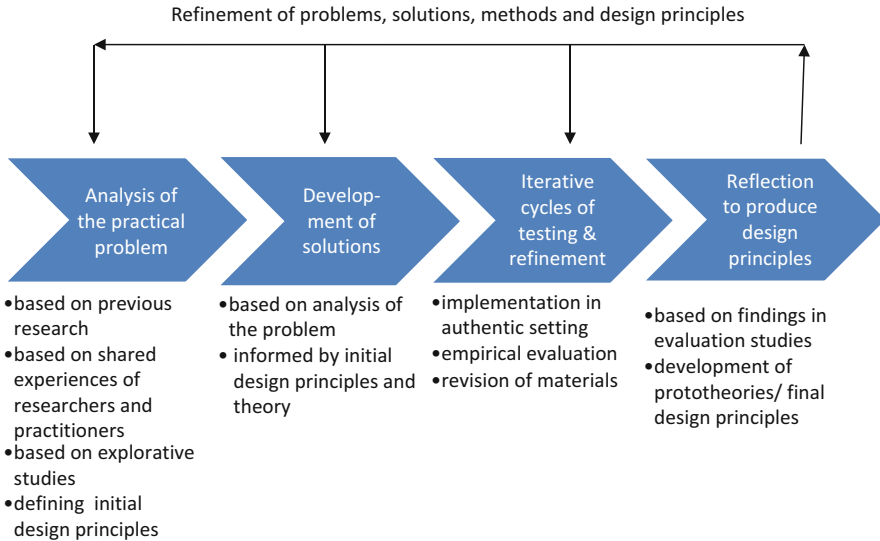


Fig. 1 Iterative steps of design-based research, based on Reeves (2006)

Why Choosing a Design-Based Research Approach?

The design-based research approach is partly originated in reaction to the lack of theoretical base in designing and developing interventions to improve learning, the lack of theoretical implications of intervention research, and the lack of evaluation studies in authentic settings (Phillips et al. 2012; The Design-based Research Collective 2003). Since the methodology eliminates the boundary between design and research (Edelson 2002) and results in both theoretical contributions and practical solutions, this research approach is appropriate for research about the design of new educational learning materials.

Several advantages of design-based research have been described in literature. Edelson (2002) summarized the three most important reasons why someone should choose to use a design-based research approach. First of all, it provides a *productive perspective for theory development*, as it starts from a fully specified theory, shows inconsistencies of this theory by evaluating the design that was based on it, and ends in context-specific guidelines. The goal-oriented nature of the design-based research guides this theory development (Edelson 2002).

A second advantage of design-based research that was described by Edelson (2002) is the *usefulness of the results*. He states that in the past, practitioners often complained that they did not know how to implement the results that were found in research in their daily practice. Design-based research not only results in practical solutions that can be used immediately in the learning context, it also delivers design guidelines that can be used easily to develop similar interventions.

The third reason to use a design-based research approach, following Edelson (2002), is the fact that design-based research directly *involves researchers in the*

improvement of education. Whereas previously, the design was often in the hands of publishers and practitioners, the expertise and knowledge of researchers now directly influences the development process, making innovative designs based on recent educational studies possible.

Next to these three advantages described by Edelson (2002), several other advantages have been described in design-based research literature. One of these is the fact that the use of real-life settings, in contrast to labo-settings, ensures the *ecologic validity* (Phillips et al. 2012). This aim for generalizability is highly valued, as it ensures the usability of materials in the classroom. Another advantage that is described is that it fulfills the norms of good research in general, including the articulation of clear goals and research questions, the cumulative and systematic nature of gathering evidence, and the use of methodologies that are appropriate to the research goals (Phillips et al. 2012).

Applying Design-Based Research: A Research Example

In this section, we describe a design-based research project that has been conducted from 2011 to 2013, as part of the Security and Privacy in Online Social Networks project, further referred to as SPION project. This project has received funding from the Strategic Basic Research (SBO) Program of the Flemish Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT). The main goal of the SPION project was to counter responsabilization (i.e., the process where the user of a social network site is responsible for its own safety and privacy) and to redirect responsibilities towards other institutions (e.g., service providers, schools, government, etc.). One of the subgoals was therefore to develop educational materials that can be used in secondary schools, to teach teenagers about the risks on social network sites.

IWT financed a 4-year PhD track, thereby allowing a multiyear project to be set up. By including researchers in the development of materials, the expertise necessary to do evaluation studies was ensured as well. The research group that was involved in this studies, a division of the Department of Education of Ghent University, already had built an expertise in doing design-based research and evaluation studies in secondary education (Raes et al. 2012; Schellens and Valcke 2004).

Since one of IWT's conditions for funding was that the project would result in both solutions for practice and in scientific progress, the advantages and characteristics of design-based research were ideally suited.

Focus of the Research

This research project focused on a form of learning situated in the field of media literacy. Traditionally, media literacy refers to the ability to analyze and appreciate literature, but this meaning has been enlarged the moment computers became

prominent in society (Brown 1998). With the rise of Web 2.0, the meaning of media literacy has evolved even more, as it covers not only interactive exploration of the Internet but also the critical use of social media and social network sites. Since social media give an excellent opportunity to create online content, the development of new skills is necessary. Livingstone (2004a) therefore describes media literacy in terms of four skills, this is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages across a variety of contexts. Previous research shows that children are good at accessing and finding things on the Internet, but they are not as good in avoiding some of the risks posed to them by the Internet (Livingstone 2004b).

In this respect, schools are put forth as ideally placed to provide media literacy education to all children and teenagers (Livingstone and Haddon 2009; Marwick et al. 2010; Patchin and Hinduja 2010). In the current research, it was aimed to develop effective educational materials to teach children of secondary education (aged 12–19 years) how to behave safe on social network sites (i.e., to increase awareness and to change unsafe attitudes and behavior), and to describe critical design guidelines for the development of these materials.

Method and Results

As stated before, the procedure of design-based research iteratively involves four sequential steps as depicted in Fig. 1 (Reeves 2006): (1) analysis of practical problems, (2) development of solutions based on existing knowledge, (3) evaluation research of the solutions in practice, and (4) reflection to produce design principles. In the following, the methods used in this research throughout the sequential steps are described in detail, together with a short summary of the results.

Step 1: Analysis of Practical Problems

In a first step, the practical problem needs to be analyzed and a theoretical framework has to be articulated, including initial design guidelines to proceed to the next step (development). To analyze the practical problem, three important resources can be consulted: previous literature, shared experiences of researchers and practitioners, and one or more pilot studies (Reeves 2006).

In this research, the lead to answer the questions about the nature of the problem was taken from previous literature: do teenagers care about their privacy, are they behaving risky on social network sites, are they aware of the existing risks on social network sites, and what is the role of school education? The results of this literature study were extended with three pilot studies. First, an observation study of Facebook profiles was conducted, to find out what teenagers are doing on Facebook and whether they show risky information. Second, a theoretical evaluation of existing educational packages about safety on social network sites showed the gaps and challenges to develop new materials. And third, a survey study showed the impact of school attention for the topic of safety on social network sites on students' attitudes and behavior. Finally, the experiences of practitioners were

taken into account by organizing a focus group with educational stakeholders (i.e., teachers, developers of educational materials, educational counselors).

Following the results of the literature study and the three pilot studies, some conclusions were particularly important to guide the decisions in the next stage, that is, the development of solutions. In the literature study, it was found that the risks teenagers face on social network sites can be divided into three main categories: content risks, contact risks, and commercial risks (DeMoor et al. 2008). The first one includes encountering provocative or wrong content on your social network site, such as hate messages or gossip, respectively. The contact risks find their source in the fact that social network sites are made to communicate and have contact with others. Examples of contact risks are cyberbullying, sexual solicitation, and all kinds of privacy risks (De Moor et al. 2008; Livingstone et al. 2011). The third category of risks contains the commercial risks. These include the commercial misuse of personal data: information can be shared with third companies via applications, and user behavior can be tracked in order to provide targeted advertisements and social advertisement (Debatin et al. 2009). In the first pilot study that we conducted, the observation study, we found indeed that teenagers face a significant amount of risks (Vanderhoven et al. 2014e). In the organized focus group, it was found that cyberbullying and privacy risks are the most encountered risks by educational stakeholders such as teachers. These risks may form a threat, since research indicates that a significant amount of teenagers experience harm after exposure to online risks (Livingstone et al. 2011; McGivern and Noret 2011).

Further literature study revealed that a variety of prevention campaigns and awareness-raising interventions has been developed to account for the rising concerns about the new risks children face when using the increasingly popular social network sites (e.g., for an overview of European packages, see Insafe 2014). However, a systematic review showed that almost none of these interventions has been empirically evaluated (Mishna et al. 2010). The results of our second pilot study confirmed that most of the existing packages were developed without any theoretical consideration, nor with regard to the cause of the problem that is tackled, nor with regard to the intervention that is developed (Vanderhoven et al. 2014a). Moreover, the few evaluation studies that were conducted only show an impact of the interventions on Internet safety knowledge, but not on pupils' behavior (Mishna et al. 2010). This is in line with the results from quantitative intervention studies about media literacy education in general that typically show an increase in knowledge about the specific topic of the course, but lack a measurement of attitudes and behavior (Martens 2010). If measured, it is found that attitudinal and behavioral changes are much harder to obtain (Cantor and Wilson 2003) or not found (Duran et al. 2008; Steinke et al. 2007). Still, in our third pilot study, a survey study, we found that school attention for the topic of online safety has a positive influence on pupils' attitudes and behavior (Vanderhoven et al. 2013a).

As stated before, another typical characteristic of this first step of design-based research is the articulation of an initial framework (Reeves 2006). Therefore, next to the studies that were conducted to analyze the practical problem, initial design guidelines and predictors of effective materials were formulated. We took into

account both general principles that are shown to be important in prevention campaigns (Nation et al. 2003) and more specific instructional design principles that follow out of the leading theory in education, that is, constructivism. Furthermore, because of the goal of our materials (i.e., not only changing awareness but also changing unsafe attitudes and behavior), theories of behavior change are taken into account as well. More specifically the study was based on the transtheoretical model of behavior change (Prochaska et al. 1992) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1991).

Step 2: The Development of Solutions

Based on the results of the first phase, educational materials were developed. A detailed design was created, and explicit goals about the outcome of these materials were put forth: an increase in awareness about risks on social network sites and a decrease of unsafe attitudes and behavior on social network sites. There was a special focus on contact risks as these were of most concern to the educational stakeholders in our focus group (privacy risks, cyberbullying, and sexual solicitation; DeMoor et al. 2008). The package consisted of a syllabus for the pupils and a manual for the teacher. Every course lasted 1 h, trying to satisfy the need of teachers to limit the duration of the lessons and the work load (Vanderhoven et al. 2014a). The different criteria that were put forth in our theoretical framework were taken into account during the development of the materials (Vanderhoven et al. 2014). All courses followed the same structure:

1. Introduction. The subject is introduced to the pupils, using the summary of risks (De Moor et al. 2008).
2. Two-by-two exercise. Students receive a simulated social network site profile on paper and have to fill in questions about the profile together with a peer. These questions were scaffolding the pupils towards the different existing risks on the profile.
3. Class discussion. Answers of the exercise are discussed, guided by the teacher.
4. Voting cards. Different statements with regard to the different contact risks are given. Students agree or disagree using green and red cards. Answers are discussed, guided by the teacher.
5. Theory. Some real-life examples are discussed. All the necessary information is summarized.

Step 3: Evaluation Research of the Solutions in Practice

The materials that were developed were implemented in authentic classroom settings in secondary education, and the impact of the materials on the awareness, attitudes, and behavior of the pupils that were involved during the intervention was measured. Based on the results, materials have been refined. These revised materials were implemented again. In total, there were five iterations of development, evaluation, and refinement. The methodology was mostly equal for the five different intervention studies. However, some small changes have occurred. This is a

typical characteristic of design-based research, where integrative research with varying methods is necessary to meet new needs and issues that emerge during the process (Wang and Hannafin 2005).

The materials were implemented in classes in secondary schools. In the first intervention study 1,035 pupils participated, in the second intervention study 1,487 pupils were involved, and in the third intervention study 156 pupils followed the course. In all these studies, the pupils were on average 15 years old. In the last two intervention studies, slightly younger students were involved, because in these studies the importance of parental involvement was tested, which is particularly important in lower grades. The mean age of the 146 pupils that were involved in the fourth intervention and of the 205 pupils in the fifth intervention was therefore 13 years.

A pretest–posttest design was used in all intervention studies. This means that in all conditions, in all studies, pupils had to fill in an online pretest survey before the intervention took place. Afterwards, they followed the intervention, which was different in all studies. Finally, they filled in a posttest survey. In all intervention studies, a specific experimental intervention was compared with a control group. In the first two studies, no intervention took place in this control group, and pupils only had to fill in the surveys. In the last three studies, the intervention out of a previous phase was given to the control group, so that comparisons with the experimental group indicated the added value of the revised materials.

The survey measured pupils' awareness, attitudes, and behavior towards contact risks on social network sites. This survey was developed based on the contact risks as described by DeMoor et al. (2008). In the first two studies, three different scales were developed, one for awareness, one for attitudes, and one for behavior, all built on the base of the means of six or more items. They all had a satisfactory reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha. In the last three studies, the survey was shortened, because pupils and teachers reported that it was too long and time consuming. Therefore, a new and shorter survey was developed with less items on the awareness scale and with attitudes, intention, and behavior measured based on the theory of planned behavior following the manual of Fishbein and Ajzen (2009).

In all studies, an open question asked pupils about what they had learned during the intervention, to have a direct measure of increased awareness. Moreover, a direct binary measure of behavioral change was conducted by the question; "Did you change anything on your profile since the first questionnaire?" If the latter was answered affirmatively, an open question about what they changed exactly gave us more qualitative insight in the type of behavioral change.

Multilevel modeling (MLM) with the software package MLwiN was used to analyze the data. Since our data clearly have a hierarchical structure, that is, pupils in classes, the obtained data from pupils out of the same class might be dependent and might so break the assumptions of simple regression analysis. In this respect MLM is suggested as an alternative and adequate statistical approach. Consequently, since a significant between-class variance could indeed be observed in the first two studies, a two-level structure is used: pupils (level 1) are nested within classes (level 2). The

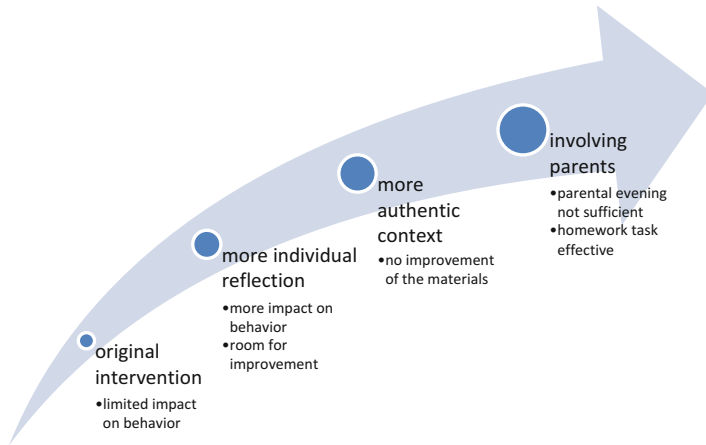


Fig. 2 Iterative process of implementation, evaluation, and revision of the designed materials, based on Vanderhoven et al. (2014)

impact of the intervention on different posttest scores—when controlling for the pretest scores—is evaluated by comparing the control condition with the experimental conditions. Bonferroni corrections were used to control for multiple testing. However, in the last three studies, no significant between-class variance could be observed, so there was no need to use MLM. Therefore, a multivariate repeated measure approach has been used, using the software package SPSS.

The different iterations of implementation, evaluation, and revision were previously described in detail (Vanderhoven et al. 2014) and are summarized in Fig. 2. In the first intervention study, the originally developed materials (see step 2) were implemented and the impact was compared with a control condition where no intervention took place (Vanderhoven et al. 2014b). It was found that while there was an impact on pupils' awareness about the risks on social network sites, only limited impact on behavior could be found. Based on these results, observations in the classrooms and remarks of teachers and pupils, and the theoretical framework of behavioral changes that was put forth in step 1, the materials were revised: peer influences during the course were reduced by decreasing moments of collaborative learning, making place for more time for individual reflection. In the second intervention, it was found that this new intervention had more impact on attitudes and behavior, while the impact on awareness was still the same (Vanderhoven et al. 2012a). Since there is always room for improvements in the design (Anderson and Shattuck 2012), the materials were revised again. Based on remarks of pupils and teachers, the authentic setting that was used in the materials was made even more authentic by including the own social network site profile in the course. It was however found that this manipulation did not increase the impact of the intervention (Vanderhoven et al. 2013b). In the final two studies, the importance of parental involvement was tested by revising the materials so that parents were included. First, a parental evening was organized next to the course that was given to the

pupils. In the fourth evaluation study, it was found that this was not enough to involve all parents (Vanderhoven et al. 2014d). Second, the materials were revised so that parents were involved in a homework task. This appeared to increase the impact that the intervention had on the behavior of the pupils, especially for boys (Vanderhoven et al. 2014c).

Step 4: Reflection to Produce Design Principles

Summarizing the results of the previous step, it can be stated that materials need to include time for individual reflection and that involving parents in the intervention is beneficial, especially for boys. However, it needs to be taken into account that involving parents using an information evening might not be enough to include all parents. Involving parents as partners, using a homework task, is put forth as a good alternative. Considering the authentic context, exercises with simulated profiles are just as good as real online profiles to obtain the goals that were set. Taking into account all these findings, a final practical solution has been developed that effectively has an impact on both awareness and unsafe behavior.

However, design-based research results not only in practical solutions but also in a theoretical contribution. Therefore, the last step of design-based research includes a reflection of the total research procedure and all findings, resulting in both practical solutions and improved theoretical understandings (Reeves 2006). At the start of this research, different theoretical frameworks were put forth, such as the general principles that are shown to be important in prevention campaigns (Nation et al. 2003), more specific instructional design principles out of constructivism, and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1991). In the light of the results found in this design-based research project, these frameworks needed to be reinterpreted and contextually sensitive design principles and theories were put forth. For example, collaborative learning, which was proposed as an important instructional strategy following constructivist theories (Duffy and Cunningham 1996), appears to be less effective in the case of reputation-related behavior like unsafe behavior on social network sites. In the same way, the importance of authentic learning and of parental involvement was put into perspective. Following these results, context-specific guidelines were formulated (for more details, see Vanderhoven et al. 2014).

Presenting Results

As stated, the results of this research are important for both researchers and practitioners, such as developers of new e-safety materials. Therefore, different formats of presenting these results were chosen. First of all, to reach researchers, the results of this research were disseminated by means of academic publications. Every single study of all stages of the design-based research was presented separately and in detail (Vanderhoven et al. *in press*, 2013a, b, 2014a–e). Moreover, the design-based research as a whole has been presented in detail in another academic manuscript (Vanderhoven et al. 2014). Second, to reach both researchers and practitioners, the results have been presented at several

academic and nonacademic conferences (e.g., EARLI, AERA, IAMCR, Media and Learning Conference, etc.). Finally, to reach practitioners, articles have been published in nonacademic journals (e.g., Vanderhoven and Schellens 2012), presentations were given at training seminars (e.g., Insafe training meeting), and workshops were organized.

Evaluating the Design-Based Research Approach

To overcome problems of previous research, in this study it was chosen to use a design-based research approach. So far, due to limited financial resources and expertise, the existing educational materials about the risks on social network sites were built without a strong theoretical base, and no research was carried out to evaluate the possible impact of these packages (Vanderhoven et al. 2014a). Since IWT financed a multiyear project involving researchers with expertise in design-based research, these problems could be overcome in the SPION project. Moreover, the advantages and specific characteristics of design-based research were well suited to fill in the gaps that existed in the literature and research about e-safety interventions. First, based on the fact that the originally developed materials did not obtain all the goals that were put forth (i.e., they did not change unsafe behavior), the initial design principles drawn from the initial framework during the first step of the research were adapted, and the design-based research project did not only result in the development of effective materials but also in contextually sensitive design principles. Second, the typical collaboration among researchers and practitioners in this type of research helped us to find a balance between the teachers' needs and the guidelines based on previous research. For example, while previous research about effective prevention campaigns shows that interventions should be sufficiently dosed (Nation et al. 2003), a short-term intervention would be more satisfying for teachers who reported a high workload (Vanderhoven et al. 2014a). In the design-based research, it was found that a short-term intervention appears to be enough to have an impact. This also maximizes the possibilities for dissemination and usefulness in practice. This is especially important given the conditions that were put forth by the financing institute IWT. Third, design-based research directly involves researchers in the improvement of education. Whereas, previously, the design and development of educational materials was often in the hands of publishers and practitioners, the expertise and knowledge of researchers now directly influences the design. For example, as stated before, previous e-safety interventions were often not evaluated, due to a lack of expertise of the designers. In our research example, it is the conjunction of the experiences of the practitioners, and the knowledge and theoretical background of the researcher that made several evaluation studies possible which led to an effective course that could change both risk awareness and unsafe behavior.

Yet, although most literature focuses on the invaluable contribution and advantages of design-based research, some of the pitfalls that are inherent to this

research approach also need to be mentioned (Anderson and Shattuck 2012; Barab and Squire 2004; McKenney and Reeves 2013). For example, while generalizability and ecological validity are often argued to be positive aspects of design-based research, the fact that design principles are context-specific might also jeopardize the external validity of the implications. In our research example, the research only assures that formulated design principles are applicable in the context of teaching pupils about the risks on social network sites and how to behave safely. However, these guidelines might also be applicable on the design of interventions about different behaviors that are typically tackled in other prevention campaigns, such as smoking, drug abuse, or aggressive behavior. However, further research is necessary to prove this generalizability.

A second challenge that is described in the literature, is the fact that it is difficult to know when (or if ever) the research program is completed. The multiple iterations ascertain cumulative knowledge and an improvement of the design, but as stated before, there is always room for upgrading (Anderson and Shattuck 2012). When can one decide a design is good enough to finalize the research? In the research example above, five iterations of development, implementation, and evaluation have been conducted. However, several more iterations could have been conducted, possibly even increasing the impact of the intervention. Most of the time, the end of funding means the end of research, independent of whether this happens after one or five iterations (Anderson and Shattuck 2012).

These time limits are a third disadvantage of design-based research: the total research procedure is very time consuming, considering the different iterative phases that need to be completed. It often needs a multiyear project to finish a design-based research (Anderson and Shattuck 2012). The research example described above indeed took about 3 years, with every step of the process lasting several months. The choice to conduct this time-consuming research was possible since a larger research agenda was financed, which is most often not the case. However, it also has more negative consequences for the research itself, such as the fact that only a short-term impact of the intervention is measured. Since conclusions of one study lead to the next step of the research, it is difficult to include long-term impact. If a long-term impact would be measured, several further steps of the research process would already have been started or even finished. Given the raising importance of sustainable learning, additional research using a longitudinal approach might be interesting, not only to find out if the materials have a delayed impact but also to find out whether the impact of the intervention is persistent over time.

Finally, it should be noted that although we elaborated on the advantages and disadvantages of design-based research for our research project, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of this research method in general. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) reviewed the impact of several design-based research interventions, concluding that it might be meeting its promised benefits, but McKenney and Reeves (2013) reacted that next to the scientific impact, which is easy to find in academic articles, there is also a practical impact, which is much harder to identify and therefore to evaluate.

The Role of Interpretation in DBR

In every research, interpretation plays a undeniable role. It is the interpretation of the context by the researcher that determines which research method will be used. It is the interpretation of the researcher that decides which measurement tools will be used. Participants interpret the questions asked in these measurement tools, which again has an impact on the results. Further, the results need to be interpreted by the researcher again: how will he or she analyze the gathered data. Finally, the researcher decides what is interesting for whom, when determining which results he or she will report, how and where.

In design-based research in particular, it is important to acknowledge the role of interpretation. One of the reasons is the close involvement of the researcher in the design process, and the bias that this involvement may cause. Some authors state that the results of the research must be biased because of the interpretations of the researcher, while others claim that these researchers with their biases, insights, and understanding are the best research tool (Anderson and Shattuck 2012; Barab and Squire 2004). Following the involvement of the researcher in the designing process, ethical issues are raised as well (Barab and Squire 2004). When observing problems in school, do they intervene, or do they minimize their impact in the classroom?

In addition, it should be noted that while the influence of interpretation is important in one single study, the accumulation of these interpretations and decisions in the different steps and studies of a design-based research even increases this influence. As different studies are sequentially conducted, with the results of each study influencing the setup of the following study, the interpretation of the results has a very big impact on the progress of the study as a whole and the final results. Moreover, as stated before, it is argued that because the researcher is closely involved in all the research steps, including the implementation of materials in real-life classroom settings, “researcher bias” is even larger when using this methodology (Barab and Squire 2004). However, as is shown in the different chapters of this book, interpretation is inherent to every research and should not paralyze us or prevent us to do any research at all.

In the following paragraphs, we will repeat the different steps of our research, thereby indicating the role of interpretation in every phase. The decisions and interpretations that we made as a research team are only examples of the interpretations any researcher needs to make when conducting design-based research.

Step 1: Analysis of Practical Problems

As explained in the methodology section, there are three important resources to describe the problem: previous literature, shared experience of researchers and practitioners, and one or more pilot studies (Reeves 2006). A first decision a researcher needs to make is what he or she will do to analyze the problem, and to what extent. It could be decided only to focus on previous research or to have one focus group with practitioners to have an idea of the state of the art. It could also be

decided to conduct multiple pilot studies, making a broad idea of the state of the art possible. Several aspects, such as time constraints, expertise, and practical opportunities, influence these decisions.

In our research, it was chosen to complete an extensive needs analysis, including three exploratory studies, next to the literature study, and one focus group with practitioners. Concerning the literature study, it is clear that the interpretation of the researcher is of very big importance. One example is the search for information about privacy care with teenagers (Vanderhoven et al. 2013a). In this search, we found that some authors reported that teenagers care about their privacy, while others reported the opposite, depending on the exact measure of privacy care in their study, the age of the respondents, and other methodological differences. These kinds of contradictions are often found in literature and should be taken into account when making a state of the art during this first needs-analysis phase.

Next to the interpretation of previous literature, different decisions needed to be made about the method, the data collection, the measures, the data analysis, and the reporting of every single pilot study. As an example, we analyzed the different interpretations made in the observational study of Facebook profiles (Vanderhoven et al. 2014e). We chose to use the method of observation, to overcome problems that are inherent to the self-report methods that are mostly used to study teenagers' behavior on social network sites, such as social desirability (Phillips and Clancy 1972). With this, we wanted to eliminate the amount of variation caused by the interpretation by the participants of the questions in a survey. However, this does not mean that observation is free of interpretation. A detailed codebook was developed to code the information that was observed on the different pages. It was tried to be as exhaustive as possible when composing this codebook, but there is always information that is excluded, depending on the choices of the researchers. Moreover, we chose to use research assistants to collect the information. A total of 179 research assistants coded the information on the Facebook profiles of their friends and friends of friends. By including so many researchers, it was aimed to randomize the researcher bias, a method rarely used in social sciences. While most of the time, researcher bias is tried to be eliminated (although it can be argued that this is quite impossible, hence the focus of this book), we tried to randomize the impact of the observer, thereby eliminating the importance of the different interpretations for the overall research results. Finally, the results of this study were also impossible to report without any interpretation. To give an example: 34 % of the minors in the study were tagged in pictures in which they were drinking alcohol. This is a fact, a number, that can be interpreted in several ways. Is it a risk? Is it a problem? Is 34 % a significant amount, enough to put effort in preventing it? In our research team, we concluded that indeed a significant amount of teenagers show risky behavior (of course, there were also other risk indicators that we found to be threatening), and we based our further intervention on these interpretations. It is important to note that this is a decision and that others might feel that the risks teenagers face are not important enough to put so much effort in prevention campaigns.

Step 2: The Development of Solutions

Design is a sequence of decisions made to balance goals and constraints that can be divided in three sets of decisions: how the design process will proceed, what needs and opportunities the design will address, and what form the resulting design will take (Edelson 2002). These decisions are guided by the results that are found in the previous step of the research, the needs analysis and other context variables, such as the financing resources. In our research example, the development of materials is guided by the results of the needs analysis but also by some context variables. As stated before, a research team funded by the Flemish Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT), more specifically in the context of a Strategic Basic Research (SBO) Program, conducted this research. These kinds of projects have an important focus on valorization of the research results and on the value of the research for society. The Flemish government showed special interest in the development of educational materials, because they believe that media literacy is very important to teach children how to behave safe on social network sites. This implicates that, as a researcher in this project, the stakes, norms, and values were colored, that is, the project started from the fact that a security problem was existing regardless of how the user felt about this (as was found in the first step, the needs analysis). While this is not detrimental by nature, and although the development of materials was still primarily based on the results of our extended needs analysis, it is important to keep in mind these norms and values that were part of our research from the start.

During the development process, interpretation is also involved when the researcher must decide about the goals he or she wants to accomplish with the educational materials. In our research example, we have put forth that our materials aim to raise awareness and to change unsafe behavior on social network sites. Putting forward the goal of changing behavior cannot be done without any consideration. Indeed, trying to change behavior can be seen as paternalistic and undemocratic (Kelman 2001). While it can be argued that teenagers deserve to be informed, so that they can make informed decisions when using social network sites, it can also be argued that it is unethical to decide how they actually should behave. One should keep in mind that developing educational materials always includes the developer's expectations of desirable attitudes and behavior. This is not always in line with the goals and expectations of the pupils. It can be argued that every individual has the right not to care about certain risks and to choose to behave "unsafe" on social network sites if that is what he or she wants, given the benefits this entails, such as communication (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt and Runnel 2012) and identity formation (Hum et al. 2011; Madden and Smith 2010). However, it is generally believed that schools have a broad educational agenda, including the enhancement of pupils' character, health, and civic engagement (Greenberg et al. 2003). School education needs to enable pupils to participate fully in public life (Cazden et al. 1996). It can be argued that in the twenty-first century, this means that schools have a responsibility to teach teenagers how to behave safe on social network sites. In this line of thought, putting forward the goal of attitudinal and behavioral change next to raising awareness seemed appropriate.

Step 3: Evaluation Research of the Solutions in Practice

As mentioned before, the results of each study of the design-based research influence the setup of the following study. This is especially the case in the third step of the research: the iterative implementation, evaluation, and revision of the materials. For every cycle, the revisions are based on quantitative and qualitative results (sometimes contradicting each other, making an interpretation by the researcher necessary to proceed in the research), observations in the classroom, collaboration with practitioners, and a theoretical framework. It is the conjunction of all these different aspects, which guides the decision to change specific aspects of the materials and to improve the impact that these materials have on the pupils. It goes without saying that this amount of information can lead to different decisions, making the interpretation and the decisions of the researcher at the moment of revisions of materials of tremendous importance for the final results.

To demonstrate this importance, we analyze the decisions of our research team during the first revision of materials (after the first intervention study), described by Vanderhoven et al. ([in press](#)). The materials were changed so that moments of individual reflection were increased during the intervention, while moments of collaborative learning were decreased, trying to minimize peer pressure during the course. This decision was based on different pieces of information: the observation that popular kids raised their voice during the course to influence their peers, the quantitative and qualitative results of the first study indicating that there was no impact on unsafe behavior (Vanderhoven et al. [2014b](#)), the theory of planned behavior stating that the social norm has a significant impact on people's behavior (Ajzen [1991](#)), and theories about peer pressure in adolescence stating that teenagers are especially vulnerable for peer pressure (Sumter et al. [2009](#)). Of course, there were other observations as well that might have influenced the impact of the intervention but that were not chosen for revision. For example, maybe students did not have the technical skills to act safer and more attention should have been given to the training of specific skills.

Step 4: Reflection to Produce Design Principles

The design guidelines that are formulated are based on the results of the previous steps of the research and therefore again dependent on the interpretation of the researcher. Moreover, it is dependent on the amount of iterations, the choices made about the revisions of the materials, and so on. In our research example, the design guidelines that were put forth are not exhaustive, as time constraints limited the amount of iterations to five. More design guidelines might have been revealed in other iterations.

Finally, the interpretation of the researchers about the dissemination of the results is vital. For example, to reach practitioners we formulated simple rules of thumb in the final materials, derived from the design principles. This enabled teachers to use these guidelines during their courses. The rules of thumb are, by definition, a simplification of the conclusions of the results of the total design-based research and therefore dependent on the interpretation of the researcher with regard to what is most important in the conclusions of this research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it was argued that a design-based research approach can eliminate the boundary between design and research (Edelson 2002), which can result in both theoretical contributions and practical solutions. Although this research approach is appropriate for studying the design of new educational learning materials, it must be concluded that interpretation plays an undeniable role in all research, which accumulates throughout the different studies in design-based research.

It is therefore of significant importance to acknowledge the presence of interpretations in this approach. In that sense, design-based research can be seen as a story, which can be told as objective as possible, but which is undoubtedly colored by the interpretations of the storyteller. Nevertheless, we hope that the methodology described in this chapter can inspire other researchers to write their own story based on their own interpretations.

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7.2 Interpretation of Research on Technology Integration in Teacher Education in the USA: Preparation and Current Practices

Anne T. Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Peggy A. Ertmer, and Jo Tondeur

Introduction: Rationale for the Research Project

There is great promise for technology use in educational settings. For example, in the most recent US Department of Education's technology plan (2010), technology is described as offering teachers the means to enact a student-centered, technology-enabled curriculum. Unfortunately, studies have shown that most teachers are not using technology in these student-centered ways (Keengwe et al. 2008; NEA 2008), suggesting that they may be ill-prepared to use technology to affect meaningful learning in their classrooms (Spector 2010). This is causing various stakeholders to question how well teacher education programs are preparing their graduates to be effective technology-using teachers (for an overview, see Kay 2006; Tondeur et al. 2012).

Concerns about this lack of technology use have prompted leaders in higher education and at governmental levels to place a greater emphasis on providing more opportunities for pre-service teachers to use technology throughout their teacher preparation programs (Pellegrino et al. 2007; U.S. Department of Education 2002).

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During the past decade, the US Department of Education's *Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology* (PT3) program provided over \$750 million to teacher education programs focusing on new methods for preparing future teachers to effectively integrate technology into their teaching (Pellegrino et al. U.S. Department of Education). For almost three decades now, US teacher education programs have made efforts to prepare their students to use technology as a teaching and learning tool in their K-12 classrooms (Polly et al. 2010).

Studies have examined what knowledge pre-service teachers need in order to be able to implement technology, as well as what teacher education programs should do to prepare their graduates to effectively use that knowledge to support teaching and learning (e.g., Kay 2006). Unfortunately, many of these studies only examined selected schools that were funded by large grants (Pellegrino et al. 2007) or conducted meta-analyses of already published studies (Kay 2006; Polly et al. 2010; Tondeur et al. 2012). Few studies have conducted large-scale evaluations of teachers' uses of technology. Even fewer studies have examined the connection between that which is learned in teacher education programs and that which is required or expected in practice. The study described in this chapter was designed to fill this gap, using a mixed methods approach.

Purpose

The purpose of the study described in this chapter was to address the knowledge gap regarding how teacher education programs should best prepare pre-service teachers to integrate technology into their teaching. We began by examining the topics, related to technology integration, that currently were included in pre-service teacher education programs. We then compared those topics to the ways in which practicing teachers used technology in their classrooms.

A two-phased mixed methods research design was conducted. Phase one focused on gathering data from teacher education programs via a 14-item online questionnaire and follow-up interviews with a selected sample. Phase two focused on examining the technology integration practices of K-12 teachers, via an online questionnaire, followed by one-on-one interviews with a smaller sample. Within both phases, we began by examining a larger population through the use of online questionnaires (Schmidt 1997). Utilizing this method, we could identify common themes to investigate to a greater depth through the one-on-one interviews. Teaching artifacts were collected from participants in both of the smaller samples to create case studies of both teacher educators and practicing teachers. The results explicate the differences in the perceptions of practicing teachers and teacher educators regarding the relevance of various technology integration skills and knowledge to achieving meaningful technology integration in today's K-12 classrooms.

The Focus of the Research

The study was guided by three research questions: (1) What technology topics are included in pre-service teacher education programs? (2) What technology topics do in-service teachers find relevant and meaningful to their teaching/learning practices? (3) What are the similarities and differences between the technology topics included in teacher education programs and those teachers find relevant to their current teaching/learning practices? Initially, the researchers intended to investigate the *types* of educational technology experiences that participants considered to be the most influential on their classroom practices (e.g., stand-alone technology courses, integrated field experiences), but it was difficult to assess that information. This is discussed in more detail later.

The Reason for Choosing Mixed Methods

A mixed methods research design enables researchers to combine the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). Using a sequential mixed design, we first used quantitative data collection methods (close-ended questions) to provide a broad, overarching view of the situation. We also collected qualitative data (from the open-ended questions) to help us elaborate on any common ideas through examination of a larger number of responses (Teddlie and Tashakkori). Through this process, we were able to identify participants from whom to gather additional information, which yielded 39 cases. A multiple case study design allowed us to view the patterns that emerged within and across settings (Yin 2003).

Identifying Participants

In large-scale survey studies, it is critical to identify the appropriate population (Barlette et al. 2001). Because this was a comparison study, there were two critical populations to identify: teacher education programs and technology-using teachers. The selection procedure and rationale for each population is discussed next.

Teacher Education Programs

In 2006, the US Department of Education conducted a similar study (Kleiner et al. 2007) with the intent of collecting information on how teacher education programs across the country incorporated technology into their courses/programs.

Kleiner et al. identified 1,439 schools and requested that one contact person fill out the survey. Although the researchers received a 96 % response rate, there was no information about the individuals who completed the survey for each institution. In other words, the individuals completing the survey may not have known all the various ways technology was being used and/or to what extent it was being used across all courses in the program. This, then, potentially compromised the results.

Therefore, the selection of participants in this study was deemed to be critically important. Using a US Department of Education database called the Postsecondary Education Quick Information System (PEQIS), we identified the institutions that met our specifications. Ideally, we would have selected all institutions that prepared teachers. However, there were certain limitations to using this system. Some institutions only offered master's degree programs (e.g., most California programs), which potentially could have included teachers who were returning for advanced degrees. However, our focus was on pre-service teacher education programs at 4-year institutions, specifically those programs that offered a teaching degree for initial licensure. Using the PEQIS, we identified all 4-year institutions in the USA that offered programs in general, elementary, and/or secondary education ($n = 1,283$).

Once we identified all the institutions, we focused our efforts on selecting the specific individual at each institution who would be asked to complete the questionnaire. This was an important aspect as it was a notable weakness in the previous study (Kleiner et al. 2007). Specifically, it was critical to identify a representative from each institution who had knowledge of the specific educational technology requirements at that institution. By using the institutions' websites, a representative, with knowledge of the uses of educational technology within the teacher education courses, was identified. Identified individuals were contacted by e-mail and asked to complete a 14-item online questionnaire describing the pre-service educational technology requirements at their institutions. Of the 1,283 institutions contacted, 426 individuals completed the questionnaire (response rate of 33 %). We e-mailed reminders three times in order to obtain this response rate. Forty-four percent of institutions responding were public institutions and the median number of teacher education students graduating from responding institutions was 139. Forty-eight percent of the teacher educators responding for their institutions had over 10 years of experience at their institutions, and 62 % of respondents stated that they had primary responsibility for teaching educational technology courses.

From among the 426 responding institutions, 12 were selected for follow-up analysis. Purposeful sampling was used to maximize the variety of institutions selected. Maximized purposeful sampling was important because depending on the location, size, and institution type, educational expectations might be expected to differ. Therefore, the selection of institutions was based on the location of institution [West ($n = 3$), Northeast ($n = 2$), Southeast ($n = 3$), Midwest ($n = 1$), Southwest ($n = 3$)], size of the teacher education programs [Large ($n = 8$), Small ($n = 4$)], and institution type [Public ($n = 6$), Private ($n = 6$)]. The teacher educator representative, who completed the initial questionnaire, also participated in the follow-up interview and document collection.

Technology-Using Teachers

For the second population for the study, we sought to investigate how practicing teachers actually used technology in their classrooms. Our intention was to find high-quality users of technology, in hopes of highlighting the intended goals of the new US Department of Education technology plan (2010). Therefore, we sought to recruit participants from the membership of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). ISTE is a professional association dedicated to supporting teachers' uses of information technology in support of K-12 student learning. With over 18,500 individual members and 80 affiliate organizations, ISTE provided our best access to US teachers who were using technology in innovative and unique ways. Technology-using teachers were recruited through a self-nomination procedure. Requests to participate in the study were sent via e-mail to various listservs focused on educational technology (ISTE special interest groups and ISTE state affiliates). The e-mail requested that teachers complete a 23-item online questionnaire focusing on how they used technology in their classrooms. By completing the questionnaire, teachers self-nominated themselves as technology-using teachers and agreed to participate in the study.

However, not all the responses were used. Responses were selected for the study based on two criteria. First, teachers needed to report that their primary professional responsibilities were directly involved in teaching PreK-12 students; technology coordinators and administrators were not included in the study. This was important because the pre-service teachers graduating from our teacher education programs were most likely to obtain PreK-12 teaching positions. In order to identify the information that needed to be included in teacher preparation programs, we needed to study teachers who were using the technology in their classrooms and (hopefully) using it in ways that aligned with best practices as described by the US Department of Education (2010).

Second, teachers needed to report a high self-assessment of their classroom technology skills. Based on their responses to one questionnaire item in which they rated their comfort levels with technology on a 4-point scale, only those teachers responding at the upper two levels were included (e.g., (1) I'm not comfortable using technology in my classroom, (2) I'm somewhat comfortable using technology in my classroom, (3) I'm comfortable using technology in my classroom, and (4) I'm comfortable teaching others to use technology in their classrooms). If teachers reported feeling not comfortable or only somewhat comfortable, we did not include them in the sample.

A total of 457 individuals responded to the questionnaire. Of those respondents, 316 met both of the criteria. Sixty-eight percent of these respondents taught at the secondary level, and 60 % had more than 15 years of teaching experience. This was one of the trade-offs in our research design when selecting participants. Unfortunately, since more than half of our participants had more than 15 years of experience, their pre-service teachers' education programs did not include technology experiences. Therefore, we were unable to identify the experiences they perceived as being most influential from their teacher preparation programs. Instead, with this population, we chose to focus on the topic areas they believed were most critical to include now.

From among the 316 teachers responding to the questionnaire, 27 teachers were selected for follow-up interviews and additional data collection. Purposeful sampling was used to maximize the variety of teachers selected for follow-up analysis; selection of teachers was based on subject areas and grade levels taught. Because teachers use technology differently in various subject areas and grade levels (e.g., Tondeur et al. 2007), it was important to include representation from the four core subject areas (English language arts, social studies, math, and science) and both elementary and secondary (including middle school and high school) levels in the follow-up phase. The ten elementary teachers taught in classrooms from 1st grade to 5th grade. The secondary teachers included eight middle school teachers and nine high school teachers and varied in the core subject areas taught.

Description of Data Sources

To answer our research question about which technology topics were relevant to both practicing teachers and teacher education programs, we distributed a questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions to both sets of participants. A slightly different questionnaire was distributed to both populations. After comparing trends among responses, we conducted follow-up case studies of individual teacher education programs and technology-using teachers.

Questionnaires

Teacher Educator Questionnaire

The teacher educator questionnaire consisted of 14 items separated into three sections. The first section contained four items focusing on demographic information such as institution name, location, and the responsibilities of the individual respondent (teacher educator) with regard to the program. Demographic information was used to inform our selection of institutions for the follow-up interviews. The second section contained seven items focusing on the technology topics included in coursework and/or experiences required in the institution's teacher education programs. These items were based on several meta-analyses of teacher education programs (Brush et al. 2003; Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al. 2010; Polly et al. 2010). The last section referred specifically to relevant technology topics covered in the program. Respondents were provided with a list of technology topics and asked to select those that were included in all or some of the teacher education programs at their institution.

To create the list of topics for participants to respond to, we initially reviewed resources describing how teachers use technology. These resources included research articles (e.g., Brush et al. 2003; Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al. 2010) and

educational policy documents (e.g., US Department of Education technology plan, ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers, and the UNESCO ICT Competency Standards for Teachers) that described how technology had been used in the past and which also advocated how technology should currently be used.

Using these resources, we created a research-based conditional matrix that identified key topics/practices, along with research studies that provided evidence of the impact of those practices at the teacher knowledge level, teacher application level, and/or student achievement level (see Fig. 1 for example excerpt).

Research-Based Matrix			
	Knowledge Level	Application Level	Student Achievement
Content (knowledge base)			
Students use a wide variety of software	Hadley & Sheingold, 1993; Becker, 1994		Case study: Ravitz & Mergendoller, 2002; Peter-ongoing
Comfortable and confident with using technology	Hadley & Sheingold, 1993; Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001	Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan, & Ross, 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexton, King, Aldrige, Goodstadt-Killoran, 1999 Collis, 1987
Content integration	Hadley & Sheingold, 1993; Becker, 1994	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Hughes, 2004; Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan, & Ross, 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morgan & Ritter, 2002 Hoffman, Wu, Krajcik, & Soloway (2002) Huppert, Lomask, and Lazarowitz (2002) Wenzlinsky (1998)
Positive attitudes, lifelong learners, and risk takers	Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, & York, 2006; Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Bigatel, 2004; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	
Emphasize the human element and harboring humane characteristics valuing their profession	Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, & York, 2006	Bigatel, 2004; Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan, & Ross, 2001;	Graham & Wentworth (2008)
Enhance student learning and motivation	Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Bigatel, 2004;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sonak, Suen, Hoi, Zappe, Steve, Hunter, & Maxwell (2002)
Student-centered/learner-centered, as opposed to curriculum centered	Becker, 1994; Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Bigatel, 2004; Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan, & Ross, 2001; Mills & Tincher, 2003; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goldberg & Dintzis, 2007 (Higher Ed) Hsu (2008) (Sr. HS students) (Taiwan)
Encourage student collaboration, as opposed to individual		Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angers & Machtmes (2005)
Students are active and use technology as a tool	Hadley & Sheingold, 1993; Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muir-Herzig & Rozalind (2004)
Productivity	Becker, 1994	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	
Learning environment (methods)			
Technology-rich context	Becker, 1994; Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, & York, 2006	Bigatel, 2004; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	
Supportive environment	Becker, 1994; Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001	Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Bigatel, 2004; Mills & Tincher, 2003; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997	
Collaboration with other teachers	Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich,	Bigatel, 2004; Sandholtz,	

Fig. 1 Research-based conditional matrix of teachers' uses of technology

<p>Encourage student collaboration, as opposed to individual (students work collaboratively, had strategies for helping students learn technology(referring them to other students), encourage peer learning)</p>		<p>Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997</p>
<p>Students are active and use technology as a tool (give students choices, authentic tasks, encourage creativity), students solved problems, students shared knowledge and responsibility, students use technology as tool for writing, analyzing data, and solving problems (higher-order thinking skills)</p>	<p>Hadley & Sheingold, 1993; Zhao, Byers, Mishra, Topper, Cheng, Enfield, et al., 2001</p>	<p>Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997</p>
<p>Productivity (use both teacher-centered/productivity uses of technology, as well as student-centered projects/assignment)</p>	<p>Becker, 1994</p>	<p>Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997</p>

Fig. 2 Definitions of topic categories

A definition was provided for each main topic (see Fig. 2 for example). Content validity was established by synthesizing the literature that described teachers’ technology uses and/or technology topics covered by teacher education programs (Fink 2003). These categories were then examined, revised, and validated by a team of university faculty, K-12 teachers, and educational evaluation experts selected by the US Department of Education based on experience and expertise in the area of technology integration. Using external expert reviewers, we were able to establish the face validity of the questionnaire confirming that the measure included all the necessary questions and covered all the necessary constructs (Fink).

The final categories/topics included in the questionnaire were: personal productivity, information presentation, administration/classroom management, communication, access/use of electronic resources, analysis of student data, facilitation of specific teaching concepts, documentation of personal/professional growth, support for student learning styles, support of higher-order thinking skills, support for students with special needs, and classroom preparation. Examples for each category were provided so teacher educators would understand what each topic meant (see Fig. 3). Teacher educators were asked to indicate whether all programs, some programs, or none of their programs covered each topic.

We used the responses of the 426 respondents to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach’s alpha measure of internal consistency for this portion of the questionnaire was 0.86. The second item in this section was open ended and asked respondents to indicate what technology topics they perceived to be the most important topics incorporated into the curriculum of their programs.

7) Below are various topics that are included in educational technology courses/experiences in elementary or secondary education programs. Please indicate if each of these topics is included in all elementary and secondary teacher education programs at your institution, some elementary and secondary teacher education programs, or no elementary and secondary teacher education programs by selecting the appropriate column.

	ALL programs	SOME programs	NO pro
Use of technology for personal productivity (e.g., word processors, spreadsheets)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology for information presentation (e.g., powerpoint, digital media)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology for administration and classroom management (e.g., gradebooks, attendance, seating charts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology for communication with peers/parents/students (e.g., e-mail, online chats, parent newsletters, class websites)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology to access and use electronic resources (e.g., websites, online databases)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology to analyze student achievement/performance data (e.g., identify trends, provide remediation to learners)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology to facilitate teaching specific concepts (e.g., computer-based courseware, tutorials)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology to document personal/professional growth (e.g., electronic teaching portfolios)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology to support various student learning styles (e.g., use of media for auditory and visual learners)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of technology to support activities that facilitate higher-order thinking (e.g., collaborative problem-based activities, activities that require analysis and synthesis of information)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig. 3 Technology topics included on the questionnaire for teacher educators

Technology-Using Teacher Questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire consisted of 23 items separated into three sections. The first section contained seven items focusing on demographic information such as current teaching position and location, grade level/content area, and years of teaching experience. Similar to the inclusion of demographic information for teacher educators, this information was used to identify potential follow-up case participants (using grade level/content areas).

The second section contained 12 items focusing on ways in which teachers used technology to support their teaching in a typical week, and the types of technology experiences completed in their teacher education programs (e.g., educational technology courses, technology activities in methods courses). Because most teachers

indicated that their pre-service technology experiences were not influential, with most having graduated over 10 years earlier, we did not include their responses to these items in this research. Instead, we focused on the technology that teachers used on a regular basis. The final section asked respondents to rate their technology expertise, to rate their pre-service teacher experiences, and to provide additional contact information if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

The question focusing on technology topics utilized the same categories from the teacher educator questionnaire. The only difference was that we asked teachers to select the topic(s) that best matched the ways they used technology to support their teaching during a typical week (see Fig. 4).

We used the responses of the 316 teacher respondents to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency for this portion of the questionnaire was 0.70. The next three items in this section were open-ended and asked respondents to indicate other ways they used technology to support their teaching and what they believed were the best ways to use technology to support teaching and learning.

16) Please identify all the different ways you use technology to support your work during a "typical" week (please check all that apply):

- I generally don't use technology during a "typical" week
- Personal productivity (e.g., word processors, spreadsheets)
- Information presentation (e.g., powerpoint, digital media)
- Administration and classroom management (e.g., gradebooks, attendance, seating charts)
- Communication with peers/parents/students (e.g., e-mail, online chats, parent newsletters, class websites)
- Access and use electronic resources (e.g., websites, online databases)
- Analyze student achievement/performance data (e.g., identify trends, provide remediation to learners)
- Facilitate teaching specific concepts (e.g., computer-based courseware, tutorials)
- Document personal/professional growth (e.g., electronic teaching portfolios)
- Support various student learning styles (e.g., use of media for auditory and visual learners)
- Support activities that facilitate higher-order thinking (e.g., collaborative problem-based activities, activities that require analysis and synthesis of information)
- Facilitate your support of students with special needs in your classroom (e.g. assistive technology, special software, etc.)?
- Classroom preparation (e.g., lesson planning, gathering resources)

17) Do you use technology to support your work that was not previously mentioned in question 16? If so, please describe that use below.

Fig. 4 Technology topic question for teachers

Follow-Up Interviews and Document Collection

Teacher Educator Follow-Up

We identified teacher educators from 12 institutions to participate in follow-up interviews, based on the recommendation of Guest et al. (2006), who indicated that data saturation typically occurs at 8–12 participants. Similar to the questionnaire instrument, items on the semi-structured interview protocol were developed by a team of experts in technology integration and approved by the team of university faculty, K-12 teachers, and educational evaluation experts selected by the US Department of Education. This helped establish the face validity of the instrument (Patton 2002). For example, the interview protocol initially included a question, “What competencies do the students leave with?” The experts recommended adding specific examples to make this question more specific and prompted us to ask teacher educators to provide information on the technology topics and/or areas that were included in their teacher education programs (question 3).

The interview protocol was pilot tested with other teacher educators (not identified for the follow-up study). This helped us identify unclear questions or areas of focus. Based on these pilot tests, slight wording modifications were made. In addition, some follow-up probing questions were added to extract specific examples, while some questions were removed due to duplicity. In one question, we asked the pilot test teacher educators to tell us, “How much interaction with technology do you think pre-service teachers get outside of the required courses?” Respondents had a difficult time answering this question, asking for clarification. Therefore, we modified this question to, “How do pre-service teachers use technology in other contexts (e.g., methods classes, field experiences, etc...)?” The interview protocol consisted of nine broad questions, focusing on the technology topics/areas included in their teacher education programs, unique aspects of their specific programs with regard to technology integration, and challenges faced when attempting to infuse technology into their programs (see Fig. 5).

Teacher Educator Supplemental Documents

For each of the 12 institutions selected for follow-up analysis, specific documents were also collected from a variety of sources (e.g., program websites, faculty). These documents included syllabi for various technology courses, overviews/program sheets for the teacher education programs offered at the institutions, sample assignments, course materials, and student work. The supplemental documents were collected to triangulate the data sources and themes emerging from the interviews and questionnaires (Stake 1995). Stake noted that through the use of *methodological triangulation*, “we are likely to illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences” (p. 114).

Let's begin...

- 1) Can you talk about your institution and your role in your institution's teacher education program?
 - What courses do you supervise/teach/direct?
 - Talk about the demographics of students in your teacher education program.

- 2) How does your institution prepare your elementary and secondary preservice teachers to use technology in their future classrooms?
 - What educational technology courses are your elementary and secondary preservice teachers required to take?
 - What other requirements in terms of technology exist for preservice teachers?
 - Are there different requirements for different programs? Can you describe them?
 - How have you integrated technology throughout the teacher education curriculum?
 - How do preservice teachers use technology in other contexts (e.g., methods classes, field experiences, etc.)?

- 3) What are the technology topics and/or areas that are included in your teacher education programs?
 - What are the main topics you teach? Theory or actual tools?
 - How do you determine these topics/areas?
 - What specific tools do you teach?
 - What types of assignments do the students need to complete?
 - What strategies are used to teach these topics/areas?
 - How do you prepare preservice teachers to use technology with diverse populations (special needs, ENL, etc.)?

- 4) What technology resources (hardware, software, etc) are available to faculty and students?
 - What technology resources are available in your college/school/university?
 - What specific resources related to technology integration in K-12 settings are available?
 - Are there resources available that can be taken off-site for use in K-12 schools?
 - Where can preservice teachers go if they have a question about educational technology or technology resources?

- 5) Could you describe what you feel are unique aspects of your teacher education program with regards to technology?
 - What are some of the most creative approaches used at your institution you've seen in terms of teaching preservice teachers to use technology in their future classrooms?
 - What are the most successful ways you have experienced in your program to teach preservice teachers how to use technology?
 - Do you have any unique projects (funded, university initiatives) focusing on technology that include preservice populations?

- 8) What feedback have you received from recent graduates of your program?
 - What technology requirements/experiences are they saying are relevant/beneficial to their current professional placements?
 - What technology requirements/experiences would they have liked more exposure to?
 - What technology topics/areas are they saying are relevant/beneficial to their current professional placements?
 - What technology topics/areas would they have liked more exposure to?

- 9) Do you have any additional comments on your institution and the methods you use to prepare future teachers to integrate technology?
 - Any samples of materials/syllabi/etc you would be willing to share?
 - Other individuals who might be beneficial to talk with?

Fig. 5 Teacher educator interview protocol

Technology-Using Teacher Follow-Up

Twenty-seven teachers agreed to participate in follow-up interviews. We selected individuals from both elementary and secondary schools, as well as the four core subject areas at the secondary level. Similar to the teacher educator interview protocol, items on the semi-structured interview protocol for technology-using teachers were developed by a team of experts in the area of technology integration and approved by the team of university faculty, K-12 teachers, and educational evaluation experts selected by the US Department of Education. To strengthen the validity of the interview protocol, experts made recommendations to improve the focus and suggested follow-up probes for questions.

The interview protocol was also pilot tested with other teachers (not identified for the follow-up study). This helped us identify unclear questions or areas of focus. Based on these pilot tests, small revisions were made, some follow-up probing questions were added, and a few questions were removed. The final interview protocol consisted of ten broad questions, focusing on how and why these teachers use technology for teaching and learning (Fig. 6).

Technology-Using Teacher Supplemental Documents

For each of the participating teachers, specific documents were collected from a variety of sources (e.g., teacher websites, e-mail correspondences). These documents included specific teacher-developed activities, sample assignments, course materials, and student work. It was important to collect these documents to (a) provide additional context for teachers' uses of technology (*data source triangulation*) and (b) provide triangulation for the technology uses they described during their interviews (*methodological triangulation*) (Stake 1995).

Preparing to Obtain the Data

It was critical to establish an online questionnaire that was easy to use and read, as well as one that organized the data and was easily accessible to the researchers. In this study, the questionnaire data were collected through a secure, survey tool. The data were then downloaded into a spreadsheet and organized. The more critical plans for organizing the data related to the follow-ups for both populations, as there were 39 cases whose data needed to be organized (questionnaires, interviews, documents). Furthermore, we needed to be able to organize and compare the data across those cases. As Stake (2006) noted, organization in multiple case studies is essential. Patton (1980) recommends utilizing a case record which "pulls together and organizes the voluminous case data into a comprehensive primary resource

- 1) Can you describe how you use technology in your [English / Language Arts] classroom with regards to teaching and learning?
- Ask for document examples (lesson plan, sample student work, student reflections on the lesson, teacher-created materials)
 - BEST WAY. What's the coolest way that you use technology?
 - INFORMATION PRESENTATION. Can you give me some specific examples of how you use technology in [insert specific grade/ English / Language Arts] for information presentation? (get at content specific) Samples via email.
 - What are your reasons for using technology for information presentation?
 - Why do you use that, as opposed to other non-digital technologies?
 - ADMINISTRATION/CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT. Can you give me some specific examples of how you use technology in [insert specific grade/ English / Language Arts] for administration and classroom management? (gradebooks, classroom management software) (get at content specific) Samples via email.
 - What are your reasons for using technology for administration and classroom management?
 - Why do you use that, as opposed to other non-digital technologies?
 - SPECIAL NEEDS. Can you give me some specific examples of how you use technology in [insert specific grade/ English / Language Arts] for supporting students with special/diverse needs? (get at content specific). Samples via email.
 - EXAMPLES. Describe the technologies that students with special needs use in your classroom.
 - REASONS. What are your reasons for using technology for supporting special needs?
 - Describe your responsibilities with regards to students with special needs in your classroom and technology.
 - STUDENT USE OF TECHNOLOGY. So, you described an example where you use the technology. Can you describe another example where you have your students use the technology?
 - Please explain why you think this use is meaningful.
 - TEACHER USE OF TECHNOLOGY. So, you described an example where your students used the technology. Can you describe another example where you use the technology?
 - Please explain why you think this use is meaningful.
 - STUDENT KNOWLEDGE. Explain the knowledge or skills your students gain from using technology in this unit.
 - Why you decided to have students use technology in this way during the unit?
 - Why was technology necessary instead of other methods?
 - Explain how this skill will help students be prepared for their futures. Do you think this is an important skill to have?
 - SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGY TOOLS. If you could use only one technology during the school year, what would it be?
 - Why?

Fig. 6 Technology-using teachers' interview protocol (English language arts example)

package ... information is edited, redundancies are sorted out, parts are fitted together, and the case record is organized for ready access either chronologically [or] topically ... complete but manageable" (p. 313). In this study, the data were organized by themes within each case (see Fig. 7).

For each case, documents (websites, syllabi, files, student work, etc.) were all uploaded to a secure server. A large spreadsheet was set up—each case received its own tab. A description and a link to all documents were included in that case's tab. This enabled us to view all the documents, interview transcripts, and questionnaire responses for one case within a single location (Merriam 1998).

	A	B	C	D
1	Elementary Teacher	Description of Document	Link (if URL does not exist, upload to Oncourse and link from there.	Description
5	[Redacted]	Ms. [Redacted]'s Site - S [Redacted] Elementary School Description	http://c[Redacted]	Contains calendar, links to other websites, and a few items for information (peek of the week, math code words)
6	[Redacted]	Blog	http://e[Redacted].ucces	Only 3 posts. Last post in October 2007
7	[Redacted]	Children's book	http://www.amazon.com/foal-1424183421	Children's book for readers ages 9 through 12 (author and illustrator)
8	[Redacted]	Subject Area Interactive Lessons Online	http://www.[Redacted].d	Resource for online lesson for third graders
9	[Redacted]	Example 1 of lesson that integrates technology (Texas Math Project)	https://oncourse.iu.edu/at701a-4b61-8061-1fe3276f6efb/TeachTech	First of four lesson plans sent by [Redacted] on Feb. 18, 2010 that she's used in her classroom which integrate technology tools.
10	[Redacted]	Example 2 of lesson that integrates technology (Texas Math Project)	https://oncourse.iu.edu/at701a-4b61-8061-1fe3276f6efb/TeachTech	Two of four lesson plans sent by [Redacted] on Feb. 18, 2010 that she's used in her classroom which integrate technology tools.
11	[Redacted]	Example 3 of lesson that integrates technology (Texas Math Project)	https://oncourse.iu.edu/at701a-4b61-8061-1fe3276f6efb/TeachTech	Third of four lesson plans sent by [Redacted] on Feb. 18, 2010 that she's used in her classroom which integrate technology tools.
12	[Redacted]	Example 4 of lesson that integrates technology (Valentine's Day Party)	https://oncourse.iu.edu/at701a-4b61-8061-1fe3276f6efb/TeachTech	Fourth of four lesson plans sent by [Redacted] on Feb. 18, 2010 that she's used in her classroom which integrate technology tools.
13	[Redacted]	Search engine used by third graders	http://www.nettrekker.com	Used by students to search online - requires payment to use
14	[Redacted]	School Technology and Readiness Chart	http://starchart.esc12.net/	She talks about how her state uses this to assess teachers' technology abilities and readiness.
15	[Redacted]	STaR Chart PDF	https://oncourse.iu.edu/at701a-4b61-8061-1fe3276f6efb/TeachTech	PDF explaining the STaR Chart, which was created to assist all Texas teachers in self-assessing efforts to effectively integrate technology across the curriculum.

Fig. 7 Example of case record organization

Obtaining the Data

The supplementary documents (e.g., syllabi, course websites, etc.) were obtained from publically available websites and via e-mail with the individual participants. To locate publically available documents and websites, the researchers conducted in-depth searches. The documents found in these searches were used to focus the follow-up interview questions for each teacher educator and practicing teacher. Furthermore, all documents were member-checked with the interviewee to ensure the documents were theirs. Finally, each interviewee was asked to supply additional documents illustrating concepts covered during the interview.

Interpreting the Results

To answer our research questions, we began by examining the basic demographics of those responding to the questionnaire. For the teacher educators, this helped identify the context of their programs: public or private, location of the institution, and size. For practicing teachers, this helped identify who was engaged in classroom teaching, as opposed to serving as a technology coach, media specialist, or administrator. Demographic data were analyzed using frequency counts.

Next, we examined the technology topics teacher educators were covering in their programs. This closed-ended questionnaire item asked teacher educators to select those topics that were included in all, some, none, or optional in their teachers' education programs. To compare these topics to those considered important to practicing teachers, the same list of technology topics was provided to our sample of classroom teachers, who were asked to indicate which ones were used during a typical week. Our main goal was to compare those topics being covered by a majority of the teacher education programs with how teachers were using technology. If there were no significant difference between the two groups, we could surmise that the majority of teacher education programs were preparing future teachers to use the kinds of technology current teachers actually use in their classrooms. However, if there were a significant difference, this would suggest that the majority of teacher education programs are either teaching topics that teachers do not utilize in their own classrooms or are not covering the topics teachers do use. Therefore, a chi-square test was used to compare the differences, on each topic, between teacher educators and practicing teachers.

With the chi-square test, we needed to limit the variables in the teacher educator responses. Therefore, instead of looking at which technology topics were included in all, some, none, or optional in their teachers' education programs, we decided to only look at the reports of the technology topics required by all teacher education programs. If we examined topics that were listed as being "optional" or only required in "some" teacher education programs, it was likely that these topic areas did not target most of the teacher education graduates in these programs. Significant chi-square results prompted our subsequent use of effect sizes to further differentiate between topics. The effect size "characterizes the degree to which sample results diverge from the null hypothesis" (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 610). An effect size above .3 is considered a moderate to strong effect size (Cohen et al.). Thus, based on our results, there was a strong difference between samples on the following topics: administrative purposes (.508), communication (.482), access and use electronic resources (.344), analyze student achievement data (.300), teach specific concepts (.335), support a variety of learning styles (.401), and support higher-order thinking (.334).

Once these significant differences were identified, it was important to gain a better understanding of why these occurred. Therefore, we examined participants' responses to the open-ended questions to help illuminate the reasons behind these differences. One of the open-ended items on both questionnaires was designed to garner perceptions of the importance of specific technology uses. Teacher educators

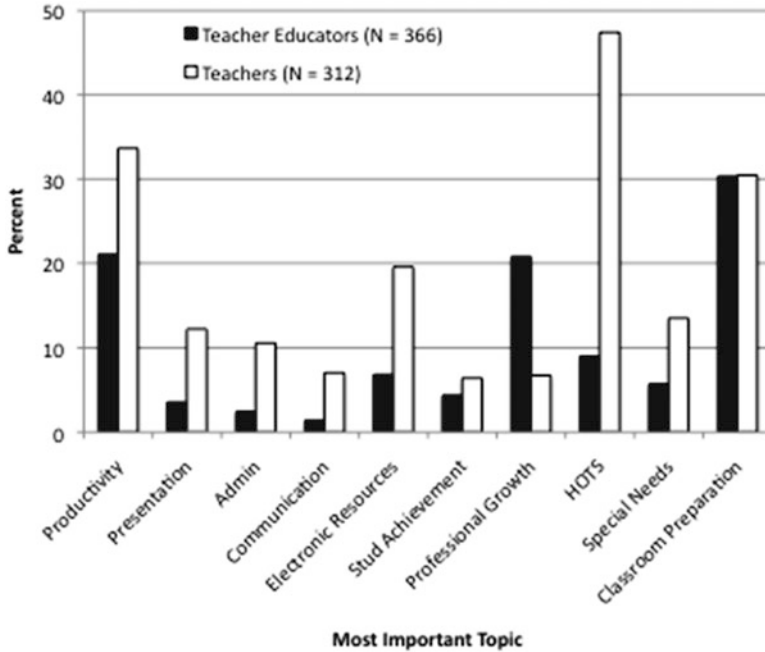


Fig. 8 Comparison of percentage of responses by teacher educators and practicing teachers regarding important technology topics/uses

were asked to describe the most important technology topic covered in their teacher education programs, while practicing teachers were asked to describe the best ways to use technology for teaching and learning. By examining the results of this open-ended question, we hoped to identify why certain topics were identified in teacher education programs, but not used by teachers or vice versa. The results reported were based on the percentage of teacher educators ($n = 366$) and practicing teachers ($n = 312$) who responded to the open-ended questionnaire item (see Fig. 8).

To code the open-ended responses, we used a deductive code list generated from the close-ended question described above (which was previously constructed from the literature and approved by experts). Using a constant-comparative method, two codes were combined with others due to an overlap in teacher responses. The *Teaching Specific Concepts* code was folded into a *Classroom Preparation* code since both emphasized searching for resources and lesson planning to teach specific concepts. We also combined the *Learning Styles* code with the *Special Needs* code. When teachers referenced using technology to address learning styles, they typically mentioned that technology could be used to address both the special needs and learning styles of individual students.

To increase the reliability of the coding, four researchers worked together to establish definitions and representative example responses. The four researchers then used that code list with descriptions and examples to code participant responses separately; two researchers reviewed all the teacher educator responses,

and two reviewed all the teacher responses. The researchers evaluated all the coded participant responses where disagreements occurred and resolved each issue separately.

To compare differences in frequencies of responses between teachers and teacher educators on the close-ended and open-ended questionnaire items described above, Pearson's chi-square analyses were conducted on those item responses. Since multiple tests were conducted on each item, the alpha level was set at a more conservative $.05/10 = .005$. To further determine the magnitude of the effect for each comparison, Cramer's V was computed and reported for each Chi-square test conducted. Seven of the ten codes were found to be significantly different.

Each code was then used to examine the significant differences among topics shown in Table 1. For example, there was a significant difference between teacher educators and teachers regarding how they reported using technology to support higher-order thinking skills. On the close-ended question, teachers reported using technology to achieve this goal much more frequently than teacher educators reported covering the topic during their classes. In the open-ended question, almost half of the teachers described that this was one of the best ways to use technology for teaching and learning. Teachers mentioned the best uses of technology to facilitate student learning included using the collaborative capabilities of technology (e.g., "The best ways to use tech to support teaching and learning are to take advantage of its collaborative abilities. Connect your students to the world around you." [Teacher 426]), increasing student engagement (e.g., "Creating interactive lessons with visuals and high-interest activities engages the students." [Teacher 396]), or facilitating student-centered activities (e.g., "Student-centered

Table 1 Comparison of selected technology topics covered by teacher education programs and those used on a weekly basis by teachers

Topic/use of technology	Teachers ^a	Teacher educators ^b	χ^2	Cramer's V
	(N = 368)	(N = 406)		
Personal productivity	97.8	78.3	67.35***	.295
Information presentation	92.4	75.6	39.61***	.226
Administrative purposes	88.6	39.4	199.82***	.508
Communication	99.2	59.3	178.90***	.482
Access and use electronic resources	95.7	69.0	91.77***	.344
Analyze student achievement data	54.3	25.1	68.94***	.300
Teach specific concepts	68.5	35.0	86.33***	.335
Document professional growth	41.0	55.1	15.20***	.140
Support variety of learning styles	76.9	37.1	123.81***	.401
Support higher order thinking	69.8	36.5	85.83***	.334

* $p < .05/10 = .005$; *** $p < .001/10 = .0001$

^aRepresents percentage of respondents who indicated that they used technology for this purpose on a weekly basis

^bRepresents percentage of respondents who indicated that this technology topic was included in all teacher education programs at their institutions

technology [is the best use]. The ability to have each student investigate and use technology.” [Teacher 318]). This suggests that teachers may value using technology to support higher-order thinking more than teacher educators.

In the second phase of the study (39 case studies of teacher educators and teachers), researchers used multiple case analysis procedures to analyze data obtained from interviews and artifacts. For each case, data were organized topically by the codes established in the first phase, thus developing a case record for each teacher and teacher educator participating in follow-up data collection (Yin 2003). One researcher reviewed each case record and recorded margin notes on emerging themes. The research team then collectively discussed the themes emerging both within and across the cases. Refer to Table 2 for examples of codes and corresponding themes (not all are listed).

Presenting the Results

The quantitative results were presented first to provide an overall picture of the similarities and differences between teacher education programs and technology-using teachers. Once this general picture was provided, we examined the nuances that emerged from the qualitative data. The qualitative data also provided an opportunity to explain the differences. Qualitative data were presented using verbs like “described” or “presented” to convey that we were summarizing the participants’ statements. For example, we discussed one teacher educator’s interview response as follows:

...described the importance of having pre-service teachers using Web 2.0 to collaborate: ‘You know, if every kid is making their own PowerPoint, that’s interesting – but if kids are getting together to discuss how to build one PowerPoint and it’s a group of aspect of the PowerPoint, you’ve got much richer and more meaningful use of technology there. And I think by focusing on the collaborative aspect of Web 2.0 technology, you get your foot in the door there, very naturally too’ [Teacher Educator L, lines 94–98]. Analysis of course assignments revealed that many programs incorporated other Web 2.0 tools (e.g. Google Docs, Titanpad) into the activities pre-service teachers completed. (p. 18)

When interpretations were presented, we attempted to use as much of the participant’s own language as possible. In addition, we triangulated any responses with additional data sources to increase the trustworthiness of our reported results.

Close-Ended Questionnaire Item

Based on our results, there was a strong difference between samples on the importance and/or use of technology for the following: administrative purposes (.508), communication (.482), to access and use electronic resources (.344), analyze student achievement data (.300), teach specific concepts (.335), support a variety of learning styles (.401), and to support higher-order thinking (.334) (see Table 1).

Table 2 Emerging theme examples based on topic codes

Code	Emerging theme	Example of emerging theme
Productivity	Presentations—using technology to present information (the importance of being able to do this)	“They have to pass a test. . .They have to actually do a presentation with Smartboard. I make sure that our teachers are ready to go out” (Teacher Educator E, lines 362–375)
Administration/ classroom management	Gradebook/course management system	“We do all our report cards on the computer. We have Power Grade” (Teacher b, lines 170–172)
Communication	Website (to communicate or post resources for students). Teacher education programs model this, students are not required to complete	“The gradebook program we used was called <i>SmartWeb</i> . . .is probably one of the more useful tools to me as a teacher – pushing that accountability factor on to the parents. I register every parents and make them accountable for being aware of what their children are doing. . .I put current grades weekly in there” (Teacher y, lines 200–214)
Access and use electronic resources	WebQuests, Google searches, websites, online databases	“We use Quest Garden. Questgarden.com. Bernie Dodge has a whole business online” (Teacher Educator G, line 144)
Assessment/ analyze student performance data	Clickers, cell phones, immediate feedback, accelerated reader results	“We have a SMART response system. . .I use that to generate what groups I’m going to be working with. I don’t want to pull kids that don’t need extra help that can be working and be furthering themselves” (Teacher g, lines 124–143)
Document personal/professional growth	Personal learning networks	“I spend 10–15 minutes going through Twitter reading and looking. And when I find something that looks like it might be interesting. . .I copy and paste it to Delicious” (Teacher u, lines 124–129)

Open-Ended Questionnaire Item

Teacher educators were asked to describe the most important technology topic covered in their teacher education programs, while practicing teachers were asked to describe the best ways to use technology for teaching and learning. Based on the descriptions provided by teacher educators, the most important technology

Table 3 Comparison of perspectives regarding the importance of specific technology uses: teacher education representative perceptions versus teacher perceptions

Topic/use of technology	Teachers ^a (N = 312)	Teacher educators ^b (N = 366)	χ^2	Cramer's V
Personal productivity	33.7	21.0	13.65***	.142
Information presentation	12.2	3.6	18.02***	.163
Administrative purposes	10.6	2.5	19.10***	.168
Communication	7.1	1.4	14.24***	.145
Access and use electronic resources	19.6	6.8	24.61***	.191
Analyze student achievement data	6.4	4.4	1.39	.045
Class preparation and teaching concepts	30.4	30.6	0.00	.002
Document professional growth	6.7	20.8	27.06***	.200
Support students with special needs	13.5	5.7	11.92*	.133
Support higher-order thinking	47.4	9.3	124.80***	.429

* $p < .05/10 = .005$; *** $p < .001/10 = .0001$

^aRepresents percentage of respondents who indicated that they viewed this use of technology as the best/most important way to use technology for teaching and learning

^bRepresents percentage of respondents who indicated that this technology topic was the most important topic covered in the teacher education programs at their institutions

topic was introducing future teachers to how to use technology for classroom preparation and to teach specific concepts (30.6 %). In contrast, when teachers were asked to describe the best ways to use technology for teaching and learning, almost half (47.4 %) described technology uses that supported higher-order thinking. To further examine the magnitude of the effects, Cramer's V was computed for all comparisons. Based on these data, a moderate to strong effect size was calculated for using technology to support higher-order thinking (.429). This topic showed the widest disparity between teachers and teacher educators in terms of perceptions regarding the importance of specific technology uses (see Table 3).

Multiple Case Records

Analysis of interview and artifact data revealed several emerging themes that highlighted differences between teacher education programs and K-12 teachers with regard to the use of technology to support teaching and learning. These main differences included communication, analyzing student data, documenting professional growth, and supporting higher-order thinking skills.

Communication referred to using e-mail, websites, newsletters, and/or blogs to communicate with parents and students. Almost all of the 27 teachers interviewed discussed using technology for communication purposes in their classrooms. They described using a range of technologies from more traditional newsletters and websites, to blogs and e-mail. In contrast, very few teacher educators interviewed mentioned preparing pre-service teachers to use technology for communication purposes. For the few that did, pre-service teachers created newsletters or static websites to inform “parents” of classroom events.

Analyzing student data included statements about using technology for data-driven decision making, feedback, and assessment—specifically examining student data. For this particular code, three distinct themes emerged. For teachers, they mentioned using classroom performance systems (clickers) and portfolios for assessment purposes. Teacher educators did not discuss either of these themes, but some interviewees described the importance of designing assessments that aligned with objectives.

Using technology to document or engage in professional growth included any informal (e.g., collaboration with other teachers) or formal uses (e.g., e-portfolios). Most teachers responded that technology provided them with a constant source of professional growth. With the amount of resources and information available on the Internet, teachers established their own PLNs through a variety of social media sites (e.g., Twitter, blogs, Google bookmarks). One teacher stated that the Internet was “. . . a floodgate. I’m just constantly bookmarking, dog earing different things here and there.” This was perhaps the strongest theme revealed during interviews with teacher educators—the use of electronic portfolios. Electronic portfolios tended to be used to encourage pre-service teacher reflection and documentation of technology skills and pedagogical knowledge. Most teacher educators indicated that portfolios required pre-service teachers to document how they addressed the standards.

Using technology to support activities that facilitate higher-order thinking skills focused on using Web 2.0 technology tools to support student collaboration and using technology to support project-based learning. Both teachers and teacher educators discussed these two themes. Teachers reported using various technology tools to facilitate student collaboration. One teacher described using blogs and the commenting feature: “I allow them to comment on each other’s blogs. We have a lot of discussion.” Teacher educators did not discuss teaching pre-service teachers how to use technology to support K-12 collaborative projects. Instead, teacher educators described how they modeled the use of technology for collaboration by assigning pre-service teachers to group projects and using Web 2.0 technology to facilitate collaborative activities involved in completing those projects.

Discussion

The results of the study have relevant implications for practice because they help us identify areas of disconnect between preparation programs and actual practice. By investigating this gap, we have accomplished several things. First, we

documented several areas in which teacher education programs may not be preparing teachers to be successful in the field. For example, although 99.2 % of teachers reported using technology for communication on a weekly basis, only 59.3 % of teacher education programs reported covering this topic. These results can cue teacher educators as to the importance of this topic area to practicing teachers and thus suggest the need to address this during teacher preparation programs. Another example of an informative result is in the documentation of professional growth.

The research question posed at the beginning of the study focused on examining gaps between the current topics, related to technology integration, that are included in pre-service teacher education programs, and the ways in which practicing teachers use technology to support their teaching and learning efforts. Specifically, we asked the question, “What are the similarities and differences between the technology topics included in pre-service teacher education programs and the technology topics teachers find relevant and meaningful to their teaching/learning practices?” To investigate this, it was important to gather information from both teacher education programs (to see how we prepare teachers for practice) and teachers (to see what teachers are actually doing). Furthermore, it was critical to survey a large sample from both populations to determine what they typically do. The online questionnaire helped us gather this information from a large sample for both populations. Then using this information to identify common themes, we needed to follow-up in order to gather specific examples of these themes. Therefore, interviews and additional documents were gathered in case study format to understand how these themes were manifest in specific bounded contexts.

This study was commissioned by the US Department of Education to address concerns regarding the preparation of students in teacher education programs for meaningful technology use. Based on our own experiences as teacher educators, the authors felt compelled to examine this concern across teacher education programs, nationwide. As noted in the first author’s previous publications (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al. 2010), she has made a concerted effort to elevate the voices of teachers to promote technology uses that align with their own values and needs. Results of this study confirmed that there are several technology topics/uses for which teachers and teacher educators differed in terms of the frequency of inclusion in teacher education programs versus the prevalence of use in the classroom. Although teacher educators are addressing a wide variety of topics in their programs, these are not completely aligned with the types of topics or uses that classroom teachers most value, as indicated by the technology they incorporate into their classrooms on a regular basis. Future efforts are needed to provide our future teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to be effective technology-using teachers.

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7.3 Theory-Driven Evaluation Studies: Establishing Links Between Research, Policy, and Practice

Leonidas Kyriakides

Introduction

Theory-driven evaluation is a collection of different methodological approaches that can be used by evaluators in trying to understand the impact of a reform policy evaluation such as those of program theory, theories of change, and realism (Bledsoe and Graham 2005; Rosas 2005). In all of these perspectives, social programs are regarded as products of the human imagination; they are hypotheses about social betterment (Bickman 1985). Programs chart out a perceived course where wrongs might be put right, deficiencies of behavior corrected, and inequalities of condition alleviated. Programs are thus shaped by a vision of change and social justice, and they succeed or fail according to the veracity of that vision. In respect to these, evaluation has the task of testing out the underlying program theories (Chen and Rossi 1987) and also identifying unintended consequences, which may or may not be beneficial. This also implies that when one evaluates, he/she should return to the core theories about how a program is supposed to work and, then interrogate it by asking whether the basic plan is sound, plausible, durable, practical, and, above all, valid.

Evaluation projects that are theory driven take into account the needs and issues raised by the various stakeholders associated with an innovation, such as the practitioners and the policy makers. However, the evaluation agenda of these projects is also not entirely defined by the policy makers and the school stakeholders. The overall agenda is expanded in such a way as to allow evaluators to not only provide answers to the questions raised by stakeholders but also help them understand the reasons for which a reform is more or less effective (Weiss 1997). In this chapter, it is argued that in order to provide such answers, evaluators in

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education should make use of the growing knowledge base of educational effectiveness research (EER) as it is concerned with the correlates of effective practice and provides theories about their relationships with each other and with student outcomes.

EER can be seen as an overarching theme that links together a conglomerate of research in different areas, including research on teacher behavior and its impacts, curriculum, student grouping procedures, school organization, and educational policy (Scheerens and Bosker 1997). The main research question underlying EER is the identification and investigation of which factors in the teaching, curriculum, and learning environments (operating at different levels such as the classroom, the school, and above-school) can directly or indirectly explain measured differences (variations) in the outcomes of students (Creemers and Kyriakides 2006). Further, such research frequently takes into account the influence of other important background characteristics, such as student ability, socio-economic status (SES), and prior attainment (Teddlie and Reynolds 2000). Thus, EER attempts to establish and test theories which explain why and how some schools and teachers are more effective than others in promoting better outcomes for students (Kyriakides 2008). In this context, this chapter argues that EER can be seen as a theoretical foundation upon which better evaluation studies can be built in education. Guidelines for conducting theory-driven evaluation studies that are based on educational effectiveness are provided, and a framework for designing theory-driven evaluation studies is offered. In the last part of the chapter, it is argued that EER could have a greater impact on policy and practice if theory-driven evaluation studies based on theoretical models of EER are conducted.

Designing Theory-Driven Evaluation Studies: The Role of EER

Programs are embedded in social systems as they are delivered (Shaw and Replogle 1996). As a result, it is through the workings of entire systems of social relationships in and outside the classroom and/or the school that any changes in behaviors, events, and social conditions in education occur. Serving to aid an understanding of variation within an effective implementation of a reform, theories of educational effectiveness can help evaluators identify factors most closely associated with the effective implementation of the reform policy.

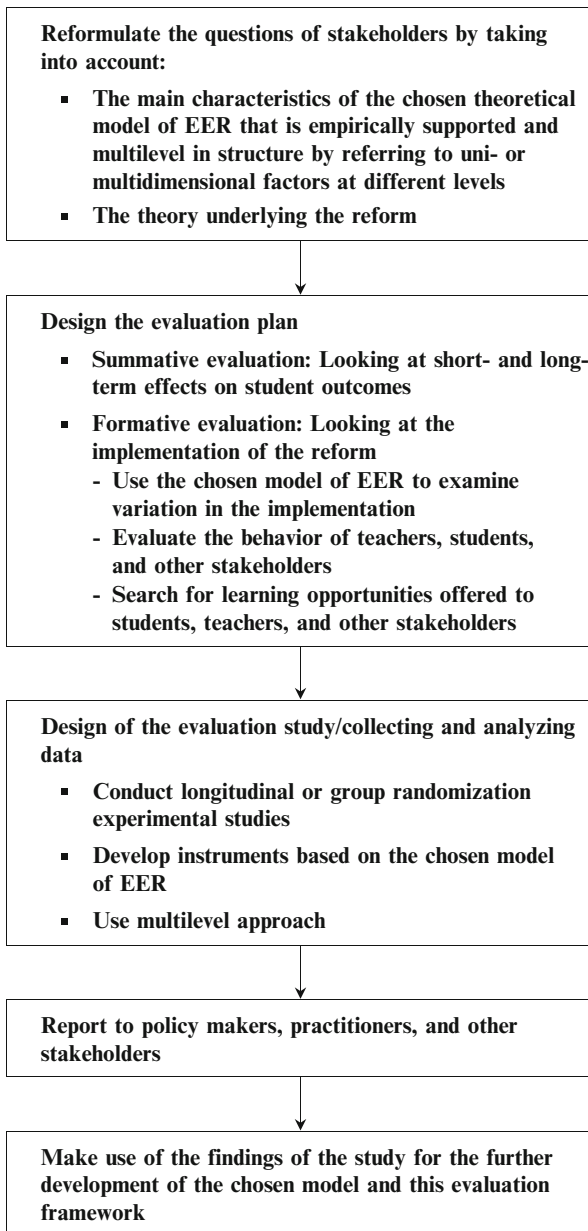
A typical example of a theory-driven evaluation is the evaluation of a 1998 Cypriot reform that concerned the use of schema theory in teaching mathematics (Kyriakides et al. 2006). Five years after the introduction of the reform, an evaluation study was conducted in order to determine its current implementation. The study aimed to examine the main stakeholders' (i.e., teachers' and students') reactions to the reform and the factors influencing its effectiveness. The study not only provided answers to policy makers but also revealed that student achievement was determined by a number of factors related to teachers' and students' personal

characteristics and teachers' reactions towards the reform itself. Moreover, the research verified the decisive role of teachers in implementing any reform. Based on the findings of this study and drawing on the theoretical assumptions of the "emergent design" research model, a conceptual framework for conducting program evaluations was proposed which attributes a central role to teachers' classroom behavior. It was claimed that teacher effectiveness research could be a foundation upon which to design studies regarding the evaluation of reforms (Kyriakides et al. 2006). In turn, this study revealed that EER can be seen as a foundation upon which a theory-driven evaluation project can be designed. Furthermore, this study reveals that it is possible to combine theoretical models of EER with evaluation projects that have their agendas defined by different stakeholders for political and practical reasons. Such projects contribute to the development of the knowledge base of EER and provide elaborate and better answers to the questions posed by the various stakeholders of education (see Creemers et al. 2010). Thus, this section provides more guidelines for conducting theory-driven evaluation studies that are based on educational effectiveness, and a theoretical framework is offered (see Fig. 1) which leads to the following observations.

First, evaluators need to reformulate the research questions that policy makers may have in relation to a reform process. In doing so, the theory upon which a reform is based and the main characteristics of the theoretical model that they consider as appropriate should be taken into account. The chosen model should meet the following criteria based on the current knowledge base of EER (Creemers and Kyriakides 2008; Townsend 2007). First, the model should be multilevel in nature and refer to factors operating at different levels such as students, teachers/classes/departments, schools, and various features of the local and national context. It should outline hypothesized relationships between factors and student outcomes (linear or nonlinear relations) and should refer to relationships among factors that exist both within and across levels (see Kyriakides and Creemers 2012). Second, the model should provide a clear framework for measuring the functioning of factors. Finally, the model should have sufficient empirical support. This implies that the multilevel structure of education and the factors that operate at different levels should at least be considered. For example, a reform program implementing a reduction of class size could investigate its impact on the quality of teaching, factors describing teacher and student behavior in the classroom, and finally only then student outcomes. Therefore, the reformulation of the evaluation questions of the stakeholders can be seen as a starting point for the design of the evaluation plan.

After the reformulation of policy questions, the second step should be to design an evaluation plan. It is expected that evaluators should not only attempt to achieve the summative purpose of evaluation but also address formative purposes. The latter are closely related to the implementation of the reform, whereas the summative aspect of evaluation is expected to study both short- and long-term effects of the reform on student outcomes. Given that we expect variation in the implementation of reforms, we propose that evaluators need to focus their attention on the behavior of those expected to make use of the reform policy.

Fig. 1 A framework for conducting theory-driven evaluation studies



Data concerning the impact of the reform on teachers' and students' behaviors as well as on the behaviors of other stakeholders may help to identify factors associated with its effective implementation. The chosen evaluation model may even be of use in identifying the impact of such effectiveness factors and may also suggest how the reform could be redesigned in such a way that it could provide further

support to those who need it. Rather than discussing issues related to the existence of prescribed plans for implementing reforms, there is a need to examine how teachers use and modify these plans in order to meet the needs of students and promote learning. Finally, instead of giving too much emphasis to students' reactions towards a reform, it is important to examine what learning opportunities students and other stakeholders (e.g., teachers and headteachers) have been provided with by participating in the reform. This suggestion can be attributed to findings of EER which show that the learning opportunity factor is one of the most important factors associated with student achievement (see Brookhart 1997; Creemers and Kyriakides 2008; Kyriakides and Tsangaridou 2008; Lughart et al. 1989; Trautwein et al. 2002).

The third step is the design of the study and should feature the collection and analysis of data. The framework proposed here suggests that beyond examining students' progress in terms of learning outcomes, we also need to collect longitudinal data for both teachers and students. Namely, it is worth examining both short-term and long-term effects on students since there is evidence that reforms and intervention programs may not have enduring effects on student learning (Plewis 2000). This framework also suggests that evaluators should examine whether teachers improve their practices throughout the years as a consequence of implementing the reform (i.e., the reform itself could be considered as a force able to bring about change in teachers' practice). In order to achieve these purposes, either an experimental study could be conducted by following the group randomization approach or a longitudinal design could be used (see Creemers et al. 2010). The choice of the research design depends not only on practicality issues but also on whether the reform program is implemented in the same way across the participating teachers/schools or by offering different treatments to different groups. The chosen model of EER and the way that factors are defined are both expected to help evaluators design appropriate instruments and also to investigate the properties of these instruments before conducting the main evaluation (Creemers and Kyriakides 2012). In addition, different measurement theories such as the item response theory (IRT) or the classical test theory (CTT) can be used for this purpose. Finally, the multilevel structure of the data to be collected should be taken into account by the analysis, using appropriate techniques such as multilevel modeling techniques (Goldstein 2003; Snijders and Bosker 1999) or structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques (Kline 1998; Muthén 1994; Raykov and Marcoulides 2006).

In the fourth step, evaluators are expected to report the results to different stakeholders. If a participatory model is adopted, then different reports for policy makers and teachers but also for parents and students should be produced. However, beyond providing answers to the specific questions raised by the policy makers and other stakeholders concerning the impact of the reform and possibilities for its development, evaluators are expected to draw implications for the further development of the chosen model of EER and/or for the development of the proposed evaluation framework presented above.

The framework proposed here does not however aim to provide a *comprehensive* model for evaluating educational reforms. Rather, it aims to incorporate different theoretical frameworks into a single model, acknowledging the fact that each theoretical framework could illuminate different aspects of the reform under scrutiny. It is acknowledged that further research is needed to refine and elaborate the framework described above, especially since it did not arise from empirical evidence or the results of evaluation studies. The evaluation framework is, thereby, offered as a set of hypotheses that need to be further tested. Nevertheless, this chapter provides a framework for developing a dynamic rather than a static model of evaluating educational reforms. In the next section, it also is argued that by using this framework an evidence-based and theory-driven approach to improve practice may be promoted.

Establishing a Theory-Driven and Evidence-Based Approach to Improving Education

Although the responsibility for, and the improvement of, educational practice cannot be dictated by educational theory and research, it is a major objective of educational science to contribute to the effectiveness and the improvement of education by providing a knowledge base for practice and helping schools develop effective intervention programs (Creemers and Kyriakides 2012). However, the relationship between general practice in education, science, and specifically educational effectiveness has not always been successful. There are many publications which spell out problems in attempts to create better links between theory and practice in education. In fact, these publications point out differences in approach, implementation problems, and the differences between teachers and schools which should make it almost impossible to use existing “knowledge” in school improvement (Creemers and Reezigt 1997; Scheerens and Bosker 1997; Teddlie and Reynolds 2000). By contrast, it is reasonable to expect that there would be a good linkage between EER and school improvement which aims to improve and develop education in classrooms and schools. The explicit purpose of those who initiated the research on the effectiveness of classrooms, schools, and educational systems was that the results of this research could be used in practice (see Townsend 2007). For example, one of the major aims of the 1988 establishment of the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) was to bring together researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in productive cooperation for the benefit of education in general and for the development of the participating “disciplines.” However, the question persists of how to best apply the knowledge base of effectiveness in practice or, in other words, how to get valid and useful information about school improvement out of EER (Creemers and Kyriakides 2006). In this section, conducting theory-driven evaluation studies on educational effectiveness is claimed to contribute to the establishment of a dynamic perspective on improvement (Creemers and Kyriakides 2012) and help

to establish stronger links between EER and policy and practice. This perspective gives emphasis to the use of theory-driven and evidence-based approaches to the development of improvement strategies and action plans. The importance of this approach is discussed below by showing that a valid theory of educational effectiveness and evaluation data should guide the design of improvement efforts.

Establishing Clarity and Consensus About the Aims of School Improvement

The first step of any school improvement effort is based on the assumption that it is important to start with a clear understanding of your destination and how you are seeking to improve the quality of education. This could be considered “a purposeful task analysis” (Wiggins and McTighe 1998, p. 8) and suggests a planning sequence, while a commitment to collaborative work also needs to be established. However, Fullan (1991) points out that people have different perceptions of change, meaning that it is difficult to reach consensus among the participants of school reform efforts, although this may be crucial in its success. Therefore, it is important to establish procedures to ensure clear understanding among stakeholders as to the aims of any school improvement program. To this end, results of theory-driven evaluation studies based on EER can be a useful tool for helping stakeholders realize that the ultimate aim of any school reform effort should be an improvement in student achievement across the school. This is the basic assumption upon which theory-driven evaluation studies in EER are based. For this reason, a major emphasis is given to measure the short- and long-term effects of reforms on student outcomes (see Fig. 1). Unless learning and learning outcomes are improved, any school improvement effort could not be considered truly successful no matter how much it has managed to improve any aspect of the climate of the school. This is due to the fact that learning is the mission of the school and so the main emphasis should be given to improving learning outcomes. An example of such an approach is the evaluation of the impact of network learning communities in England or New Community Schools in Scotland where a range of positive impacts were reported by teachers and headteachers but where little impact on student attainment was found (Sammons et al. 2003, 2007).

Addressing School Factors That Are Able to Influence Learning and Teaching Practice to Improve the Quality of Schools

Beyond providing support to school stakeholders in the design of improvement programs, the results of theory-driven evaluation studies in EER suggest that school stakeholders should attempt to build whole school reform efforts which are able to

improve the functioning of school-level factors that have been included in the chosen effectiveness model (see Fig. 1). This is due to the fact that the chosen model has to be multilevel in nature and thereby refer to school factors that are expected to be related to student learning outcomes. Therefore, designing improvement efforts focusing on only the classroom-level factors may improve the teaching practice of individuals but may not necessarily improve the functioning of the school-level factors also included in the chosen model. In such cases, teachers who may manage to improve aspects of their teaching practice that have been addressed by a specific improvement will need at some stage some other type of support to improve other teaching skills. But in cases where a reform does not aim to improve school factors, such support may not be available when needed, and the long-lasting effect of a program aiming to improve teaching practice could be questioned (see Creemers and Kyriakides 2012). At the same time, it is acknowledged that school stakeholders may develop interventions/improvement efforts which may not only improve the functioning of the school-level factors but may ultimately promote the quality of teaching and eventually raise student achievement. Therefore, results emerging from theory-driven evaluation studies will ideally demonstrate that efforts towards school improvement give emphasis to improving not only the teaching practice but improve practice through improved functioning of school-level factors as well. In this way, not only are new learning opportunities offered to different stakeholders as is supported by the proposed evaluation framework (see Fig. 1), but also the conditions are provided that enable them to continuously improve their teaching practice.

Collecting Evaluation Data and Identifying Priorities for Improvement

The use of a valid theory to design an improvement effort cannot in itself ensure that the aims of a proposed reform will be achieved even if it is implemented in the way it was designed (Kyriakides et al. 2006). In this section, a theory-driven approach to improve the quality of schools is suggested, and emphasis is given on using empirical evidence to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a school and design relevant improvement efforts. The importance of using an evidence-based approach to school improvement arises from the fact that several studies have revealed that the evaluation of school policy is an important factor operating at the school level (Creemers and Kyriakides 2010a, b; de Jong et al. 2004; Kyriakides 2008; Scheerens and Bosker 1997). Therefore, based on the results which emerge from theory-driven evaluation studies, the strengths and weaknesses of teachers/schools/systems should be identified. Moreover, stakeholders may also identify priorities for improving the functioning of specific factors and/or grouping of factors. Furthermore, evaluation data may reveal more than one improvement priority for each teacher/school/educational system although the identification of

more than one weakness is not always helpful for identifying how a particular teacher can be developed professionally. However, due to the dynamic nature of models of EER, different priorities for professional development for each teacher/school/educational system can also emerge from such theory-driven evaluation studies.

Establishing a Developmental Evaluation Strategy

The suggestions for designing theory-driven evaluation studies provided in the previous section may also help stakeholders establish a developmental evaluation strategy (Demetriou and Kyriakides 2012; Hopkins 1989; Kyriakides and Campbell 2004; Visscher and Coe 2002) in their attempt to improve the effectiveness status of teachers and schools. However, it is important to note that effectiveness studies support the use of a *continuous* model of evaluation since such a model allows teachers/schools/systems to adapt their policy decisions in relation to the needs of different groups of school stakeholders (Kyriakides et al. 2010; Scheerens et al. 2005). It can therefore be claimed that the results of theory-driven evaluation studies will eventually show that a developmental evaluation strategy should be established at either the macro or micro level. This strategy should ultimately contribute to the improvement of the effectiveness of teachers and schools.

One example of this might be where a developmental evaluation strategy of the school policy and of the actions taken for improving the relations of school with the parents can be used (Kyriakides 2005). In such case, the evaluation process is expected to follow a linear sequence that starts with the development of a plan for school policy on partnership and from which priorities and targets then emerge along with associated performance indicators. At the next stage, evaluation questions that followed from the targets and performance indicators will be established to provide the criteria for data collection. Next, the data will be collected and analyzed and fed back into the formative process of evaluation. In this way, stakeholders will be able to find out what is happening during the implementation of the school policy on partnership.

This strategy for improving effectiveness has a number of significant features. The evaluation process is expected to assist the implementation and development of a school policy since the establishment of targets and performance indicators may specify the developmental process of the partnership policy. Moreover, evaluation data may be related to the aims of the policy through the evaluation questions. As a consequence, a logical chain of action that relates aims to targets, to evaluation questions, and to particular information sources can then be established. However, although this evaluation process is linear, it is very likely to be less tidy in practice. Once the evaluation process is underway, different working groups of stakeholders (e.g., coordinators of partnership policy, teachers of different subjects) may implement parts of the policy at different rates (Kyriakides 2005). However, the extent to which there is a gap between the implementation of a reform policy and the design

of an intervention could be identified. Thus, the results of theory-driven evaluation studies, especially those addressing the formative aim of evaluation, may help stakeholders take decisions on how to improve school policy or how to provide additional support to those working groups that may need it (Creemers and Kyriakides 2010a). However, further research is needed to investigate the impact that the use of theory-driven evaluation studies may have on establishing an evidence-based and theory-driven approach to school improvement that is likely to have a significant impact on improving student learning outcomes (Creemers and Kyriakides 2012). In this way, strong links among EER, theory-driven evaluation, and improvement of quality in education might be established.

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7.4 Juxtaposing Interpretations of Research on School Principalsip

Marta C. Azaola and Anthony Kelly

Introduction

It is said that if leadership, defined narrowly as principalship at the school level, as a subfield of school improvement and as a route to more effective education had delivered a fraction of what was promised for it three decades ago, we would not have such a significant number of failing schools throughout the developed world. In retrospect, the notion of leadership as a panacea seems overly optimistic: if all school needs in order to succeed are a “good” principal, then the system only needs a relatively small number of “good” staff to make for perfectly effective schooling, which is a more “realizable” target than replacing 20 teachers in every school, say. Unfortunately for both policy makers and pupils, the evidence is against this notion—good leadership on its own is not a sufficient condition for good schooling—and we have learned that good heads cannot always operate with equal effectiveness in different schools. Context matters, as does complexity. Research in the field has similarly been blighted by the tension between delivering (and evidencing) improvement and challenging (and informing) the evidential base for policy, most obviously in the dearth of research on quantifying the impact of leadership on pupil outcomes. This chapter sifts through a range of research from developed and developing countries to get an overview of interpretations away from the hegemony of “Western” (policy and socioeconomic) contexts because “context” matters at system level just as it does at school level. The purpose of the chapter is not to coalesce findings but to interrogate those findings in terms of how they relate to method and interpretation. Interpretation is the action of explaining the meaning of research; methodology is the means of doing it. The link between the two should be theory, in the absence of which the researcher cannot be sure what

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has been found, and in nonexperimental research the complexity of relationships plays an important role in interpreting the findings. The appropriateness of methodology affects the legitimacy of the interpretation and ultimately the usefulness of the research. This is not to deny that there are many different conceptualizations of leadership and many different views on its desirable outcomes across cultures—“non-Western” conceptualizations of leadership can open “Western” eyes to theoretical treatments derived from different intellectual traditions—but an interrogation of the literature suggests that good research from every tradition shares the characteristic of going beyond the folk knowledge of anecdote to the theoretically constructive.

Methodological Issues in Pursuit of the Leadership Effect

The research underpinning of school leadership has occasionally been analyzed, in particular, the difficulty of conducting experimental research in the field and in schools generally. Hallinger and Heck (1996a, b) reviewed 15 years (1980–1995) of empirical research on school principalship and its conceptual and theoretical underpinnings within a school effectiveness paradigm. By the 1980s accountability and the evaluation of principals had become a major driving force in education and schooling, with diverse pro-choice and pro-privatization reforms emerging strongly in the USA, the UK, and elsewhere. The impact of principals on the lives of teachers and students is complex and not easily subject to empirical verification. The research suggests that it is a role best conceived as a web of environmental, personal, and professional in-school relationships, which combine with other factors to influence organizational outcomes, but research in the field of principalship and effectiveness—most explicitly defined as the impact of principalship on pupil outcomes—has not done justice to this complexity in terms of either theoretical or methodological sophistication, although Hallinger and Heck acknowledge that research in the period showed an improvement over the previous period.

Hallinger and Heck grouped studies by their underlying theoretical models: those that used bivariate designs with or without controls and those that used more sophisticated theoretical models and more powerful statistical methods. One third of studies in leadership and effectiveness at the time of analysis were classified as being theoretically driven, building on the theoretical work of others, but only one third were sophisticated in their theoretical orientation. Almost all the studies used a “nonexperimental” cross-sectional correlational design, with surveying and/or interviewing instruments, which makes it difficult if not impossible to understand causality. The Hallinger and Heck review implies that future research can progress conceptually if methodological progress in the field makes the study of comprehensive/complex models of principalship more feasible, and progress in the field is most likely to come from research that places the principal in the context of the school and its environment. However, researchers need to adopt a multilevel perspective to schools as organizations and treat data in a hierarchical way to assist in building theory about the nature of the effect across levels of the school, which in

turn will facilitate more refined investigations into a wider variety of theoretical perspectives on how impact is obtained in different types of organizational structure.

The Hallinger and Heck review yielded the slightly unexpected finding that the model used appeared to affect the research interpretation. Methods that used bivariate designs made weak or conflicting claims, whereas the more sophisticated theoretical models with stronger research designs yielded more positive findings more frequently. (Usually, more rigorous methods make it *more difficult*, not easier, to make definitive claims.) The conclusions were generally that principalship *can* make a difference to student learning, and that a school's socioeconomic environment influences the type of leadership exercised. The type of leadership that makes the greatest difference is the one aimed at influencing *internal school processes* if they themselves are directly linked to student learning and teachers' practice.

Logical positivism and quantitative approaches drove educational management and leadership research from the 1950s to the start of the period reviewed by Hallinger and Heck. From the 1980s onwards, scholars in the field tended to criticize these approaches, and this led to new ways of thinking about epistemology and the role of the researcher in leadership research. Supporters and exponents of the new approach moved away from empirical explication, but we know now that no single approach yields a universal understanding of school leadership; at best we have an incomplete (and somewhat) distorted view of its role in school improvement and effectiveness. To this day, researchers in the field use considerable flexibility in their approaches to the structure of knowledge (positivist, interpretive, and critical) about leadership and the theoretical lenses they use (structural-functional, constructivist, feminist, postmodernist, etc.), although researchers in educational leadership, in comparison to other education subdisciplines, do not start with well-developed theories so that the challenge is to integrate findings from studies conducted using different philosophical perspectives and methodologies. In short, it has been easier to *summarize* the approaches, perspectives, and findings than to *reconcile* them, and until we better understand the relationship between the school leader, the school context, and pupil outcomes, it will be difficult to justify the claim that leaders provide the critical impetus for improvement.

Levačić (2005) studied the methodological problems faced by empirical researchers in attempting to establish the causal effect of leadership on student outcomes, implied in national policy, professional practice, and the anecdotal claims of some research, which is critically important. Any study testing the hypothesis of a causal relationship in leadership research must have measures of key variables and be able to take account of the other factors that affect student outcomes, but causality is not easily replicated in natural settings. The counterfactual cannot be directly observed; that is to say, if X had *not* been present, Y would *not* have happened. The alternative is to use the random allocation of cases into control and non-control groups, but randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are regarded by many in education as ethically problematic. Quasi-experimentation, which is similar in many ways to RCT design, lacks the random allocation into control and treatment groups. Instead, it assigns to the treatment group using criteria other than random allocation or indeed

has no control at all over allocation. There are concerns over this approach in relation to internal validity because the treatment and control groups may not be *ab initio* comparable. With RCTs, participants have an equal chance of being assigned so that the treatment group will be statistically identical to the control group on both observed and unobserved characteristics, provided the sample is big enough, and any change in the characteristics of the intervention group is then due to the intervention. With quasi-experimental studies, it is obviously more difficult to demonstrate causality, particularly if there are confounding variables.

Both RCT and quasi-experiment have generalizability from the sample studied, but research on the effects of educational leadership on student outcomes has not employed either of these techniques to any significant extent because leadership is not generally represented as a treatment to be used or withheld, so that studies in the field have used only data generated from real-life contexts. While statistical purists advocate counterfactual research design, those on the other side of the argument respond that social science does not need to (and cannot easily) seek counterfactual causal explanations and that in any case the field should not be confined in this way. This argument that we need to develop causal explanations that are not necessarily counterfactual is the one that has emerged triumphant in the field of leadership research, particularly in the UK, with a commensurately lower incidence of quantitative research and the majority of observational data analyzed “to the best of our ability.” This is not to say that there is no value in conducting studies using observational data on schools and students, but more could be done to ensure that specific interventions are evaluated using a robust counterfactual design, and in this context, Levčić explicated a three-way typology of research model: the direct effects model, the mediated effects model, and the reciprocal effects model. In the direct effects model, “student outcome” is the dependent variable, and it can take account of antecedent variables like school context that can directly affect both student outcomes and leadership. In a mediated effects model, leadership is regarded as having an *indirect* effect on student outcomes in that it affects intervening variables such as school culture and teaching practice in the classroom. The reciprocal effects model assumes a dynamic two-way causality with leadership affecting mediating variables and in turn being affected by them.

The Gu et al. (2008) research is also an example of a quasi-counterfactual approach as they studied pupil attainment and the leadership of three subgroups of schools: “low start,” improving in attainment terms from a low base and very effective in value-added terms; “moderate start,” improving from moderate to higher attainment and with high value added; and “high start,” consistently high in both pupil attainment and value-added terms. Analyses of pupil characteristics, attainment, and value-added outcomes found that while some schools had significant and sustained improvement but no change of principal, changing the principal can contribute to the rapid improvement of schools with an initial low attainment profile, which type of conclusion is representative of the genre at the robust end.

In a comparative paradigm, relative both to other disciplines and other cultural settings, Thomas (2007) investigated issues arising from the use of evaluation (self-report) instruments in cross-cultural settings, specifically, issues of ethnocentrism

and cultural universalism in educational leadership in the Middle East. His interpretation was that educational leadership and management study has failed to keep pace with fields such as business and psychology at both theoretical and empirical/methodological levels. The latter concerns are borne out by the literature on leadership generally, not just by the literature on the effect of leadership on outcomes, in that the use of questionnaires (and the like) predominates to such an extent that there are concerns with matching sample populations and scale equivalency. Much of it is merely a compendium of anecdote, and at this end of the research spectrum, it has low reliability and is far from robust. The unexpected thing perhaps is that this unfortunate feature of research in the field seems to hold true across cultural boundaries. Pan and Chen (2011) analyzed the literature on school leadership in Taiwan, where educational reforms introduced in the 1990s created a more decentralized and participatory system for teachers, although the prevailing assessment practices remain test orientated. They found that although 63 % of research in the field used quantitative methods, while 30 % used qualitative methods, the predominance of the questionnaire as a research instrument resulted in a lack of attention to contextual factors and the interaction between structure and action. It seems that while cultural beliefs and norms play a vital role in shaping leadership, there is an undiminishing hegemony of “Western” approaches.

Leadership Agency and the Influence of Gender

The analysis of gender within the field of school leadership constitutes an important example of what Leithwood (2001) calls a “contextual perspective,” and research in the genre has straddled the globe. Studies from Western, well-established education systems are widely documented in the literature; what is less well documented are studies where gender, as an impacting factor *on* principalship and *by* principalship on pupil outcomes, is a *sub*-context to that of a developing, non-Western society. Sperandio (2000) analyzed the role of principalship in promoting gender equality in girls’ secondary schools in Uganda, arguing that women principals can combine power and influence with a caring maternal image to improve pupil outcomes. The results have been interpreted as suggesting that strong gender-impactful leadership can offset poor facilities and generate a positive atmosphere and well-motivated students, despite the fact that schools in the study had ranged from those focusing on tolerance and personal development, to those focused on regulation and prohibition. A decade later, Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) revisited the theme, specifically the under representation of women in secondary school leadership¹ in Uganda, finding that women teachers have a keen interest in promotion to principalship, but that Ugandan society was struggling to meet the goal of 30 %

¹ Sixty-two women teachers from six secondary schools were surveyed by questionnaire.

representation of women in leadership roles that the Beijing Platform² had considered critical. The findings suggest that women teachers' motivation for promotion in Africa is both financial (a preference for public sector jobs for job security and pension) and altruistic (a desire to improve schools and student outcomes) and that the most common reason for failing to achieve it is political corruption and lack of support from the establishment. Sperandio and Kagoda also reported that many women teachers and principals regard promotion as a reward for long service, though the contradiction between this interpretation and the reported belief of participants that promotion should be predicated only on ability was not explored.

The same year, Moorosi (2010) investigated the career progression of female secondary schoolteachers in South Africa, finding significant problems of gender disparity and barriers at the level of access. Participants³ were asked to narrate their career experiences to principalship and their own practices subsequently with regard to the appointment and promotion of women, the results suggesting that women continue to fight sexist cultural attitudes, and although appropriate policies provide a starting point, they are not enough to eradicate entrenched sociocultural traditions.

Agezo and Hope (2011) investigated the practice of both female and male principals in Ghana primary schools.⁴ Society in Ghana has traditionally favored male leadership in most aspects of life for many generations, but in the opening decade of the twenty-first century, women have had greater access to educational leadership positions, especially in primary schools. Six null hypotheses were framed by Agezo and Hope corresponding to six theoretical "dimensions" of leadership, finding in contradiction of findings from other researches, that there was no significant difference between female and male principals in decision making; in interpersonal relationships; in ethical, instructional, or collaborative leadership practices; or in professional development. The authors interpreted this as suggesting that the criteria used by the Ghanaian education system in selecting and appointing principals, and the induction processes that they undergo upon appointment, encourage stereotypical leadership so the opportunity for diversity is limited, with participants more concerned with managing their schools effectively than about representing gender-differentiated features of the role.

Investigating school leadership in Israel, Addi-Raccah (2006) looked at principalship in secular, Jewish, and Arab public schools and how male and female principals support applicants in this context. The research found that male principals tend to "sponsor" other men, but that female principals' support for other

²The United Nations convened the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing, China, which prepared a Declaration and Platform for Action aimed at achieving greater equality and opportunity for women.

³A questionnaire was sent to all female secondary school principals, and from that a purposive sample of 28 female principals, ten provincial officials, and ten school governing body chairpersons was selected.

⁴The Principal's, Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire was used to collect the data. Five hundred and seventy-one teachers, 38 female principals, and 14 male principals completed it.

women was more equivocal, despite the traditional view that women in leadership roles act as sororal role models. Using regression techniques to analyze data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics and data from a survey of (approximately) 64,000 teachers and school administrators,⁵ the findings further suggested that female school leaders have more diversified behavior towards other women than male school leaders have towards other men, which was interpreted as suggesting that women's entry into leadership positions will not be enough to redress the gender bias generally.

The Supply and Turnover of School Principals

For some time, the supply of leaders has been a recurring theme in research in the field and a recurring concern for policy makers around the globe, though few conclusions have been reached as to the cause or extent of the problem. In 2005, Barty et al. examined the declining supply of principals in two states in Australia. They reported on the difficulty of acquiring information about applications as education systems typically do not aggregate data, but using equal opportunities data the researchers did manage to draw some conclusions on the spread, number, gender, and ethnicity of applicants. They found that the location and size of the school and the presence of an incumbent and local politics were key issues in the decline in the number of applications for principalship, but their recommendations were limited to suggesting that statistical data relating to school leadership be made public.

Still on the Pacific Rim, Kwan (2011) looked at principal recruitment in Hong Kong by analyzing the criteria used by recruiting bodies to assess potential candidates. The purpose of the research, somewhat unusually in the literature, was to identify what recruiters look for in applicants because in many ways this is a proxy for the traits that school governing bodies regard as desirable. Like the Addi-Racchah research from Israel, Kwan took account of leadership in context, which in Hong Kong meant a decentralization of decision making and an increase in principals' responsibilities. Participants were asked to identify the specific attributes they thought were sought in school leaders and found that job applicants tended to overemphasize the importance of communication skills and experience as a deputy. The findings also indicated that religious affiliation was a reliable and useful proxy indicator in judging the attitude and value orientation of potential recruits, with preference being given to candidates who had the appropriate (religious) commitment.

Leadership turnover has been identified as a major concern for academics in their research and politicians in their practice. The literature suggests that it is generally caused by high levels of stress and dissatisfaction as a result of overly

⁵ The study covered only schools where the percentage of female teachers was between 10 and 89 %.

managerialist approaches. Moving away from the paradigm's fixation with principalship as a synonym for leadership, Alsbury (2004) researched the turnover of *school board members* in Washington, USA. Turnover per se, no matter what the cause or the typology, disrupts the educational process within schools, but Alsbury presupposes a distinction between political and apolitical turnover, finding that it mostly (73 %) results from the "defeat" in a political sense of board members (rather than the result of personal, financial, or ethical considerations). Alsbury's findings also show that there is more "defeat" and greater politically motivated turnover in larger communities and in communities with higher political stakes, which could be interpreted (though Alsbury did not do so) as meaning greater within-school disruption for larger urban schools and schools in more ethnically diverse settings.

The same year, Saitis and Menon (2004) analyzed the perceptions of primary schoolteachers in Greece regarding the effectiveness of their principals, an underexplored (if slightly solipsistic) topic in leadership research: the hypothesis was that newly qualified teachers have certain preformed expectations regarding the skills and abilities of principals in advance of working in schools. The research found that dissatisfaction with principals encourages new teachers to abandon the profession and that perceived weakness in leadership is a major cause of teacher turnover, though older teachers experience less anxiety and frustration in this respect. The authors suggest that the negative outlook of future teachers needs to be recognized as a complicating factor in the transition of newly qualified teachers from training at university to employment in school. Three (somewhat *de trop*) policy implications emerged from the interpretation of findings: the need for future teachers to become familiar with school organization and leadership in advance of employment, the need for proper managerial training for principals prior to appointment, and the need for systems to be objective and transparent with regard to promotion and selection.

The converse research approach, of course, would be to accept leader turnover as an inevitable fact of life and instead examine ways to attenuate it. The turnover of school leaders, although inevitable, is receiving greater attention today because a large number of principals are approaching retirement age and the role is narrowing in definition as it becomes more managerial, but whatever the reason, turnover presents a significant challenge to schools, local authorities, and policy makers, not least because it diminishes the sense of shared purpose and makes it difficult to maintain an improvement focus long enough to accomplish anything meaningful. In Canada, Mascall and Leithwood (2010)⁶ found that where there is a high turnover of school principals, distributing leadership and coordinating handovers (which should not be solely the responsibility of the incoming principal) can mitigate some of the negative effects. In a practical sense, the authors interpreted their findings as suggesting that local authorities should aim to keep principals in post for a minimum of 4 years and should encourage incoming principals to understand their predecessors' work as a priority.

⁶ Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Two thousand five hundred and seventy teachers from a total of 80 schools were surveyed, with a 78 % response rate.

Turnover has been linked to training in several studies. While Saitis and Menon (2004) were attributing the weakness of principalship in Greece to a paucity of training in educational administration and management, Wong (2004) was investigating their professional development in Hong Kong. In the 1990s the implementation of school-based management in Hong Kong, as elsewhere, significantly increased demands on principals and changed the paradigm of school leadership from its traditional hierarchy to change, collegiality, and teamwork. Up to 2002, teachers in Hong Kong were eligible for promotion to headship provided they had at least 5 years experience and were not required to complete any training beyond their initial teacher training. They were instead prepared through an induction program that followed the dominant centralizing administrative guidelines, and Wong's research showed that the idea of ongoing training for principals was unpopular among practitioners who complained that they were too tied up with daily administrative chores. Wong's findings were interpreted as suggesting that in-service training courses are effective in implementing change and that joint collaborations between government, academics, and professionals can have beneficial results, but that it is difficult for improvement to be "realized" when practitioners do not engage with development opportunities. De Jaeghere et al. (2009) found that principal and deputy principal efficacy was also low in Africa in the areas of instructional leadership and community relations and that (perhaps unsurprisingly) principals and deputy principals were not adequately prepared for their roles and there are few professional development opportunities to provide them with the necessary skills.⁷ It is an interesting juxtaposition: in the well-established education system of Hong Kong, principals were provided with in-service development opportunities, but didn't want them because of the pressures of managerialism; in an underdeveloped system like that in Uganda, principals wanted development opportunities but they were not available because of a lack of managerialism. In both cases, failure to improve was attributed to their respective (but opposing) contexts, echoing the findings of much of the unsophisticated research in the field (see Fig. 1) that policy makers should consider location, school size, and so forth when developing leadership training to impart skills, manage school performance, and identify teachers' training needs.

Principal Efficacy, Professional Standards, and School Improvement

Research evidence has demonstrated how school principals around the world work in an increasingly demanding environment. Leithwood (2001) has investigated school leadership in the context of accountability policies to identify practices

⁷ Interviews were conducted with 97 principals and deputy principals. The sample was drawn from schools in three geographical areas of Uganda: one urban and two rural.

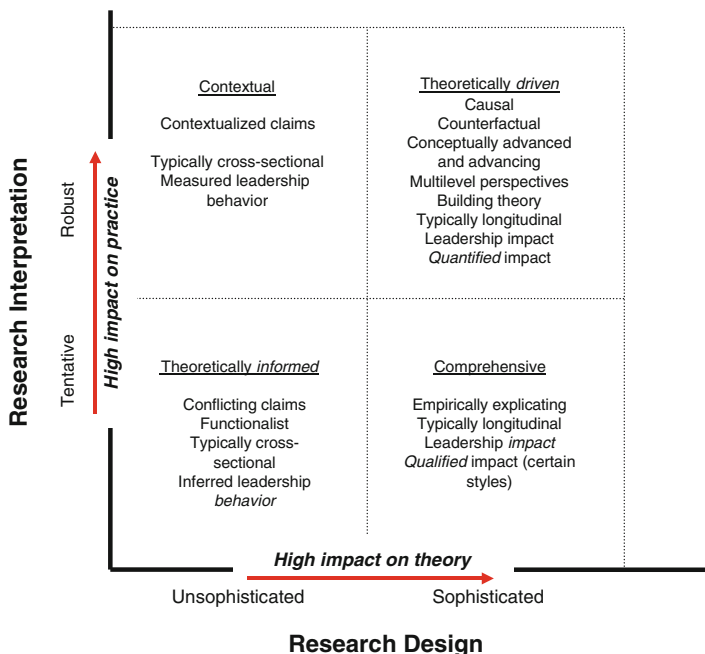


Fig. 1 How design and interpretation interact in the research literature on educational leadership

suitable for the new emerging contexts and has claimed that although some leadership practices are useful in most circumstances, *transformational* leadership practices are a necessary part of the repertoire, though insufficient on their own. He distinguishes leadership practices intended to be useful in most situations from those suited to a particular policy context, thus suggesting a contextual perspective on leadership that explains the small number of school leadership effects evident in quantitative studies. Leithwood suggests that the Hallinger and Heck (1996a, b, 1999) review only looked at common generic leadership practices and not at the additional practices used by principals as a means of dealing with their own unique contexts. For that reason, Leithwood suggests that quantitative research underestimates the effect of leadership on educative outcomes, and there is some justification for this view in the literature on leadership evaluation. In 2007, Catano and Stronge examined the evaluation instruments for principals in 132 school districts in Virginia, USA, where, like everywhere else in the developed world, principals find themselves dealing with competing tasks on a daily basis to satisfy the sometimes competing demands of internal and external stakeholders. The complexity and lack of clarity surrounding principalship make the formulation of appropriate assessment metrics a daunting task, and the expectations of school principals are often grounded as a result in theoretical conceptualizations of leadership that compete with the day-to-day managerial functions of running a school.

Catano and Stronge suggest that the evaluation for principals should be based on what they are expected to do and that evaluation instruments should reflect this.

In a similar vein, Torres et al. (2008) analyzed the perceptions of school improvement policies in the USA,⁸ finding that principals are struggling both to run their schools and to implement external initiatives, and this has changed the role of the leader from one of resource management to one of accountability. The results from the Torres et al. analysis (using both quantitative and qualitative data) indicate that principals regard site-based policies as less controversial and more relevant than wider external initiatives and that as a consequence the former have a greater (positive) impact on student outcomes. While aggressive school improvement policies *can* have positive outcomes, they can also have unintended consequences such as low staff morale and reduced commitment among teachers and principals. Tuytens and Devos (2010) carried out similar questionnaire research to analyze the influence of school leaders on the perceptions of teachers of evaluation policies in Belgium.⁹ Three multiple regression analyses were conducted, the first of which revealed a significant effect of leadership and trust on teacher perception. The second analysis showed that the *vision* of the principal significantly influences teacher perception of *the need for* evaluation (although the effect is low). The third analysis revealed that leadership did not significantly influence teacher perception of any of *the characteristics of* government policy.

Of course, how principals influence teacher perception and self-efficacy is not unrelated to how their deputies perceive themselves and their jobs. The number of studies focusing on deputy principalship has lagged behind those on other aspects (more senior and more junior) of leadership, and the research has sometimes produced contradictory findings. In terms of the research literature on deputyship in particular, there seems to be a double effect: in a positive sense, it is interpreted as (+) having a direct impact on pupil outcomes as part of the daily grind of the job and an additional (++) indirect/secondary effect of being a training ground for principalship; in a negative sense, it is interpreted (particularly when the role lacks a clearly defined job description) as having little influence (–) on the management of a school, in which case the additional indirect effect is the adverse (––) one of actively discouraging deputies from applying for promotion. In fact, Kwan's (2009) research in Hong Kong¹⁰ suggests that neither school-level factors nor gender has an effect on the desire of deputies for promotion and that their sense of efficacy is

⁸ Forty-five percent of elementary school principals in Texas were surveyed online (20 % middle school and 25 % high school).

⁹ Thirty-seven secondary schools (selected randomly from the 956 Flemish secondary schools) participated. Six hundred and ten teachers filled out the questionnaire representing a return rate of 82 %. Three years previously, the government had issued a new policy on teacher evaluation which obliged schools to evaluate all staff every 4 years.

¹⁰ Eight hundred and three questionnaires were sent to all secondary schools in Hong Kong. The response rate was 41 % (n = 331).

the most influential factor in their desire for principalship—although in a self-defeating way, those deputies who enjoy a better working relationship with their principals and colleagues are more reluctant to apply.

Juxtaposing Interpretations and Research Design: A Suggested Typology

Notwithstanding the desire to encourage both causal approaches to leadership research and the need to capture the actualité of life in schools, research in the field has rarely done both, and as we have noted already, relatively few studies have linked either to pupil outcomes in anything more than an anecdotal way. Researchers who have attempted to capture the complexity of everyday leadership through the use of appropriate research methodologies have generally avoided the use of approaches that measure the leadership effect; and those who have sought to quantify the effect have left practitioners no better off in terms of what they are expected to *do* with the findings. For researchers, both paradigms involve a great deal of data reduction, but when interpreting the results in either tradition, the field may be better served by asking instead whether or not the research is “capturing complexity” in the sense that it attempts to construct interpretations of leadership behavior or “capturing impact” in that it attempts to construct interpretations of leadership *as it affects outcomes* (e.g., research in the UK by Gu et al. 2008). Research in the “capturing-complexity” tradition is usually characterized by suggesting that principalship is an interactive and/or reciprocal and/or evolving process involving many players, influenced by and/or influencing the context in which it occurs (e.g., research in Australia by Mulford 2005¹¹). Research in the “capturing-impact” tradition is characterized by claims that leadership can make a difference if it satisfies certain descriptive criteria or “isms of the day” like distributiveness, but that these are only indirectly related to student outcomes. The interpretation of research in both traditions is frequently moderated in the literature by references to core moral values and the beliefs/vision of the principal, which are interpreted in turn as driving actions/behavior and decisions/impact, respectively.

Figure 1 offers a typology of interpretation and design that is flexible enough to acknowledge the value of research being “comprehensive” (which is largely a matter of method) and “contextual” (which is largely a matter of interpretation). The former is designed to help us understand the link to outcomes and to a lesser extent, depending on interpretability, explain reality (usually in a qualified way). Where it occurs in the literature, it is usually the result of sophisticated methodologies but relative tentative (or self-evident) interpretation. Contextual research, on

¹¹ Developed from surveys of more than 2,500 teachers and 3,500 15-year-old high school students.

the other hand, is driven by the need to have robust interpretation and facilitate improvement. Where it occurs in the literature, it is usually characterized by relatively unsophisticated methodologies but robust interpretation. And at the extremes of the literature, one finds research that is merely *informed* by theory without contributing to it (the result of simple design and tentative findings) and research that is driven by, and driving of, theory, which is usually the result of sophisticated approaches that enable causal claims to be made in the interpretation. We suggest that there is too little of the latter in the field of educational leadership. Both theoretically informed and contextual researches have had significant impact on practice, but the literature suggests that it is the latter (not unnaturally) that has led to *sustained* improvement.

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7.5 Researching Equity and Effectiveness in Education: Examples from the UK and Germany

Pamela Sammons and Yvonne Anders

Introduction

International comparative school achievement studies such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have clearly documented over several decades that the school attainments and school careers of children are linked to their origins (ethnic, cultural, language) and the socioeconomic situation of the family they grow up in, but have also revealed marked variations between countries in the patterns of association and their strength (Goldstein 2004; Marks et al. 2006). These results underline the relevance of inequity as a problem of education. Educational systems can be both a source of inequity and a key factor that may help in overcoming inequity (Cox 2000; Sammons 2010a; Sammons et al. 2013a).

Following current definitions in the growing literature, the concepts of educational equality and equity are seen to be closely related and cover aspects such as access to educational resources and facilities for all students, equal amounts and quality of instruction, provision with same educational material, bias-free attitudes in the learning environment and curriculum, positive interactions with teachers, proper and positive language, and fair assessment procedures. However, in most education systems students from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., those from minority ethnic origins and those experiencing social disadvantage factors such as

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low socioeconomic status (SES), low family income, or parents lacking qualifications) are more likely to show low attainment levels from a young age and are more likely to be regarded as underachieving at school and experience school failure (dropout, early leaving, low or no qualifications, etc.). Some psychologists define underachievement as the discrepancy between measured intelligence (IQ) and attainment in educational tests. This definition has been criticized since all IQ tests are, to some degree, tests of achievement themselves (see West and Pennell 2003 for a discussion). An alternative approach is to study under-attainment by identifying relative differences in attainment between various social and ethnic groups by the means of statistical measures.

Most of the studies in the quantitative arithmetic tradition follow such an approach, and a number of large educational studies have been set up to identify groups that experience inequality and to shed light on the question how to overcome such inequity. Quantitative approaches serve a number of needs in contributing to research of educational equity and inequity. First, absolute differences in attainment between specific groups of students can be measured and quantified to identify the size of the attainment gap. Factors associated with low attainment can be divided into broad categories such as individual child or student characteristics, family characteristics (e.g., SES, income), community (e.g., neighborhood disadvantage) and societal characteristics, and educational experiences (related to preschool, school, and peer characteristics). In addition the child's home learning environment can have a strong influence on children's attainment, and a low-quality learning environment at home can be defined as educational disadvantage (Anders 2013; Sammons et al. 2004; Melhuish et al. 2008).

Going beyond the identification of educational inequity, quantitative approaches can also be used to help identify potentially successful ways of how to reduce inequity in outcomes. Educational effectiveness research (EER) is set up to disentangle the complex links between the student's intake (the mix of abilities, prior attainments, and personal and family factors) which any young person brings to the educational setting, from those of their educational experiences, and explore the way these jointly influence their later attainment, progress, and development (Coleman et al. 1966; Rutter et al. 1979; Mortimore et al. 1988; Scheerens and Bosker 1997; Teddlie and Reynolds 2000; Creemers et al. 2010; Muijs 2012). The main areas of interest are the impact of social institutions (including size of school effects), characteristics that promote better educational outcomes, the influence of context, the processes of institutional change, and the long-term impact of schooling on life chances. An effective school is defined as one in which the students' progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake. An effective school thus adds extra value to its students' outcomes, in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes (Sammons 2010a). As a consequence, SER can be an effective approach to identify the characteristics of educational systems that may be better placed to reduce inequalities and inequity (Muijs et al. 2004; Creemers and Kyriakides 2008; Creemers et al. 2010). In the study of educational inequity, international comparisons are also a popular means to compare the size of attainment gaps between different countries or different educational frameworks, although it is recognized that there are difficulties in making such comparisons due to the influence of cultural and other

contextual factors. Furthermore, to evaluate effective means to overcome inequalities, studies conducted in different countries are often reviewed and form the base for research synopses. But while interpreting international findings, in addition to cultural or country effects, one needs to take into account possible differences in study designs, methodological approaches, or data analysis methods. It must be recognized that comparative studies involving qualitative or quantitative approaches and international comparisons, in particular, are vulnerable to misinterpretation and potentially misleading conclusions.

In this chapter we will present two large, longitudinal studies that are conducted in England and Germany to investigate children's development from preschool age onwards. A core question of both studies is whether and how far (pre)school can contribute to reducing educational inequity. We will describe the design of both studies, discuss similarities and differences in their methodological approaches, and then examine results that are based on the use of multilevel modeling approaches, regression analyses, and latent growth curve modeling and the estimation of effect sizes. Following this, the reasons underpinning the choice of methods and their implications for the interpretation of results from the two studies will be discussed.

The EPPSE3-16 Project in England and the BiKS3-10 Study in Germany

The *Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary, and Secondary Education (EPPSE 3-16) project* began in 1997, at a time when in England the main educational priority at national and local level was for children in statutory schooling. The Rumbold Report (DES 1990) and the Start Right Report (Ball 1994) had highlighted the potential for preschool education to give children a better start to school, and Kathy Sylva had made a case for the mid- and long-term effects of early education on motivational and academic outcomes. Since 1997 successive UK governments have shown strong commitment to expanding preschool and early years services. The EPPSE project investigates the effects of preschool, primary, and secondary education on children's development for children aged 3–16 years old in England. The EPPE team collected a wide range of information on 3,000 children who were recruited at age 3+ and studied longitudinally. Data were collected on children's family background, the child's home learning environment, the preschool settings children attended, their primary and secondary schools, and their developmental profiles (cognitive outcomes as well as sociobehavioral development). The initial project aimed at investigating the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of preschool on children's intellectual and social-behavioral development. In addition, data on the characteristics of effective and high quality preschool settings were derived. The research gave also answers to the relative impact of child, family, and home learning factors on children's development. As the children grew older, the project gave insight into the joint effects of preschool experience and primary and secondary schooling on children's attainment and progress.

In Germany, the study *BIKS3-10 (Bildungsprozesse, Kompetenzentwicklung und die Formation von Selektionsentscheidungen im Vor- und Grundschulalter)*

Educational Processes, competence development and selective decisions at pre- and primary school age) started in 2005. This was after international school achievement studies had documented not only that achievements of German students are at best average but also more importantly that school achievements and school careers of children in Germany are more strongly linked to children's origin and the social background of the family than in many other countries (Marks et al. 2006; Döbert and Sroka 2004; Döbert et al. 2004). These findings have been discussed broadly, and as a consequence there has been great interest in the potential of preschool education to give children a better start to school. Particularly since 2005 the German government has made significant efforts to expand early years services to give children a better start to school, to raise the birth rate in Germany, as well as to help mothers to move back quickly in employment after the birth of a child. The BiKS study was set up to answer the question of how to improve learning environments of young children and to reduce inequalities. Another focus was the formation and effects of selection decisions, as Germany belongs to those countries where tracking takes place quite early (after 4 years of primary school) in the school career of young children. The study follows approximately 550 children, which attended 97 different kindergartens in the federal states of Bavaria and Hesse. Children were at average 3 years old when they entered the study and they will be studied until age 10. For most of the children, this period covers 3 years of kindergarten experience and 4 years of primary school. Data collection took place once or twice (for a subsample) a year. Verbal and cognitive developments of the children were tested. In addition, measures of children's social-emotional development were included. BiKS collected a wide range of information on children's background, home learning environment, and the preschools and the primary schools they attended (von Maurice et al. 2007).

Both studies are designed to investigate differential effects of (pre)school experience, family background, child characteristics, and home learning on children's cognitive and social/behavioral development. In addition, both studies implemented a mixed methods design drawing on interview and questionnaire data as well as tests and observations. Relevant elements of the study design and central constructs (e.g., preschool quality) are assessed similarly. However, when comparing the results of both studies, there are some limitations, which need to be kept in mind and discussed carefully when interpreting or drawing conclusions. First, EPPSE started in 1997 and BiKS in 2005. As consequence any differences in findings between the studies are likely to be confounded with effects of different time cohorts. On the other hand, the policy contexts in the UK and Germany when both studies were born seem to be comparable. Second, the EPPSE sample was designed to give a nationwide picture of early education services, whereas BiKS draws on a sample in two federal states which represent different sociodemographic structure. The number of children in each individual preschool center is higher in EPPSE than in BiKS. Third, the educational outcomes which were assessed in both studies are comparable in some ways, but the tests were designed to investigate progress within the samples. Fourth, both studies provide extensive information on child factors and family background, but some predictors which have been shown to have impact in EPPSE were not assessed in BiKS and vice versa.

Keeping these limitations in mind, we will now present findings from England and Germany based on these two studies which have been published. The first study described is the German study that investigates learning environments at home and at preschool and their relations to the development of early numeracy skills between the ages of 3 and 5 years (Anders et al. 2012). The second study is based on the EPPSE project and investigates the potential continuing influence of preschool education on children's cognitive attainment and progress in English primary schools between the ages of 6 and 10 years (Sammons et al. 2008). The studies not only look at different age ranges, but relevant differences between the projects have also led to the choice of different methodological approaches. We will compare and discuss the choice of methods and the implications for interpretation in both studies. The description of both studies is intentionally compact and dense. We include all the information necessary to discuss methodological approaches and the role of interpretation but not all details of the studies, as these can be found in the original publications (Anders et al. 2012; Sammons et al. 2008).

Findings from Germany: Learning Environments at Home and at Preschool and Their Relations to the Development of Early Numeracy Skills

Based on the longitudinal BiKS project, Anders and colleagues (2012) examined the development of children's numeracy skills between the ages of 3 and 5 years while children attend preschool. Four research questions were addressed:

First, the authors sought to identify the influence of several child and family background factors on developmental progress.

Second, the influence of the quality of the learning environment at home on development was investigated.

Third, the power of measures of preschool experience to predict the development of numeracy skills was tested.

The fourth research question aimed at analyzing whether the effect of preschool process quality is the same among children exposed to home learning environments of different qualities.

Methods

Sample

The sample was drawn from two federal states (Bavaria and Hesse) that cover a wide range of living conditions in Germany. The sample can be assumed to be representative for the selected regions and federal states. A total of 532 children

with at least one valid outcome measure and predictor were included in the analyses. Of the children (48.1 % girls), 10.0 % had one parent and 9.6 % had two parents with a native language other than German. With respect to maternal education, 34 % had graduated from the academic track. The number of included preschool classes was 97. Preschool classes in Germany are usually age mixed, meaning that the age range within one class may be from 0 to 6 years. The target population for the study were children to be enrolled in school in fall 2008. The average number of children assessed per class was 5.5.

Measures

Outcome Measures

Children's early numeracy skills were assessed using the arithmetic subscale of the German version of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC; Melchers and Preuss 2003). The development over three measurement points (age 3, 4, and 5 years) was investigated. Raw scores were used to document change over time.

Predictors

Gender, age in months, parental native language status (German/other), highest socioeconomic status in the family (SES), maternal education, and age at entry to preschool were included as *child and family background factors*. To assess the *quality of the learning environment at home (HLE)* in terms of promoting (pre) reading literacy and numeracy skills, two scale measures were developed based on data from questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The HLE verbal and pre-reading literacy scale contains ten items tapping literacy-related activities and access to material that stimulates pre-reading and verbal literacy experiences, whereas the HLE numeracy scale contains ten items tapping numeracy-related activities and access to materials thought to stimulate numeracy experiences. *Preschool measures* include structural factors such as the proportion of children whose parents had a native language other than German, class size, child-staff ratio, amount of space (m² per child), average age of the class, and federal state. The assessment of preschools' process quality was based on researchers' observations of each preschool setting on the German versions of the ECERS-R (Harms et al. 1998; Tietze et al. 2007) and the ECERS-E (Sylva et al. 2003; Rossbach and Tietze 2007). Whereas ECERS-R is a measure of the global quality of preschools, ECERS-E focuses on four educational aspects: the quality of learning environments for verbal literacy, mathematics, science literacy, and catering for diversity and individual learning needs.

Statistical Analyses

The influences on development were examined using latent linear growth models to the data. Model fit was evaluated with reference to RMSEA and CFI, using criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). Furthermore the variance accounted for in the model was analyzed. Standardized coefficients were estimated. The data have a nested structure, with children being nested in preschool classes, although the number of children per preschool class was rather low as an effect of the sampling strategy. However, ignoring the multilevel structure of the data might have led to unreliable standard errors of the coefficients in the model (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Thus, standard errors adjusted for the multilevel structure of the data were estimated. To deal with missing data, we chose the full information maximum likelihood approach (FIML) (e.g., Arbuckle 1996) which uses all available data to estimate model parameters. To account for possible selection bias, we chose a covariate approach and included child and family background indicators that might be correlated with the outcome as well as with the indicators of the quality of learning environments.

A stepwise analysis procedure was used which is illustrated in Fig. 1.

First, a null model with an intercept representing initial achievement and a linear slope representing growth was specified, considering only age at assessment as a predictor of numeracy skills. Child and family background factors were then tested as factors potentially influencing initial achievement level (intercept) and growth (slope) (Model 1). In a next step (Model 2a, 2b) the predictive power of the two

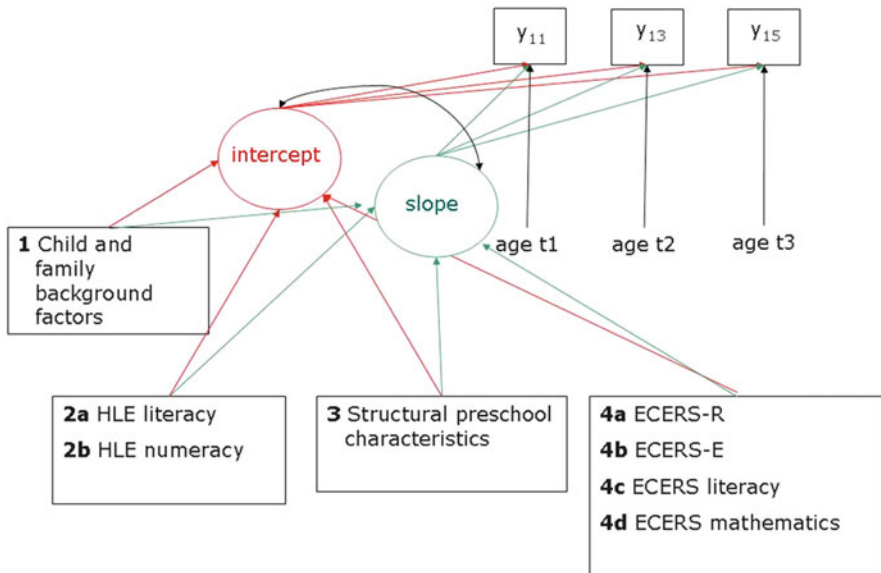


Fig. 1 Latent growth curve analysis: stepwise procedure (Anders et al. 2012)

scales assessing the quality of the home learning environment was tested, controlling for the child and family background used in Model 1. Third, the structural (quality) characteristics of preschools were added to the model, while controlling for child, family background factors, and the HLE indicators (Model 3). In the fourth step, indicators of preschool process quality (ECERS-R, ECERS-E, ECERS literacy, EECERS numeracy) were tested individually while controlling for child, family background, HLE, and structural preschool characteristics (Model 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d). Finally an interaction term to test whether the effect of preschool quality on development is different for children with different qualities of home learning environment was specified and included in the model (not included in Fig. 1).

Results

The null model confirmed linear growth of numeracy skills and a considerable variance in growth. Examining descriptive indicators for the quality of the HLE and preschool quality, we found that parental support in activities supporting (pre) reading and verbal literacy was significantly higher than in activities supporting numeracy. Furthermore, the mean scores of the ECERS revealed that preschool quality could be considered generally low to moderate in the sample, especially in terms of promoting children's academic development as measured by ECERS-E (see Anders et al. 2012 for more details on descriptive statistics).

Looking at the impact of child and family background factors (see Table 1), we found that mother's education had a significant influence on initial numeracy skills (intercept) but not on later growth. Girls started with higher levels of numeracy ($b = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$), but boys caught up over the years ($b = 0.60$, $p < 0.001$). Children whose parents' native language status was not German showed lower achievement at the first assessment, especially if both parents' native language was not German ($b = -1.21$, $p < 0.001$). This group also showed relatively stronger growth ($b = 1.01$, $p < 0.001$), although not closing the achievement gap to their peers completely. With respect to the influence of SES, children with higher SES already had higher numeracy scores at the first assessment ($b = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$), and the achievement gap even widened over the following 2 years ($b = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$).

Examining the impact of HLE, the results revealed that the quality of the home learning environment already explained substantial variance in numeracy at the first assessment (HLE literacy, $b = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$; HLE numeracy, $b = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$), when children were at average 3 years old. But there was no significant effect of HLE on the slope, indicating that the advantages of children with a high-quality HLE were maintained between the ages of 3 and 5 years. The influence of family background factors in the model was decreased when HLE indicators were included, suggesting that part of the relation between family background and numeracy is explained by the quality of the home learning environment.

Looking at the influence of preschool characteristics, we found that a number of structural characteristics (average age of the class, size of the preschool setting in m² per child, child-staff ratio) were associated with initial numeracy skills of the

Table 1 Results of latent growth curve analyses predicting the development of numeracy skills from the first to the third point of measurement

Predictors	Model 1				Model 2a				Model 2b			
	Intercept		Slope		Intercept		Slope		Intercept		Slope	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>
Child and family background factors												
Age at entry to the preschool setting	-0.12#	0.06	0.14#	0.08	-0.11#	0.06	0.15#	0.08	-0.14*	0.07	0.13#	0.08
Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	-0.36*	0.10	0.60*	0.16	-0.34*	0.09	0.60*	0.16	-0.37*	0.09	0.60*	0.16
Parental native language status (reference category: none)												
One parent	-0.62*	0.19	-0.12	0.28	-0.56*	0.20	-0.10	0.28	-0.59*	0.20	-0.11	0.28
Both parents	-1.21*	0.19	1.01*	0.23	-1.00*	0.20	1.08*	0.26	-1.10*	0.20	1.08*	0.25
Mother's education (reference category: no qualifications or vocational-track qualification)												
Intermediate-track qualification	0.24*	0.12	0.25	0.21	0.10	0.11	0.20	0.21	0.21#	0.12	0.24	0.21
Academic-track qualification	0.43*	0.15	0.03	0.25	0.17	0.14	-0.06	0.28	0.40*	0.15	0.03	0.25
Any other qualification	0.66*	0.21	-0.03	0.42	0.63*	0.22	-0.04	0.41	0.67*	0.21	-0.04	0.41
Highest SES of the family	0.13*	0.06	0.25*	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.24*	0.09	0.12#	0.06	0.24*	0.09
Home learning environment (HLE)												
HLE literacy					0.29*	0.07	0.09	0.11				
HLE numeracy									0.14*	0.05	0.09	0.09
Slope with intercept	<i>B</i> = 0.27		<i>SE</i> = 0.18		<i>B</i> = 0.27		<i>SE</i> = 0.19		<i>B</i> = 0.27		<i>SE</i> = 0.18	
R ²	0.27*		0.23*		0.33*		0.24*		0.29*		0.24*	
CFI/RMSEA	0.96/0.06											

Anders et al. (2012)

Note: In all models, age at assessment was included as time-varying predictor, although not shown in the table. Coefficients were standardized using the variances of the continuous latent variables (Std-standardization)
 # $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$

children, but not with further growth. In contrast, all of the indicators of preschools' process quality were not associated with initial numeracy skills. But the overall ECERS-E score was a significant predictor of growth ($b = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$) as well as the ECERS subscale mathematics ($b = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). This scale was the preschool indicator showing to have the strongest influence on developmental growth.

The interactive effect between the quality of HLE and ECERS-E proved to be significant for the intercept ($b = 0.87$, $p < 0.05$) and for the slope ($b = 1.50$, $p < 0.05$). Comparing the effects of HLE and ECERS-E on children's development of numeracy skill, one observes that at the first measurement point (age 3), achievement differences seem to be influenced strongly by the quality of the HLE. Only the group of children with low-quality HLE seems to show already achievement differences related to preschool's process quality. At the third measurement point (age 5), average numeracy was especially high for those children exposed to medium- or high-quality HLE and high-quality preschool experience. Children with a medium-quality HLE seem to benefit particularly from a high-quality preschool. But children with a low-quality HLE did not seem to benefit from the quality of the preschool. These findings suggest that at least medium support at home may be necessary for children to take advantage of the opportunities for academic learning offered in preschool.

Findings from the UK: Investigating the Potential Continuing Influences of Preschool Education on Children's Cognitive Attainment and Progress in English Primary Schools During Key Stage 2

Sammons and colleagues (2008) examined children's cognitive development when they were already some years older (following up previous phases of the research on younger age groups studied from 3 to 7 years). They explored children's cognitive achievements at the end of Year 5 of primary school (age 10) and progress during Key Stage 2 (ages 6–10) based on EPPSE3-16 data. The first set of analyses examined achievement in reading and mathematics at age 10. The influences of a wide range of child, family, and home factors on children's attainment were tested. In addition, the authors investigated whether any net preschool or primary school effects could be established while controlling for the influences of the relevant child and background factors. Finally, the combined influences of different predictors such as pre- and primary school experience were explored.

The second set of analyses examined progress in reading and mathematics between the end of Year 1 of primary school (age 6) and end of Year 5 (age 10). Again, in a first step child, family and home learning factors were tested as potentially influencing factors. Additionally, it was investigated whether any

Fig. 2 Contextualized attainment models

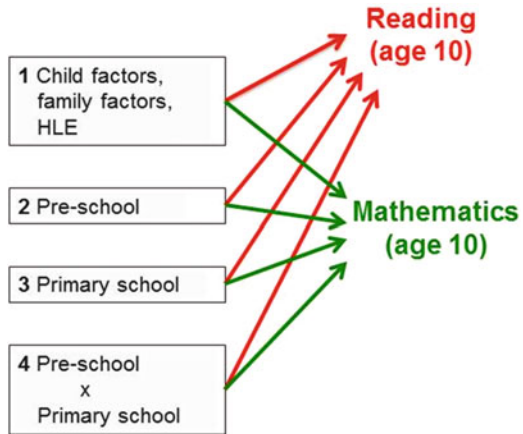
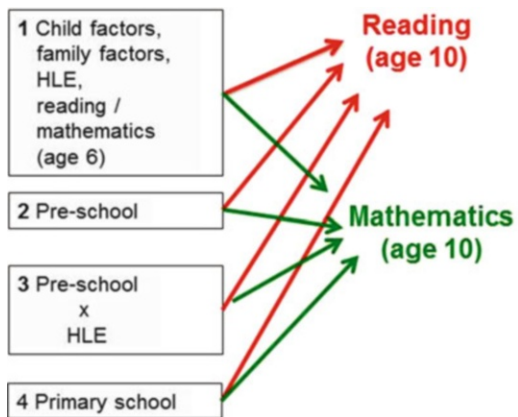


Fig. 3 Contextualized progress models



preschool effects for cognitive progress could be identified. In the last step analyses explored the combined effects of home learning environment and preschool experience on progress between age 6 and age 10. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the strategy of analyses.

Data Source and Methods

Sample

The analyses of Sammons and colleagues (2008) are based on a sample of 2556 EPPSE3-16—children with valid standardized cognitive test scores at age 10. The sample may be regarded as nationally representative: a quarter of the children in the sample were classified as not white UK for ethnicity, and for 11 % English was a

second language (EAL). In terms of socioeconomic status, 19 % of the mothers' and 29 % of the fathers' occupations were in the professional categories. In total, nearly a fifth (19.4 %) of the children received free school meals, an indicator for low family income.

Measures

Outcome Measures

Cognitive achievements were assessed by NFER-Nelson Reading Level 2 and Mathematics Age 10 (NFER/France 1981; NFER/Patilla 1994) tests at the end of Year 5 of primary schooling. The test scores were age standardized using the EPPSE sample as a reference group ($M = 100$, $SD = 15$).

Predictors

The authors included the following *child and family factors* as potential predictors: gender, EAL, age in months, ethnic group, birth weight, parent record of early health problems, early developmental problems, premature child, number of siblings, family structure, parents' employment status, parental education, family salary, family SES, and the free school meals (FSM) proxy measure for low income. The *quality of the learning environment at home (early years HLE)* was assessed by an index that measures the frequency of engagement in certain activities at preschool age such as teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, reading to the child, taking the child to the library, practicing number, etc., as reported by the parents (Melhuish et al. 2008; Melhuish 2010). *Preschool measures* included the duration of preschool attendance and quality and effectiveness of the preschool center. The quality of preschool measure was based on researchers' observations of each preschool center using environment ratings (ECERS-E) (Sylva et al. 2003, 2006). The effectiveness measures for each preschool center in terms of promoting children's progress in pre-reading and early numeracy were obtained from earlier value-added analyses of children's progress between 3 and 5 years (Sammons et al. 2002, 2004). Similarly, measures of *primary school academic effectiveness* were derived from independent value-added analyses of pupil progress for three successive full national pupil cohorts (2002–2004) using national assessment data sets matched between Key Stages 1 and 2 over 3 years for all primary schools in England (Melhuish et al. 2006). The estimates for the individual primary schools attended by EPPSE children were added to the EPPSE database. *Children's prior cognitive achievements* were used as predictors in the progress models, but not in the Year 5 attainment models. Attainments at age 6 were assessed by NFER-Nelson Reading Level 1 and Mathematics Age 6 tests administered at the end of Year 1 of primary schooling (NFER/France 1981; NFER/Patilla 1999). Like

the outcome measures, these test scores were age- standardized using the EPPSE sample as reference group ($M = 100$, $SD = 15$).

Statistical Analyses

Contextualized Pupil Achievement Models

The influences on pupils' attainments at age 10 were examined using multilevel regression analyses. First, all available child, family, and home characteristics were tested stepwise. Only statistically significant variables were retained in the final models. This procedure produced two background models for reading and mathematics outcomes. The strengths of the influences of the different factors were compared using effect sizes (ES) and overall variance accounted for in the models. The effect sizes were based on the child level variance after controlling for background factors and coefficients for predictors included in the multilevel statistical models adopting the formulae outlined by Tymms et al. (1997).¹ The data have a nested structure, with children being nested in primary school classes, although the number of children per primary school class was rather low (2.7). However, ignoring the multilevel structure of the data might have led to unreliable standard errors of the coefficients in the model (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Thus, the use of multilevel models was retained to provide more efficient and accurate estimates of fixed effect predictors at level 1 (the main focus of this aspect of the research). The progress models were built using the background factors of the achievement models, but the equivalent prior cognitive assessments at age 6 were additionally included as baseline measures for the longitudinal analyses of pupils' progress between age 6 and age 10.

Results

Attainment Models

Null Models

The null models with no explanatory variables included indicate for reading that the intra-class correlation is 18.6 %. This shows the amount of variance in children's scores related to differences between individual primary schools, while the majority

¹ $ES = 2r/(1 - r^2)^{0.5}$ or $\Delta = \beta_1/\sigma_\epsilon$

In essence the effect size is being taken as the difference in standardized criterion residuals, after appropriate controls, corresponding to predictor scores one SD above and one SD below the mean.

reflects differences between individual children. The intra-class correlation for mathematics in the null model is slightly higher (21.2 %).

Contextualized Background Models

The contextualized multilevel model for attainment in reading includes mother's highest qualification level ($ES = 0.63$, degree versus no qualification) and the quality of the early years HLE ($ES = 0.58$, very high versus low) as the strongest predictors. Furthermore, gender ($ES = 0.11$, girls versus boys), birth weight ($ES = -0.40$, very low versus normal), the ethnic group ($ES = -0.37$, White European versus White UK), the number of siblings ($ES = -0.20$, 3+ siblings versus singleton), the need of EAL support in Year 5 ($ES = -0.38$), and early developmental problems ($ES = 0.42$, 2+ problems versus no problems) were child factors with a statistically significant influence on reading outcomes at age 10. With respect to family factors other than mother's education, eligibility for free school meals ($ES = -0.28$), family SES ($ES = -0.38$, unskilled versus professional nonmanual), father's education ($ES = 0.32$, degree versus no qualifications), and family salary ($ES = 0.27$, annual salary £ 67,500, and higher versus no salary) showed a statistically significant impact on reading outcomes.

The contextualized background model for mathematics achievement at age 10 is quite similar to the model for reading achievement with mother's qualification and the quality of HLE being the strongest predictors for achievement. Thus, we only highlight the relevant differences to the reading model. Looking at child factors, gender also showed a significant influence on test scores in mathematics, but here boys outperform girls ($ES = -0.10$). The number of siblings and the number of early developmental problems were not related to achievement at age 10, but the number of reported early health problems was ($ES = -0.45$, three or more problems versus no problems). With respect to family factors, all the factors that were predictive for reading outcomes were also found to be significantly related to outcomes in mathematics. The detailed results of the attainment models can be found in Table 2.

Preschool Effects

With respect to the influence of preschool experience, the findings revealed that at age 10 there were no longer any statistically significant net effects on cognitive outcomes for the most basic indicator: attendance at a preschool center compared to no preschool. This is in contrast to findings for the EPPSE sample at younger ages (Sammons et al. 2003, 2004) where attendance at any preschool center showed to have a significant positive net effect on early cognitive abilities like pre-reading or early number concepts. At age 10 years, this effect seemed to have faded, but when analyzing the influence of preschool quality, relatively small but statistically significant differences in reading attainment remain between children who went

Table 2 Results of contextualized regression analyses

	Reading			Mathematics		
	Estimate	SE	z	Estimate	SE	z
<i>Gender</i> (girls compared to boys)	1.342*	0.525	2.560	-1.293*	0.540	-2.390
<i>Age at outcome test</i> (centered around mean)	0.013	0.071	0.180	0.043	0.073	0.590
<i>Birth weight</i> (compared to normal birth weight)						
Very low (<= 1,500 g)	-5.075*	2.277	-2.230	-5.305*	2.329	-2.280
Low (1,501-2,500)	0.450	1.035	0.430	-1.446	1.073	-1.350
<i>Ethnic group</i> (compared to White UK heritage)						
White European heritage	-4.724**	1.510	-3.130	-2.596	1.565	-1.660
Black Caribbean heritage	-0.592	1.384	-0.430	1.463	1.471	1.000
Black African heritage	-2.312	1.895	-1.220	-2.419	1.975	-1.220
Indian heritage	0.621	1.886	0.0330	4.892*	2.029	2.410
Pakistani heritage	-2.951	1.401	-2.110	-0.308	1.564	-0.200
Bangladeshi heritage	-4.557*	2.521	-1.810	-0.758	2.620	-0.290
Mixed race heritage	-1.092#	1.139	-0.960	-0.750	1.188	-0.630
Any other ethnic minority heritage	-1.969	1.785	-1.100	1.136	1.872	0.610
<i>No. of siblings</i> (compared to singleton)						
1-2 siblings	-0.684	0.747	-0.920	n/s	n/s	n/s
3+ siblings	-2.522*	1.011	-2.490	-0.20		
<i>Need of EAL support in Year 5</i> (compared to need of EAL support)						
EAL support needed	-4.784**	1.480	-3.230	-6.448**	1.530	-4.210

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

	Reading			Mathematics		
	Estimate	SE	z	Estimate	SE	z
<i>Early developmental problems (compared to none)</i>						
1 problem	-2.170**	0.830	-2.610	n/s	n/s	n/s
2+ problem	-5.332	2.517	-2.120	-0.42		
<i>Early health problems (compared to none)</i>						
1 problem	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	0.620	-0.760
2 problem				0.134	1.059	0.130
3+ problem				-5.657*	2.308	-2.450
<i>Free school meal eligibility (FSM) (compared to not eligible)</i>	-3.528**	0.0775	-4.550	-2.799**	0.799	-3.500
<i>Family SES (compared to professional non manual)</i>						
Other professional non manual	-1.556	1.023	-1.520	-1.794	1.056	-1.700
Skilled non manual	-2.902*	1.191	-2.440	-3.373**	1.227	-2.750
Skilled manual	-4.218**	1.243	-3.390	-3.668**	1.281	-2.860
Semiskilled	-4.446**	1.498	-2.970	-3.890*	1.544	-2.520
Unskilled	-4.867*	2.327	-2.090	-3.702	2.392	-1.550
Unemployed: not working	-3.180*	1.600	-1.990	-2.059	1.646	-1.250
<i>Mother's highest level of qualification (compared to no qualifications)</i>						
Vocational	1.188	0.986	1.210	0.387	1.012	0.380
Academic age 16	2.713**	0.818	3.320	2.485**	0.839	2.960
Academic age 18	4.179**	1.199	3.490	4.630**	1.235	3.750
Degree or equivalent	8.039**	1.234	6.510	6.878**	1.277	5.390
Higher degree	9.737**	1.783	5.460	6.863**	1.841	3.730
Others/miscellaneous	4.931*	2.252	2.190	6.448**	2.299	2.810
						0.51

<i>Father's highest level of qualification (compared to no qualifications)</i>											
Vocational	1.507	1.056	1.430	0.12	2.591*	1.085	2.390	0.21			
Academic age 16	0.350	0.911	0.380	0.03	1.451	0.936	1.550	0.12			
Academic age 18	1.385	1.243	1.110	0.11	0.830	1.281	0.650	0.07			
Degree or equivalent	4.014**	1.212	3.310	0.32	4.320**	1.246	3.470	0.34			
Higher degree	3.548*	1.709	2.080	0.28	4.845**	1.765	2.740	0.38			
Others/miscellaneous	-0.116	2.767	-0.040	-0.01	0.926	2.823	0.330	-0.07			
Father absent	0.782	0.885	0.880	0.06	0.742	0.907	3.470	0.06			
<i>Early years HLE (compared to 0-13. Very low)</i>											
Low 14-19	1.629	1.044	1.560	0.13	2.467*	1.076	2.290	0.20			
Medium 20-24	3.207**	1.057	3.030	0.25	2.481*	1.086	2.280	0.20			
High 25-32	5.057**	1.052	4.810	0.40	4.787**	1.085	4.410	0.38			
Very high 33-45	7.289**	1.256	5.800	0.58	6.754**	1.287	5.250	0.54			
<i>Family salary (compared to no salary)</i>											
£ 2,500-15,000	-0.104	1.215	-0.090	-0.01	0.839	1.251	0.670	-0.07			
£ 175,000-27,500	1.664	1.269	1.310	0.13	2.755*	1.309	2.100	0.22			
£ 300,000-35,000	0.564	1.385	0.410	0.04	2.593*	1.427	1.820	0.21			
£ 375,000-66,000	2.570*	1.339	1.920	0.20	4.029**	1.383	2.910	0.32			
£ 67,500-132,000	3.397*	1.692	2.010	0.27	4.119	1.752	2.350	0.33			

Sammons et al. (2008)

Note: **Statistically significant at the 0.01 level, *Statistically significant at the 0.05 level, #Verging significance (p<0.08)

to high-quality ($ES = 0.15$) or medium-quality preschool ($ES = 0.14$) compared to children who went to low-quality preschool. Interestingly, children who stayed at home did not show better or worse outcomes than those children who went to a low-quality preschool center. For mathematics, no statistically significant net quality effects were found. With respect to the effectiveness of the preschool attended, the analyses revealed that measures of preschool effectiveness still showed a small positive net impact on children's achievements in reading and mathematics at Year 5 of primary school (e.g., $ES = 0.13$ for reading when comparing preschool centers highly effective in promoting pre-reading to preschool centers low effective in promoting pre-reading; $ES = 0.21$ for mathematics when comparing preschool centers highly effective in promoting early number concepts to no preschool).

Primary School Effects

Further multilevel analyses were conducted to explore the net impact of overall primary school academic effectiveness controlling for all relevant family, child, and home learning characteristics. The results showed that the academic effectiveness of the primary school attended was a significant predictor of better academic outcomes for the EPPSE children in both domains. Children who had moved on to attend a high or medium academically effective primary school in terms of their school's overall mathematics results in national assessments measured across 3 years had significantly better scores in separate project tests of mathematics at age 10 than children who had attended a low academically effective primary school ($ES = 0.28$, when comparing highly effective primary schools to low-effective primary schools). Also, children who had attended a primary school identified as highly academically effective in terms of national assessment English results across 3 years also had significantly better reading attainment at age 10 compared to children who had attended a low academically effective primary school ($ES = 0.19$).

Combined Influences of Pre- and Primary School Effectiveness

In addition to separate analyses of pre- and primary school effectiveness, these two measures were combined and included in the same model, so that their joint effects on achievements could be examined. The aim of the analyses was to investigate whether going to a more effective preschool had a protective influence if a child then went on to attend a less academically effective primary school and whether home children or those who had attended only a less effective preschool center did better later if they moved on to a more academically effective primary school. For achievement in mathematics, the results indicate that children who went to a highly effective preschool center show the higher attainment irrespective of the academic effectiveness of the primary school attended later ($ES = 0.58$). They maintained the

early benefits received from attending a highly effective preschool center. But when looking at those children who did not go to preschool or went to a low-effective preschool center, these children benefit especially from then moving on to attend a medium to high academically effective primary school later ($ES = 0.45$, $ES = 0.44$). The results for reading followed very much the same pattern.

Progress Models

Simple Progress (Value Added) Models Only Controlling for Prior Achievements

Standardized test scores were used for reading and mathematics at age 6 and age 10. Therefore, progress and its influencing factors could only be analyzed in relative terms. The results of the simple value-added models only controlling for prior reading or mathematics achievements at age 6 showed that much of the variation of mathematics test scores at age 10 is accounted for by prior attainment by 42.4 %. The proportion for reading is somewhat lower (34.7 %), thus achievement in mathematics seems to be more stable over time. The intra-class correlations (ICC) were 0.18 for both reading and mathematics showing that 18 % of the unexplained variance in EPPSE children's academic progress was associated with the individual primary school attended.

Contextualized Progress Models

In a second step it was tested whether those predictors which had shown to be predictive for achievements at age 10 were also predictive for progress between age 6 and age 10. With respect to reading the analyses revealed that mother's qualification ($ES = 0.61$, degree compared to no qualification), the quality of the early years HLE ($ES = 0.44$, high-quality HLE versus low-quality HLE), and a record of early developmental problems ($ES = -0.45$, 3+ problems compared to no problems) remained significant predictors when prior attainment at age 6 was included in the model. With regard to mathematics the findings indicated that boys ($ES = 0.20$) and children with Indian background ($ES = 0.68$) showed better progress. The need of EAL support ($ES = -0.37$) and early health problems ($ES = -0.24$, 3+ problems compared to no problems) were negatively associated with progress in mathematics. In contrast, high parental qualification levels showed a positive influence (mother, $ES = 0.42$; father, $ES = 0.24$; degree versus no qualifications).

Preschool Effects

Attendance at a preschool center compared to no preschool experience was not significantly related to progress in reading or mathematics between age 6 and age

10 when controlling for all relevant child, family, and home background factors and prior attainment. But examining the effects of preschool quality and preschool effectiveness, we found a weak but significant positive effect of preschool quality for progress in reading ($ES = 0.13$, high preschool quality compared to low preschool quality). In addition, children who went to a highly effective preschool center in promoting pre-reading skills also showed better progress in reading between age 6 and age 10 at primary school ($ES = 0.16$, highly effective preschool center compared to low-effective preschool center). In contrast no significant net effects of preschool quality or preschool effectiveness could be established for progress in mathematics. To summarize, the results suggest that the effect of preschool experience on mathematics operates mainly by providing children with a better start at entry to primary school that lasts to age 10 at least, whereas in reading a high-quality or highly effective preschool can also give children a small boost in terms of promoting better academic progress in primary school, as well as better attainment at age 10.

Primary School Effects

Further multilevel analyses showed that children who attended a highly academically effective primary school progressed significantly better in reading ($ES = 0.25$ for highly effective primary schools compared to low-effective primary schools) and mathematics ($ES = 0.28$ for highly effective primary schools compared to low-effective primary schools) between Year 1 and Year 5 of primary school. In these models all relevant child, family, home, and preschool factors plus prior attainment at age 6 were controlled.

Comparing the Methodological Approaches in Both Studies and the Role of Interpretation

In the final part of this chapter, we compare the methodological approaches of both studies and discuss the role of interpretation. We have chosen ten aspects that may be used to illustrate the importance of interpretation in research methods.

The Definition of Disadvantage in Both Studies

Both studies are especially interested in the question of how to overcome social disadvantage in educational systems. A comparison of both studies reveals that already the selection of characteristics to define social disadvantage may have a

strong influence on later interpretation, e.g. HISEI in BiKS versus SES definition in EPPSE and, parental native language status as an indicator for migration background in BiKS versus ethnicity and the need for EAL support in EPPSE. Both studies apply a concept that underlines the importance of the quality of the early years home learning environment for educational advantage or disadvantage, but the measurement of the indicators is not the same, although there are similarities. Lack of preschool experience may be seen as one aspect of disadvantage. By design, EPPSE is able to investigate the impact of lack of preschool experience, whereas BiKS was—due to the very high preschool attendance rates in Germany—not able to realize a comparison home group. These differences in definitions need to be kept in mind when interpreting results especially when it comes to specific effects of preschool education for disadvantaged children. The reason that some studies, e.g., EPPSE (Sammons et al. 2008), are able to show that high-quality preschool education is especially beneficial for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and others, e.g., BiKS (Anders et al. 2012), cannot may be simply due to different concepts and measurements of disadvantage.

The Choice of Control Variables: Controlling for Selection Bias

This aspect is related to the definition of disadvantage. Both studies use a covariate approach to control for selection bias. But this approach may be less conservative than other approaches like propensity score matching, especially in unbalanced samples (NICHD ECCRN and Duncan 2003). The BiKS sample is relatively small, and to avoid problems of multicollinearity and to be able to fit the appropriate statistical models to answer the research questions, a limited number of control variables were chosen based on theory and driven by preliminary analyses. But when interpreting the data, one needs to consider that some indicators which have been shown to have impact in other large studies like EPPSE or the NICHD study are not controlled for (e.g., salary information or information on birth weight). The fact that structural preschool characteristics are related to initial numeracy skills at age 3 may be a hint that the set of control variables is not sufficient. EPPSE chose an exploratory, stepwise approach to define the set of control variables and included more variables in their background models. Thus, in EPPSE the danger of misinterpretation due to selection bias seems to be lower, although interpretation of net effects of individual predictors becomes more difficult, the higher the number of predictors in the models. The EPPSE research indicates that SES and income effects in terms of inequity in attainment are likely to be overestimated if other linked but conceptually different measures (education of parents and home learning environment) are not studied (Sammons 2010b, c; Sammons et al. 2004).

Designs With and Without a Control Group

To be able to investigate the disadvantage that may be experienced by children who do not get the chance to attend preschool, the inclusion of a control or comparison group in the study design is necessary. But control groups may not be easily realized due to the fact that attendance rates are now so high (e.g., over 90 % in Germany for the last year before children move on to primary school; Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2012, p. 242). Furthermore, as the empirical evidence on potential benefits of preschool education has grown, they may not be realized anymore due to ethical reasons. In particular, experimental designs, like the Perry Preschool Project (e.g., Schweinhart et al. 2005), are unlikely to prove acceptable in societies in the twenty-first century in Germany or England. Parents are very unlikely to agree to random allocation of their children to attend or not attend a preschool. Applying strict interpretation standards, any study without a randomized control group cannot draw firm, causal conclusions related to the question whether pure attendance of preschool may be helpful to overcome social disadvantage. Nonetheless, by statistically controlling for other factors, we may make more tentative claims, such as attending preschool predicts better outcomes, particularly where we show gradations of impact by quality or duration of attendance. In BiKS, for example, we find that especially for children who grow up in families with both parents having a different native language status than German catch up markedly in their numeracy skills over the preschool period. All BiKS children attend preschool, and we might suggest that one interpretation is that this could be due to preschool attendance, but this interpretation can only be a speculation as it is methodologically not justified. On the other hand, designs with control groups in educational research can suffer from highly selective control groups. This selectivity also needs to be accounted for in interpretation, especially when small, unbalanced control groups are used. Overall, it is recognized that covariate approaches are unlikely to be able to fully control for potential selection bias and thus that causality cannot be claimed from such designs, but that they may nonetheless have an important role to play, just as in epidemiological research in health that studies naturally occurring variation (Steiner et al. 2010).

Methodological Approaches to Assess the Quality of Home Learning Environment

The EPPSE research relied on initial parent interviews conducted at entry to the study to collect data about parental learning activities with their children and then created an overall early years HLE index (Melhuish et al. 2008). While a strong predictor, there may be error and bias in parent self-reports by interview or survey. By contrast, observations of parent-child interactions in the home can provide other evidences from trained and reliability checked field researchers. Nonetheless, the

presence of an observer may well alter parent–child interaction and behavior. BiKS used observation-based measures of the quality of the home learning environment as well as parental interviews and created one index that integrates different contents and methods (Kluczniok et al. 2013). The HLE indicator used in BiKS accounts for a comparatively high amount of variance already at age 3 which may be due to superior measurement properties since the combination of different methods enabled the creation of a very powerful indicator. These differences also need to be kept in mind when comparing results of different studies. Another aspect related to the investigation of the influence of the quality of the home learning environment is the question of how to disentangle effects of social background and the home learning environment. Studies which were set up to investigate this research question most often look at the impact of social background and the quality of home learning environment individually as well as together. Using this strategy, the additional impact of the home learning environment when controlling for social background may be analyzed. However, the results will still highly depend on characteristics of the sample and definitions of social background and home learning environment (see above). So it is not altogether surprising that some researchers have argued that the effect of social background can be attributed to differences in the quality of home learning environment (Guo and Harris 2000), whereas others find that there is some overlap of explained variance but that this is not complete with both also having a unique contribution in predicting attainment for young children (Melhuish et al. 2008; Anders et al. 2011; Sammons et al. 2004, 2008, 2013a, b).

Pre(school) Quality and Effectiveness

Both BIKs and EPPSE collected internationally recognized ECERS measures (Harms et al. 1998; Sylva et al. 2003) of observed preschool center quality, which allows comparison of differences in observed quality between individual preschools and among types of preschools, as well as exploration of possible differences in quality between preschools in Germany and England to be studied. But there are some limitations in the use of ECERS in these studies. First, the development of the ECERS scales was based on the preschool tradition in the USA and England. So the traditions of other countries might not be fully reflected. Although we find that ECERS scores predict children’s cognitive progress in a German sample, still the relationships might be stronger if we used a measure that was developed with the German kindergarten tradition and the German curriculum in mind. Furthermore, the BiKS sample was drawn only from two federal states and cannot be treated as nationally representative. The EPPSE decision to sample approximately equal numbers of different types of preschool centers also means that EPPSE data is not nationally representative of overall quality differences; results would need to be weighted according to the prevalence of use of different types of provision.

Another aspect that needs to be kept in mind is the association of preschool quality based on ECERS scores and children's progress. Although a number of studies have found a moderate positive association between ECERS scores and students' progress (e.g., Anders et al. 2012, 2013; ECCE-Study Group 1999; Sammons 2010b, c), some others have not identified this association. So another perspective in looking at the potential of preschool education might be useful. EPPSE sought to examine preschool effects in several ways related to going to preschool or not, duration of attendance, the quality of preschool attended, and the effectiveness of the preschool attended. When studying effectiveness EPPSE sought to identify individual center effects based on studying the effects of individual centers. Effectiveness scores were derived by value-added analyses of children's progress during their time in preschool from ages 3 to 5 years on average (Sammons et al. 2002, 2004). These residual measures are used as indicators of the potential of individual preschool centers to promote children's development while controlling for relevant intake factors. Only studies that are designed to use multilevel modeling are able to obtain such effectiveness estimates for individual preschool centers. This aspect is further explored in the next paragraph.

Multilevel Modeling Versus Adjusted Standard Errors

Multilevel modeling is widely recognized a key methodological tool in much educational effectiveness research (Goldstein 2003; Sammons and Luyten 2009) because it allows researchers to model the effects of clustering in data sets that links with organizational units (preschools, classes, schools) of special interest in education. However, in longitudinal studies it is not always feasible to collect sufficient data to allow for clustering effects across different sectors and phases. Ideally cross-classified models can be applied (Goldstein and Sammons 1997; Leckie 2009), but this requires very large samples. In Germany, for example, children are often cared for in age-mixed groups covering the age range from 0 to 6. Any educational study will look at a certain cohort of children and due to restricted resources will not be able to conduct quality observations in all the groups. The BiKS study studied children that were to be enrolled in school in 2008 and decided to sample one group per preschool center (von Maurice et al. 2007). As a consequence, the number of children per group and per preschool center is most often comparatively small (average 5). In the analyses, the BiKS team needs to account for possible effects of the multilevel structure. However, due to the small number of children per group, the design is not ideal for multilevel modeling, and the possibilities to use cross-classified models or obtain individual center level effectiveness scores are restricted. The EPPSE research in England explicitly sought to study individual preschool center effects as well as effects of quality and type of preschool. It therefore recruited a child sample clustered at the preschool level from 141 settings with approximately 15–20 children per center. However, the preschool sample later moved on to attend over 800 primary schools, thus the sample was not clustered

at the school level due to the very small numbers of EPPSE children in most primary schools. Due to this cross-classified models were impractical. However, it proved possible to obtain data for full cohorts of pupils in all primary schools in England to investigate the academic effectiveness of individual primary schools using multilevel models to calculate value-added residual estimates (Melhuish et al. 2006) based on data for matched pupil cohorts across 3 years and based on over 15,000 primary schools.

Stepwise Explorative Versus Theory-Driven Choice of Variables in the Models

The EPPSE research sought to model first the child and then the family and then the early years HLE effects before testing potential preschool or school influences. Measures were collected that had been shown to be relevant in previous educational research as likely predictors and that were relevant to the concept and study of educational disadvantage. EPPSE created an additional indicator of multiple disadvantage based on combinations of child, family, and HLE measures employed to study the concepts of risk and resilience (see Hall et al. 2009, 2010; Sammons et al. 2013a, b).

The use of stepwise approaches meant that it became possible to disentangle net effects of different sources (child, family, preschool, and school) of children's development. With respect to the order, different predictor families were included in the model; the strategy of EPPSE reflects a typical socio-systemic approach in the tradition of Bronfenbrenner (1994) meaning that predictors are included in the model in the order they may be hypothesized to influence the child (from proximal to distal). The stepwise-explorative approach also means that individual predictors are included stepwise as long as they have a significant impact on the outcome or the model. With a large number of potential predictor variables, this approach always also implies a probabilistic decision in the choice of background variables finally included in the model. BiKS also used a stepwise approach, but defined driven by theory beforehand a relatively small set of control variables to be included in the analyses. The theory-driven selection of variables is an advantage, but there are also some disadvantages to this approach as has been mentioned previously: failure to include potentially important background variables in a model might lead to misinterpretation of significant results because the effects of certain background variables are not controlled. However, the sample of the BiKS study is relatively small compared with EPPSE, and the choice of a larger set of control variables might have led to problems of multicollinearity (Farrar and Glauber 1967), difficulties in convergence of the latent growth curve models (Stoel et al. 2003, 2004a, b), and difficulties in interpreting the net effects. In practice analyses showed that the limited set of common and potentially important, theoretically driven control variables worked well. In the BiKS study the preschool effects were comparable in size to other studies that had worked with larger sets of control variables (Anders et al. 2012).

Standardized Versus Unstandardized Outcome Measures

By using age standardized tests, the impact of a child's age is already controlled (thus, the poorer outcomes of young-for-their-year summer-born versus autumn-born children may be masked or overlooked in interpreting educational disadvantage).

However, there are advantages in comparing the strength of relationships across different measures within and between studies. In the EPPE research additional analyses on age unstandardized outcomes were used to examine age effects specifically (i.e., the summer impact in predicting SEN), but in other instances age standardized results were used to allow comparison across outcomes and models. The use of unstandardized outcome measures has the advantage that growth over time and the influence of age at different measurement points may be more easily observed. But growth curve models require instruments that are able to measure skills over a broad age range and few such instruments exist.

Value-Added Regression Analyses Versus Latent Growth Curve Modeling

Latent growth curve models are often deemed to provide a better picture of progress or developmental change over several years. In the BiKS study latent growth curve models were applied. However, there are data constraints that also affect interpretation. When applying latent growth curve analyses, outcome measures must cover the same constructs at different time points, and the larger the time span, the larger is the danger of reduced variance at the lower and upper bounds of a scale; in other words, ceiling or floor effects might occur. Ceiling or floor effects impair the ability to determine the central tendency of the data, and reduced variance on the dependent variable might impair the ability of detecting effects of independent variables on the dependent variables (Cramer and Howitt 2004). Furthermore, practice effects can occur when using the same test over several time points. In the reported BiKS study, the data were carefully checked, and ceiling or floor effects could be ruled out, and the possibility of practice effects was very low due to the specific scale used. However, any study using latent growth curve analyses needs to check very carefully if the data is appropriate for this type of analysis; otherwise, misinterpretations of results will occur. In the EPPSE research standardized external tests were used only in Years 1 and 5, while national assessment data were collected in Years 2 and 6. The measurement differences meant that growth curve modeling would be inappropriate for cognitive outcomes since the constructs measured were not identical. Thus, differences in measurement might be conflated with growth trajectories.

The Use of Effect Sizes

Effect sizes can provide a useful additional tool to express the strength of relationships between predictors and outcomes. Cohen (1988, 1992) proposed conventions for small, medium, and large values for different effect size indices that are now commonly used. For example, for d-type effect sizes an effect of under 0.2 is seen as fairly weak, one of 0.5 as moderate, and 0.8 plus as strong. Effect sizes are often used in economics and can be seen as helpful by policy makers especially in making decisions about funding (see Schagen and Elliot 2004 for a discussion). However, they are also dependent on the model adopted and set of controls included as predictors. Cohen (1992) describes his intentions for the effect size conventions and he states that the intent was that a “medium effect size represent an effect likely to be visible to the naked eye of a careful observer.” He set “small effect size to be noticeably smaller than medium but not so small as to be trivial,” and he “set large effect size to be the same distance above medium as small was below it.” It is obvious that the conventions are somewhat arbitrary. It is not difficult to think of situations where a small effect observed in one setting might be more important than a large effect observed in another. In educational studies effect sizes often tend to be rather small when applying Cohen’s rules; however, these small effects often have high practical relevance or imply large monetary benefits in the long run. For example, a small effect that raises attainment for large number of students in many schools at little cost could be more important overall to policy makers than a large effect for an expensive intervention that applied only to a very small number of students with special characteristics. When interpreting effect sizes the context of research always matters.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided an account of two ongoing large studies that provide insights into preschool and primary school research from the educational effectiveness tradition. Both studies had a strong interest in the investigation of equity and educational disadvantage. The two research projects sought to examine the way different child, family, HLE, and educational influences shape young children’s attainment and progress in academic outcomes as well as social behavior and affective domains using longitudinal designs and multivariate analyses. The examples discussed here provide a focus on the analyses of cognitive and academic outcomes and changes in these over time (elsewhere social behavior has been explored).

Further follow-up research on EPPSE has gone on to use structural equation models to investigate indirect and direct effects. It reveals that preschool quality can act as a protective influence (Hall et al. 2013) and also that the academic effectiveness of primary school attended can help to protect children from the adverse effects of experiencing multiple

(continued)

disadvantage in early childhood (Sammons et al. 2013a, b). Similarly, Anders et al. (2013) have provided further analyses of BiKS data that reveal preschool and primary school influences on the development of early numeracy skills up to age 7 in Germany. While there are similarities in design, measures, and methodology, there are also differences. This means that simple direct comparisons are not always appropriate, as in many comparative studies. However, the two examples highlighted here provide an opportunity to examine how research aims and questions, sample size, and measures collected helped to shape the analysis strategy. The chapter uses examples of findings and their interpretation to illustrate how quantitative research and different modeling strategies can be used and seeks to identify their strengths and limitations. There is growing evidence that methodological developments can lead to theoretical advances in educational effectiveness studies, also that theoretical insights can prompt the development of more appropriate analytic techniques (Creemers et al. 2010; Sammons 2012; Hall and Sammons 2013). In educational effectiveness research hierarchical regression approaches such as multilevel modeling have the power to explore the impact of clustering in data and potential institutional effects. However, all such approaches depend heavily on the quality of the sample and the measurement of key constructs and control variables. The adequacy of the model (both its technical fit and its theoretical underpinnings) is crucial in the evaluation of the confidence we can place in results. Clarity of aims, appropriate design, building on previous research, and good measurement linked with theory remain essential features of high-quality research and will be key to choices of appropriate methodology and statistical analysis.

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7.6 Beyond the Quantification of Irregular Migrants: From “Knowledge on the Case” to “Knowing How to Go On”

Elias Hemelsoet

Introduction

For various reasons, irregular migration has become a more frequent phenomenon during the last decades. Without going deeper into the globalizing context of growing and changing migration tendencies in different parts of the world, it should be remarked that this topic is gaining attention. Until recently, there was only a limited amount of scientific evidence on irregular migration (with a focus on clandestine activities such as human trafficking and smuggling). But these days, in Western societies there are humanitarian and social problems related to the growth of this group, problems which have stimulated political discussion. This has subsequently led to scientific research on the subject. Irregular migrants have become visible in our everyday lives. They defend their rights in self-help groups, protest marches, and hunger strikes, and they are visible in the streets: we are all familiar with the salesman in the Pakistani night shop, the East European or South American cleaning lady in the hotel, and the gypsy woman begging for money. These clichés provide prototypical examples of the role irregular migrants play in the public imagination. As a consequence of this situation, both politicians and scientists want to “grab hold” of what is happening and to acquire an overview of the state of affairs. Predominantly short-term government-driven research is flourishing.

It is interesting to have a closer look at this research. In 2005, the UK government attempted to estimate the numbers of irregular migrants and published the UK’s first official estimate of irregular migration (Woodbridge 2005). The aim of the study was to review methods that have been used in different countries to estimate the number of illegal resident persons, followed by an assessment of the

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applicability of these methods to the UK. The presupposition of this government-directed initiative is the idea that “sizing the illegal resident population” will contribute in some way or another to migration policy. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) tries to look at things in a broader perspective. This organization defines itself as the UK’s leading progressive think tank. Along with other tasks, it tries to engage the media and the public in an informed and evidence-based debate on current policy issues. In the 2006 report (described as a “FactFile”) “Irregular migration in the UK,” researchers are at a standstill regarding key questions considering this topic. Recognizing the usefulness of the estimate in the Home Office report, this “FactFile” attempts to do more than estimate numbers and deal with some of the broader policy issues that irregular migration raises. The following questions are at stake:

- Who are irregular migrants? How do they differ from illegal, undocumented, and unauthorized migrants?
- Why do irregular migrants come to the UK?
- How many irregular migrants are there?
- How do irregular migrants enter the UK?
- Where do irregular migrants come from?
- Where do irregular migrants work?
- What are the economic impacts of irregular migration?
- How long do irregular migrants stay?
- What rights do irregular migrants have?
- What are the policy options?

The report deals with a whole range of different themes and gives a descriptive overview of “evidence-based facts” that are for the most part of a quantitative nature. After mapping different definitions related to this group of people, push and pull factors for migration are defined. This study goes beyond a mere estimate of the amount of irregular migrants in the country. Nevertheless, all the other questions refer to an evidence-based paradigm. Answers are given in terms of numbers and quantities that are taken as a starting point to get policy making going.

Similar tendencies are apparent at the European level. *Clandestino* is “an interdisciplinary project” and is “a response to the need for supporting policy makers in designing and implementing appropriate policies regarding undocumented migration” (Picum 2009, p. 2). Twelve EU countries participate in this project that aims at:

- Providing an inventory of data and estimates on undocumented migration (stocks and flows) in the selected EU countries
- Analyzing these data comparatively
- Discussing the ethical and methodological issues involved in the collection of data, the elaboration of estimates, and their use
- Proposing a new method for evaluating and classifying data/estimates on undocumented migration in the EU

Again, the number of undocumented migrants in the different countries is at the heart of the research. Similarly, in her book that “aims to be a general reader on irregular migration in Europe,” Triandafyllidou (2010a) “casts light to the hitherto under-researched albeit much discussed phenomenon of irregular migration in Europe” by focusing primarily on the size of irregular migrant populations in each of the studied countries. The fact that there are large methodological problems related to estimating irregular migrants has not prevented policy makers from focusing on this area. Paying lip service to unreliable figures is having far-reaching consequences. Before approaching this issue, I will consider what is said in these reports and the conclusions that have been drawn from the findings.

Techniques for Estimating Irregular Migration Numbers

A lot of creativity is put into action to estimate numbers of irregular migrants. The list of different techniques that can be used is long and varied. Without going too deeply into the particularities of different techniques and the problems each presents us with, an overview of methods will now be outlined. Then attention will be given to some examples of the most widespread methods and how they are applied.

In general, there is a consensus on the classification of various techniques. Recent reports of the Clandestino project (Kraler and Vogel 2008; Vogel and Kovacheva 2008; Picum 2009) and the Home Office (Woodbridge 2005; Pinkerton et al. 2004) all start from the distinction between “*stocks*” and “*flows*,” in the line of earlier research (among others Delauney and Tapinos 1998; Pinkerton et al. 2004; Jandl 2004). This fundamental distinction is made in analogy with data on legal migration and refers to different statistical concepts: *stocks* (e.g., of irregular residents or migrant workers) refer to a number of people that are present in a country *at a particular point in time*, while *flows* (e.g., of illegal entrants or migrants “overstaying”) refer to *movements during a certain period*. Flow estimates thus refer to the number of migrants crossing the border during a period in time. Estimations are mainly based on border apprehension data or entry–exit statistics. Given the volatile nature of migration flows, the scarcity of reliable indicators, and the dearth of appropriate methods for estimating flows, most efforts have so far concentrated on estimating stocks rather than flows. Methods for estimating stocks of irregular migrants can be divided into direct and indirect approaches. *Direct measurement* is based on data that “captures” the subject of research directly. Numbers of irregular migrants taken from administrative statistics based on refusals, infractions, or regularizations are multiplied to estimate the total number in the population. *Indirect estimates* do not rely on such data. They mainly start from general data on the population to estimate irregular migrant numbers (e.g., by expecting similar proportions of irregular migrants or calculating residues in official registers). Direct estimation approaches can be further classified into multiplier methods (among which simple multiplier models, capture–recapture models, and models using a comparison of administrative registers and random effect mixed modeling),

methods of self-identification, and snowball sampling methods. Among the indirect approaches, residual methods, demographic methods, subjective estimations, or indicator methods, econometric methods on the size and structure of shadow economies, comparisons of immigration and emigration statistics, flow–stock methods, and methods based on indirect inferences can be distinguished. It is not the aim here to provide an extensive discussion of all the methods mentioned above (for a very informative schematic overview, see Appendixes 1 and 2). Three examples will be given though, as they are paradigmatic for the problems related to estimating irregular migrants.

Multiplier methods calculate the size of the unknown total from the size of a known subtotal by use of an appropriately estimated multiplier. The use of multipliers to derive the size of a hidden population from the size of a known subtotal of that population is probably the most common way of estimating an unknown population. The problem of giving adequate estimations is then translated in finding the right multiplier (Vogel 2002). An example of using the multiplier method for estimating irregular migrant numbers is provided by a study in Belgium by Van Meeteren et al. (2007). In this study, police data on arrested criminal foreigners is combined with data from in-depth interviews with 120 irregular migrants. The police data on criminal offences committed by foreigners without legal residence is compared with the “crime rate” among the migrants that were interviewed. Three assumptions are internal to this method, assumptions that modify the quality of the outcomes. Firstly, there is the expectation that the crime rate derived from the interview sample is a good indicator for the actual crime rate among the target population. Secondly, the estimate is based on the assumption that the reported crime figures are a good indicator for total crime figures. Thirdly, the sampling group is expected to be representative of the total population of irregular migrants. Concerning the first assumption, it can be argued that long in-depth interviews lead to sufficient trust between the interviewer and the respondent so as to retrieve realistic answers. As regards the second assumption, things get slightly more complicated. It is not clear to what extent police data on arrests cover the total amount of criminal offences that are actually committed. It is very likely that the police do not detect all cases of crime and the resulting estimate is therefore unreliable (Kraler and Vogel 2008). The third assumption implies problems concerning generalization, as the sampling group is rather small and it is impossible to retrieve a randomized sample if the composition of the total group is largely unknown.

Similar problems arise with the capture–recapture method. This method is used in biology to estimate animal populations in the wild. The basic idea is to develop a multiplier through repeated sampling of the same population. Estimating a fish population goes as follows: first, capture 1,000 fish and mark them before releasing them again. Capture another 1,000 fish and look how many are marked. If, for example, 100 are marked, the 1,000 fish will statistically make up approximately 10 % of the total, i.e., 10,000 fish. In the Netherlands Van der Leun et al. (1998) have used this principle to estimate numbers of irregular migrants. Their “repeated capture method” is based on a data set that tries to apprehend numbers of illegal immigrants in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht (the four biggest

Dutch cities) during 1995. Using the number of persons captured and arrested again, it is argued that the number of people who will show up again follows a probabilistic distribution called the Poisson distribution (λ). On the basis of the available data, the crucial parameter determining the Poisson distribution can be estimated. This is then used to identify the probability of an individual being caught by the police. Again, a number of problematic assumptions are at work. First, the population has to be homogeneous (with respect to the risk of being caught). This can be met through the use of an appropriate regression method, which accounts for determined features for apprehension, such as age, sex, and origin. Second, there has to be a more or less stable chance of getting caught. The supposition that no major policy changes take place during the time span of the research is thus required. But, most problematic is the third and final assumption: the population under consideration has to remain constant during the period of research. Such stability is highly unlikely as there are peaks in flows of irregular migration (e.g., seasonal workers). This leads researchers to make the decision to exclude certain groups from the study (Pinkerton et al. 2004).

As a final example of estimation methods, demographic methods start from the idea that rates concerning, e.g., birth, mortality, and hospitalization are normally distributed over the total population. Legal and illegal people are thus supposed to experience these events to the same extent. Proportions of irregular migrants' hospitalizations, deaths, and births are then extrapolated to estimate total numbers. The practical advantage of these methods lies in the wide availability of the required data, which means that there is no need to acquire new data sets. However, the assumption that these demographic rates are similar for illegal and legal residents can be questioned. In some populations, the birth rate is very high (e.g., Roma population, Ringold et al. 2005), while life expectancy too may vary a lot (e.g., Fundación Secretariado Gitano 2009). Irregular migrants often live in worse conditions than natives and are more susceptible to health problems. A larger risk of disease due to poverty and bad living conditions may thus lead to an overrepresentation of data. Furthermore, there are registration problems. Irregular migrants are often very mobile and may choose to return due to impending demographic risks (e.g., chronic illness, death). Sometimes, things may be the other way around: people come here to enjoy medical care that is lacking in the country of origin. Finally, differing benefits in the health-care system may lead to serious underestimations. Irregular migrants are not always hospitalized when this is required because they cannot rely on the same benefits or they are afraid to profit from them due to their illegal residence status.

Counting the Uncountable: Some Conceptual Problems

Social scientists generally acknowledge the problems resulting from various estimation methods. They are therefore reluctant to identify estimates and differ over the degree of reliability that they are willing to attribute to these numbers. Problems

of measurement evidently follow from the fact that irregular migration is resistant to registration and statistical description (Tapinos 1999; Gordon et al. 2009). Estimating the numbers of illegal residents in a country is almost impossible given the fact that the phenomenon is a gray zone. Nevertheless, a great deal of pressure is put on researchers to make such estimates. Both journalists and policy makers need numbers to develop a particular argument and make policy. As Clarke (2000) argues, a number that is quoted somewhere in the press has a good chance to develop a life of its own and survive for many years in the media where it is rehearsed as a fact, even if the original estimate was accompanied by disclaimers. As such, they may obtain the character of a scientific finding without, however, having any methodological or conceptual backing (Triandafyllidou 2010b). Surprisingly, problems pertaining to unreliability do not deter researchers from producing estimates. Scientists seem to be equally attracted to numbers (Kraler and Vogel 2008) and search for solutions to deal with the observed problems. These problems are redefined in terms of a lack of quality assessment of the methods of estimation. What is thus required is “a classification scheme that serves as an indicator of the scientific quality of the estimates” (ibid, 2008, p. 6). “Quality classes” (high-/medium-/low-quality estimate and low estimate with a plausibility warning) are distinguished, estimates are formulated in terms of a minimum and a maximum, and different methods are intertwined (“combined methods”) to increase reliability. But still some maintain that “even low-quality minimum or maximum estimates without ranges can be useful in a national context if they challenge generally shared assumptions about the size or composition of a group” (Vogel and Kovacheva 2008, p. 9).

The quality of estimation outcomes remains problematic. Moreover, in what follows it will be argued that there are fundamental problems underlying the search for qualitative estimates of a conceptual nature. In most cases these problems are hardly touched upon. They concern differing definitions, data sources, and collection methods that are used when comparing data. Moreover, different legislations in the respective countries generate problems of comparability. The problematic character of conceptualizations when estimating irregular migrant numbers will be treated in two different ways. Firstly, the focus is on the relation between the definition of the target group of research and the way the problem is conceptualized. Secondly, the unavoidable tendency towards homogenization that is intrinsic to reducing the complexity of a large amount of data to a limited number of differences will be problematized.

Different Definitions, Different People

In the literature a number of descriptive strategies are used to denote people without legal residence. Adjectives such as illegal, irregular, unauthorized, undocumented, or clandestine are often interchangeably combined with the nouns (im)migrants, aliens, or refugees. There is debate over the appropriateness and applicability of

these various concepts. Mostly, discussion is on the (often emotive) connotations associated with different terms. Some authors talk about refugees (Hamilton and Moore 2004), referring to the definition of the 1951 United Nations Geneva Refugee Convention: “A refugee is a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” (UNHCR 1993, p. 6). This term refers to the group of migrants who have been found to “qualify” for official refugee status (Watts and Bridges 2005). In many countries, people who do not meet the criteria that are set by the government to be a “legal” refugee are often called “undocumented migrants” (or *sans-papiers*), a term preferred by, among others, Paspanalova (2006), although it is unofficial and has no legal force. In scientific literature, the term “illegal aliens” (Van Dijk 1996; Ommundsen and Larsen 1999; Martiniello 2005) has, to a large extent, been replaced by the term “irregular migrants” (Jandl 2007; Broeders and Engbersen 2007; Laubenthal 2007). This is due to the fact that “illegality” is too often connected with criminal behavior and human rights advocates argue that “no human being is illegal.”

Without going deeper into the discussion over which concept is most appropriate, it should be noted that the definitions of preference are decisive for the way a problem is conceptualized. Using different terminologies as well as different ways of defining the used concepts can influence the statistical outcomes to a large extent and will finally lead to different conclusions and recommendations. The target group “irregular migrants” exemplifies the importance of conceptual demarcation: definitions frequently have emotive connotations, they are often unclear, and they are used in very different ways. It is thus of crucial importance that research reports clearly indicate the definitions to which they subscribe, who is or is not included in the target group and why this is so. The motives behind conceptual choices should therefore be made explicit due to the potentially unpleasant consequences of not doing so. That is not as evident as it may seem. Definitions of irregular migration always include elements of a negative definition (people *without* papers, who have *no* legal residence status, who *cannot* rely on particular kinds of support). Therefore, policy changes towards regular migration can lead to substantial changes in the irregular migrant population. This is most obviously the case when regularization programs take place, but besides this, attribution of, for example, working permits and medical cards to particular groups may temporarily or permanently change their legal status. Definitions are constructed in relation to their practices of reference that may historically and locally differ to a large extent. The impossibility of deriving concepts from empirical data lies at the basis of the incomparability of much of the research data and outcomes. Unfortunately, this does not stop policy makers and journalists making comparisons. The love for numbers comes with a desire to compare. A good example is the Clandestino project that is funded by the European Union. This project tries among other things

to estimate the stock of irregular migrants in different countries. The total number of irregular migrants in Europe (Picum 2009) is estimated as being between 2.8 and 6 million. To complicate matters, there is no implication that the mean estimate is the most likely number. The width of these estimates is huge and their reliability is questionable. Estimates from different countries are made with different (more and less reliable) methods. Different definitions are used and again it should be stressed that policy differences cannot be overcome. Some figures are even calculated on the basis of extrapolation of the number of irregular migrants that reached their destination countries by looking at the number of migrants arrested at the borders. Based on discussions with border control authorities, a multiplier is defined (e.g., multiplying 60,000 borders' apprehensions in 1993 multiplied by 4–6, cf. Widgren 1994). Estimations then hardly seem to be more than mere “guesstimates” or “politicized number games” as they are to a large extent based on ungrounded assumptions (Vollmer 2010). Moreover, with international comparisons, there are always added difficulties when comparing the different data sets as they measure different things, using different systems, at different times, and by different authorities (Clarke 2000).

This does not keep researchers from drawing remarkable conclusions. It is recognized that “the review of efforts to estimate the size of irregular migration on a European level has shown that the numbers indicated are based on very rough estimates” because “often we do not know which groups of irregular migrants are included in a stock estimate, nor do we know whether a flow estimate is meant to measure net inflows or gross inflows” and “older studies are often quoted in newer studies, so that estimates appear to apply to the present, although they were made some years ago” (Igllicka, in Kraler and Vogel 2008, p. 17). Still, researchers say that “approximate comparability is better than no data at all in a situation where a high degree of comparability may never be achieved” (Vogel and Kovacheva 2008, p. 17) or that “these estimates will greatly aid policy making” (IPPR 2006, p. 9). Reference is made to policy: “In the public sphere, there is a general need to gather reliable information on important social phenomena, to determine whether or not the situation warrants any political action. [. . .] For governments, the perceived size of the phenomenon will have an important bearing on the justification for the expenditure of public resources on alternative uses” (Jandl 2004, p. 152). The idea that “approximate comparability is better than no data at all” seems to count here as well.

Given the far-reaching consequences at policy level, glossing over the large and to a great extent insurmountable problems that are related to estimating irregular migrant numbers is highly problematic. Or as Clarke (2000, p. 21) states:

. . . whichever method of assessment is used, estimated numbers of irregular migrants are based on assumptions, many of which are either untested or maybe even untestable. The fact remains that unrecorded and irregular migration is, by its very definition, unquantified and, indeed, unquantifiable. Any figure generated is at best an educated guess. [. . .] And yet there are many pressures from policy makers, the media and other interest groups to come up with a quotable figure. When an estimated figure is “calculated” no matter what warnings and disclaimers are attached to it, as has been seen a number of times in the last few years of growing interest in trafficking and “illegal” migration, there is a danger that this figure is picked up and rapidly circulated and, before long, quoted as a fact.

The nature of Clarke’s critique is clear and goes beyond concrete problems related to particular methods. From a scientific perspective, there is a lack of reliability in the estimations obtained. To a certain extent, the phenomenon of irregular migration indeed *is* unquantifiable, and the best that can be expected from these estimations *is* an educated guess. But the weight of these scientific arguments, which strive for objectivity, is limited in the politicized context of policy making. For some this is regrettable. It is true that one may find examples of research that is conducted to provide the rationalization for a predetermined policy. In these cases, the outcomes of the research are known long before it even has begun. Research is used as an instrument to legitimize political choices. Both the media, governments, and parties may have something to gain by presenting high numbers of irregular migrant inflows and a dramatization of the situation at hand (Triandafyllidou and Vogel 2010). This is unacceptable but is not what is really at stake here. At the very least, the arguments in defense of using estimates should be taken seriously. A requirement for political action is a well-founded insight in the current state of affairs. To be able to deal with problems related to irregular migration, the nature of these problems requires clarification. Part of that job is to get an idea of the scope of the phenomenon, i.e., to “measure” the “size” of it. The “love for numbers” demonstrated by policy makers may then be an expression of sincere engagement with these problems, rather than a fast solution to legitimize decisions.

The fact that “something has to be done” by policy makers does not take away the fundamental critique on irregular migrants’ estimations. But it does mean that critics have to offer a possible alternative. If not, the argument that from a policy view “approximate comparability is better than no data at all” is legitimate, although, from a scientific perspective, this is not always so. What is left from the critique now is twofold. First, the critique can serve as a “reminder” for policy makers. It does so by stressing the importance of conceptual demarcation and underlining that the information provided by estimations is very limited. It is not the estimations that are the problem, but rather the fact that these numbers start to lead a life of their own. Policy makers should be aware of this danger and the limitations of estimations. Secondly, the critique may be a step-up to develop other research strategies. This refers to the idea that estimates are an *insufficient* condition to gain insight into the problems related to irregular migration. Again, this does not mean that they cannot be helpful; it only means that their contribution has to be put into perspective. Other questions and different kinds of (e.g., qualitative) method (ology)s may form a valuable supplement to the acquired numbers. This may therefore lead to *alternative* ways of approaching irregular migration.

The Homogenization of Complexity

The question of what can be expected from estimating irregular migrant numbers is currently being explicitly brought to the fore. The group of people involved is predominantly approached from a legal point of view that focuses on residence

status. Within that perspective, the heterogeneous character of irregular migrant populations is to some extent acknowledged. There seems to be general agreement of a division of this population into four different groups or categories:

- People who have illegally entered the country, whether independently or with traffickers, by either:
 - Physically evading formal immigration control, or
 - Presenting false papers to immigration control
- People who legally entered the country for a fixed period which has expired; they did not renew their permission to stay and are thus unlawful overstayers.
- Asylum seekers who legally entered the country to pursue a case for refugee status, but who remain despite a final decision refusing them a continuing right to remain; and
- Children born in the country to such “irregular migrants”, who also lack a right to remain although they are not themselves migrants (Gordon et al. 2009).

Still, in each of these cases, the legal status of “irregularity” serves as the benchmark of categorization. The ethnicity, nationality, religion, native language, cultural background, etc., of the people involved are barely considered, as from a policy perspective what is at stake is their legal status. For asylum seekers, things are slightly different. On arrival, attention is directed at political or personal reasons for taking refuge, and nationality is a very relevant factor for recognition of refugee status. But once people are categorized into the group of “irregular migrants,” they are treated as a monolithic group of people. Contextual elements slide to the background and become rather irrelevant. The residence status is the qualifying benchmark to be included or excluded from all kinds of (citizen) rights, provisions, and initiatives. Everything depends on the documents one has or does not have.

As a consequence, the quest for these documents serves as the binding agent for the people lumped together under the denominator “irregular migrants.” This experience *is* shared by all of these people. They come across with each other, e.g., in charity organizations or in shared waiting queues for public services. But at least as important as this guiding similarity are the observed differences between irregular migrants. Various cultural backgrounds, motivations to take refuge, and personal histories that lead to irregularity are often incomparable. An Eastern European girl kidnapped and smuggled into Western Europe by human traffickers for prostitution deals with problems that have little to do with those faced by her immigrant worker compatriots who come here to work for a few months on the black market so as to gather as much money as possible to send or take back to their homeland. Similarly, the unaccompanied child soldier has little in common with the African soldier of fortune looking for a better life in the rich West or the South East Asian refugee seeking safety after suffering persecution in her homeland. Roma gypsies often feel comfortable with their irregular status and are often not even interested in regularization. “Being irregular” in many cases seems to have become a part of their cultural identity, towards which they have adapted to. Of course, within these different groups of people, there are large differences;

homogenizing them through stereotypes is not what the preceding examples are intended to do. What I am trying to emphasize here are the divergent perspectives and (previous and current) living conditions of all these people (at a cultural or ethnic but at least as much at a personal level). The government also recognizes that incomparable situations refer to different problems that are not necessarily related to residence status. Human trafficking, war traumas of unaccompanied minors, moonlighting, clandestine (drugs) trade, etc., are important problems that cannot be captured under the name of “irregular migration.” Unfortunately, this is exactly what is being done when numbers of irregular migrants are estimated. None of the studies mentioned above draw attention to these differences. This leads to injustice for the people involved. They are (independently of the particular term used to define irregular migrants) linked to problems that may have nothing to do with their personal conditions. From a policy perspective, it shows that treating these people as a monolithic group takes away the possibility of making desirable distinctions. In statistical terms, this reflects the danger intrinsic to reducing the complexity of a large amount of data to a limited number of differences. Restricting the degrees of freedom to obtain more accurate data inevitably has homogenizing consequences. What is left are vague numbers that hardly contain any relevant information. That brings us to the last section of this paper, in which I explore alternative ways of dealing with the aforementioned problems.

Does It Make Sense to Say...

The discussion presented above shows how difficult it is to “make sense” of the divergent problems related to the group of irregular migrants. I now want to move beyond the methodological matters concerning the adequacy of various estimation methods and consider the appropriateness of the questions put forward by policy makers and researchers. Why are these questions seen as being so attractive, so apparently integral to the situation presented above? Willingness to “count the uncountable” is surprisingly strong. The fact that the goal of many irregular migrants is to go into hiding does not diminish the conviction that estimations will be helpful when trying to understand the problems at stake. Neither does the finding that it is impossible to even roughly estimate irregular migrants’ numbers keep researchers from doing exactly that. Something more profound seems to underlie the apparent “love for numbers” that to a large extent characterizes Western societies.

Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) largely elaborate on their thesis that “the ‘migrant debate’ rests on the idea that the ideal society should be as uniform or homogeneous as possible. Homogeneity is not only seen as desirable, but also as the norm, as the most normal manifestation of a human society” (ibid., p. 117). In their linguistic discourse analysis, they put forward an impressive number of examples that support this thesis. “‘Homogeneity’ is seen as the dominant ideology that directs our thinking about foreigners. Through the abnormalisation of the foreigner,

it contains an a priori rejection or problematisation of diversity. [...] Foreigners disturb the existing order, they threaten the *status quo*, their presence alone already turns them into a problem” (ibid., p. 146). The attempts to homogenize the group of migrants—which seems to hold for irregular migrants too—thus come from a defensive reflex. This attitude expresses a fear towards the unexpected, the new, and the unknown, i.e., towards whatever can change or damage what has been established.

This critique of homogenization brings a different perspective to the question of “how many irregular migrants there are.” If policy makers ask this question so as to bring about “reliable information” (cf. supra) for dealing with problems related to the presence of irregular migrants, then its contribution seems limited. The repeated search for numbers hardly reveals anything with respect to the content of concrete practices, as by definition it is an expression of the homogenization tendency mentioned earlier. What is at stake concerns attempts to “grab” the situation and the changes to that situation. Numbers help to “get an overview” and in that sense to “control” what is happening. The apparent “love for numbers” in Western societies seems to refer to the dominant presence of a thinking that divides the world into “us” and “them” and continuously looks for “ownership.” Numbers become the tools to realize that ownership: quantifying reality becomes synonymous with objectifying reality, i.e., gaining control over the world surrounding us. One could even argue that the attraction of numbers refers to what Nietzsche called *Wille zur Macht*: the will to power as the driving force behind human actions.

Recognizing the “will to power” in the current love for numbers gives us sufficient reason to judge the estimation practices in the context of irregular migration. But, as mentioned earlier, that does not solve the problem at hand: what course of action is left for the policy maker? The question that remains concerns whether or not there are other ways to “understand” the situation that can be distinguished apart from attempts to “grab” it. A possible alternative may be to develop a problem-oriented policy that works towards finding solutions to current problems. Some irregular migrants would then be liable to prosecution as a result of policy that fights smuggling, human trafficking, poverty, etc. Stretching this line of thought, some decisions might even be directed towards particular cultures, religious groups, or ethnicities. One can, for example, think about discussions on the foundation of Muslim schools in Western European countries or initiatives to promote school participation for Roma people. Irregular migrants are then not approached from the perspective of their (illegal) residence status, but from events they have participated in or been victimized by or from the ethnic, cultural, or religious group they belong to. It is unclear whether or not this would deal with the problem. Even if this approach is adopted, numbers will be sought after to estimate the size of the problem. Whether we are talking about irregular migrants, smuggling, criminality, poverty, Muslims, Roma people, or anything else, obtaining an idea of the scope of a social problem seems an indispensable element of “understanding” that problem and gaining insight into it even if this is only so that policy makers can decide on how the limited means that are available should be distributed.

The earlier critique of attempts to estimate irregular migrants provided evidence of the limited value of these numbers when trying to gain insight into the phenomenon. However, the pragmatics of policy making shows that this limited contribution to understanding irregular migration is better than no contribution at all and that the critique itself has limits too. Estimations make sense, even if their reliability is very low. Although they cannot deliver the profound insight into social problems that is required for a well-founded policy, they can serve as a stepping-stone for further research. The “will to power” may indeed be present in the attempts to frame social phenomena in numbers, but this does not explain the “love of numbers” and the attractiveness of quantitative data. Every search for understanding, whether it be quantitative, qualitative, or even philosophical, is expressing a will to power, i.e., to gain control over a situation.

What makes numbers so attractive then might be their transparency and unambiguous character. That takes us back to the second element of the conceptual critique, namely, the homogenization of irregular migrants. Here, the proposed policy alternative may deliver added value. This alternative does not start from the dichotomy between regular and irregular people and between people with a legal and an illegal residence. It is important to recognize the diversity of problems facing irregular migrants are dealing with. Indeed the very concept of an “irregular migrant” (or any alternative concept referring to this group of people) as an umbrella to homogenize the present diversity should be seen as problematic. This could be a starting point for a more just approach to the complexity of their everyday social practices.

The Educational Solution Beyond Demarcations: Inclusive Education for the Sake of Whom? The Roma Case

In the foregoing, the homogenization tendency that is present in social policy regarding irregular migrants was outlined. In what follows, the focus will be more specifically on education. In this particular area, a growing tendency towards inclusion provides a way of thought that seemingly counters the earlier mentioned homogenization critique. The division between *us* and *them* that is still present in initiatives focusing on integration gives way to an inclusive approach that—as the word expresses it—includes all (Booth and Ainscow 1998). Divisions are avoided, as they may give cause to different treatments and subsequently to discrimination and/or ethnocentrism. In the current discourse, inclusion heralds a new era in which all are fundamentally equal. Or, as it is defined on the UNESCO website:

Inclusive education is based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. Focusing particularly on *vulnerable and marginalized groups*, it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual. The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is *to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion*. (own italics) (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2009)

The conceptualization of “discrimination” is very interesting here. In the past it referred to “giving a distinguishing judgement” in an esthetical, moral, or intellectual respect. An “undiscriminating” person lacked the power of discernment. Nowadays, the power of discernment is still valued. Yet, in a positive sense it is rather related to the concept “critical (power)” (cf. the Greek κρινω: to separate, decide). “Discrimination,” on the other hand, still requires an ability to make distinctions, but is foremost presented as something undesirable, as it is associated with racism, unequal treatment, and injustice (Dalrymple 2007). The meaning of this concept has not only shifted, moreover, it is put in an ethical context: “discrimination” implies a position of desirability towards the distinctions that are made and as such it *has* acquired a negative connotation. Inclusion explicitly breaks with all forms of discrimination, encompassing the distinction between *us* and *them*. All are to be included, and thus social cohesion is fostered. This view expresses a universal right to education. All children have the right to participate in the educational system, whatever their ethnicity, nationality, or residence status. Without going deeper into the discussion to what extent this goal is realized in different European countries so far, the inclusive approach clearly aims at removing distinctions and aims to provide opportunities for all.

The question that remains now is whether and in what sense homogenization is still at work in the inclusive view once the distinction between *us* and *them* has disappeared. Above, attempts to homogenize people were explained as expressions of fear towards the unexpected and the unknown, i.e., towards what may change the current state of affairs. That makes this question extremely interesting for education, as (possible) “change” plays an important role in educational practices, whatever the perspective one takes. In what follows, the leading question will be whether and how “homogenization” is or should be still at work in inclusive education initiatives.

Going back to the UNESCO definition of inclusive education, the focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups is very remarkable. It seems to express the opinion that starting from “all are equal” does not take away the need to define groups when adopting an inclusive policy. UNESCO defines seven “target groups” considering inclusive education: street children, child workers, child soldiers, children with disabilities, indigenous people, Roma children, and rural people (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2009). I will now focus on the Roma children, considering the focus of this chapter on irregular migrants. This case seems to be particularly interesting, as many Roma live in an irregular status—which has, some even argue, become part of their cultural identity; and as their willingness to become part (“to be included”) of other local communities is often far from evident, which brings along additional educational challenges. Starting from the finding that as many as 50 % of Roma children in Europe fail to complete primary education, UNESCO urges for interventions directed at this particular group. The intentions are laudable: Roma children should be able to exercise the right to participate in the school system just like other children. Potential barriers should be taken away. This implies initiatives such as changing the legislation, developing a positive attitude towards Roma people in the

schools, creating participation possibilities in decision-making processes, and moreover the empowerment of Roma people to advocate themselves (e.g., through training programs). Summarizing, one could say that everything has to be done to “include” Roma children in the educational systems that are present in different European countries. An enabling policy that offers opportunities to empower and emancipate oneself is developed. Focusing on particular target groups is only necessary up to the extent that the ideal of inclusion is not yet realized.

Although the proposed initiatives may sound like humble pie, it might be interesting to have a look at the presuppositions of this view. Divisions are no longer made on the basis of their legal status. Moreover, the distinction between *us* and *them* in any (other) sense seems to be abolished. Homogenization seems to be absent. “All children are considered to be fundamentally equal” and that is the starting point of inclusive education. But is this so? And moreover, is it desirable?

A starting point to answer the latter question (that might go against the grain with many, as “equality” is often considered univocally positive) is brought forward by Roma people themselves in concrete situations. Maybe, the profound disinterest that many social workers encounter when trying to convince Roma to send their children to school should be taken more seriously. The observation that school often “does not make sense” to Roma is easily explained in terms of a lacking information and insight in how the school system works or in terms of discrimination. But the latter may be more than an expression of possible barriers in a current state of affairs. To some people, the idea of schooling itself may not make any sense at all. That possibility forces the inclusive idea to show its true face. The sense and importance of schooling for all children is not questioned fundamentally in the current discourse about inclusive education. The distinction between *us* and *them* is overcome under the guise that it is up to “us” to search our own heart and take the responsibility to “include” the other. Still, the basic idea is one of including, i.e., to make the “other” become part of “us.” Moreover, the conception of quality that is implicit in talking about a “quality education for all” seems to be self-evident.

What is at stake in the discussion is not whether schooling makes sense or not. Rather, it is about the self-evidence of the desirability of “schooling as it is” for all. This becomes very clear in the areas of intervention formulated by UNESCO: all is done to offer (participation) opportunities for Roma people, on the assumption and the expectation that these people are *willing* to participate. Opening up the possibility that this might not be the case shows how homogenization is still at work within the inclusive view, albeit in a different way than it was before. The “us vs. them” has made place for a “we are all one.” The “them” seems to have disappeared at the cost of an “us” that exceeds all boundaries. We are willing to include all, but not to accept another perspective. Inclusive education *should* not only include all, it *must* include all—in the child’s best interest. The next step might then be to blame the parents who do not take up their responsibility (i.e., their duty) to make use of what is offered. To some extent, this is quite understandable: parents cannot keep their children from enjoying the rights that are attributed to them. Yet, there is more at stake here. Who is not willing to participate in inclusive education is regarded as obstructive to the realization of the right to education for all. Thus, the right to education is equated with subscribing to the paradigm of inclusive education.

Coming back to the question whether homogenization is still at work in inclusive education, the answer seems to be a clear “yes.” The definition of Blommaert en Verschueren of “homogeneity as the abnormalisation of the foreigner as the problematisation of diversity” (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998, p. 147) is no longer tenable though. The current homogenization in inclusive education works through the *normalization* of the foreigner. Diversity (e.g., on the cultural or ethnic level) is no longer seen as a problem, but rather denied to avoid possible forms of discrimination. The discourse on diversity no longer focuses on differences between groups. Differences only matter at the individual level, when the aim is to realize a qualitative education for all, i.e., an education that fits individual needs. This tailor-made education is shaped through an extensive amount of initiatives: from personalizable digital learning environments to “care coordinators,” everything is put in force nowadays to address personal needs in the learning process.

The inclusive paradigm reminds us that individuals are not reducible to a group (e.g., culture, ethnicity, residence status, etc.) they belong to. These “groups” are value loaded categorizations that are socially constructed, which indeed implies risks of undesirable forms of discrimination. What is left after deconstructing these (social) groups is the particularity of the individual. In the end we are all unique and irreducible to any social category that is “benchmarking” us. Without wanting to question the truth value of this view, it may be a concern whether one finds fertile soil for education in such an image solely. The factual reality that we indeed *are* all different from one another is crucial for thinking about education. But of equal importance is the insight that educational practice is by definition normative and value loaded, as a conception of what is more or less desirable is implied in every human interaction. That does not justify former practices, nor does it refute the discrimination critique that is formulated by inclusion advocates. But it does imply that the (factual) uniqueness of every individual may be necessary but is clearly insufficient for educational practice.

Individuals live in communities and they share common beliefs and practices. And apart from the ethical concern with the individual, education is about the initiation in these social beliefs and practices too. Then, the homogenization in “we are all the same in that we are all different” becomes problematic again. Individuals cannot be reduced to a group they belong to, but neither can they be reduced to their unicity as an individual. From an educational perspective, shared practices with other people within a community *do* matter. Roma people are a preeminent example here. These children cannot just be “included” in an educational system that is unfamiliar to their social practices and which does not make any sense to them. “Empowering” the Roma may be a step beyond integration; it does not express a readiness to doubt the (universal) rightness of *us* and our social practices.

The limits of the inclusive paradigm come to light in this contradictory situation. To include everyone paradoxically implies that one imposes her opinion to the other. This is to a certain extent unavoidable: escaping from this paradox is impossible as one cannot apply other criteria than her own. The possibility to do justice to the other appears to be limited. If one is willing to question herself and to come as much as possible towards the other, the consciousness of these criteria is a

first step. An openness towards (new) concepts, criteria, and categorizations is moreover required. Qualitative data on the social practices of other people may be helpful to achieve this consciousness and to broaden one’s own perspective, which may finally lead to a certain level of “understanding” the other (Smeyers 2007).

Broadening the Idea of Understanding: On the Social Practices of Irregular Migrants

This chapter focused on the question how “irregular migrants” are being framed both from a policy and a research perspective, mainly drawing attention to the predominant focus on the intent to count and quantify the people that are concerned. The focus on numbers and estimations in research expresses the need of policy makers to get a hold over the state of affairs. Although it concerns people who differ in many senses and who are dealing with very divergent problems and living circumstances, they are all homogenized under the same denominator. Irregular migrants are thereby mostly defined in negative terms: people who do *not* have legal documents, who are *not* granted a refugee status, and who *cannot* rely on different kinds of social support. They seem to be the remnants of all kinds of minorities that fall between the gazes of the social welfare state. It was argued that the situation is somewhat different at first sight within the area of education, where inclusion initiatives are growing. In the inclusive discourse homogenization is still at work, yet in a less obvious and more subtle way than it was before. The case of Roma proved to be helpful in understanding that homogenization; as people with a very particular cultural identity, they frequently oppose to “being included” and give expression to the impossibility of an outside position with respect to the inclusive paradigm. But what is left now? Does this imply that inclusion is by definition undesirable or that we should put educational systems as they are conceived of between brackets?

At least some suggestions can be put forward to help policy makers in their attempts to “do justice” to irregular migrants. First of all, homogenization is not by definition bad or wrong. Sometimes people want to belong to a group as a means to confirm their own identity. Again, reference can be made to Roma people who often seem to confirm the distinction between “us” (the *Roma* people) and “them” (the *gadje* or non-Roma people) rather than blurring it. From the perspective of policy makers, “grouping” people cannot be avoided; it is often desirable or even required to deal with particular problems. Earlier, reference was made to the danger that this kind of relevant differences may vanish to the background when focusing on the irregular legal status. The remaining question is what is “relevant” in the latter and what is not. That brings us to a second suggestion. To answer the question which distinctions are relevant for what purpose, different kinds of research are required. Estimating numbers is certainly not a meaningless activity. Yet, to be able

to make proper judgements on what problems, characteristics, or resemblances are “relevant.” at least a certain level of “understanding” of social situations has to be achieved. Qualitative research—i.e., research that is looking for “meaning”—may then be of great help. The size of a problem or phenomenon can be measured and that is relevant to gain an insight in the scope of the required initiatives. But besides this, “understanding” problems or phenomena implies looking for how those are socially constructed, what meaning people give to them, and how they relate to different social practices. This “understanding” forms a necessary condition to make well-considered choices on which “groups” are desirable to be distinguished for a purposive and conscious policy.

The issue of what legitimizes the dividing lines to mark out particular target groups—in this case irregular migrants and Roma—has now been approached from different angles. In the cases of both irregular migrants and Roma, it turned out to be difficult not only to demarcate clear boundaries between who does and does not belong to the group at stake but also to identify specific characteristics. For irregular migrants, some residence statuses are not only fuzzy (in that it is unclear whether they should be classified as of irregular or regular status), but legal conditions may vary over various countries and over time too, which implies that no fixed criteria can be identified. Similarly, one could argue that linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and religious commonalities cannot be deemed characteristic for all Roma. At first sight, the aim to give “recognition” to people, including their particularities, seems to disappear from the picture with this homogenization critique. But such a view is incorrect. Quite the reverse, it opens opportunities to develop a different approach focusing on social practices, the starting point of which is an ethical sensitivity and responsiveness towards the people and situations at stake.

According to Winch (1958) social science has to engage itself in understanding human practices. In suggesting this he draws from the later Wittgenstein such ideas as “following a rule,” “human shared practices,” and “what it makes sense to say.” Invoking Wittgenstein, Winch draws attention to the fact that one cannot make a sharp distinction between “the world” and “the language in which we try to describe the world,” and argues that it is therefore wrong to say that the problems of philosophy arise out of language rather than out of the world: “Because in discussing language philosophically we are in fact discussing what counts as belonging to the world. Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world” (Winch 1958, p. 15). As has been argued throughout this chapter, the relevance of conceptual enquiries into what it makes sense to say should therefore not be underestimated. Words are to be understood in terms of their use in the lives of those who deploy them. Having a language and the notions that go along with that, such as meaning and intelligibility, are logically dependent for their sense on social interaction between people. Turning back to our case, it is shown that recognizing the individuality of, e.g., Roma may imply something else than “calling them by their name” or “revealing and affirming their positive characteristics.” More likely, it requires us to be responsive to who

they are. That does not require that differences are stressed, nor that these are denied or to be overcome. The answer to the questions “what needs to be done?” and “how to go on?” with Roma issues may be one in terms of paying more or less attention to particular group differences; but that is not necessarily so and especially not in an unequivocal or universal way. While in some contexts and policy areas it seems desirable to create a space for people to identify with being Roma, this may not be the case elsewhere. Consequently, “recognition” does not require any sort of particularization. That is only one out of many possible answers to the situations at stake. Rather, the pedagogy proposed here is inspired by ethical sensitivity, responsiveness, and centralization of the questions “how to go on?” and “what needs to be done?”.

From “Knowledge on the Case” To “Knowing How to Go On”

In educational research what is at stake is the understanding of a particular reality brought to the fore by language: this presupposes that this reality can be understood and moreover that its intelligibility can at least partially be made explicit. The core of the conception of language, which marks Wittgenstein’s later work, is that in the context of social practices, any attempt to say something is always partial and is always one-sided. No way of speaking, no doctrine whatsoever can control cultural practices and thus liberate us from the restlessness and uncertainty of human existence, of the search for meaning in our lives. He points to the fact that what we do can never be completely transparent and that it is always characterized to some extent by arbitrariness. Thus, it becomes clear that in what we say we bear witness to what we long for, but also to what we are not certain of, such as how we try to express ourselves or be coherent (Wittgenstein 1953, 1969).

The conceptualization of social (and political) problems therefore demands an ever-renewed rethinking of reality using similar instruments. To think again can only mean to think from a different point of view about what one is trying to understand (and perhaps change). The more general question of what is at stake when dealing with social problems shifts to what is at stake for someone. In order to grasp what matters to a person, it is necessary to obtain an insight into how she makes sense of things. That does not only imply recognition of someone as an emotional being but also a sufficient understanding of her social practices. This is the horizon of meaning from which she gives sense to the things she is doing and to how she stands in the world: it defines “the rules obeyed” which are constitutive for these practices. But these rules are not fixed. In educational terms, initiation into practices is not a predetermined process. Initiation is not intended to result in a reproduction of social practices, though there are some “conservative” elements. Neither is the process of initiation relativistic; rather, what one is initiated into shapes and defines a practice which in its turn continues to be adapted and transformed. The learning processes concerned in initiation thus unavoidably

imply a form of transformation (see Smeyers and Burbules 2006)—which should not be seen however as an end state.

This process of transformation is of the utmost importance for education. Practices are not fixed entities, and therefore knowledge about these will by definition be partial and temporary. But from the focus on “what needs to be done” and “how to go on,” it follows that an investigation of what exists is only a starting point. The questions here at stake relate to what characterizes initiation processes: what are the limits and the possibilities to go on? The conceptual framework of (education as initiation into) practices offers particular opportunities to do so. It provides a language and framework to take a step beyond how these are usually approached and inspires an alternative approach. In that position, knowledge about the present differences cannot suffice; what is required is the kind of understanding that is helpful to go on. Of course, alternative interpretations or positions could have been chosen. Emancipatory approaches or critical theory, for example, would bring up other elements and draw attention to aspects that here remain unnoticed and vice versa. That is unavoidably so, as various stances stress other facets, approach these from different angles, and may lead to different conclusions. Recalling Wittgenstein, none of these positions can claim comprehensive superiority, as the extent to which they are right depends on presuppositions that ultimately are to be accepted or not and for which no conclusive arguments can be given. Still, it is argued that the stance taken offers an alternative to more classic approaches to the issues under investigation. Centering on the question “how to go on?” may be a fruitful way to deal with the differences at hand, which put common ways to deal with differences to the test.

Thus, going back to quantitative estimations of irregular migrants, these may indeed provide valuable contributions to mapping a current state of affairs. Notwithstanding large methodological and conceptual problems, as well as the unavoidable vagueness of such numbers, they may at least offer some support in estimating the scope of the phenomenon at stake. As do many other forms of (quantitative, but to a large extent this also counts for qualitative) scientific research, these numbers add to “knowledge on the case.” The homogenization critique points at some more fundamental objections, however, and clarifies how this way of approaching social reality—particularly in the area of education—unavoidably transforms this reality. It does so both at the level of the estimations informing policy and at the level of the proposed strategies and outcomes of these policies. More importantly, it does so in a particular way. In that sense, the contribution of (quantitative) approaches producing “knowledge on the case” is not only limited to the provision of a first step in the quest for answers to the more fundamental question “how to go on?”, it also alludes to the desirability of a particular direction to “go on.” An interpretive account is thus not merely an additional feature of some forms of qualitative research or a mind game of philosophers. Rather, it should be at the heart of every social scientific endeavor. That will also imply further crystallization of the position of the researcher and more specifically the delimitation of degrees and ways of involvement and

engagement. In the end, this is at the heart not only of science but also of the question “how to go on?”: to question the world around us as well as ourselves and to investigate how we relate to it and keep doing so. Though knowledge may necessarily be the beginning, it cannot leave us to indulge ourselves in the feeling of complacency that this is all we, as researchers and educators, need to acquire or achieve. Indeed, it pushes us in the direction of making it our business to know how to go on. And I modestly hope that this initiation may in its turn induce forms of transformation in a particular direction and as such point to new perspectives on “what is possible” beyond “what is.”

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Methods for Stock Estimates

Approach	Data sources	Method	Estimation technique	Main idea of calculation
Direct approaches	Based on immigration enforcement data	Multiplier methods	Simple multiplier	Estimation of total with a simple multiplier based on derived or estimated ratio of “dark field” vs. “clear field”
			Capture-recapture/ repeated capture	Estimation based on probabilistic function derived from multiple recaptures of individuals in sample
			Matching of registers	Estimation based on implied non-registration in two or more individually matched registers
			Random effect mixed modelling approach	Estimation using statistical regression model assuming comparable apprehension rates of legal/illegal residents with statistical adjustment for random effects

(continued)

Approach	Data sources	Method	Estimation technique	Main idea of calculation
	Based on administrative statistics	Methods of self-identification	Evidence based on regularisation data	Inferences on the size and composition of irregular migrant stock prior to regularization from data on applications for and grants of regularizations
			Using data on status adjustments over time	Inferences derived from data on changes in residence status after a period of irregular residence
	Based on surveys	Survey methods	Direct survey methods	Reconstruction of a “random sample” of regular and irregular migrants through a re-weighting of the probability of contacts
			Snowball sampling methods	Estimation using chain referral methods to obtain a sample of persons not registered vs. persons registered
			Respondent driven sampling	Recruitment of interviewees through peers and incentive system leads to equilibrium sample of respondents after several recruitment waves which is independent from original sample and can be analyzed statistically
	Indirect approaches	Based on census/registers	Residual methods	Differences census results—legal immigration data
Simple comparison of various registers				Indirect estimation based on a comparison of two or more registers with data on the same target population
Demographic methods			Use of birth/death rates	Inferences on demographic subgroups based on the comparison of real and expected birth or death rates

(continued)

Approach	Data sources	Method	Estimation technique	Main idea of calculation
	Based on census/registers/demographic data	Expected population methods	Comparison of census/emigration data and immigration statistics	Indirect estimation of illegal resident population from comparison of emigration estimates with data on legal immigrants at destination
	Based on administrative statistics	Flow-stock methods	Calculating the stock through flow figures	Using estimated inflow and duration of stay indicators to estimate steady-state stock of illegal residents
	Based on complementary data sources and estimates	Indirect inferences	Using information on correlated phenomena as basis of calculation	Making inferences on subgroups of irregular foreign residents on the basis of indirectly related phenomena and estimates such as irregular work, sector-specific demand for irregular services, school attendance or health services (e.g., inference of share and size of irregular foreign workers from econometric estimates on the shadow economy)
	Based on surveys of “key informants”	Subjective estimation/indicators methods	Expert surveys	Survey of key informants on their assessments of sizes, ratios and characteristics of target population
			Delphi surveys	Anonymous multiple round survey of key informants mediated by researcher to attain convergence of opinion
Combined approaches	Based on small scale surveys	Window/postal code method	Small scale study + use of regression analysis	Extrapolation of estimates derived from intense local study with regression analysis
	Based on expert opinions	Localized Delphi	Delphi method + use of regression analysis	Extrapolation of estimates derived from localized Delphi study with regression analysis

(continued)

Approach	Data sources	Method	Estimation technique	Main idea of calculation
	Adjustment to surveys/census data	Non-threatening survey design	Direct survey method + randomized response/3-cards method + residual method	Statistical inferences from employer survey using randomized response method and inferences about share of irregular migrants in sample survey using non-threatening survey questions combined with residual estimation results

Source: Kraler and Vogel (2008)

Appendix 2: Methods for Flow Estimates

Approach	Data sources	Method	Model	
Direct approaches	Based on border apprehension data	Multiplier methods	Simple multiplier	Estimation total illegal border crossings by applying estimated or derived multipliers on border apprehension data
Indirect approaches	Based on stock estimates	Differential methods	Net differences in stocks	Deriving estimated annual net increase of irregular migrants through changes in estimated stocks
	Based on entry-exit statistics	Residual method	Double entry card system	Deriving estimated number of overstayers through individual matching of entry-exit records

Source: Kraler and Vogel (2008)

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7.7 Interpreting Statistics in an English Team-Based Evaluation

Peter Bowbrick

*Teachers – except, of course, statistics teachers – sometimes commit the regression fallacy in comparing grades on a final examination with those on a midterm examination. They find that their competent teaching has succeeded, on the average, in improving the performance of those who had seemed at midterm to be in precarious condition. This accomplishment naturally brings the teacher keen satisfaction, which is only partially dampened by the fact that the best students at midterm have done somewhat less well on the final – an ‘obvious’ indication of slackening off by these students due to overconfidence. (Wallis, W.A. and H.V. Roberts, **Statistics – a new approach**, Methuen, London 1957.)*

The Study

A team consisting of two educationalists, Professor Morwenna Griffiths and Dr. Tony Cotton, with me to do the statistics, evaluated a Department of Education and Science (central government) project for improving the results of selected schools. The time line and funding had been specified by the clients, who also stated the data availability and some of the analysis that must be done. This chapter, therefore, is concerned with drawing inferences in the common situation where time and money are major constraints, where the statistical analysis is only part of the team effort, and where the message communicated to the clients is important. Certainly it would have been carried out very differently as part of a well-funded PhD, and different statistical inferences might have been drawn, but the results would have come too late to affect what the clients did.

The Intensifying Support Pilot (ISP) was designed to offer a package of support and professional development to schools that had low achievement in literacy and mathematics and had made little progress in raising standards since the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, a central government “initiative.” From the start, the ISP had been fully integrated with the rest of the government

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Primary National Strategy. It aimed to draw together existing good teaching and learning practice. It was designed to raise standards and improve teaching and learning in the context of the school as a professional learning community. The program worked in partnership with the LEA (the local government education authority which runs the schools within its area) and the school. It was based on the cycle of audit, setting targets, action, and review. It was designed to support schools to establish self-sustaining systems.

The different players in the system were the main government department (the Department for Education and Science in London), the section in this department responsible for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the ISP management team working from London for this section, the LEAs, the “consultants” (who were experienced teachers working full time on delivering the support program to the schools within their LEA), the schools, the headteachers, the teachers and, of course, the pupils. All had an influence on our work, and all but the pupils drew inferences from our reports.

In the pilot round of the ISP, starting in May 2002. LEAs with a relatively high proportion of schools in the lowest attaining category on a national scale were identified. They were invited to join a programme under which more intensive support would be delivered by consultants to some of the schools within the LEA. We were appointed to evaluate the pilot in July 2003. In October 2003, an extension of the program to 76 further LEAs was started. We were then asked to expand the 2004 evaluation, first to see what happened to the schools that had been in the ISP pilot program when the support was no longer provided, and, second, to compare the current views of the schools in the second phase with the views that had been expressed by the pilot schools.

Aims of Our Evaluation

Our evaluation examined the delivery of the ISP in the first phase, identifying what seemed to have worked and what problems were encountered. We were also to identify any measurable results and, specifically for the second (2005) evaluation, the impact on attainment in national curriculum tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. (There were state-run tests at Key Stage 1, the first year after the Foundation (infants) stage and again 4 years later at Key Stage 2. Schools were judged on the percentage of pupils reaching a certain level in the Key Stage tests.)

In both stages we were required to carry out statistical surveys and do statistical analysis of test results. That was largely my responsibility.

The evaluation did make substantial use of the statistical analysis to determine whether it could be shown that the ISP had in fact improved the educational attainment of schools in the program. However, it did have much broader

objectives, which required an evaluation of changes in the teaching and administrative approaches. It required, therefore, a team approach.

The Clients' Own Survey

The clients carried out their own survey before our contract started. It was intended that LEA consultants would hand out the questionnaires during a meeting with the staff of a school and that the questionnaires would be filled in during that meeting. This was done by some consultants. In other cases the consultants sent questionnaires to the schools. In some schools nothing appears to have been done with the questionnaires. Indeed one school sent the questionnaires in, untouched. In other schools there was a small response.

This means that there are several forms of response bias. One is that schools dealing with certain consultants and certain LEAs either did not respond at all or had a low response rate. It is conceivable that these consultants and advisers were better or worse than the average, and so the results were biased. Another source of bias is where some teachers chose not to respond. These may have been teachers who were particularly critical of the pilot program. We do not know. The postal questionnaires were submitted later than the others and may reflect how people felt a month or two after the end of term and having rest, rather than at the end of a busy term like the others.

It is also apparent from an inspection of the returns that responses within a given school were surprisingly similar. It seems likely that when the questionnaire was presented to a group after that group had spent an hour identifying and discussing problems and achievements, they all would write down the problems and achievements discussed during that hour.

A disproportionate number of the responses came from a few LEAs where the survey was carried out as intended. In these LEAs there were responses from more schools, and there were more responses per school.

We did not think that anything could be done to remedy this by the time we saw the data. It seemed unlikely that the normal process of sampling the nonrespondents to see whether they were atypical would work. There had been a considerable delay since the survey took place, and perceptions had undoubtedly changed after the holidays. There was a high staff turnover, many of the staff would have moved on—possibly those most disaffected, possibly not. Response rates were likely to be very poor. It was felt, too, that the follow-up would be perceived as more paperwork and would be resented. We had no doubt too that any follow-up to the ISP survey would damage the mail survey we were to carry out.

One problem was that the questionnaire had not been piloted. For example, a large proportion of respondents misunderstood the question “What is your current teaching responsibility?” This meant that it was not possible to analyze the data by whether the teacher was a full-time class teacher, a headteacher, a subject coordinator, etc. It turned out that in most cases they had two or more areas

of responsibility. In fact, when all the combinations were allowed for, there were 119 different categories. Any analysis by responsibility would, therefore, have been seriously misleading.

The only value of this survey to our evaluation was that some of the written comments gave an indication of what issues we might ask about.

It is relevant that our clients were perfectly happy with their survey, and suggested that the biases could be ignored because there was a misunderstanding about how the questionnaires were to be distributed.

Our Mail Surveys

We were asked to do three mail surveys. In the review of Phase I there was a mail survey of the headteachers involved in the ISP and a mail survey of the consultants delivering the ISP in the LEAs (that is to say not the ISP staff operating from head office in London). In the review of the second phase, there was a mail survey of the headteachers of the schools which joined the ISP in this phase.

I had carried out a lot of surveys when I first started in research many years ago, trying to be formally correct in carrying them out so the results would be valid. I came to realize though, that, for my type of research, surveys were an expensive way of putting numbers on what I knew already. The open-ended depth interviews which start the process of identifying what the survey is to be about and what questions should be asked usually made the survey redundant—either they had told me what I needed to know, or they had told me that the real question was something I had not thought of.

Mail surveys take a lot of time to administer. A survey would normally take place over more than 4 months, doing it according to the standard research protocols, so instant results are not possible. This makes them extremely unattractive when I am doing my own administration, or where I am working to a time limit. In my consultancy abroad, my statistically literate employers would not let consultants do surveys. In Britain I note that some consultancy firms routinely carry out mail surveys. The advantages to them are, first, that the surveys can be carried out by cheap clerical staff; second, that the analysis can be done very quickly using SPSS; third, that few clients will know or care if costs are cut by omitting some steps of the standard survey protocols; fourth, that this analysis can produce an enormous number of tables and graphs to give the clients the assurance that a lot of work has been done; and fifth, that publishing programs can present the tables and graphs very prettily, if not comprehensibly. This is very impressive to clients not trained in statistics, who may think that these tables and graphs alone justify the consultancy fee.

In our evaluation none of these considerations applied. The terms of reference required that we do a mail survey.

Our Survey

Surveys provide a lot of the data used for drawing inferences, and there is a tendency to accept that they are grossly inaccurate and then treat the figures as though they are 100 % correct. Sampling error is usually quoted in reports, because it can be calculated quite easily, but the other errors are usually forgotten—questionnaire bias, bad questionnaire design, interviewer bias, respondent bias, recording error, calculation error, and aggregation error. We tried to bear these in mind in drawing inferences.

Response Rate

Our major worry was that we might not get a big enough response to draw any conclusions. We did not know, or care, what might be acceptable to the clients. I have seen a British government department express itself delighted with a mail survey that had 10 % response, though these 10 % were obviously completely atypical in this way at least, and a quick glance at the results showed that they held extreme and incoherent views (Bowbrick 2012). We do not share the government's view of what is an acceptable response.

It was clear from the clients' own survey that nonresponse could be a serious problem, invalidating the whole study. It was clear from our team's initial interviews that the headteachers were swamped with paperwork—they were dealing with up to 30 central government "initiatives," like the IPS, and had to handle the enormous amount of administration imposed on them from above, as well as running the school. It was also clear that the consultants running the process were swamped with paperwork from headquarters.

This meant that the questionnaire had to be very short and obviously easy to fill in. The questions had to be clear, so there could not be the slightest confusion about what they meant. The questions had to be obviously relevant—we could not expect the questionnaire to be returned if questions were perceived to be silly. We had to leave space for the respondents to put in their own comments, both to encourage them to reply and because it was an important part of the study. We had to guarantee anonymity—our guarantee would carry more weight because we were operating from a university. These considerations were important in preparing the questionnaires and in piloting them.

The survey covered all LEAs and schools in the ISP. The questionnaire was mailed to headteachers, project consultants, and LEA personnel. The questions were designed to elicit views about each of the themes and elements in ISP. Respondents were asked to answer each question on a five-point scale and were then invited to comment on the reasons behind their response.

The clients provided us with lists of all three populations together with addresses and contact details. Surprisingly, these were faulty: 6 % of the schools on the list had been closed, and 12 % of the consultants were uncontactable, because, for instance, they had changed jobs.

The questionnaires were sent out in reply-paid envelopes. Two reminders were sent to nonrespondents. In the two cases where there had been a low response rate from an LEA, follow-up telephone calls were also used, and the opportunity was used to ask deeper questions, addressing issues that had arisen.

In the evaluation of the first phase, we got the following results.

		No.	%
Number of questionnaires sent out to heads		132	100
Number of replies		117	89
Of which	Schools closed, etc.	8	6
	Unusable	4	3
	Usable	105	80
Number of questionnaires sent out to consultants, etc.		49	100
Number of replies		33	67
Of which	Not contactable	6	12
	Not usable	3	6
	Usable	24	49

The responses from the initial posting, the reminder, and the second reminder were compared and no significant differences could be observed. It was concluded that the response from the headteachers was satisfactory and that it could be taken to be representative of the population as a whole.

We were not happy with the response from the consultants. The response was a lot lower than I would expect and much lower than we got from the headteachers when using the same methods. We had expected a higher response if anything, because the consultants were employed specifically to deliver the ISP, while the ISP was just one part of a busy headteacher's job. In our evaluation, therefore, we had to bear in mind the possibilities that, for instance, the consultants might be so overloaded with paperwork that it was too much to spend a few minutes on a survey, or that they were extremely unhappy about their work and were frightened of making any comment that might be traced back to them: it might affect future employment with ISP or the LEA.

Generation of Questions

It is standard practice to do depth interviews to find out what questions should be asked, and how they should be asked. Our questions were drawn up after the team members had had in-depth discussions with people in the clients' headquarters, with field consultants, and with headteachers and teachers. They were then piloted with people in the target populations.

For a later survey, depth interviews in selected LEAs, we were able to pilot in LEAs which would not be covered.

Drawing Inferences

The questions had a range of objectives.

The fundamental one was to provide crude answers for the evaluation. Did the consultants and headteachers think that the ISP was working well or not? Which elements did they think were working well or not? This provided the headline information for the Department's public relations: yes, most of them thought it was working well.

The crude figures could then be broken down in the analysis. Analyzing by LEA (local government area), for example, showed big differences between perceptions, suggesting that the stated success of the ISP depended very much on the competence and charisma of the individual consultant responsible for that area.

The first inference was that there was some reason why we had a very low response from the consultants, compared to headteachers, but we could not know what it was. Our response was for the team members to do what they could to identify reasons, using depth interviews and telephone interviews at the later, interview, stage of our study. Statistical methods were inappropriate when we did not know what questions to ask or what the perceived problems were. That is to say, the temptation to draw conclusions directly from the survey results had to be resisted.

In drawing inferences it was important to remember the importance of the charisma of individual consultants. This was stressed to us repeatedly by the ISP management and came up again and again in the team's interviews. We observed a meeting held by London-based ISP staff for the consultants which reminded us of a revival meeting, whipping up a crowd's enthusiasm. This does raise the possibility that the people who reported themselves to be strongly in favor of ISP were in fact reflecting the fact that the LEA consultant had inspired them with enthusiasm. Some consultants clearly aroused this enthusiasm with a lot of headteachers, some only with a few. We did not have the time or money to see whether those LEAs or schools which had been most enthusiastic about ISP did actually produce the best results, or whether there was any relationship between the replies of individual consultants and the results in the LEAs in which they worked. The data on results was not available in time. Some questions still remain, therefore. Would having any sympathetic listener who was willing to listen to problems have had the same effect as the ISP (as some people suggested in interviews)? Would having any person with charisma have the same effect, regardless of technical competence? The design of the ISP did not let us draw any inferences on this.

An important purpose for us, as evaluators, was to find out what aspects of the ISP were disliked by consultants and by headteachers and what aspects they did not think were working well. This was addressed both by specific questions and by the comments that the respondents were invited to give. The results could then be addressed later in our depth interviews.

There turned out to be a fundamental disagreement with the clients on this, a major difference in interpretation. They were of the view that if most people

thought part of the system was performing well (as they did), we could ignore the fact that perhaps a quarter thought it was performing very badly, and we should omit any mention of this quarter from the discussion in the report. We, however, thought it important to find out more about what was potentially a major problem running through the system as a whole: it was not satisfactory that a quarter to half of the headteachers were unhappy with an element of the program.

Partly as a result of this difference in interpretation, they were reluctant to have the critical comments published in the report, though they were happy to give great prominence to any favorable ones. (I discuss below the suppression of unwelcome results in general.) The fact that a problem had not yet impacted on most people does not mean that it never will. The fact that a problem had not yet been noticed by most people does not mean that it is not already impacting on everyone. Indeed, it has been my experience when doing evaluations and investigations that the key fact that explains all the inconsistencies is often given by just one respondent.¹ In drawing inferences from such information, sampling method, response rates, and statistical reliability are irrelevant: someone has pointed out that there is a potential problem, and we should investigate. The evidence to draw conclusions will be found elsewhere.

Most of the analysis of the surveys did not impact on the evaluation. The tables were presented in a format that would facilitate the management of ISP in the future, by the ISP management and by the LEA consultants trying to find out what was happening in their own areas. It was clear that the tables would have to be presented as simply as possible for an audience not trained in statistics, and that we could have no control on how they chose to interpret them.

¹ I struck oil this way when I was evaluating a large irrigation project designed to plant a million apple trees in Pakistan. I got stuck in Peshawar for 3 days, waiting for a plane to take me out. I saw the people I had to on the first day. To pass the time I spent the next 2 days interviewing other people, people who might have had a different perspective. I hired a rickshaw for a day and went from office to office. I enjoy people and this was a lot more fun than sitting in a hotel bedroom. I learned a lot about things that interested me, though not very relevant to my project. Eventually someone let slip the fact that in the Tribal Territory of the North West Frontier, it was not the Department of Agriculture who distributed apple trees, as in the rest of the country; it was the Department of Forestry. I rushed to see them and found that they had handed out a million apple trees in the past 5 years. How could this be? All the project documents I had been given had masses of statistics and there was no mention of these million trees. Nobody I had met in the provincial or national Departments of Agriculture had mentioned them. It turned out that the Tribal Territories are not fully incorporated into Pakistan. They will be when they pay taxes, but this will not happen until a woman can walk from one end of the village to the other in perfect safety—which is not likely to happen for years. In the meantime, the Tribal Territories are treated as semi-independent. Their statistics are not included in the Pakistan statistics, but in a separate volume.

This little bit of information blew the project out of the water. It had only appeared to be profitable because there was a shortage of apples in the country, so apples got four times the price of oranges. This extra one million apple trees plus the million trees of the project I was evaluating would create an oversupply and push the price of apples as low as that of oranges or lower, so the whole project was uneconomic. This one interview saved \$50 million directly and hundreds of millions in wasted investment by farmers. But the result was entirely unexpected. Nobody I had met before had any inkling of this, and nor did I.

Did the ISP Have Any Effect?

The most important questions our team had to ask in the evaluation were, “Did the ISP have any effect?” and “If it did improve outcomes, by how much?” If it had little or no effect, it was not worth continuing with.

For the quantitative aspect, obtaining the data was the first priority. As is always the case when examining a real-world situation, the team started without knowing what was relevant. The first step of our study was, therefore, to build up nonstatistical models on what was happening. The team produced a literature review and interviewed civil servants, the ISP management, consultants in the field, headteachers, and teachers. Once we had this information, we looked for the data to build a statistical model. We soon found that no statistics existed on many of the aspects that were obviously important and that many of the statistics that did exist were wrong or were wrong for our study. This is perfectly normal, but it means that a lot of thought is needed before constructing any statistical model. We had to tackle these problems before we could start drawing inferences.

Working Without Data

No statistics existed for most of the key factors, on inputs or outputs. This had to be taken seriously: it meant that it was not possible to create a statistical model that reflected our model of what was really happening.

We could of course build a model using the data that did exist. There is always a danger that you may leave out a factor because there are no statistics, because the statistics are unreliable, because no observations are recorded for it (which, as will be shown later, is far from saying that the factor does not exist or has not been observed), because the analysis of the statistics that are available is too difficult, or because it would make the model too difficult. There is also the opposite temptation, to include irrelevant data because they exist. It takes a certain firmness to refuse to use some of the vast amount of information produced as a by-product of administration. There may also be a temptation to put all the data that do exist into the computer without prior constraints, to run random regressions, and to include everything that produces a good “fit” into the model. These temptations are particularly strong when one is under pressure to start the analysis as soon as possible, or when the output is an academic paper rather than a recommendation for action.

In this evaluation, lack of data was largely because it is an area of rapid change or great confusion, which is exactly why there was a particularly strong need to investigate it very carefully indeed.

In a sense, leaving out key factors because the data are not available is like removing a leg or two from a chair. Putting in factors purely because the data are available is rather like adding a leg or two, pointing up or sideways rather than touching the floor. That is to say one removes any security from the chair, the other adds expense and complications without increasing security.

Our team worked closely together to limit these dangers. The other team members told me what their work showed them were the key factors, and I told them which areas could not be covered by the statistical analysis and must be addressed in their interviews.

Non-reporting of Selected Observations

The dangers of an incomplete model are particularly likely to arise out of non-reporting of selected observations or of a class of observations. This usually happens because the people responsible for primary data collection fail to report certain observations, but it may happen where selected observations are removed during the data processing or analysis. An example of this bias is where scientists report the yields of a new strain of wheat on those test plots where it gives an increase in yield, but not elsewhere. They may justify this to themselves on the grounds that low-yielding plots must have been affected by extraneous factors that were not observed, that, for instance, "They look as though they were damaged by windborne herbicide" or "Obviously this patch was damaged by white mold." Similar suppressions are common enough in the administrative procedures in the collection of much of the raw data of educational statistics. This is an example of deliberate suppression, though by people who believe that they are being perfectly honest.

Clearly, this suppression invalidates all the perfectly accurate observations in the experiment. The final result is wrong. It means that it will throw doubt on the correct result produced by normal methods. It also throws suspicion on all other statistics collected by the same organization. It changes the standard error as well as the mean.

In this study there was non-reporting of observations. Deliberate non-reporting to bias results is discussed below. The analysis was also handicapped by nonavailability of data when they were needed. It is difficult to understand, for instance, why full information on the percentage of pupils in a class reaching Level 4 at Key Stage 2 should be available, while the average score of the pupils in the class should not be available until months later: the same data are used with a very small difference in the calculation. Nevertheless, this lack of data seriously restricted our analysis, and the inferences we could draw.

In a later section I discuss some more general problems with the use of official data available.

Non-reporting of a Class of Observations

The best-known example of the non-reporting of a class of observations was the thalidomide affair. In the trials of this drug, there was full and accurate reporting of a wide range of phenomena. This showed thalidomide to be an extremely effective and useful drug with no harmful side effects on the patient. It was only after the

drug was released that it was found that it had very serious effects on the fetus of a pregnant patient. The failure to test for this, and the delay in recognizing it when it happened, was due to a weakness in the theory: it had not been realized that the fetus could be damaged by a drug administered to the mother.

There is a difference between (a) failing to notice that a category, such as “deformed babies” might be relevant, (b) failing to notice that a category such as “deformed babies” exists, (c) failing to report observations in that category, and (d) reporting that there were no occurrences in that category, rather than that no observations have been made. In educational statistics it is not usually clear which of these causes the lack of data or the blank in a statistical series. It is not always clear whether “. . .” or “n.a.” means that there was only a negligible quantity in the category or that no data were recorded. If the statistical table does not include a heading for a category such as “deformed babies,” it is hard to find out whether it is because of (a), (b), or (c) above. It may be because someone thought the category was unimportant or because the results looked suspect.

Working with Bad Data

Most non-statisticians ignore data errors when working with statistics. The more conscientious may quote the sampling errors, but not the other errors, and then proceed to use the data as though they were 100 % correct. When they receive statistics they ignore the caveats that the statisticians produced to accompany them. People with some statistical knowledge may run regressions or other models and, when they get a “reasonable,” fit take it as an indication that they were right to take these caveats and sampling errors as only an extremely unlikely theoretical possibility. It is common for them to report their results to three significant figures, accurate to one tenth of 1 %, and it is not rare to see them quote results to one part in a billion.

This does not mean that one should ignore all bad data and statistics. All data are in some way bad for any particular study, and ignoring them would mean relying on wild guesses instead, so the data and statistics must be analyzed rigorously, bearing in mind their weaknesses. This means that there are necessarily a lot of theoretical models and theoretical techniques that are useless in a particular study because they need more accurate data than does exist, or indeed than could ever exist, or because they need quite different data. If the models are used, they produce results that are wrong but have a quite spurious appearance of reliability because of the sophisticated models used.

In my first job I had to publish a monthly bulletin of statistics. I had to go into government and semi-state organizations, get hold of any information I could, and prepare it for publication. There were enormous errors due to the collection procedures and the way the raw data was processed in these organizations. The government policy was to publish them because they were the best we had. In spite of this, the figures looked completely authoritative once they were put into

print. However long the cautionary footnotes I put in, the statistics were used as though they were accurate. It is surprising how few statistics textbooks give more than a passing mention of this, perhaps a couple of pages suggesting that the raw data or the published statistics may be imperfect.

All statistical organizations, public or private, have to justify their existence to nonprofessionals. Nonprofessionals expect statistics to be accurate and they are likely to cut budgets if they find that the organization is producing figures that are wrong. As a result, organizations may be reluctant to admit that their figures are anything but perfect. There is a tacit agreement that statistical organizations do not criticize each other publicly—it is common for different organizations to produce completely different figures for the same phenomenon without mentioning each other's figures or mentioning that there are discrepancies, and I have seen one small organization publishing two series showing very different levels and opposite directions of movement over time for the same phenomenon, without anybody in the organization realizing the contradiction.

Researchers often use techniques that give a wholly spurious appearance of accuracy, because the nonprofessional does not understand that complete accuracy is impossible. For example, they quote four or five significant figures for statistics derived from data that are only accurate within 30 %. This is a falsehood. In fact, Morgenstern (1963) recommended that all statistics should be presented with only the number of significant figures justified by their accuracy. He suggested, tongue in cheek, that the enormous savings in printing costs would finance a major improvement in collection procedures.

We must start, therefore, with the assumptions that:

1. There is probably a large random or biased error. It can never be assumed that the error is constant, whether a constant sum, a constant percentage, or in a constant direction. Nor can the opposite be assumed, that there are random errors which will cancel each other out over time.
2. For most decisions we are not concerned with averages: we are concerned with changes at the margin, at what would happen if we put a few more resources into certain schools (as in this case), for instance. The margin is the difference between two figures, the results before and after the ISP, but each of these figures is subject to random and nonrandom errors. Even if the averages for the sector as a whole were very accurate, the figures for the margin, for the year-on-year changes in these selected schools, would be highly variable.

As the study progressed, we discovered more and more reasons to believe that there were random and biased errors which would make statistics for changes at the margin extremely unreliable. These are discussed below.

Noise

Computers have resulted in an information explosion. There is now a vast amount of information collected, often as a by-product of an administrative procedure. The

data may be made available, and statistics published, but they are of unknown provenance, reliability, and error. We do not know how the data were collected or processed, nor do we know the definitions used. This is just “noise.” It means nothing in itself, but it stops us from identifying, isolating, and using the meaningful information and from identifying gaps. Reliable and accurate statistics which are not relevant to our task must also be classified as “noise” for our purpose. The first, and most important, part of the task of interpretation is rejecting information which is noise.

Are Errors Constant?

A common reaction to the knowledge that the statistics are unreliable is to say “I know that the figures are wrong and are probably not within 20 % of the true figure. However, I am not interested in the average, but the change from year to year. The average may be wrong but the changes from year are right. I can still use them for trends, regressions, and correlations.” In effect, this is assuming that the error is constant. Depending on the specifications of the model, the implicit assumption may be that the error is a constant sum, a constant percentage, or even a constant power. Often one sees that in one part of a single model, a constant sum is implicitly used, in others, a constant percentage. The assumption is that the error is all a constant bias, or, sometimes, that the random errors cancel out. It assumes that there was no change in the bias over time. These assumptions have to be identified, and challenged, before interpretations are made.

For some reason, too, it is very easy to convince oneself that the results of an obviously unreliable survey become completely reliable if the survey is repeated year after year. Because the survey is carried out every year, researchers, including the statistically literate, have no hesitation in using the figures as being both perfectly accurate and strictly comparable from year to year. Perhaps the feeling is that the means (arithmetic? harmonic? geometric?) may be wrong but the changes will be meaningful, an assumption which is false, for reasons that will be discussed later.

In our evaluation this was particularly important. Since we were carrying out the evaluation before the intervention was complete, since we were measuring changes in test scores within 1 or 2 years of the intervention, and since data were not available immediately after the tests were run, we were, in effect, looking at year-to-year changes in test score. We were also concerned with changes at the margin. For reasons set out below, there were strong reasons to expect random and nonrandom fluctuations.

Some Models Are Sensitive to Bad Data

Morgenstern (1963) quotes an example from Milne (1949) to show that slight errors in specification and in input can cause enormous errors in output. He takes two equations:

$$\begin{aligned}x - y &= 1 \\x - 1.00001y &= 0\end{aligned}$$

which have the solution $x = 100,001$ and $y = 100,000$

The almost identical equations

$$\begin{aligned}x - y &= 1 \\x - 0.999999y &= 0\end{aligned}$$

have the solution $x = -99,999$ and $y = -100,000$

While this is an extreme example, you cannot know whether your model will produce similar results unless you test it with variations of the data within the limits of its error. It is possible that the errors might cancel out, but it is equally likely that they would multiply. The implication is that if you feed data with a small error into a complex mathematical model, you can expect to produce results with a large error. The more complex the model, the more likely it is that it will produce large errors in an unexpected direction.

This problem is often tackled by saying in the report, “This model is robust,” and scattering the word, “robust,” through the report, a technique that reduces awkward questions but does not solve the problem.

A lot of simplifying assumptions must be made to make a theoretical model workable. However, each explicit simplifying assumption necessarily introduces implicit assumptions which usually go unrecognized. The more simplifications are made, the greater the effect and the greater the danger.

It is often forgotten that the raw data have been aggregated and then further processed to produce a statistic. This mathematical aggregation and processing is part of the mathematical model when the statistic is used as an input into the model. In our study this hidden analysis proved crucial.

Available Statistics

Data Availability

The interpretation is strongly affected by the data available, and it is a truism that the result can be altered by deliberate or accidental suppression of certain data.

We were astonished to find the sheer quantity of data that could be amassed by a large government department in a rich country and even more astonished to find

how little of it was of any use to this study. Most of the professional statisticians, not least those I consulted when preparing for the present study, have a strong professional integrity which compels them to make available all they know of errors and mistakes in their output. They usually present a very full analysis in the technical appendices, and they are willing to discuss the basis of the figures I want to use and whether my use is valid. At the start of the evaluation I discussed the availability of statistics with statisticians from three LEAs and from the central government Department for Education and Science. They urged caution.

If data are collected and statistics produced by people who have not thought out clearly who is going to use the resulting statistics and what decisions they are going to use it for, it is probable that the wrong information will be collected, that it will be processed in a way that makes it inaccessible to the user, and that it is delivered long after the decision has been made (Bowbrick 1988). This is particularly common when the data are the by-product of administration. Often the definitions and methods used for collecting them and then processing them to produce published statistics may make the statistics unusable for many purposes.

In our evaluation, the only possible measure of whether there had been any impact (as defined in the terms of reference) was the tests carried out first at Key Stage 1 and then, 4 years later, at Key Stage 2. If the schools that adopted IPS had better results in these tests after a year using ISP, it was an indication that ISP might have had some effect.

The Pilot Sample

There are rules for carrying out an experiment to see if a pilot program is working. It would be normal, for example, to select schools by certain predetermined criteria and then to randomly select which of these schools were to be exposed to the program and which would be the untreated control group. It would be normal to do a before-and-after study. And it would be normal to try not to let other factors influence some schools and not the others. The United Nations and the World Bank have strict rules on Impact Studies (Clemens and Demombynes 2010; Angelucci and Di Maro 2010; Winters et al. 2011, 2010). The LEA statisticians volunteered the information that this had not been done in their LEA and that they had not been consulted in the design of the pilot.

When carrying out an experiment, it is normal to be very careful in selecting the subjects for the experiment. In an experiment such as the Pilot, it would be normal to specify the parent population, “All schools with less than 40 % of pupils reaching Level 4 at Key Stage 2” perhaps, and then randomly select schools from this population, so that the results would be representative of the population.

This was not done. First, the LEAs volunteered: they were not selected from a group of LEAs meeting the criterion of less than 40 % of pupils reaching Level 4 (or any other defined group). Nor were they randomly selected. The only group they had in common was, “All LEAs” and they were self-selected using different criteria—they may perhaps have been LEAs which were persuaded that the ISP

would help them be even better, or ones which were desperate to try any new system that might possibly be an improvement on the existing system.

For both the Pilot and the Follow On, individual LEAs used their own criteria for selection of the schools in their own area. These criteria reflected their own priorities, which in turn reflected the social, demographic, and economic situation in the individual LEA—and these vary enormously from LEA to LEA.

The Department for Education and Science meant the ISP to be used in schools which had particularly low performance, and the pilot study was meant to cover schools where fewer than half of the pupils achieved Level 4 at Key Stage 2. The LEAs chose completely different schools, schools which were not part of the intended parent population. Nearly half the schools selected for the pilot had already a better performance than this. The range was from 25 to 94 % achieving Level 4 in 2002 with a mean of 59 %. In one LEA, for example, three of the four schools had scores of more than 60 %. In another, 10 of 18 schools exceeded the 50 % mark, and four had scores of 78–93 %. In a third, 11 out of 16 schools exceeded the 50 % mark. What, then, was the pilot program examining? It was certainly not measuring the effect of the program on the target population.

Similarly, the LEAs selected schools according to their perception of individual headteachers and individual schools. Some chose schools where new headteachers who were perceived to be energetic reformers had just been appointed. Some avoided schools with new headteachers on the grounds that they would be fully occupied settling in. Some avoided schools which were obviously performing very badly but were perceived to be stressed enough without yet another “intervention.”

Headteachers informed us that they had to deal with 25–35 “interventions,” usually central government programs, some of which would require as much staff time and effort as the ISP did. The Pilot did not attempt to control for this or even to record which “interventions” were being implemented in each school. The particular mix of “interventions” varied from school to school, and a different mix applied to teachers at different levels. This raises the question of which “intervention” was responsible for any change recorded or, indeed, prevented any change.

Since the Pilot sample was not representative of any parent population, it was not possible to draw any inferences about what it meant for any group of schools except those actually in the Pilot. Certainly it could not be used to draw inferences about the impact on the specific group of schools that we were told it was designed to study. And it was not possible to do anything resembling an impact study meeting the internationally accepted standards.

Control Group

Obviously there must be some control group, or else it could be argued that all similar schools throughout the country had the same change in test scores whether or not ISP was applied, so we could ignore a fall in performance, for instance. It would be normal for a pilot study to identify the schools in the parent population, to pair similar schools, and then select which were to receive the treatment and which

were to be controls (though this is not a simple procedure). This was not done. There had been no selection of a control group before the ISP so we had to find one ex-post. We decided, for lack of credible alternatives, to use the schools that were selected for the second round as controls. That is to say, we were left with no alternative but to assume that a body of schools had been selected on one set of criteria as needing an intervention to improve performance, and that half of this selection had been selected at random to go into the first phase of ISP, and the rest of them to go into the second phase 2 years later. Unfortunately this was not how it was done. We know that the selection for the second phase was based on different criteria—the two sets of schools were different even in the years before the Pilot—and we have no idea what bias was introduced.

When we were asked to carry out an evaluation of the second phase, no such control existed as all of the initial selection had been incorporated into the program.

Accordingly, it is questionable whether any inferences could be drawn from schools and LEAs selected in this way.

Random Variation

The Key Stage test scores for any school varied a lot from year to year, for reasons quite unrelated to ISP. There are purely random elements in any test score. If the same test could be given to identical pupils on different days, we could expect different results. The wording of one year's tests may help some pupils understand, and reduce the score of pupils from some areas and pupils with a different language background. A school may get higher scores in one year than in another because there is a brighter, or otherwise different, group of pupils sitting the tests that year.

The results will be influenced by the competence of the teachers. The results could be changed dramatically because a better or worse teacher was in charge during the year of the test. The team were told that the underperforming schools had a higher level of turnover of teaching staff than other schools, and indeed, there were examples of three or more teachers being in charge of the KS2 class during the test year. There was also a high turnover of headteachers, which would have affected test results. No evidence was produced to support these assertions.

Other Variation

A lot of the schools in the ISP had a high level of pupils having English as an additional language (EAL), some with as many as 95 %. Some of these pupils had arrived as immigrants within a year of two of the test, some were born to recent immigrants, some were second- or third-generation British, with Polish or Punjabi, say, as the home language of a bilingual family, which is to say very different performances could be expected from schools with the same proportion of EAL pupils. There were no data on which was the case. The team was informed that

typically these pupils would perform badly in reading and writing at Key Stage 1. In some LEAs the previous experience was that these pupils made their big improvement in these subjects at secondary level, just after the Key Stage 2 tests. However, if they made the improvement slightly earlier, in primary schools, the schools which had these pupils at both levels of test would appear to be high-performing. If ISP could speed up this improvement, it would mean a sharp improvement in Key Stage 2 results compared with Key Stage 1, but we would have no way of knowing whether it altered Key Stage 3 results. It might have no effect at all.

It cannot be assumed that the pupils doing the Key Stage 1 tests are the same as the ones doing the Key Stage 2 tests 4 years later, so it cannot be assumed that any change in marks achieved are due to the school. Many of the schools covered had a high level of “turbulence,” with pupils moving from one school to another. This was particularly obvious in inner-London schools. The KS2 pupils might have been in different schools in the same LEA, from different LEAs, or from different countries in the KS1 year. It was not possible to compare the performance of children who were in different countries or different LEAs in the Key Stage 1 year. Comparisons could have been made of performance of children who were in the same LEA for both tests, but this would have required that the ISP project had asked the LEAs to collect the information, which they had not done. In some schools, nearly all the pupils who did Key Stage 2 in one school had also done Key Stage 1 in that school. In one school, just a single pupil in the Key Stage 2 class had been at the same school for Key Stage 1. One headteacher said that the school had a high turnover, as the upwardly mobile families moved pupils to other areas—producing a bias, as the pupils from these families could have been expected to perform better.

Each pupil does have a unique individual identification number in the Department for Education and Science database, and it would, in theory, be possible to link the performance of those pupils who had done both tests in England (but not Scotland or Wales). In practice it would have required far more time and money than we had to make use of this. Individual performances are sensitive information, and in our view it would have been both unethical and unlawful for us to have access to this information for this particular study. Even if we had had this information, we would not have been able to determine which of the schools that a pupil had been to should be credited with any improvement. Similarly, we did not have the resources needed to determine which students in a class, if any, benefited.

Some of the schools had particularly severe turbulence, with changes of headteacher, teachers, and pupils. In these cases it may be questioned whether the “school” of 1 year is in any sense the “school” of 4 years later. One bias would be introduced if we ignored these schools, another if we included them. However nearly all of the schools selected had some of these problems. It may well be that schools in richer areas with stable, nonimmigrant populations are more likely to retain their staff and get better results, regardless of the quality of teaching.

At best, therefore, the figures for Key Stage 1 would give some idea about the performance in the year before the test with the obvious limitation that the pupils in

the poor areas covered and those with more EAL pupils might be expected to have low scores anyway. The figures for Key Stage 2 might indicate that the ISP intervention in the final year before the test influenced, or did not influence, results. They also indicate, to an unknown extent, the influence of teaching in the previous years, mainly in the same school for some schools, mainly in other schools for others.

Number of Years

We would have liked to analyze year-to-year variations in results over a long time period before the Pilot, so we could make a judgment on the degree to which any change observed might be due to these exogenous factors rather than to the Pilot. Unfortunately the only data series was recent. For Phase 1 we had to do the analysis on only 80 % of the schools, those for which 5 years' results were available. Some schools had closed, some had started more recently, and there were problems with the data for others. Accordingly the main analysis was done on those schools for which data from 1998 to 2004 existed. 115 schools met this criterion out of 143.

Value Added

One figure starting to be produced by the Department for Education and Science when we did our evaluation was the "Value Added" statistic, designed to measure how much of any improvement or lack of improvement in pupils' performance could be ascribed to the school. This was comparing Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 test results and was produced by a complex formula using several data series. Certain observations in the data were excluded from the calculation—the Department for Education and Science ignored results:

'if at either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 results for that pupil were missing, or the pupil was not eligible for the tests, would take the test in the future, was working at the level of the tests but 'unable to access them', was 'not awarded a test level', was working towards level 1, or if there were lost scripts, or the results were 'annulled', 'disapplied', or 'disregarded'.

It may be that some of these reasons applied for just one of the tests taken in any year. It appears likely that many of the pupils at some of the pilot schools would have been omitted on these grounds, introducing a bias.

The Value Added statistic had all the data problems discussed above, and one discussed below. It required complex calculations and used explicit and implicit assumptions which necessarily introduced biases. It is normally considered good statistical practice that statistics should be presented with the minimum amount of processing of raw data, and that routine publication of statistics derived by amalgamation of data from different data sets and complex calculations are to be avoided, to avoid such problems.

The way in which the statistic was calculated might have had some value if we had been comparing middle class schools with static staff and pupils, but was of no value at all for our evaluation.

Experimental Results

The ISP management had not intended to do an evaluation, even though this was a pilot of a new program of intervention which they intended to roll out to cover a large proportion of the educational system. They did agree to an evaluation because pressure had been brought to bear on them by LEAs which thought that the ISP was badly managed and ineffective. Had the management thought about an evaluation at the beginning, and particularly if they had examined the data needed, a much fuller evaluation would have been possible.

We had discussed data availability with the clients before entering the contract. They assured us that the data were readily available from the Department for Education and Science statisticians within the building, and that we would not need the time we had set aside for data collection, a time we had based on our experience elsewhere. In fact the statisticians within the building flatly refused to give us the data for unstated reasons, and we had to spend a lot of time and money finding out where else we could get the data, which turned out to be in another section of the same Department—where we were told that that the man we first approached was the person who should have supplied it.

We were hampered by the fact that no preparations had been made for an evaluation when the ISP was started. Indeed we were told by consultants that it was only at their insistence half way through Phase 1 that an evaluation was carried out at all. This meant that there was not a properly selected control group. It also meant that a lot of information that was available within some LEAs, like a comparison of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results, and which could have easily been collected by other LEAs on request—the LEA statisticians we met were keen, helpful, and enthusiastic—was not available within our time and budget constraints. Similarly, raw data and processed data that would have been provided by the Department for Education and Science for routine evaluation by one of its own sections was not made available to an outside organization, a university, requiring the information at short notice. The statisticians said that we, as an outside organization, would have been charged if they had produced anything but the raw data at our request. Had we been given correct information on the availability of data by the clients, we might have done something about this.

Some data, notably matched figures, matching Key Stage 1 and 2 can be bought. We were not sure how well this would allow for the extreme turbulence of the selected schools. It was not possible to buy data, given the financial limits to the study which had been imposed by the clients.

Percentage Reaching Level 4

The Department for Education and Science targets were based on the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 at Key Stage 2. This is very different from a figure for the average score in a class.

The English government had adopted a policy of monitoring the efficiency of government and local government organizations by setting “targets,” usually a calculated statistical measure. Sanctions were imposed on management if these “targets” were not met. There was a widespread view, among the general public at least, that the organizations were skewing their performance to do whatever would produce the statistical measures to show that they had met their target and were forgetting what their real objective was. The health service could achieve their targets by manipulating waiting lists and neglecting some patients, for instance. We considered therefore whether the Department for Education and Science targets could be skewing the delivery of education in this case.

The Department for Education and Science set achievement targets for all schools on a variety of targets. The targets for primary schools were set in terms of the number of pupils reaching Level 4 at Key Stage 2, for example. This target ignores the number of pupils who reach Level 5, as well as those who were working below the level of the test, those who were not awarded a test level at all, and those reaching Levels 2 or 3.

This contrasts with an average score for the school, which takes all pupils into account.

In our interviews, the team were told by consultants and headteachers that the teachers and schools were under strong pressure from the Department for Education and Science and the LEA to reach the target by increasing the proportion getting of pupils reaching Level 4. The teachers were under personal pressure, both out of loyalty to the school and for career reasons. They explained that they could achieve this in several unacceptable ways that did not improve average score and might well reduce it. They said that lots of teachers and schools did in fact adopt these practices, though the teachers, consultants, and headteachers we spoke to said that they themselves resisted this pressure and did not use such improper practices.²

The first way was to concentrate on two or three pupils who would otherwise get marks just below Level 4. If there were 15 rather than 12 pupils in a class of 25 reaching Level 4, the target figure, “Percentage achieving Level 4” would rise

² We did not challenge this claim, of course. Similarly, when I am interviewing the village moneylender and he says, “I only charge 1 % interest, and the farmers never pay me back anyway. I am losing money out of it, and only doing it out of charity,” I nod sympathetically, and say, “That must be difficult for you.”

He then goes on, “But what some moneylenders do is. . . .” And then tells me a tale of violent extortion. I get the information I need on how the system really works, and he saves his face.

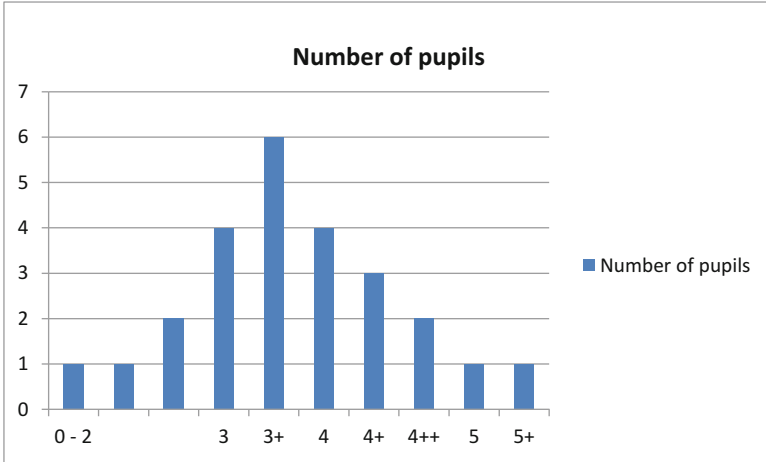
from 48 to 60 %. This looks very impressive, though it may just mean that three pupils get 5 % more marks. How do teachers get the extra time to push these pupils? The obvious way is to ignore the pupils who would normally get a Level 5, and will certainly get a Level 4 anyway, and to ignore those who could never be pushed as high as Level 4. However low their score falls, they did not affect the target statistic.

The tables and graphs below show how this works using a simplified example. By concentrating efforts on the pupils achieving just below Level 4, the percentage achieving Level 4 or above can be raised 27 % from 44 to 56 %, but this means reducing the average marks 11 % from 5.4 to 4.8.

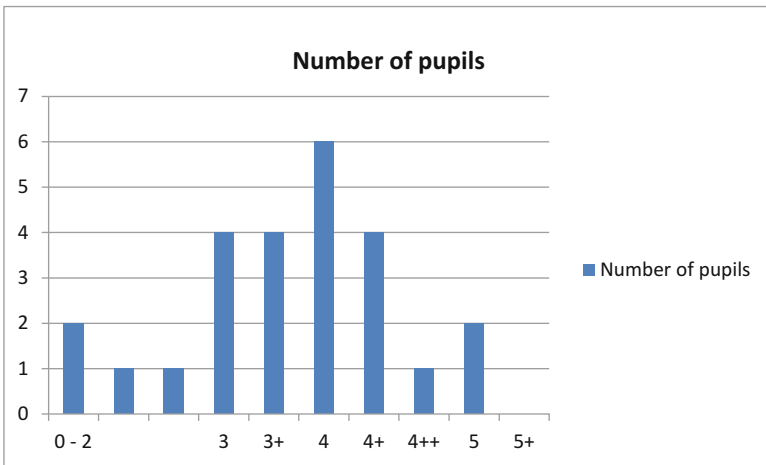
Comparing average marks and % Level 4 or above											Example 1	
Level	Level			Level		Level			Level		Total	
	0-2			3	3+	4	4+	4++	5	5+		
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Number of pupils	1	1	2	4	6	4	3	2	1	1	25	
Total marks	1	2	6	16	30	24	21	16	9	10	135	Marks
Average marks											5.4	Marks
% Level 4 or above											44	%

Comparing average marks and % Level 4 or above											Example 2	
Level	Level			Level		Level			Level		Total	
	0-2			3	3+	4	4+	4++	5	5+		
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Number of pupils	2	1	1	4	4	6	4	1	2	0	25	
Total marks	2	2	3	16	20	36	28	8	18	0	133	Marks
Average marks											5.3	Marks
% Level 4 or above											52	%

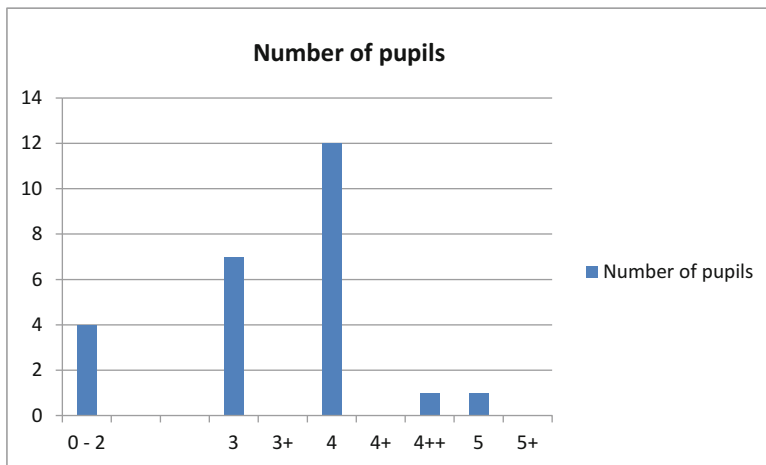
Comparing average marks and % Level 4 or above											Example 3	
Level	Level			Level		Level			Level		Total	
	0-2			3	3+	4	4+	4++	5	5+		
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Number of pupils	4	0	0	7	0	12	0	1	1	0	25	
Total marks	4	0	0	28	0	72	0	8	9	0	121	Marks
Average marks											4.8	Marks
% Level 4 or above											56	%



Example 1



Example 2



Example 3

The ISP gave the teachers computer programs which made this a lot easier: these could identify the pupils who were just below Level 4, so they could be given an extra push. They also helped identify those pupils who were never likely to receive Level 4, and those who might drop from Level 5 to Level 4, but were most unlikely to drop below Level 4.

An alternative way of increasing the percentage achieving Level 4 was to see that some of the lower performers were excluded from the calculation, and the ISP system gave teachers the tools to identify the pupils who should be excluded. If two weak performers in a class of 25 are excluded, the percentage achieving Level 4 might increase from 48 to 52 %, meaning that the school reaches the government target figure. One way reported in the interviews was to suggest to parents that a weak pupil might take a day off when the test was taking place, another was to encourage, or permit, parents to take weak pupils on holiday or go on a long visit to Poland or Pakistan to “re-engage with their culture.” Disruptive pupils might be excluded. The Department for Education and Science also reported omitting results when results for that pupil were missing, or when the pupil was not eligible for the tests, would take the test in the future, was working at the level of the tests but “unable to access them,” was “not awarded a test level,” and was working towards Level 1, if there were lost scripts, or the results were “annulled,” “disapplied,” or “disregarded,” which provide lots of possibilities.

Another, common, intervention was to put the best teachers in the class that was sitting the test and give them additional resources, using the worst teachers in other years. If a lot of the pupils moved from school to school, the school’s apparent performance would be maximized by this. Using resources on pupils who would be moving to other schools for their KS2 would be helping the other schools.

Percentage of a Percentage

There is a presentation bias that arises from expressing change as a percentage of a percentage. At first sight it may seem that if the percentage achieving Level 4 rises from 50 to 60 %, there is a 20 % improvement in “performance.” When one tries to work out what it means, one becomes increasingly confused. If a school increases the number of pupils reaching Level 4 by two, the result can be presented as a percentage of a percentage. In one school this may mean that 12 pupils reach the target instead of 10, 48 % instead of 40 % presented as a 20 % increase in achievement. In another it may mean that 25 instead of 23 do, 100 % instead of 92 %, an increase of 9 %. Surprisingly, some of the schools selected did have as many as 96 % of the pupils reaching Level 4, which meant that it would be impossible to have two pupils increase to this level.

Statements of an increase in average mark are more comprehensible.

Our Conclusions

In Phase 1 it was difficult to identify any impact from the ISP for Key Stage 1. The average point score results were broadly the same before and after the ISP started and broadly the same as for the control group. Average point score was not available for Key Stage 2, so we had to use the suspect measure of percent reaching Level 4. There was a sharp rise in the levels reported after the ISP, which was not observed in the control. We pointed out in the report that it was possible to make these increases look much larger or smaller by selecting different base years for the comparison.

Did They Concentrate Efforts on Half a Dozen Borderline Pupils?

In Phase 1 we reported that for KS1, where it was possible to use average point score rather than a break point, there was no change in performance. These statistics were not made available for KS2, so the possibility remained that borderline pupils were pushed, at the expense of the very good and very poor students. This possibility was taken very seriously by the team and emphasized in our report and in other communications with the clients.

In Phase 2 we had a longer data series and were able to compare the average mark obtained in the Key Stage 2 tests with the percentage of pupils obtaining Level 4. For English there was a clear indication that, overall, average marks fell by perhaps three percentage points over a time that the percentage attaining Level 4 rose nine points. This discrepancy occurred for all LEAs except one and was much more marked for some of the LEAs. There were only half a dozen schools for which average mark increased more than percentage Level 4. For Mathematics

there was an increase in overall Average Marks of about 3 %, compared with an increase of ten percentage points in the Percentage of Pupils achieving Level 4. This does not show beyond doubt that teachers were concentrating on the pupils who might achieve Level 4, but is consistent with it. The possibility was considered that the vast majority of pupils are concentrated very close to the minimum Level 4 mark, so that if all pupils got three more marks, this would push three or four pupils per class into Level 4, but disaggregation of the statistics showed that this was not the case. Disaggregation showed that for a third to a half of the schools, there was clear indication that average marks fell while the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 rose. Again, the concentration could be on the pupils who are borderline Level 4, to the detriment of the others.

Caveats

To summarize, the only statistics available which could give any indication of whether the ISP had any effect on pupils were the results of the tests. These probably were correlated with what the pupils were able to do, but we had no information on this: the results may well have reflected other factors. There were certainly random and nonrandom fluctuations on what test result would be produced from a group of pupils of a given ability, and these could be expected to influence different LEAs differently, but again we had no information on this. There were large year-to-year fluctuations in the average results and percentage reaching Level 4 in total, more obviously in each LEA and most obviously in each school. Many reasons could be suggested. The very short time series meant that it was not possible to analyse the fluctuations in an attempt to quantify the random and nonrandom fluctuations. That is to say any variation in test scores might be just normal variation, which happened to affect the chosen schools in one way. Since these schools were not systematically selected, nonrandom fluctuations affecting this particular group may well have been due to their special characteristics (e.g., non-English speaking pupils, pupils from poor families, schools with a high proportion of children having special needs, regional culture, and dialect). We must be extremely cautious about drawing inferences from them.

The schools were not randomly selected or selected according to common criteria. There was no attempt at a controlled experiment to evaluate the ISP. The figures were consistent with a large number of schools, sometimes most of them getting worse results after the ISP.

The figures were consistent with schools adjusting their teaching and other factors to maximize the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2 by reducing the attention given to non-marginal pupils. The percentage achieving Level 4 rose while average score fell, sometimes overall, but always for a large number of LEAs and schools. It is noted that it is possible to get some increase in

the percentage Level 4 in a school without reducing the average by these methods, so they do not always show up.

For all these reasons we could give only the most tentative statistical conclusions, except to state that the figures were consistent with concentrating on the marginal pupils at Level 4.

Inferences Drawn

Inevitably the inferences drawn purely from analysis of the data will be quite different from those drawn by people who are reading the full report and integrating it with their knowledge, experience, and emotion. And people may be unable or unwilling to understand what the data show and do not show, and the limitations in the reliability of any results of a statistical study. However, it is the inferences that are drawn that influence future study, so we must take into account inferences drawn.

By team as a whole

By clients

Department for Education and Science
National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies
ISP management team

By consultants delivering ISP

By LEA officials

By headteachers

By teachers

We can only speculate about how these groups interpreted the evidence and conclusions we provided. Obviously there was a very complicated micro political environment within the Department and within each LEA. In carrying out the study and presenting the results and conclusions, we had to bear in mind how they could possibly interpret what we said and how they might react to it.

We did know from interviews that, among the people from National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the ISP to whom we were reporting, there were people who thought that ISP was so self-evidently going to work that it was unnecessary to do an experiment or do an evaluation. Nearly everyone in this group appeared to believe that the pilot stage had been such a clear success that there could be no doubt that it would be rolled out to the whole country. (Or at least anyone who dissented felt it wise to keep their opinions to themselves.) And the message we got was that nearly everyone believed that any evidence that challenged this belief must be invalid.

Controlling the Discourse

Could we, the team, or I, the number man, control the discourse by the clients, Department for Education and Science, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies section, or the ISP management team? Could we control what they told themselves or what they told other sections, other Departments, or their political masters?

Communicating Statistics

In most of my consultancy the technical staff in my client organization are statistically literate, and people from other organizations who read my report are also statistically literate. I expect them to understand any caveats and limitations stated and not to use my figures where they do not apply. I expect them to understand the figures I give and to correct politicians if they misunderstand. In this particular evaluation I worked with team members who were numerate academics accustomed to rigorous analysis, though they were not statistically trained—one had a first degree in physics, the other in mathematics. They understood what I was saying. I had assumed that the people in the clients' unit, who were graduates—many of them with experience in teaching mathematics—would be able to understand what I wrote. I did not realize that the staff of the clients' unit were statistically illiterate, and many of them numerate only in the sense that they could teach primary school mathematics. Had I realized this, I would have presented the quantitative analysis very differently.

Suppression of Unpalatable Results

Choice of Sample LEAs

A key question was whether the ISP was successful in the experimental schools, and whether ISP should be rolled out on a large scale, first to similar schools in more than 360 LEAs in England and then to other schools.

Our team included two education specialists, part of whose job was to interview ISP staff, consultants, headteachers, and teachers. Obviously, they wanted to see successful and unsuccessful parts of the ISP, to see what could go wrong, and to find out whether the fact that some were perceived successful was purely down to chance, or was due to unstated factors, for which no hard evidence might exist, for instance. The clients were strongly opposed to this and instructed us to do our interviews on only three LEAs. Two of these were ones where the ISP was perceived to be highly successful. One was an LEA where there had been a lot of problems, so many problems that the LEA had demanded an evaluation. The ISP

refused us access to other LEAs. In particular, the ISP officials were most reluctant to let us visit LEAs where problems had arisen, or to visit the schools we wanted to visit.

In our view this selection of LEAs to visit was worse than useless when the evaluation was to see whether there was any point in rolling out the ISP to a large number of schools in all LEAs using normal consultants and consultants whose particular charisma might not have appealed to LEA staff.

The LEAs in the ISP had been self-selected as keen to take part, and we could not assume that the results would be in any way similar to all LEAs and particularly to those where schools were in most need of improvement. A wide range of biasing selection criteria for schools has been identified above.

Concentrating on the schools and LEAs in which the ISP appeared to be outstandingly successful was clearly a waste of time. The ISP management were of the view that the success was because these had a very competent, charismatic, consultant working closely with an enthusiastic LEA which had chosen the schools very carefully to have headteachers who would make the program work. If the system were rolled out to all underperforming LEAs in that met the target criteria, there would clearly be some equally successful examples, but the proportion that could be expected was much lower than in the experiment. What we wanted to know was what problems had occurred in other schools, whether these problems had been solved, or could be avoided in future, and whether similar schools could be expected to do better in the rollout. We were not allowed to address this problem. We had also carried out our mail survey to find out what parts of the program headteachers and consultants were not happy with or were extremely unhappy with. These results could only be of interest if we followed them up with depth interviews to find out why they were unhappy—and the fact that half were not happy with a part of the program is serious. We were not allowed to do this.

We protested very strongly, to no avail. Eventually the team interviewed some people involved in other areas by telephone. This gave useful results, but the bias was obvious.

All three members of the team were involved in this phase. The other two members of the evaluating team were fully involved in formulating statistical hypotheses, and they took the results into account when interviewing ISP staff, consultants, headteachers, and teachers.

On the information the other two team members got, they concluded that the ISP was widely popular and seemed to be effective at improving working practices. They confirmed the worry about teachers concentrating their efforts on marginal pupils. They made a lot of recommendations for tackling problems that had been identified. Overall, their report was favorable. They could not comment, of course, on whether ISP had any impact on pupils.

If the statistical analysis of the results and the discussion of problems that had been identified could be suppressed, and removed from our report, therefore, the survey results and the comments could be presented by ISP staff and civil servants as providing overwhelming support for the ISP.

Recommendations

The purpose of a pilot study is, of course, primarily to find out what the problems are. It is not a criticism of staff or, necessarily, of planning that problems are found, and we do not want to put pressure on staff to conceal problems. The pilot is done precisely to find out if the new system is fundamentally flawed, or if there are problems that need fixing—and there are always problems. The normal approach in evaluation is to exercise tact, by making recommendations for future action to avoid these problems, which appears more positive than a long list of the problems identified.

The ISP management insisted that we did not include the recommendation section in the evaluation reports. “This should be treated as internal advice to the ISP team who can use them to inform their discussions, if appropriate. The research team were not asked to make recommendations in their contract and so any recommendations are their private advice to the PNS.” “Move or amend the recommendations of the research team (as this is not a research finding. Separate the finding from the recommendation).” “Move final bullet point to recommendations. Not a finding.” I found this argument extraordinary. It is quite normal for the major part of a report to address points not specified in the terms of reference, to the extent that the points in the terms of reference are dealt with very skimpily. The points specified in the terms of reference are the clients’ first guess at what issues will be of key importance to address the main objective. They often turn out to be relatively unimportant. The key issues are often not mentioned because nobody knows that they are the key issues: if they had been identified the clients would probably have dealt with them instead of calling in the consultant. That is why people employ outside consultants.

We agreed to suppress the recommendations, though with serious misgivings. I believe it to have been a mistake.

Literature Review

Again, the ISP asked us to remove the literature review. “It is not necessary to make the literature review (currently Appendix 1) public. This was commissioned and paid for separately from the main evaluation and it is therefore justifiable that it should be treated as a separate document for internal use only.” The logic of this statement escapes me.

Average Marks

The question of using percentage achieving Level 4 instead of the average marks really upset the ISP project management. In the first phase, we agreed, with misgivings, to let this finding be tucked away in the back of the report as long as they

undertook to implement our recommendation on it fully and immediately. This was a mistake. In the second phase they claimed, “The focus on average marks is not one that was explored in the original evaluation and it wasn’t part of the brief for the follow up.” Analysing the statistics on changed test performance was, of course, part of the brief. Even if it had not, it would be considered deeply dishonest for an evaluator to suppress important results because they were not specified in detail in the brief.

In the second phase we set out the facts and figures. We met with strong resistance:

‘There could be other reasons for the fall in average marks. . . . Our concern is that one link is being made and repeated for which there is no evidence.’ ‘However the data does not provide evidence to show that the fall in average marks is consistent with teachers concentrating all efforts on pupils who could, with a push, achieve Level 4 (p. 29, 30), or that the concentration could be on pupils who are borderline Level 4, to the detriment of others (p. 31).’

They did not respond to our request that they present the other reasons that they believed could explain the facts, nor their reasons for the extraordinary belief that the reasons we suggested were not consistent with the facts. This would, of course, have required some serious analysis by someone who could at least calculate an average.

Changing the Statistical Conclusions

The ISP proposed to publish only the main body of the report on the Department for Education and Science, leaving off the appendices, though it costs nothing to put the appendices on a website.

They proposed to change the executive summary of the findings to

‘indicate that the statement relating to KS1 Is based on only one years data and a footnote is added indicating that the two year data is now available and shows increases at KS1 also.’
 ‘Any public requests for the report are accompanied by a page of statistics prepared by the [ISP] showing the relevant statistical data for the [ISP] schools (or LEA).’

Clearly it would be totally unacceptable to adjust my conclusions on the basis of calculations by the ISP. I had not seen the new figures, nor the calculations, and I had and have no confidence in the statistical competence of anyone I met working for the ISP.

Providing Different Statistics

The ISP management told us, “We intend to publish the main body of the report on the public DfES website; the full report would be available on request from PNS or from NTU. In order to publish it on the website, the following recommendations are made:

Any public requests for the report are accompanied by a page of statistics prepared by the ISP showing the relevant statistical data for the ISP schools (or LEA).

That is to say, our statistical analysis was suppressed and replaced with statistics produced by someone else, statistics which we were not allowed to see, based on data not given to us, with calculations that were not disclosed.

I do not know who did what to the statistics, but some time later I was informed that recommendations to roll out the ISP on a very large scale had been submitted to the Prime Minister based on the claim that we had shown that the ISP had increased pupils' performance by 14 %. The claim of increased pupils' performance was false at many different levels, as shown in this paper.

Ethical Implications of Different Inferences

We believed that our primary duty was to the children being educated. If an ineffective approach to teaching was introduced, or one which actually reduced attainment, the children would be harmed. Possibly more important, the time, effort, and money switched to this approach would be removed from other approaches which might be more effective. If there were weaknesses in this approach, it was our duty to say so in order that they might be remedied. We did not believe that we had any obligation whatsoever to protect the interests of the Department for Education and Science, of the politicians in charge of it, of the National Literacy Strategy, or of the ISP, nor did we have any obligation to protect the interests or careers or any of their staff. We recognize from our experience of working in institutions and in government that this perception of duty is not always that of people affected.

The managers who set up and operated the ISP were the people who recruited us to do the evaluation, and they kept tight control on what we did and what we published. Their careers would be affected by our conclusions—some were employed specifically for the ISP and their jobs would go if it were terminated. This is a serious moral hazard. The UK Treasury guidelines are that the recruitment of evaluators for a project must be done at arms length when the results may adversely affect the recruiters, so the people being evaluated and the people affected by the evaluation can have no control who is appointed to do the evaluation, of how the evaluation is carried out, or what results are published. These guidelines appear to be ignored in practice (Bowbrick 2012). The United Nations agencies have strict rules for evaluation which would not permit this to happen: they have their own pressures on evaluators but the pressures work differently and come from a different direction, usually from the desk officers in headquarters who approved the funding for a project rather than the people who implemented it (Griffiths 2003).

The evaluation team felt itself under pressure. There was also the feeling that we had two different evaluation objectives, summative, whether the project was working, and informative, where we would be helping identify problems and opportunities for future implementation. We have written on this pressure in this case and in others (Bowbrick 2012; Griffiths et al. 2006).

One has, of course, to adapt to the culture of the country in which one is working. International consultants describe with astonishment the British system in which government departments usually send a report back five times for “corrections” and when the government tender documents say that this should be allowed for in the costings. The UN, World Bank, and European Commission have strict rules, saying that the evaluator is employed as an independent, to give an independent opinion. I have evaluated for these organizations, I have been evaluated by them, and I have seen many other evaluations done for them. There has never been any suggestion that the people or organization evaluated could demand changes in the evaluation. If they disagreed with the evaluation, the most they could do was write a response.

The power structure is important here as it introduces a serious moral hazard. Academics in UK education faculties are most likely to get consultancies and research grants from government. There is a widespread belief that if they annoy a government department in any of these consultancies or research projects, they will not get any more. I have been blacklisted for a government consultancy on the basis of a journal article and report written 20 years previously when I was working in another country, though I had an international reputation in the subject (Bowbrick 2012). While one person may be willing to resist the pressure and lose government funding, there is also a widespread belief that it is not a single person that is blacklisted, but a whole department. There is pressure to submit, to protect the jobs of one’s colleagues. One British university had a formal committee to vet all research, not just government research, and to suppress any that produced results that might be unpalatable to any firm or organization that might possibly give the university a consultancy or a grant in future.

Working in an Imperfect World

In this chapter, I have described some of the problems that arose in a fairly normal use of statistics in consultancy research. In this evaluation, as in all research, we had to operate in an imperfect world. Inferences were going to be drawn by someone whether or not we wrote our report, and whether or not it was accepted by the clients, so we had to do the best we could, making unpalatable compromises, which may or may not have been justified. We had to work, as always, with constraints of money and time available. As always the data and statistics were not right for the task. As always the information and support promised by the clients were not made available. As always, the results were not what the clients had expected.

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7.8 Making Sense of Layers of Interpretation in Quantitative Educational Research

Paul Smeyers

Introduction

Statistics are everywhere. In their descriptive mode they often indicate the level of satisfaction of clients/customers of post offices and hospitals, of one's use of an e-mail system (e.g., Eudora), and of the number of downloads (provided by publishers of journals) and are gathered for various purposes (including to evaluate scholarly conferences such as AERA). This may be innocent as far as it goes, but it carries with it a number of presuppositions that should not necessarily be taken for granted. One of these is that it is possible to represent reality (and have a grip on it), shifting often to the simple equation that this *is* the reality we belong to. This either implies that (1) there is nothing else to know about a subject or (2) if there is anything else to know, this is still the best way to deal with reality, the one that is the least harmful and most objective. Another presupposition (or should one say promise) that statistics carry with them is the possibility of control, particularly when an explanation is offered (by this I mean the control of the evolution of dependent variables in terms of the independent variables which have led to the distributions that are offered or the correlations that may be observed). Thus a paradigm of (quasi-)causality enters that goes together with estimation and management of risk (this applies in the case of experiments as it does for randomized field trials). At the same time, the attraction of statistics lies in its simplicity (the reduction of the variability of the data to as few "factors" as possible, as few homogeneous classes as the data permit) as well as in the accompanying belief that it is possible to characterize reality and the way it shapes our lives. Though what has been outlined so far may well be recognized (or deplored) by many, there is a more complex story to

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be told. Moreover, though we may be familiar with the possible objections and take these “warnings” into account, this does not really change the fact that we often unthinkingly rely on what is presented to us. Why is that the case, or in other words, what do statistics do for us that makes them so irresistible?

This chapter deals with a number of meta-issues concerning the use of statistics in educational research. Though familiar with what quantitative educational researchers do, as an “outsider,” I approach the assumptions that are often taken for granted by quantitative researchers from a philosophical stance. I distinguish several layers of interpretation that may guide the quantitative researcher: looking for simplicity (reducing the number of variables), offering an explanation, and outlining implications for practice (advice). Though these layers go together, they can nevertheless be distinguished at a meta-level. For example, whereas an explanation often offers a starting point to make suggestions for practitioners, in a number of cases authors signal that other issues may also be involved and that there is no direct (or deductive) relationship between the results of what has been investigated (“what is the case”) and what should follow for the handling of these issues by practitioners in the educational field. What I have called looking for simplicity should also be qualified: what one is interested in is an explanation that offers as few variables as possible, but to do justice to the problem that is addressed may require attention to a large number of variables and a rather complex scheme that shows their interconnectedness.

I start with some detailed examples of quantitative research. After a description of interesting research from the area of child-rearing as well as schooling, I foreground questions which address the underlying assumptions and identify some possible criticism. Each example is used to highlight one possible layer of interpretation; obviously, this is to some extent arbitrary, as these layers are interwoven. In a more systematic way, I then distinguish kinds of understanding and explanation and deal more in detail with causality and probability and their underlying assumptions which guide the quantitative educational researcher. I point to the strengths of a quantitative approach, but I also highlight the limitations. I argue that though attention to the particular (the opposite of generalization) has much to be said for it, it is not the only alternative when trying to decide what needs to be done. Backed up by an amended correspondence theory of truth and an awareness of the limitations, I develop the idea that there is nothing necessarily problematic about the quantitative approach. On the contrary, it can contribute to the process of doing justice to the multilayered complex educational reality one finds oneself in. But in order to do this properly, attention, so I emphasize, must be given to interpretation all through the process of this kind of research.

Layer 1: On the Promise of Simplicity

Consider, for instance, the following abstract which was sent around recently to the staff of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven. The abstract was for a talk to be given by Peter Wilhelm (University of Fribourg, Switzerland) titled “How to Assess Synchronization in Family Members’ Daily Life?”:

How family members affect each other’s feelings and behaviours is a crucial question in family and social psychology. To answer this question, ambulatory assessment techniques that capture family members’ experiences and behaviours in their usual daily life over days or weeks are especially useful. To date various diary studies have been conducted to investigate transmission of affects in couples and in parent-child dyads. However, diary studies to investigate the synchronization of current affects in entire families are rare. The aim of our research was to investigate the extent to which family members’ current moods synchronize in their usual daily life and how this synchronization can be explained. Using a computer-assisted diary approach, six times a day over the course of a week we asked 192 parents and 122 adolescent children from 96 Swiss families how they were feeling, where they were, with whom they were, and whether they had experienced conflicts with each other. To answer our research questions we propose a multilevel approach in which the similarity between family members’ average mood (trait component) and the similarity between their current mood (state component) is reflected in the covariances of the random part of the model. Using this approach we were able to show that average mood was moderately correlated among family members. As expected, family members’ current mood (state component) was more similar when they were together, than when they were apart. This indicates that family members’ mood synchronizes when they come together. By extending the analyses we could explain the amount of synchronization by shared setting factors that have an impact on mood, such as location, activity, and time of the day. However, conflicts between the family members produced the largest decreases in the covariances and therefore seem to contribute most to the synchronization of current mood in family members’ daily life.

It may be fun to speculate about the practical consequences of the insights this study comes up with, i.e., the family members’ mood synchronizes when they come together especially when they have conflicts. Has it thus been established that one should test a relation to its destruction or has a more general argument been developed in favor of quality time? A positive reading may indicate that the latter is obviously the case—we need to spend time together if we desire synchronization of current affects in families. Though this seems rather obvious, this research can substantiate it. Granted, this does not go very far, but at least it provides insight into how an issue in family and social psychology is dealt with. It provides answers and takes us beyond mere speculation in regard to something we may be (really) interested in (how things are).

The following abstract of a talk by Jeff Rouder (University of Missouri-Columbia) for another seminar at the same Faculty, titled “Using Bayesian hierarchical models to search for structure in recognition memory,” is much more straightforward when indicating what, according to its author, is at stake:

Science has conventionally progressed by identifying regularities or invariances; for instance, planets orbit the sun as ellipses. These invariances then serve as the phenomenon

to be explained by theory; for instance, elliptical orbits may be explained by the Newtonian theory of mechanics. In this mode, the search for invariances is a necessary precursor to theoretical development. Though this approach has been fruitful, psychologists, who tend to focus on verbal explanations of differences idiosyncrasies across conditions and populations, have not adopted it. The search for invariances is complicated in many domains by the presence of unintended or nuisance variability. For instance, in memory research, there is variability from the selection of participants and items in addition to that from the mnemonic processes at hand. The conventional approach is to aggregate across these nuisance sources, but this aggregation may distort the structure and mask important invariances in the data. To address this problem, my colleagues and I have developed a collection of Bayesian hierarchical models for modelling nuisance variability so that structure in psychological processes may be explored. I apply these models to recognition memory, where there is a vigorous debate whether memory is supported by a single mnemonic process or by multiple distinct processes. Model analysis reveals that ROC [receiver operating characteristic] curves across people and conditions form an orderly field, much like the order in gravitational of magnetic fields. As a consequence, the structure of recognition memory seems to be one-dimensional and may be accounted for with a single parameter of mnemonic strength.

A single parameter of mnemonic strength is the result of a search for invariances in this area. It is a “structural quality” (a reduction of the complexity of the data here as invariance, in other cases, for instance, a pattern), which should now be taken up by theory and explained (or “given a place”). We might ask what exactly the relationship is between this result and the particular method that has been used (in this case, a collection of Bayesian hierarchical models). Furthermore, we might consider whether it is in some sense useful. Clearly this is all about reduction, about “seeing” something in a simpler form. For this reason (maybe for this reason alone), it is something to be strived for.

Layer 2: On the Promise of Advice

My attention was recently drawn to a study by Van Petegem et al. (2012) published in the Web of Science journal *Developmental Psychology* which focuses on the concept of adolescent autonomy and its relation with psychosocial functioning. In this study the aim is to differentiate between two prevailing conceptualizations of autonomy, that is, (a) autonomy defined as independence versus dependence and (b) autonomy defined as self-endorsed versus controlled functioning. As their second goal the authors identify to examine the relative contribution of each autonomy operationalization in the prediction of adolescents’ adjustment (i.e., well-being, problem behavior, and intimacy). The article (of more than 10,000 words) follows a standard format: it gives an abstract; describes where the study starts from; gives details of the method that is followed, the data collection, analyses, and results; links the latter with previous research (and theories); deals with limitations of the present study; and offers suggestions for future research, before turning to conclusions and adding on the list of references.

The authors gathered data in a sample of 707 Belgian adolescents. Using a newly developed questionnaire, they assessed both the degree of independent decision making per se and the self-endorsed versus controlled motives underlying both independent and dependent decision making.¹ They report that the present study empirically underscores the conceptual difference between two prevailing definitions of autonomy. As specific results concerning their second goals, they report that deciding independently because one personally values doing so relates to a better quality of relational functioning, whereas being externally pressured into independent decision making is associated with less adjustment. Further, for the motives for dependent decision making, it is reported that identified motives were related to higher subjective well-being and to lower problem behavior, introjected motives were related negatively to subjective well-being, and external motives were associated with more problem behavior. They thus argue that identified motives for dependent decisions generally relate to a better pattern of adjusted functioning though not to intimacy, whereas controlled motives are associated with less adjustment.²

It goes without saying that the mentioned conclusions/results are substantiated by detailing the techniques of analyzing the data. I don't think, however, a lot of

¹The following is a summary of the different steps in the analysis of the data. An integrated measure was developed to assess both aspects of adolescent autonomy. Participants first completed a variation of the Family Decision Making Scale (FDMS; Dombusch et al. 1985), where they answered the question "Who decides [horizontal ellipsis]" on the following 5-point scale: 1 (My parents alone), 2 (My parents, after talking to me), 3 (My parents and I together), 4 (I, after talking to my parents), and 5 (I alone). The scale consisted of 20 issues that typically came from five social domains (Smetana et al. 2004; Smetana and Daddis 2002), that is, the personal domain (e.g., what clothes to wear), the friendship domain (e.g., whether you can hang out with friends your parents don't like), the prudential domain (e.g., whether you smoke cigarettes or not), the conventional domain (e.g., how you talk to your parents), and the moral domain (e.g., whether you can hit others). In a next step, they measured the motives for independent decision making. The questionnaire comprised 18 items, derived from the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ; Ryan and Connell 1989). Formulation of the items was based upon versions from related domains and reflected identified motives (e.g., "because this is personally important to me"), introjected motives (e.g., "because I would feel bad if I didn't"), and external motives (e.g., "because I am forced by others"). Respondents indicated their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Completely untrue) to 5 (Completely true). A similar procedure was used to assess the motives for dependent decision. Participants completed two scales tapping into their subjective well-being: the global self-worth subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA; Harter 1988); next, they measured depressive symptoms, using a six-item version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff 1977). Concerning problem behavior participants completed a shortened version of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT; Saunders et al. 1993) to indicate the level of alcohol abuse; the Deviant Behavior Scale (DBS; Weinmann 1992) was used to assess rule-breaking behavior. Finally, they measured the quality of intimate functioning in the relationship with one's best friend or romantic partner, using a shortened version of the Intimate Friendship Scale (IFS; Sharabany 1994). For further details, see Van Petegem et al. 2012; see also endnote 3.

²They report that in the final model, the predictor variables explained 24 % of the variance in well-being, 43 % of the variance in problem behavior, and 23 % of the variance in intimacy (Van Petegem et al. 2012, p. 83).

people will be surprised by the results that are offered—granted, now it has empirically been established (of course, one should not forget that this presupposes accepting the many “operationalizations” such as the integrated measure and all the other scales that are used, further the presuppositions of the various statistical methods, and last but not least what is involved in what is mentioned by the authors themselves “the conceptualization of autonomy,” i.e., the way they handle, operationalize, the two conceptualizations of autonomy). They suggest further that their findings may have some implications theoretical as well as practical; let me draw attention to what they call important implications for clinical practice:

...for instance with respect to parenting advice. Based on the correlates of independent decision making, one may consider the maintenance of dependence to serve a protective role against problem behavior. However, the undergirding motivational dynamics for such dependent behavior seem as crucial. If parents use pressure to foster dependent behavior, they may instead elicit rebellious reactions and oppositional behavior, such that their children distance themselves from them rather than stay dependent on them. Likewise, even though an increase in independent functioning is normative through adolescence, youths should not be pressured to decide or behave more independently, as controlled motives for independence also relate to maladjustment. By contrast, fostering adolescents’ self-endorsed functioning (e.g., through empathy, giving choice whenever possible, and encouraging them to act upon their personal values and interests; see Grolnick 2003; Soenens et al. 2007) seems to be especially crucial for parents, in order to deal successfully with the challenges of raising an adolescent. (Van Petegem et al. 2012, p. 85)³

How remarkable to use the concept of “clinical practice” when referring to advice for parents. But even if that is seen as fine (or just a matter of no importance), what about the presupposition in this kind of argument which clearly bears the label of a “means-end” reasoning (the use of pressure to foster dependent behavior which serves as a protective role against problem behavior is negatively appreciated because *children may distance themselves from them rather than stay dependent on them*; moreover, youths should not be pressured to decide or behave more independently as *controlled motives for independence also relate to maladjustment*). The final addition, again based upon empirical research, to foster adolescents’ self-endorsed functioning to deal successfully with the challenges of raising an adolescent, will surely baffle the reader, will it not?

I will continue with detailing quantitative educational research with another example from a similar field. It concerns a study by Bosmans et al. (2011) titled “Parents’ power assertive discipline and internalizing problems in adolescents: The role of attachment” published in the Web of Science journal *Parenting: Science and Practice*. The authors start from the observation that current evidence-based therapeutic and preventive parent management training programs teach parents to discipline their children in response to misbehavior. As research, according to these authors, has demonstrated that parental disciplining leads children to develop

³The references to publications which are part of quotations of the two educational research examples that are discussed either in the main text or in endnotes are not included in the list of references given at the end of this paper. They are nevertheless included to do justice to the study that is discussed.

less antisocial behavior, it is important to know whether discipline has side effects for the child (i.e., leading to internalizing problems). They distinguish power assertive discipline and inductive discipline. Examples of the former are corporal punishment, deprivation of privileges, psychological aggression, and penalty tasks; examples of the latter are diversion, explanation, ignoring misbehavior, reward, and monitoring.

Because it has been demonstrated, so they argue, that it is the power assertive character of disciplining that predicts internalizing problems, it is this what they will study further. More particularly, they are interested in the relation with attachment insecurity, as the link between power assertive discipline and attachment (which provides internal working models) has not been studied explicitly. Following Wu's assumed close association between power assertive discipline and attachment insecurity, and in line with the association that obtains between attachment and internalized behaviors, they hypothesize that attachment insecurity mediates the association between power assertive discipline and internalizing problems (Bosmans et al. 2011, p. 37). This is, they say, at the same time a test of a basic tenet of attachment theory which predicts that children and adolescents store their experiences with parents in internal working models (less secure working models are expected to be characterized by insecure attachment, cognitions, and behaviors, and this should be linked with an increase in internalizing problems). It is their prediction that power assertive discipline will be positively linked with adolescent internalizing problems and that this effect will be mediated by attachment security (ibid., p. 39).

Thus far it is clear that the interest of this study is motivated by a theoretical issue, a particular theory, and that it is a specific hypothesis based on this theory that is tested; there is, however, also a further interest which is explored and which is inspired by a particular practice (parenting advice) where disciplining in response to misbehavior is taught; here it is all about the possible side effects such as a clinically relevant emotional cost for the child leading to internalizing problems. Participants included 514 elementary and high school students ranging in age from 10 to 18.⁴ The article describes in detail the characteristics of the scales and instruments that are used (including their reliability, validity, etc.). It then details all the analyses that were carried out and offers justifications for the choice they made and the ways they proceeded. The study confirms that "...when parents apply more

⁴ Power assertive discipline was assessed using the Ghent Parental Behavior Scale. Two punishment scales of the GPBS are combined: harsh punishment (e.g., slapping one's child) and disciplining (e.g., taking away something fun or not letting her watch TV). For "internalizing problems" the Youth Self-Report questionnaire is administered (internalizing problems, syndrome scales, withdrawn/depressed, somatic complaints, and anxious/depressed subscales); for "attachment" a short version of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was used attachment was conceptualized as the quality of the relationship with mother and father; it has three subscales: "trust"; "communication"; for example, "I tell my mother about my problems and troubles"; and "alienation," for example, "My mother doesn't understand what I am going through these days"). For further details, see Bosmans et al. 2011.

power assertive discipline, adolescents report higher levels of internalizing problems and report being less securely attached. It is important to note that our analyses show that attachment completely explains the relation between power assertive discipline and internalizing problems” (ibid., p. 48). They continue by warning the reader:

These findings should be interpreted with caution. Demonstrating mediation suggests causal pathways, our data are cross-sectional and we investigated correlations. This allows us only to conclude that what we observe is consistent with what we would expect to see whether indeed a causal path leads from power assertive discipline to internalizing problems over attachment representations . . . Future research should investigate these associations using longitudinal research designs (ibid., p. 48).

Their findings are important they say for at least three reasons: they have implications for our understanding of the influences of power assertive discipline, they confirm a basic tenet of attachment theory, and they suggest that attachment is still malleable in adolescence. As customary they also discuss the limitations of the study, the relation of their findings with what has been suggested by other studies, options for future research, etc.

It comes as no surprise that these authors too (given their own starting point) return towards the end of the paper to implications for clinical practice:

The present study has implications for clinical practice. Clinicians should exercise care when they propose to use disciplining tactics such as deprivation of privileges or imposing penalty tasks, even in a consequent manner, to counter externalizing problems, because these results suggest that, at least in adolescence, this might have negative side effects as well. Our findings should be further investigated before advising too strongly against using nonphysical power assertive discipline. Research is needed to investigate whether applying nonphysical power assertive discipline in combination with parental warmth and involvement has more positive outcomes. Research on the authoritative parenting style advocates in favour of such a balanced perspective (Baumrind 1996), but all power assertive discipline behaviors have in common that they do not allow the adolescent the autonomy he or she requires in this developmental phase. Consequently, less controlling and more autonomy-supportive parenting behaviour might have a positive effect on internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems in adolescence given that they have a positive effect on attachment security (Soenens et al. 2008). (Bosmans et al. 2011, p. 50)

And they continue:

The mediation effects add to the growing suggestion that merely trying to change parenting behaviours without taking into account the quality of the relationship between parents and adolescents might not have an immediate or sufficient effect on psychopathology, nor on less secure attachment-related cognitions that are associated with power assertive discipline . . . This study shows that one of the reasons for the limited therapeutic effect of parent management training might be because cognitions about the quality of the relationship become more important than the actual behaviors of the parents. Therefore, in adolescence it might become increasingly important that therapy focuses on these maladaptive cognitions and on the quality of attachment relationships. After all, research shows that less securely attached children communicate less with their parents about their feelings. Consequently, they become more vulnerable to develop depression (Bosmans et al. 2010) . . . In sum . . . [r]esults demonstrate that power assertive discipline is associated with internalizing problems and less secure attachment . . . The large sample families, the use of a multi-informant measurement of parenting behaviors, the use of well-established measures, and the replication of findings across parental gender, gender of the adolescent, and age groups all underscore the results. (Bosmans et al. 2011, pp. 50–51)

This research, as the previous one I discussed, has a lot to go for: theoretically embedded (documented by several pages of references), moreover related to clinical practice, meticulously detailed, sophisticated, addressing issues that so far have not been studied, sound argumentation, etc. Interestingly, Bosmans and Van Leeuwen—two of the co-authors—are affiliated with the “Parenting and Special Education Research Centre” of the KU Leuven; and taking further in consideration the journal where the study is published, I presume therefore that this can be seen as an example of educational research.

Yet, focusing on at least one of the results (that power assertive discipline is associated with internalizing problems and less secure attachment, in the particular way this has been given shape; see footnote iv); one is inclined to comment that it would indeed be very strange if this were not the case. And it goes without saying that there are many reasons why people should refrain from power assertive discipline (never mind its association with internalizing problems and less secure attachment). It is furthermore remarkable that though at the beginning of the paper reference is made to inductive discipline, this was just left out in this study (granted, it has a specific focus, but it is telling that it is left out). And further, the advice to focus on attachment relationships instead of focusing on particular parental behaviour again will presumably not surprise many (and please do recall that such is suggested on the basis of the results of this and other empirical studies).

Layer 3: On the Promise of Explanation

Class size, and, more particularly, the reduction of the teacher–student ratio, has been discussed widely. There is indeed a widespread belief among parents, teachers, and others that pupils learn most effectively in small classes. This is, according to Mortimore and Blachford (1993), reflected by the fact that one of the main reasons cited for choosing independent schools is class size. That many people expect a lot from smaller classes is understandable as the size of a class is one of the most important means by which the school environment affects children’s learning and behavior. Yet some people are hesitant and argue that the cost of such an operation cannot be justified in terms of the benefits it generates for student learning (Slavin 1990; Tomlinson 1990). Though there is a lot of debate concerning this issue, some critics argue that there is not a wealth of evidence gained by well-designed studies to support size reduction. Most of the research is piecemeal and would not survive serious methodological scrutiny, at least not as far as it would be held to corroborate a general conclusion concerning class size. As regards the UK Mortimore and Blachford (1993) claim that typically only correlations or associations have been reported between class size and average pupil attainment, with little or no firm evidence on the impact of a particular class size on the achievements of its pupils. It is widely recognized, they say, that results from these studies are difficult to interpret because they do not account for intake (for instance, lower-attaining pupils can be concentrated in smaller classes).

Furthermore, it should not go unnoticed that there have been instances of meta-analysis regarding this issue. But even if one takes these into account, it is not clear what conclusions should be drawn. The situation is somewhat different for North America where more research has been conducted on this topic, though again interpretations differ. Some argue that there is a clear and strong relationship between class size and achievement (Glass et al. 1982). Others criticize the idea that an optimum class size can be specified in isolation from factors such as the age of pupils or the subject matter being taught (Robinson and Wittebols 1986). In conclusion, though a bibliographical search (ERIC) generates 456 references (to reports, journal articles, etc.) for the period 1966–2005, it is not, as many scholars have argued, transparently obvious that there is hard empirical evidence regarding the impact of class size on student learning.

Concerning class size, there seems to be one case many authors refer to due to its all-encompassing approach: the Tennessee Studies of Class Size, project STAR (Student–Teacher Achievement Ratio). In this study moreover very clear conclusions are offered. It is described by Mosteller et al. (1996) in an article published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, in which they use it to show that large, long-term, randomized controlled field trials can be carried out successfully in education.⁵ Project STAR is seen as an experiment that starts from the idea that in smaller classes, teachers have more time to give to individual children. This is to cope with a number of problems, as children face a great deal of confusion when they first come to school. For instance, they need to learn to cooperate with others, to get organized to become students, and of course they come from a variety of homes and backgrounds. In the experimental classes, the class size was reduced from around 23–15, by approximately one third, in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades (ages 5–8); the children moved into regular-size classes in the fourth grade. There were three kinds of groups: classes one third smaller than regular-size classes, regular-size classes without a teacher aide, and regular-size classes with a teacher aide. The experiment was carried out in 79 schools in the first year; both children and teachers were randomly assigned to the classes. In the second year it included 76 schools with 331 classes including 6,572 children in inner-city urban, suburban, and rural schools. It was continued for 4 years (1985–1989). After this period there was a second phase, the Lasting Benefits Study, which followed participating children into later grades and recorded their academic progress.

What are the major findings on class size? Firstly, smaller classes did bring substantial improvement to early learning in cognitive subjects such as reading and arithmetic. Secondly, the effects persisted into grades 4, 5, 6, and 7, after pupils moved to regular-size classes. Students who had been originally enrolled in smaller classes continued to perform better than their peers who had started in larger classes. Incidentally, minority students gained twice as much as the rest during the first 2 years before settling to about the same gain as the rest. Thirdly, the presence of teacher aides did not produce improvements nor did their presence seem to have as many lasting benefits.

⁵ In what follows I will draw mainly upon their characterization of the project.

Some more detailed results will further corroborate this conclusion. Performance was assessed through the use of two kinds of tests: the standardized Stanford Achievement Test and the curriculum-based Tennessee's Basic Skills First Test:

The effect sizes are around .25 for small versus regular-size class without an aide and around .10 for regular-size class with an aide compared to regular-size class without an aide. Thus the small class size advances the typical student an additional 10 percentile points, to the 60th percentile, while the aide advances the same student 4 percent, to the 54th percentile. (Mosteller et al. 1996, p. 819)

The authors hurry to add that although "... not huge, these improvements are substantial; when applied to a large population, they represent a solid advance in student learning" (p. 819). Furthermore, it is encouraging to find that students' early experience of smaller size classes has lasting effects that can be observed when they move to regular-size classes—the measurable effect after the first year was .12 and in the fifth grade the effect was nearly .20.

Mosteller, Light, and Sachs finally indicate that there are many issues involved when a well-designed and implemented study comes out with a definite finding. Serious consideration has to be given to all the available alternatives and to the costs and social consequences of implementing the new policy suggested by the findings. In this case, policy makers thought about the most effective place to introduce this intervention and decided to implement it in the 17 districts with the lowest per capita income. Thus the method was used in about 12 % of the state's districts and reduced class size in only about 4 % of all K-12 classes in the state. They further point out that, at the time of the study (1996), no further information became available from the 17 low-income districts after their students moved to regular-size classes. Therefore, they stress that these findings do not automatically mean that reducing class size is the best way to improve schooling—this has to be compared to other measures (for instance, one-to-one tutoring by qualified teachers, peer tutoring, or cooperative group learning).

As argued above, the matter of class size has been the focus of interest in various places. In the 1995 report "Class size and the quality of education," Ofsted used data from inspections to examine the possible relationship between class size and the quality of pupil's learning in UK primary and secondary schools. I will not go into details concerning this study, but it is interesting to have a brief look at the conclusions. Some of the main findings are that:

- no simple link exists between the size of the class and the quality of teaching and learning within it;
- small class sizes are of benefit in the early years of primary education. Once pupils have achieved competency in basic learning, particularly in literacy, they are more able to learn effectively in larger classes;
- within the range of classes inspected, the selection and application of the teaching methods and forms of class organisation have a greater impact on learning than the size of the class. (see Ofsted 1995)

There really is an abundant amount of research to select from. In some reports, attention is drawn to the fact that numerous aspects of the classroom are changed when the class size is reduced. Furthermore, teachers that have been assigned to

smaller classes report that the classroom environment is better. There are fewer reports of distractions. The changes lead to the noise level being lower and the room arrangements are more flexible because there are fewer desks. Sometimes researchers observed that, in small classes, the majority of a pupil's time was spent in individual communication with the instructor, while most of a pupil's time in a large class was evenly split between individual and group instruction. Moreover, many forms of behavior that are not tolerated in large classes because of the disruption they create, such as walking around the room, may be acceptable in small classes.

Though the results of the STAR project have not generally been disputed, some critics have pointed out that the effects seem to decrease after a number of years. One may want to remark that this was probably to be expected in the sense that the experience of the initial class reduction was a one-off event that could not possibly produce the same effects the following years. Others have claimed that the reason for the limited benefits that derive from small classes may be found in the fact that teachers maintain their old methods of teaching and do not take advantage of the new opportunities small classes offer. Thus Mortimore and Blatchford (1993) argue:

It is difficult to know whether it is the opportunity for more individual attention for pupils, more opportunities for pupils to become involved in practical learning tasks, or enhanced teacher motivation and satisfaction in small classes, which indirectly benefit pupils. It makes little sense, therefore, to consider class size in isolation from teaching practices, because the potential benefits of reducing class size will only occur if teachers alter their behaviour and classroom organisation. (p. 4)

There may be other elements as well that have to be considered, such as the preparation time for teachers which is supposed to be higher for larger classes, whether larger classes are given to more experienced (or possibly better) teachers, and the views of pupils themselves (whether they feel happier, believe they are less likely to be bullied, and are more confident about speaking up for themselves and participating in practical activities). Other more general issues have also to be taken into account: the relationship between class size, teaching methods, and the age of the pupils. Therefore, it is suggested that the effects of class size may be different at various ages, a matter which will interact again with the kinds of teaching and instruction that are offered. For instance, it could be the case that class size reductions will be more effective in the first years of school when children are more dependent on adult help, whereas peer tutoring and computer-assisted learning are likely to be more effective once pupils have been in school for a few years. Therefore, it may also be the case that reduced class sizes can prevent problems but are not sufficient to remedy problems later on, and so forth. It goes on and on. Other issues that are suggested concern the relationships between pupil and teacher, attitudes, and morale, and the relationships pupils have with each other.

Given the success of project STAR, some authors have drawn conclusions concerning the kind of research we need to conduct. Mortimore and Blatchford argue that a carefully controlled British research study is long overdue (1993) and furthermore that what is needed is "... experimental research which compares the

progress of pupils who have been randomly allocated to classes of different sizes” (Blatchford and Mortimore 1994, p. 418) because it is the only research which can give us conclusive answers to the question of whether children in smaller classes do better. In the same vein, Mosteller et al. (1996) argue that having access to strong research and policy studies will enable educators to make wise choices. One should not forget that educators have to work with scarce resources and constrained budgets and must decide on how to organize students into classrooms. And they continue:

Hunches, anecdotes, and impressions may have been the only available options in the year 1900, but as we approach the year 2000, society has a broad set of analytic design techniques, widely accepted and effectively used in many fields, that can offer more reliable evidence than hunches and impressions. . . . Not all questions can be tackled using controlled experiments, but many can be. We need larger scale investigations because studies carried out in single schools always have the limitation of doubtful generalization. (Mosteller et al. 1996, pp. 822–823)

They suggest a list of issues which may be tackled in a similar way (i.e., well-designed, randomized controlled field trials preparing for educational innovations) such as the appropriate amount of homework in different classes for children of different ages, the distribution of time to tasks among different school subjects, and even, the question of whether or not students are losing too much of what has been learned in the school year during summer months and vacations. I find these examples quite strange and it is not clear to me how they could be studied by randomized controlled field trials. Even more remarkable is the fact that Blatchford and Mortimore (1994) express some doubts about the results of (quasi-) experimental findings or randomized controlled trials, while on the other hand, they do not give ample space for other alternatives. Though (in my opinion) they quite correctly point out that class size reductions and methods of teaching need to be considered together and that benefits are only likely to take place if we consider what kinds of teaching, classroom organization, and tasks are relevant to a particular size of teaching group, they insist that these issues should be approached in an experimental way—or how else, given their earlier statements, does one interpret their plea for *sound information* that appears in the same article (p. 426)?

I said earlier that it is strange to find, on the one hand, pleas for well-designed (experimental) research, while, on the other hand, these empirical researchers are aware of the multiple elements that have to be taken into account and the problems to overcome. It is clear that they fully realize the limitations of the methods they want to follow. For instance, in a study of 1998, Goldstein and Blatchford discuss observational studies and randomized controlled trials, in which they argue for the assumption that the point of doing class size research is to make statements about causation:

By causation we mean the inference that, from an observed ‘effect’ of class size on achievement estimated by research, we can assume that moving children from one class size to another will have a similar effect on achievement. (Goldstein and Blatchford 1998, p. 256)

Yet in the same study they argue:

Even with the most carefully controlled study causal interpretations will be difficult, not least because we need to take account of the context in which the research has been carried out; and whether the 'effect' may vary across schools, educational systems and other contexts such as social background.⁶ (Ibid., p. 256)

Goldstein and Blatchford draw attention to several problems, which may arise because researchers have ignored the problematic aspects of measuring or defining certain concepts. The following list is long, though not exhaustive:

- The actual size of a class is not the same as the student–teacher ratio.
- The number of students formally on the register may differ from those being taught.
- The experienced size is to be differentiated from the actual size.
- The sample population may differ from the target population.
- Reduction of class sizes within a large school may not be the same as an equivalent change in a small school.
- Because of the inherently historical nature of all social research, by the time the results are available that context normally will have changed.
- The institutions or populations which are most accessible for study are often atypical.
- In the case of randomized controlled trials, the expectations about the effects of class size may be partly responsible for observed effects.
- Teachers and children within a school in different class sizes may interact over time and possibly “contaminate” the effects of the size differences.
- A design where randomization occurs only at the school level may not be representative of the real world where typically differential sizes do exist within schools.
- Teachers may alter their style of teaching (they might tend to use more whole-class teaching methods and concentrate more on a narrower range of basic topics) and consequently compensate in a number of ways with larger classes.
- The role of “mediating variables and processes” (such as quality of teaching, pupil attention, teacher control, etc.).

Reanalyzing the data of the STAR project, Goldstein and Blatchford (1998) identify other “shortcomings.” For instance, they point out that 24 % of the children were removed from the project after kindergarten and these had a markedly lower score than those who remained in the study. They also noted that problems regarding dropping out continued at grades 1, 2, and 3. In conclusion, one finds that, on the one hand, pleas are made for well-designed (mainly experimental) research, while on the other hand these empirical researchers are aware of the multiple elements that have to be taken into account and the problems to “overcome.” Clearly they fully realize the limitations of the method they want to adhere to, but, nevertheless, decide that it is still the best path to follow.

⁶ Causality here and elsewhere is conceptually identified as law-like generalizations paradigmatically used, for instance, in physics.

Of course, it is interesting to know that reductions in class size have no negative (and indeed have some positive) effects on student learning, but the question remains whether the level of those effects substantiates the claim for greater investment—resources are always scarce. This necessarily requires a different line of research and of argumentation. Many other issues are involved, which the STAR study does not go into, such as the workload of the teachers, the feelings of happiness of the students, and other issues which can hardly be measured in the same “objective” experimental manner. This is also a problem because the various elements that are involved relate to each other. It comes therefore as no surprise to find in many studies that it is not so much class size that is important, but the way the teacher deals with it, i.e., varies his teaching to accommodate optimal student learning.

So what may be concluded on a meta-level as regards this kind of research? First of all, it seems that, in these studies, the benefits of reducing class size are determined in terms of factors (independent and dependent) that can be measured and manipulated in their constituent parts. What does not fit into this experimental pattern is simply left out. Although the well-being of pupils and teacher workloads are mentioned, there is no attempt to incorporate these factors into the design. Obviously it would be very difficult to analyze some of these relevant variables in random settings. Nevertheless, case studies are ruled out because the conclusions they offer cannot be generalized. It is true that most of the researchers working in this area accept that the higher cost of smaller classes is a relevant consideration. However, they are much more concerned with establishing whether or not there is an effect, rather than considering the strength of the effect that would justify higher spending on education. The latter, much more political issue, is *irrelevant* for such researchers and is not dealt with. This generates a picture, which suggests that once the facts have been determined, the conclusion (i.e., to decrease class size or not) follows on of its own accord. Second, it is difficult to see how long-term studies can accommodate for situational/historical change. It is not only impossible to foresee which new elements have to be taken into account, but what is ignored are the different elements which, in their interaction with each other, create something new (which is not just the result of addition or subtraction of variables seen as factors). Problems of discipline, for instance, may disrupt the interactions to such an extent that regularly observed relations between variables no longer hold. Conversely, we are told that one of the advantages of smaller classes is that many forms of behavior, which are not tolerated in larger classes because of the disruption they create, may be acceptable in smaller classes. Third, and less technically but perhaps even more importantly, the favored design seems to ignore the fact that teachers deal with class situations (or learning situations) in a creative manner. It comes as no surprise to find in many studies that it is not so much class size that is important, but the way the teacher deals with it, i.e., varies his teaching to accommodate optimal student learning. Teachers will look for opportunities for students to learn and thus act more in the spirit of “making the most of it,” rather than carefully “following” regularities or causal inferences. They realize that there are many roads to Rome, and also that it may not be the only place worth going to. All three of these conclusions could be seen as strengthening the case for a more holistic approach, where the relation of the elements that are involved is given a more prominent

place. It seems that in educational contexts, it is not so much factors or elements that have to be studied as such, but the complex relationships between them. Here the presence or absence of something may change the whole picture and, consequently, the conclusions that can be drawn from a particular setting. Yet from the position that is generally embraced, such studies are seen as irrelevant due to their lack of potential for generalization. Does this rule out experimental or even empirical research? For some that is the conclusion, but this seems wrong to me.

Kinds of Understanding and Explanation: Layers of Interpretation

In educational research as everywhere else in science, academia, or even ordinary life, we are for various reasons interested in trying to understand (some would say, “make sense of”) the phenomena we are surrounded by or subjected to. This understanding is supposed to give us a grip on what is happening, bring some order to the chaos. It is not in the least bit concerned with how we see ourselves, or what we aspire to achieve. Some explanations are more attractive to us than others, some are more popular in particular periods, and some focus on groups. Others center on the individual. Crucial in this endeavor are issues about truth (A) but at the same time at lot will depend on what one is particularly interested in (B). The latter may or may not be intertwined with one or other sort of good that is envisaged either by a person or a particular group, and this opens up the sphere of manipulation (C) but also of responsibility and responsiveness (D). Thus matters of the particular concept that is used when studying a problem come to the forefront (E) as crucial factors concerning the characterization of that phenomenon. This will have implications for where one can arrive at in terms of solutions for dealing with it.

Let me begin by arguing that whether something is *really* explained, or whether “reality” here is merely the opposite of fiction, should not necessarily invoke a naïve form of correspondence theory of truth where sense data are the exclusive building blocks. Instead, as Peter Winch rightly argued, it is always about “what is real for us.” It goes without saying that answering a research question in terms of causes and effects will not generate an answer in terms of the understanding of those involved. But this kind of circularity is not to be regretted. It is characteristic of all explanation. Scientific, and for that matter any other kind of explanation, will always take the data which are to be interpreted to a higher step of abstraction. This will engender a particular theoretical construction that makes sense. This is a circular process in which each level is taken to account for, to derive from, or to elaborate on the other. Thus instances are explained by patterns and patterns by instances. For Winch too, there is more at stake than just the practitioner’s understanding or the concepts of those involved (i.e., raw data as interpreted phenomena), but those of the “student of society” as well. Clearly, here it is not prediction that may exclusively provide us with a point of reference, nor is the method of the natural sciences the only way to come to valid conclusions. But if the possibility of

prediction is what one is interested in, even then a meaningful background must be present. That sense data and observations will play an important role does not jeopardize the claim that concepts are always involved. Possible exceptions occur at a very basic level. For example, light of a particular intensity is painful. In such cases one may argue that particular phenomena have “meaning in themselves” and do not presuppose a shared meaningful background. With the example of the light, what is “shared” here is the human body and its particular physiology. But these cases/examples are rare, and moreover, once we start speaking about them, a language in which we can determine “what makes sense for us” is implied. Again this has to be distinguished from a context in which reasons can be given. It is therefore not correct to argue that phenomena which have a “meaning in themselves” play no role whatsoever in our understanding of human behavior. But it would also not be correct to ignore that more is involved if they have a place in our lives. In that case they also presuppose some kind of shared meaning that will include elements over and above the physical, chemical, physiological, or biochemical level.

Explanation and Causality

When trying to understand natural phenomena, one may want to distinguish a unified style of explanation from explanations of a mechanical kind. The former explains in terms of basic comprehensive principles (for instance, in biology: selection, mutation, heritability of traits). In other words, a unified style of explanation situates phenomena into an overall scheme. The latter style of explanation answers questions of how things work (sometimes understood as what they are made of). It therefore comes as no surprise that Wesley Salmon, a philosopher of science, argues that the constant efforts of the sciences to explain involve “revealing the mechanisms at work in the world” (1989, p. 156). In terms of understanding a society one may be interested in how it functions at large, what and why people do what they do, and “who” they are. However, in many cases in this area, the concept of “causality” seems to pervade our thinking about ourselves and others, about our environment, even concerning the entire universe we live in. It is involved in the use of technology (where we attempt to achieve particular effects while avoiding undesirable ones) and in our everyday practical planning and dealings. For a lot of authors, to explain an event is to identify its antecedents, i.e., its causes.

Though clearly in many cases the use of statistics is aimed at unraveling causal mechanisms, this is not always the case. For example, one may be interested to know how many cases there are with this or that characteristic and this can be useful for a particular purpose. These descriptions (a distribution of the actual cases concerning a particular variable) may be vital for policy issues. Let us take bullying as an example. How many cases of bullying are registered in primary schools? This can be specified further for particular subgroups such as boys and girls, according to age, ethnicity, various living conditions, and so on and so forth. A model of causality looms up behind these descriptions. Now it goes without saying that to have an informed estimate of the frequency of the occurrence of a particular problem (as detailed as this can be) is quite essential in educational contexts. Policy

needs to take this into account, as it can be an element in the process of determining how relevant the problem is and what should be done about it. It should, however, be noted that when studies use *descriptive statistics*, which evidently have a place in their own right, they take a step further. Then statistics become part of a much broader (sometimes “causal”) concern, whether they are used to explain what is going on or to be made use of (i.e., used to tackle the envisaged problem). I will refer to this as *the explanatory use of statistics*. I will not deal with the area of problems the “use of” statistics confronts us with (these are typically identified as “contextualization,” “generalizability,” or even “eco-validity”). Instead, I will focus on what lies at the basis of the explanatory approach. The open door descriptive statistics offers lures us into an area that is beset with serious problems. Such problems are often put aside (“forgotten”) in the interest of explanation.

In quantitative research, one typically looks for a distribution of variables (how many cases are there with this or that characteristic) and uses this for explanations. Such explanations can be of a deductive–nomological kind (incorporating universal laws) or be of an inductive nature. Explanations of an inductive nature are supposed to contribute to what Peter Lipman calls “. . . Inference to the Best Explanation” as they provide “a partial solution to the problem of description by giving an illuminating account of the black box mechanism that governs our inductive practices” (Lipman 2004, p. 164). Clearly, bringing something under a set of laws can also offer an explanation not in terms of an argument (a logical structure with premises and conclusions governed by some rule of acceptance), but as a presentation of the conditions relevant to the occurrence of the event and a statement of the degree of probability of the event given these conditions.⁷ Thus the problem of determinism

⁷Incidentally, it is interesting to notice that examples from the atomic and subatomic world show us that there is a limit to the joint precision with which two so-called complementary parameters can be known: there is an inescapable uncertainty if one attempts to ascertain the values of both the position and momentum of a particle. The same thing goes for energy and time. Ascertaining the position of an electron with great precision makes us unable to ascertain its momentum exactly and vice versa. More precisely: when a photon strikes an electron, the direction in which the electron will go is not determined. There is a probability distribution over all possible directions. Furthermore, in this collision the amount by which the frequency of the photon will change is not determined. A probability distribution over all possible amounts exists. Because of the conservation of energy and of momentum, there is a perfect correlation between the direction of the electron and the change in frequency of the photon. The pair of values is however not determined. Incidentally, it is important in this context to refer to problems with our instruments of measurement. The click that results from a genuine photon detection is utterly indistinguishable from the click that results from a spurious count. And finally, there is of course the presumption that conditions surrounding this particular occurrence can be specified in enough detail to establish the existence of a unique necessary and sufficient cause (this example is discussed in Salmon 1998.) To offer an explanation here is something different: it comes down to the assembling of a total set of relevant conditions against which the event can be explained, and to the citing of the probability of that event in the presence of these conditions. It is in this case not an argument (a logical structure with premises and conclusions governed by some rule of acceptance), but rather a presentation of the conditions relevant to the occurrence of the event, and a statement of the degree of probability of the event given these conditions. Evidently, a persistent statistical correlation—a genuine statistical-relevance relation—is strongly indicative of a causal relation of some sort, but one should not confuse statistical correlation with genuine causation. This would be to conflate symptoms with causes.

versus indeterminism is invoked. For the determinist, the fact that we are unable to make perfect predictions in all cases is the result of human ignorance and other limitations. This is not because nature is lacking in precise determination; clearly, accuracy of prediction is irrelevant to whether determinism is true in principle. This framework is challenged by frameworks of indeterminism, for instance, by quantum theory. It is not simply that quantum mechanics is *prima facie* nondeterministic, but that under plausible constraints no deterministic completion of the quantum theory is possible. In view of this it seems inadvisable to accept determinism as an *a priori* principle—and of course the truth or falsity of quantum mechanics is a matter of physical fact. Doubts about the possibility of finding causes for everything, either on the basis of logical or empirical considerations or on the basis of relativity theory, press the case for a move to indeterminism as the more rational choice for the overarching framework. However, as far as I can see, this sort of metaphysical discussion is not terribly pertinent to the argument presented in this paper. Indeed, as argued above, laws can be seen as offering an explanation by presenting the conditions relevant to the occurrence of the event and a statement of the degree of probability of the event given these conditions. I therefore conclude that the discussion of determinism or indeterminism does not damage the use of causes and laws. Moreover, because of this it will not diminish the interest in causes and causal explanation. We explain facts (general or particular) by exhibiting the physical processes and interactions that bring them about, but such mechanisms need not be deterministic to have explanatory force. In the following I will talk about laws and causes with this in mind.

The form philosophical discussions of causality take is usually as follows: there are two facts (or types of) or two events (or types of) between which there is a relation *R*. Sometimes the logical structure of the relation is discussed in terms of necessary or sufficient conditions or a combination of both, which given the interaction of several conditions leads to complex schemes for understanding particular occurrences. To put the issue again more generally, when two types of events, *A* and *B*, are positively related to each other, we hunt for a common cause *C* that is statistically relevant. The statistical-relevance relations must be explained in terms of two causal processes in which *C* is causally relevant to *A* and *C* is causally relevant to *B*. This is the heart of matters where it is claimed that a statistical explanation is based on causality. Now the question is, why should we prefer, for explanatory purposes, the relevance of *C* to *A* and *C* to *B* over the relevance of *A* to *B*, which we had in the first place? The answer is that we can trace a spatio-temporally continuous causal connection from *C* to *A* and from *C* to *B* (while the relation between *A* and *B* cannot be accounted for by any such direct continuous causal relation). Recall that, according to Hume, causal explanations present us with a problem. As deductive logic cannot provide the answer (that explains why ball number 2 is set in motion after being hit by ball number 1), Hume turns to empirical investigations. On the basis of his observations he concludes that in situations where we believe that there is a causal relation, there is a temporal priority of the cause to the effect. There is furthermore a spatiotemporal contiguity of the cause to the effect, and finally, on every occasion on which the cause occurs,

the effect follows—there is constant conjunction. As there is, in his opinion, no physical connection between the cause and the effect (the connection does not exist outside of our own minds), the relation between cause and effect is to be found in custom and habit. We may want to qualify the latter and argue for a more robust interpretation of causality (see, for instance, Salmon 1998), but for our purposes little depends on this. It does not affect either the use of cause nor our interest in causes. As indicated, it is important to realize that when statistics are used to explain the occurrence of events, a model that uses causes is operative. Hempel's position, often referred to in this context, makes this clear.

In an explanation one may cite specific conditions obtaining prior to the event (initial conditions) and invoke general laws. It is held that the occurrence of the event to be explained follows logically from those premises, i.e., those initial conditions and laws. One can distinguish between deductive explanations that incorporate universal laws (which hold without exceptions) and inductive explanations, which employ statistical laws (which hold for most or many cases). According to Hempel (1965) scientific explanation consists in deductive or inductive subsumption of that which is to be explained under one or more laws of nature. This is referred to as the deductive–nomological model (D-N). For Hempel, however, inductive–statistical explanations are essentially relativized to knowledge situations—he suggested the requirement of total evidence that took the form of the requirement of maximal specificity, where all possibly relevant knowledge is available. If there were an inductive–statistical explanation whose law-like statistical premise involved a genuinely homogenous reference class, then we would have an instance of an inductive–statistical explanation *simpliciter*, not merely an inductive–statistical explanation relative to a specific knowledge situation. However, as there are, according to Hempel, no inductive–statistical explanations *simpliciter*, ideally inductive–statistical explanation would have no place in his account. There is a striking similarity between this kind of explanation and Laplace's formulation of determinism. In view of this close relationship, it is tempting to conclude that events that are causally determined can be explained, and those that can be explained are causally determined. Above we have set aside the problems of determinism versus indeterminism, as well as those concerning the formulation of laws (among others underdetermination; see also footnote 1). Let me reiterate the point that what is important is to focus on the fact that in many cases we do not have enough facts to be able to construct a full explanation and we can never be sure that a new condition might not turn up: one can never exclude the possibility that a further relevant subdivision of a reference class might be necessary on the basis of additional knowledge. Moreover, an explanation requires a sufficient condition that is based on empirical evidence that something actually happened, and inference on the other hand refers to something in the future. To infer something that lies in the future not only presupposes that everything relevant has been taken into account but requires that the future replicate the past. Notwithstanding these difficulties, it seems that for a statistical-relevance model, it is the amount of relevant information that counts; it consists of a probability distribution over a (maximum) homogeneous partition of an initial reference class (and thus is all about the gain in information it provides).

So one answer to the question “why are we attracted to statistics?” comes down to the fact that it helps us to find what is hidden (either a law, or a law-like generalization). We think that this hidden law may assist us in dealing with future problems. Therefore, though we are aware of the problems explanations in terms of “(quasi-)causality” are beset with, and we are knowledgeable about the limits of the use of statistics (and take these into account), there is no more trustworthy method to rely on if we want to know how things work (either in the natural or the social world), so the story goes, but there is, as I will argue, more complexity at stake.

Interpretation and Complexity

In the *Philosophical Investigations* Ludwig Wittgenstein argues against essences and metaphysics, or more precisely against our metaphysical disposition. For Wittgenstein, this is exemplified in the general propositional form of a sentence. Against the Augustinian picture of language (all propositions are or contain a description), he argues that: “language plays us entirely new tricks” (Wittgenstein 1966, *Aesthetics*, I, # 3). And in section 115 of the *Philosophical Investigations* he writes: “A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (Wittgenstein 1974b, I). The reason for this is that in a proposition, something of the subject of that sentence is always said. His move is in the opposite direction, towards particularity, and thus philosophy offers reminders for a particular purpose. In this sense (and only in this sense, because Wittgenstein is wary of theory generally and of looking for hypotheses or “what is hidden from us”), statistics may not be that different at all from our “normal” way of speaking. However, clearly retreating into “a new way of looking at things” as one or other kind of aesthetic existence may not be enough to convince the skeptic. Though much can be said for particularity at some point, we may want to transgress such a stance because resources are limited and we are urged to make decisions on a larger scale. There is much more to be said about this, but I should return now to the central focus of this paper, namely, interpretation in quantitative research.

Interestingly, the aesthetic dimension we touched upon has also been addressed more generally in regard to research methodologies in the social sciences. David Fenner (2006), for instance, argues that quantitative and qualitative methodologies could be seen as exemplifying respectively a disinterested and an engaged approach. He maintains that there exists a strong parallel between current research methodologies in the social sciences and the two most central and popular approaches to aesthetics over the last four centuries. Fenner approvingly quotes Eddy Zemach who argues that within the stance of scientific realism, “Scientists apply criteria to theories, such that those theories that best meet those criteria are those theories judged to most closely approximate the truth” and that “[a]t least in part, these criteria are aesthetic: simplicity, elegance, unity, etc.” (Fenner 2006, p. 321). Somewhat further he endorses the position that scientists do not celebrate

aesthetic properties like ambiguity or “sublime disorder.” In the conclusion he claims that “[m]otivations to employ one educational research methodology are quite similar to motivations to favor one sort of approach to aesthetic experience (or judgment) over the other” (Fenner 2006, p. 327). This far-reaching conclusion reiterates the point that was made earlier concerning a taste for the simple or the complex. That the simple can be dangerous is evident. Though simplicity may often be a good thing, it avoids the hazards of the oversophisticated, the baroque, or even the decadent (as John Dupré argues in “The lure of the simplistic,” 2002, p. 284, concerning the theory of evolution, this attractiveness can make us blind to what is naïve, unsubtle, or just misguided—he speaks of the “unifying and simplifying urge, reductionism,” *ibid.*, p. 291). So is statistics only about the simple in its pejorative sense?

There have been attempts to rescue analytical statistics in a way that is acceptable to skeptical critical realists. In an interesting paper “A critical epistemology of analytical statistics,” Wendy Olsen and Jamie Morgan (2005) argue that the significance of a method can be transformed by a reconstruction of the methodology. In their words: “It is not implausible to suggest that methods predicated on closure and regularity can contribute to an open methodology that in turn has something valuable to say about an open social reality” (p. 262). Furthermore, they argue that “. . . a post-positivist social science would want to reject empiricism but not necessarily all the techniques associated with empiricism” (*ibid.*, p. 265). There could be a case for optimism regarding the possibilities for operationalizing aspects of social reality. Furthermore, realists need not be empiricist in their interpretations. They argue that eight claims or criteria can be set up to provide for a multifaceted defense of analytical statistics.⁸ This allows us to avoid throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Here are Olsen and Morgan:

1. Methodological closure need not presume a closure in reality for explanatory significance. Non-identity between the two means that a closed method may still contribute to a realist account of an open system where the degree of openness is known in advance.
2. A manipulation that constructs regularity need not imply that the basis of that relative regularity is arbitrary or unrepresentative of the aspects of the world under scrutiny. Synthetic epiphenomena highly determined by method itself can occur, but do not necessarily occur.
3. Regularity-seeking analytical statistics are capable of highlighting non-regularity and the breakdown in relative regularity. Analytical statistics can accommodate complexity and contingency.
4. The interpretation of analytical statistics allows non-atomistic inferences about relations.

⁸ They use what they call a widely accepted notion of analytical statistics as the mathematical process of manipulating survey data in an attempt to reach “well-founded” conclusions which generalize across the region and time period from whence the data came. The analytical methods can be seen as including regression as well as some exploratory methods such as factor analysis (cf. Olson and Morgan 2005, p. 280, footnote 1).

5. As a consequence of 1–4, the results obtained through analytical statistics can be counter-phenomenal or unexpected. As such they are able to contribute to a qualitative understanding.
6. The role of the analyst in the initial choice of method(s) and in the subsequent development of the particular research application is highly significant in realizing the possibility of 1–5.
7. As a consequence of 1–6, manipulations can contribute to retrodiction [which explains what conditions in reality may have or could have led to these observations] to causal mechanisms rather than hypostatizing [acting as if, or assuming that, the relations between things are fixed] variables as chains of events through interpolation.
8. 1–7 imply that an analytical statistical method may be appropriate as part of a methodologically pluralist research project. (Olsen and Morgan 2005, pp. 269–270)

Olsen and Morgan claim that one need not believe that data *represent* the world for them to be useful in constructing arguments (ibid., p. 277). Moreover, it may be extremely difficult to disagree with their conclusions (ibid., p. 278):

Counterfactual work in analytical statistics requires comparative statistics, and can usefully bring out findings about minority groups vs. the majority, or different populations which have common causal mechanisms. The class structure of different countries, and different policy regimes which together generate different employment outcomes, illustrates the possibilities for comparative statistics. To throw out statistics as a method would involve discarding all possibilities for such comparative work, yet such work has been very illuminating in many disciplines.

Sylvia Walby (who is interested in a more theoretical stance) develops a parallel argument (2007) where the implications of complexity theory for the analysis of multiple intersecting social inequalities are investigated and applied. Similarly Helga Nowotny (2005) draws attention to the fact that we seem

to be engaged in describing and interpreting complexities with the desire to understand and to engage in both – in building higher-level complexities because they are a more efficient way of doing things and to reduce complexity in order to minimize undesirable effects and to be able to cope with the increasing levels of complexity around us (Nowotny 2005, p. 19).

Both, she claims, are indicative of a dynamic which points to the ongoing coevolutionary processes between science and society.

Evidently, there is a real danger here of committing a logical fallacy, in which one ignores the original topic of an argument and subtly changes the subject, but still claims that the conclusion concerning the original subject is reached even though the argument has little to do with the conclusion. This so-called red herring fallacy looms around the corner for statistics. It is committed when the arguer diverts the attention of the reader or listener by addressing a number of extraneous issues and ends by presuming that some conclusion has been established. This confuses scientific with faith-based belief. What can we conclude from this? It seems to me that when one does not hypostatize (by this I mean formally treat or represent something abstract as a concrete reality) the results of statistical analyses, they have the potential to engender better understanding. Of course, statistics may reveal what we are interested in or point us to something that we were unaware of (e.g., that in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium compared to the French-speaking part more drugs are used to treat ADHD and less for depression). Yet at the same time

they may conceal what we should (also) be concerned with. But to simply regard statistics as dangerous (or redundant) does not do justice to the complexity of what is involved in understanding.

The philosophical problem about the structure of language, namely, the particular metaphysical enframing (and longing) that unavoidably seems to take place (this is overwhelmingly clear in Plato's work and those positions that were developed in this vein) and which was foreshadowed in pre-Socratic stances (such as the fascination for numbers) and present in later developments, for instance, by Bacon and Descartes, haunts us to use a Wittgensteinian expression. As a result, the ideals of objectivity (bracketing the performative embeddedness) and rationality that, since the Enlightenment, have characterized our understanding of reality may be seen as indicative of unwillingness to live with complexity. Humans not only long for knowledge (to know how things are, for instance, "Is this a tenor characterizing a particular voice?" or "How long will I be in the traffic jam—incidentally, knowledge of that does not shorten the time?"), they also seem to have an insatiable need to gain control over the world. That we always use concepts that invoke something general, that there is no alternative to this even when we take it fully into account, is a profound Wittgensteinian insight. The attraction of statistics lies in the fact that they make things more simple and answer a "human all too human need" to get some kind of grip on reality. This is bound up with the force of rhetoric, a force that may be easier to exploit now than ever before given the availability of super computers and Web-based dissemination of what has been found to be the case.

On the Limits and Unavoidability of an Amended Correspondence Theory of Truth

As I implied above, all of this is puzzling, very puzzling indeed. What is it that these authors of the examples I discussed above hope to achieve? And why, one is inclined to ask, is the demonstrated reliance on empirical methods the only avenue they dare to walk confidently? The knowledge that is offered in educational research is of various kinds:

- (a) Local, situated, descriptive (of whatever nature: either based on sensory experience or observation or involving the subject to express one or other judgment about the situation or herself, or a combination thereof)
- (b) Addressing some elements to make the process run more smoothly (let us call this "technological" knowledge)
- (c) Generalization (theoretical, in many cases based on statistical methods), complemented with results based on other empirical research directed towards theoretical insights (most frequently combined with an interest to achieve certain ends)
- (d) Finally, interpretation including discussions "where to go"

The examples I have discussed (which I hold paradigmatic for educational research nowadays) do pretty well on (a), (b), and (c), but do poorly and are even neglectful concerning (d). What does this point to? Although very few colleagues in educational research will admit it, I surmise that most of them are in fact embracing the presuppositions of positivism, logical positivism, or logical empiricism. They pay lip service to the traditional criticisms, they know how to speak politically correct about the *limited* nature of their own research, and they will grant everyone that value questions are always involved and that they have to pay attention to these, yet when they are pushed to make explicit what they think their own knowledge as experts is, then what one hears is nothing less than what may be labeled objective knowledge, which invokes one or other variation of the correspondence theory of truth in a rather naïve form. Though such a kind of educational research has been criticized, successfully one may say, and moreover logical empiricism (logical positivism/empiricism and positivism) has been criticized, again successfully let me insist, it is as lively as ever.⁹ Why, one may ask is it so attractive, so much alive? The quite simple answer to this is surely that as it focuses exclusively (or at least predominantly) on referential meaning, it is more satisfactory than other positions (which include other kinds of meaning) because it leaves (almost) no room for doubt (at least not once a particular theory has been identified including the concepts it works with). In epistemological terms this may be characterized as a kind of logical positivism (maybe even the kind that is present in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*; see Wittgenstein 1974a).

As I argued above, most educational researchers seem to be aware that there are necessarily limitations concerning how to proceed. They put a lot of effort in determining the kind of data they need and how to analyze these, and are showing their willingness to justify all the steps they take before offering (usually in a tentative way) some conclusions. That their approach is heavily criticized turns out not so difficult to explain. Indeed it is tempting to ignore momentarily the pictorial form (a particular kind of (re-)presenting reality exclusively focusing on referential meaning) and then forgetting that one has ignored other (re-)presentations (see Smeyers 2014). In trying to achieve value-free, i.e., objective knowledge, to represent reality as it really is, many educational researchers confuse rational discussion with a rather crude kind of naïve registration (which they

⁹ There is a further development, i.e., post-positivism which too embraces ontological realism, the possibility and desirability of objective truth, and the use of experimental methodology. In this amended version of positivism, it is held that reality can only be known imperfectly and probabilistically (taking into account among other things that theories, background, knowledge, and values of the researcher can influence what is observed). For post-positivists human knowledge is based not on unchallengeable, rock-solid foundations, but rather upon human conjectures which are justified by a set of warrants which can be modified or withdrawn in the light of further investigations. Though this stance deals successfully with a number of criticisms of various versions of positivism, it remains however a meta-theoretical position that cannot do justice to what according to many is at the heart of social sciences, i.e., the interpretation of human experience and the particularly human reality that is addressed here (including what is offered, for example, in disciplines such as history, philosophy, etc.).

present) in their representation of research. Though it is accepted that theories and concepts are needed, no serious engagement is shown with the kinds of theoretical insights the complex human reality requires, with the kind of questions Socrates famously asked—one may want to recall his “the unquestioned life is not worth living.” What they offer can be identified as positivism, or in any case as a less outspoken or milder version of it. A metaphor may be helpful here: in a similar manner as facts and concepts are often portrayed as two sides of the same coin, ethics, aesthetics, and all dimensions which come together in our social practices can be taken to identify what will be seen looking through a prism (of which each point of entry may be a particular dimension). For a moment one may indulge oneself getting engrossed in how reality looks like (really is) from a *particular* point of entry. But when choosing to take a particular stance, one is not at liberty to forget or do away with its particular picturing (neither with other possible entries). It (i.e., the stance) is therefore not a matter of taste at all, or of what works or what is popular, but must be part of a rational deliberation involving various perspectives and the voices of all who want to be part of it. Each of these possible stances (particular entries in the prism if I may be allowed to continue the metaphor) may focus on what is absolute in a particular “perspective.”¹⁰ What I labeled “referential meaning” is thus a particular case (a discourse which relies on *sense* data); it is by no means the only way reality makes sense for us and that is shown in the variety of ways we speak of what is “real” for us.¹¹ Let me recall: it is easy to forget this.

Decisions need to be made and for that reference to “what is real” is crucial. Following Winch (1958), it is my claim too that a more fruitful way to talk about this is phrased by “what it makes sense to say.” The answer the majority of educational research nowadays offers is something that aspires to be “beyond reasonable doubt” within the chosen framework (or language game) of empirical educational science. One is interested in what is the case, what is real, unbiased, and therefore one typically also suggests that the insights should be taken up by practitioners. However, one operates as if educational research is a kind of natural science and is inclined to forget that there is more at stake. It is telling that one wants to be as far as possible removed from discussions about ends; moreover, these are presented as if they are to be situated beyond critical scrutiny. Possibly

¹⁰ Incidentally, the concept “perspective” may suggest that one can take a distance from what one observes and/or that one can decide to take only a particular perspective. Both of these tendencies should be resisted: the first is clearly impossible; the second can only momentarily be the case in view of a particular purpose. It is rather that one always finds oneself in one or other perspective which foregrounds itself.

¹¹ Of course, it may never be completely or totally possible to diverge oneself from one or other kind of correspondence theory of truth. Once one accepts, however, that there is theoretical knowledge one needs to realize that more is at stake which can no longer be captured by a correspondence theory of truth, and from this it follows that more and different kinds of “what makes sense to say” have to be “admitted.” Such broadening can build on a thin conception of meaning (may even always necessarily build at least partly on this, for example, on referential meaning, a language game which one can hardly avoid to play), but offers richer perspectives which are I believe no less rational.

this is because one is afraid of doctrines professed under the guise of wisdom and because one abhors preachers. But this is not the right kind of identifying alternatives. What is argued for in ethics, philosophy, and so forth is not excluded from rational debate and should not be confused with telling people how to think and/or act. It is not the case that what is offered in the dominant stream of educational research is not interesting (and it definitely is in the particular context in which these researchers operate); and it is certainly doing well in the present climate of performativity at the university, but it is so limited, especially when it is offered for clinical practice. The wariness of these researchers to engage with other areas, sometimes motivated by “perhaps it is not a lot research has to offer but it is the only thing it can offer,” is troublesome.

The nowadays dominant tradition of educational research presupposes that what is the case administers a normative background and generates aims which have to be observed and aspired at any cost. The illusion of certainty that they uphold is very attractive, almost irresistible to all those who struggle to decide what to do but is yet another manifestation of skepticism. Their help, well intended, cannot do away with their responsibility, it cannot do away with the normative stance they themselves are necessarily embracing as researchers. In their search for what is real in a particular sense (what explains how things are, which insights correspond with what is observed), their forgetfulness of the pictorial form is at odds with the position they seem to embrace.

I have argued that there is nothing necessarily problematic about the quantitative approach as long as one realizes what one is doing: observes complexity and acknowledges limitations. It is I think not unlikely that many statisticians and quantitative educational researchers would go along with the general stance I have been arguing for. Only in cherishing layers of interpretation one can do justice to the complexity we find ourselves in.¹²

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¹²This study is based on previous work, particularly on Smeyers 2006, 2010, 2014.

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Genre 8 Cultural-Transgressive Approaches

Introduction

Robert A. Davis

Late in their distinguished collaboration, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari wrote that “*Philosophy needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it; it needs a nonphilosophical comprehension just as art needs nonart and science needs nonscience*” (1994, p. 218). We might add to this that every interpretation needs a non-interpretation; every “hermeneutic” needs to be reminded that the god of interpretation is thrice-blessed Hermes: psychopomp of entrances and exits; thresholds and perimeters—genius, charmer, cheat, liar, thief, trickster, dreamweaver, propagandist on behalf of his morally compromised fellow divinities; patron of merchants, teachers, magicians, and the dying. The essays in this section of the present volume welcome Hermes in all his ambiguity to the limits of the known and the knowable, to the edges where transgression of the established measures of meaning and measurement is not at all nihilistic (as Nietzsche knew, Apollo the God of Reason is the true metaphysical nihilist, not Hermes), but redounds to the enriching transformation of interpretation as an art of the human imagination applied to the joys and the sorrows, the successes and the failures, of experience and learning.

Critical-theoretical approaches to educational research and interpretation are not new and neither is the eschewal of positivism or the embrace of “critique” as a reproach to the limitations of conventional analytical methods. The culture wars have penetrated education as visibly as any other social science or humanity, and this section of the volume *might* have been populated with the poststructuralist or postmodern deconstructions of the favored hermeneutics of educational research at the beginning of the twenty-first century. That is not to say that poststructuralist, postmodern, and postcolonial approaches to educational research are invisible in

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the collection of essays presented here. It is to say, however, that the often highly varied and divergent themes and topics pursued throughout the section have taken advantage of a kind of “transgressive permission” of the kind Hermes is pledged to protect—an editorial license to pass over the boundaries of even radical critique and personal investment, but on the understanding that the night journey into self, culture, language, knowledge, mystery, alchemy, music, dispossession, and anger will bring back to the larger ambitions of the book a gift or boon by which its important hermeneutical objectives can be secured.

For this reason, the section begins with Robert Davis’ examination of an area of contemporary educational research work with a strong family resemblance to other concerns and topics discussed elsewhere in the present book. As Davis argues, linguistic ethnography has since its rise within anthropology acquired a niche respectability in educational field research because educational spaces are for ideological reasons commonly regarded as highly fertile zones for its application. Foregrounding material from a major Glasgow University ESRC research project on the effectiveness of the teaching of Religious Education in UK schools, Davis highlights the merits of linguistic ethnography as a strategy for mapping the subtle and shifting perceptions of teachers and students while pointing to issues of voice and voicing, materiality and immateriality that it does not as yet comprehensively address and which, especially in the context of religion, require more nuanced and reserved examination.

Liz Mackinlay can also be seen to extrapolate several crucial lines of development from the juxtaposition of ethnography and education, attending to regions of educational experience often seen as remote from, or immune to, interpretation. Through a self-critical close-reading reprise of her prior idealistic doctoral ethnographies of Australian Aboriginal women’s musical and sung performance from the late 1990s, Mackinlay boldly disavows much of the ethical and methodological apparatus of what she subsequently came to see as her inescapably colonialist anthropological training, venturing through a necessarily difficult process of self-reproach and professional abandonment towards a new kind of “hope.” The basis of this hard-won hope is her (re)-discovery of the *storyline* impulse in her original data and her embrace of strategies that both painfully unmask the previous collusions and complicities of ethnographic practice while offering the prospect of its reinvention through the acceptance of a “storied” or narrated vulnerability and solidarity brought forth and shared between researcher and researched.

Mackinlay wishes, among other things, for interpretation to honor the viscerality of voice and somatic being, and in Chapter XX, defamiliarization of the classroom space and the oversimplified dualism of virtual and material, remote and proximate, leads Greenhalgh-Spencer to a similar restitution of embodiment and embodied selves at the heart of learning. This commitment draws forth from her detailed work on school environments a vigorous, wide-ranging technofeminist critique of *all* interpretation in educational research that is still obviously housed within the artificial contrasts of mental and physical, digital and material, virtual and face-to-face—even when these dualisms are applied recuperatively to the preservation of an idealized (and wholly misconstrued) experience of “interactive” learning and teaching.

Lundie takes the reassertion of embodiment to frontier issues in the pressing ethics of privacy, where contemporary systems of technico-rationalist information management now dominate education in the form of big data, MOOCs, Internet breadcrumb trailing, and frequently invasive digital monitoring of teacher and learners. The same resources underpinning an emergent step change in research capacity and granularity now threaten, Lundie argues, the humanizing processes they were originally designed to enhance. Vast gaps in the awareness and vigilance of educational professionals have been actively colonized by the technocrats of behavioral prediction and surveillance, making the private an increasingly menaced and contracting domain. By refocusing the “intersubjectivity” of privacy, Lundie refurbishes what are in some respects neo-traditional concepts of propriety and property rights and through these incentivizes citizen-researchers and citizen-subjects to be energetic in the production and expansion of their own educational privacy.

David Bridges, Kairat Kurakbayev, and Assel Kambatyrova are also strongly rooted in the pragmatics of educational interpretation, discerning in the difficult reciprocity of theory and practice a means to enrich the notion of “translation” as it serves to navigate complex interactions of local cultural expectation, educational reform, and often impersonal global forces prescribing the terms in which such reform is to take place in developing or emergent countries. The authors’ informal *bricolage* approach to their practical responsibilities as researchers nonetheless emerges as a potent perspective for improvising and adapting meaningful policy making across challenging cultural, historic, and linguistic divides. This in turn works to challenge widespread prevailing assumptions around both essentialized indigenous epistemologies and seemingly anonymous and irresistible national and global economic mandates, both of which can induce a defeatism in progressive reformers. The effect is profoundly empowering in restoring creative autonomy and collaboration to various “translators” as they recapture the initiative actively to shape and direct educational change within testing but potentially highly rewarding contexts.

Operating from out of the same cultural and political matrix as Bridges and his colleagues—the educational development agenda in post-Soviet Kazakhstan—Olena Fimyar also seeks to redeem, like Mackinlay, an enlarged (auto)ethnography, capable of extending the parameters of policy sociology by an act of epistemic inclusion that valorizes the detailed analysis of teachers’ beliefs and memories. At the same time, Fimyar seeks uninhibitedly to refresh the potential for educational renewal latent in the multilayered heuristic narratives through which diverse policy actors and practitioners rediscover and exercise their expertise in conditions of frequent subordination and disempowerment. The subtle and critical interpretation of teachers’ professional beliefs documented in the essay is then seen to be vital in motivating staff to address assertively a moral campaign against social inequality while applying their accrued wisdom and professional knowledge to the critical assessment and redirection of often suspect plans for national educational modernization. The massive and multiple transitions captured by the term “post-Soviet” in the positivist project underpinning the essay lead Fimyar to an entirely revisionist

position on the role of educational researchers as partisan actors in the processes of understanding—and supporting—teachers, their evolving values and aspirations and their emergent pedagogical priorities.

Conroy and Leitch also offer a robust yet watchful rehabilitation of teacher subjectivity through the remarkable application of the neglected arts of mask-making and mask-wearing to what they term the “imaginary of teaching”: a post- or pre-instrumental encounter with archetypes that are both collectively curated and individually inflected to enable teachers to refashion proactively the terms of their own identity against the grain of performative restraint. The authors’ “poetics” of teaching and learning goes to the heart of the hermeneutic task, where subjectivity is formed through a psychic combination of withdrawal and engagement protected by the autopoiesis of mask and theater.

Lapping brings to all of these andragogical and profession tasks the resources of Lacanian psychoanalysis to question the prior methodological and epistemological assumptions around which the researcher-participant axis revolves in much standard educational research. The clinical moment of psychoanalytic interpretation is in some important senses the template of all interpretation, and Lapping interrogates this to reassess the terms in which researcher and participant intersubjectivities are constituted through countertransference and affect—helping us better understand and harness unconscious communication in the spaces, and across the boundaries, of almost all forms of educational inquiry.

In a final exercise in protean self-narration, drawing promiscuously on the storehouse of motifs, symbols, and concepts informing many of the surrounding essays, Alan McManus returns the section to the custody of Hermes Trismegistus, in his guise as oneirocritical alchemist and showman. In a bravura narrative of his own highly personalized odyssey through graduate studies, McManus places receptivity to learning at the center of qualitative research. But it is a receptivity open to traditions of thought, study and self-examination often marginal to Western rationalism in even its most postmodern and ludic forms. Accessing dreams, esoteric knowledge, literature, myth, and a metaphysics, McManus seeks to raise transgression to the level an art tempered only by the moral seriousness of the researcher-adventurer invested in the fortunes of the marginalized and the forgotten. In these respects, his monumental undertaking converges with the intentions of his co-contributors in wishing for the practice of interpretation an ever-receding horizon of opportunity and trust.

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8.1 Hermeneutics of Linguistic Ethnography: Teachers and Students Losing and Finding Their Voices

Robert A. Davis

After Ethnography

In Jorge Luis Borges' 1969 short story, "The Ethnographer," the protagonist Fred Murdock, a doctoral student in a US university—a young man at "that age when a man doesn't yet know who he is"—is steered by his supervisor for his PhD topic towards the study of Native North American indigenous cultures: "one of his professors, an older man, suggested that he go live on a reservation, observe the rites, and discover the secret revealed by the medicine men to the initiates" (Borges 1998, pp. 334–335). Murdock hence embarks upon what was once considered a respected and defining academic mission for graduate students of the social sciences in Europe and North America: to secure through ethnographic fieldwork a reproducible "anthropological legibility" (Avelar 2004, p. 62), or effective encounter with "otherness," and to retranslate that encounter back into the language of "sameness" in the form of the doctoral thesis that the ethnographer is expected to write at the conclusion of his prolonged period of participant observation (Cook 2010).

Murdock's research project is at first successful, assuming the form of a classic immersion in radical otherness, in which he embraces unconditionally everything from the tribal norms of work, dress, and diet to the shamanistic experience of lucid dreaming, "in a language that was not that of his fathers." In the initial phase, indeed, the story seems to confirm through Murdock's fieldwork the possibility of a transparent legibility of the Other, underpinned by scrupulous adherence to all of the protocols of an ethical and efficacious ethnographic practice. In a utopian fusion with his object of study, Murdock "becomes" one with the tribe. His dreaming in

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another language offers the seemingly incontrovertible proof that the great fissure of researcher and researched can in good faith be bridged. As the surprising ending of the story makes clear, however, Murdock's absorption in his object—the horizon of perfection for all ethnographies of the modernist type—also comes to emblemize the complete failure of his entire undertaking and the collapse of the ambitious paradigm within which he had been trained. Initiated as intended into “the tribe's secret doctrine,” upon his return to his university Murdock is utterly unable and unwilling to communicate his newly acquired knowledge to anyone. Yet by the same secret's ineffable light—and, more importantly, the memory of “the paths that led me to it”—his professional surroundings now appear to him jejune. He leaves the university to become—with Borges' signature irony—“one of the librarians at Yale.”

Much of the interest of “The Ethnographer” lies in its ambivalent perspective on ethnography itself, leaving unanswered the question that could make the text reducible to an anthropological warning: did Murdock return from the tribe because, as he declares, he can now live anew anywhere in accordance with principles learned among the Plains Indians? Or did he choose the (for Borges) semimonastic occupation of librarian at an elite university to signify his repudiation of his previous vocation and its exaggerated assumptions? Might it be that abandoning the project of studying the tribe was the indispensable lesson of the journey—that in fact turning away from the Other, in a style reminiscent of the Heideggerian observational ethic of *Gelassenheit* or “letting be” (Heidegger 1998, p. 154), signifies at the end of his sojourn the only legitimate response to the Other? If we take this inference to be the organizing impulse behind Murdock's final self-effacing decision to “turn away” also from university research, we would then be compelled to recognize that his paradoxical withdrawal from his doctoral studies is a disclosure of what he has discerned to be the only truly coherent ethnographic ethic. The discipline of ethnography is then expressed in the story purely apophatically, through an act of quiet renunciation prompted by the *aporia* between Murdock's seemingly “successful” experience as an ethnographer and the aphasiac impossibility of writing or speaking about it. For Murdock there is no simple choice between the *endotopic* knowledge of his revelation on the plains and the *exotopic* knowledge of a doctoral dissertation (Cameron 2012), because if the former is initially thought of as a necessary condition for the latter, its successful acquisition abolishes the very possibility of translating it into citable academic rationality.

This “haunting” of ethnography by the “secret” of its own epistemological incoherence has been central to the critique of field anthropology almost since its inception, expressed vigorously in both positivist and poststructuralist–postcolonial objections and inflected across multiple domains and eras of ethnographic inquiry (Clifford 1998). It has of course excited vociferous rejoinders, most of them located in adaptations of ethnographic social science that seek to take the measure of the “secret” and compensate for the genuine problems it raises, while insisting strongly on the maintenance of a core and coherent rationale for the authentic engagement with the Other in any environment of creative understanding and mutual agency (MacClancy 2013). Whether in Malinowski's monumental collections and

recodings, in ambitious theories of communicative action, in interactional sociolinguistics, in the embedded close readings of micro-ethnography, or in Abrahams' poetics of vernacular practices (2005)—the spirited defensive argument has been waged that, in Wortham's words,

Instead of imposing outsider categories, linguistic anthropology induces analytic categories that participants either articulate or presuppose in their action, and it insists on evidence that participants themselves are presupposing categories central to the analysis. (Wortham 2003, p. 18)

Perhaps the most advanced and far-reaching hermeneutic through which the probity and validity of reproductive anthropological interactionism of this sort has been elucidated and asserted lies in the labors of linguistic ethnography and the diverse range of supplementary paralinguistic methodologies that have accrued to it across the social sciences. In both principle and action, these have combined to blur the boundaries between investigator-anthropologist and subject participants, reportedly opening the locus of field research to much more indeterminate and dynamic constructions of collaborative meaning making in which all have secrets, dreams, wisdom, and incomprehension mapped through the iterative patterns of speech and silence, plenitude, and absence:

Linguistic ethnography generally holds that language and social life are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity. (Rampton et al. 2004, p. 2)

Linguistic ethnography has hence evolved a sophisticated qualitative philosophy, which holds that every context for communication can be excavated rather than assumed. In almost all fieldwork settings, meaning emerges within the architecture of specific social relations, transactional histories, and labile institutional regimes, parsed and reproduced by agents who themselves harbor expectations and manifest behavioral repertoires that demand to be grasped ethnographically (Maybin and Tusting 2011). The analysis of the internal management of verbal and other kinds of semiotic data within these localized settings is essential to the appreciation of their significance and location in the environment under investigation. Meaning in these spaces is then understood to be far more than just the transparent expression of world views and values by compliant exoticized subjects and restlessly "positioned" participant-observers. Instead, the conventional measures of biographical recount, identification, disposition, and dialogue are extensively problematized in the high-resolution assessments and interrogations of linguistic and textual performance accompanying each mode (Duranti 2004). Linguistic ethnography as a result also addresses the empirical gradient of much social science research by offering descriptive and analytic procedures for investigating communication within the temporal unfolding of social process, especially as this affects persons, situated encounters, institutions, actor networks, and communities of practice. Attending to these profoundly interwoven empirical concerns, linguistic ethnography also uses case-study methodology to engage with issues, formulations, and claims made more pervasively across the social science canon and

in public discourse more generally perceived (Jacobs and Slembrouck 2010). The aim is to generate research that shows proper regard for the uniqueness, deficiency, and exuberance of the communicative moment, alongside acceptance that there can be no complete or definitive interpretation of the meaning of an utterance or exchange (either for the analyst or the participants). A secondary objective is to formulate accounts of how participants handle specific forms, strategies, materials, or genres, venturing confident interpretation of how this use supports and limits the communication overall, connecting more broadly with indigenous social life. These accounts require to be sufficiently persuasive to stand up to critical scrutiny from other analysts as well as satisfying the participants' need for plausible explanatory judgment traceable to reliable and accurate evidentiary material of which they themselves are a part (y Blasco and Wardle 2007; Latour 2013).

Central to this ratification of the ontology of linguistic ethnography has been its valorization of the *voice* of participants in the communicative event. In the classical formulations to which Murdock would have been heir, voice is an “analytical heuristic” (Hornberger 2006) for an empirically based sociolinguistics of ethnographical investigation. Through studying voice, the ethnographer can search in the fieldwork data for instances of conflict, inequality, and asymmetric distributions of social power—as well as resistance, creativity, and counter-hegemonic subversion. Voice provides a tool for isolating and interpreting alternative understandings of the languages, institutions, and cultural mores that speakers inhabit. Taking ordinary, vernacular voices seriously then has the potential, it is asserted, to challenge conventional academic constructions of the research object and its subjects, and to renew and customize the theoretical and conceptual apparatus brought to bear on the fieldwork phenomena (Kuipers 2013).

Rooted in the European linguistic structuralism of Jakobson (1960) and Vološinov (1973), the ethnographic modalities of speaking were transformed by the rediscovery in the late twentieth century of the narratological methods of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's definition of voice is inextricably bound up with the recognition of the internal stratification or “heteroglossia” of language—the varieties of linguistic forms that exist within a single language and that are functionally mobilized depending on the context of use or the social group with which the speaker is affiliated (Bakhtin 1981 [1935], p. 263). Building on this insight, Bakhtin's narratological methods (e.g., 1984 [1930s]) placed formal analysis central and offered linguistic ethnography new tools for understanding the tension between emergent performance and stylistic characteristics: *Situation, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genres*. These functioned to map the hidden valences of talk within the fieldwork scenario, exposing to the ethnographer's gaze—and to the participants' first-person attention—the concealed forces and influences conditioning and mediating utterance within semantically policed parameters. The principal long-term effect of this innovation was to politicize and relativize linguistic ethnography from the 1980s onwards, integrating it into a Marxist–Foucauldian critique of the discursive regulation of speech at the service of covert and pernicious economies of disciplinary and ideological control (Rinehart et al. 2014). Strengthened by a resurgence of a

new style of campaigning anthropology responsive to the often painful emergence of globalization in conditions of grave injustice and exclusion, and conscientized by the postcolonial protesting voices of plundered and disenfranchised subaltern groups from across the world, linguistic ethnography came to be aligned decisively with cultural and ethnological comparativism and political advocacy:

Ethnography, as we know, is in fact an interface between specific inquiry and comparative generalisation. It will serve us well, I think, to make prominent the term ‘ethnology’, that explicitly invokes comparative generalisation. . . . An emphasis on the ethnological dimension takes one away from immediate problems and from attempts to offer immediate remedies, but it serves constructive change better in the long run. Emphasis on the ethnological dimension links anthropology of education with social history, through the ways in which larger forces for socialisation, institutionalisation, reproduction of an existing order, are expressed and interpreted in specific settings. (Hymes 1996, p. 19)

Linguistic ethnography as an intellectual program galvanized by these fundamentally ethical concerns, and targeted upon the corrective redress of what Miranda Fricker has called “testimonial and epistemic injustice” (2007), of course, swiftly committed its academic capital to the support and illumination of the endeavors of popular education, which it regarded as exemplary avenues for ethnographic interpellation and political change. A succession of fieldwork champions proceeded to customize the instruments of linguistic ethnographic inquiry for the exploration of schools, classrooms, staffrooms, playgrounds, lessons, teacher education courses, leadership and management training schemes, professional associations, as well as the abstract discursive systems of curriculum, governance, and accountability through which public education was accredited and monitored in democratic society (Woods 1986; Rampton 2007). A sophisticated methodological inventory also rapidly evolved, introducing into empirical educational fieldwork technologies of ethnographic *souveillance* and strategies of critical accompaniment and mediation, all of which were designed to make sense of the cacophonous cultural production of diverse educational environments—including their noisy give and take, their ritualistic redundancies and repetitions, and their endemic problems of corporate memory and transparency. The emphasis once again lay unreservedly on the facilitation of change and the righting of perceived wrongs that were seen as endemic to the mass educational system and the industrial culture from which it had emerged:

Linguistic anthropology of education is, perhaps fundamentally, a field that seeks to understand macro-level societal phenomena, and in particular societal inequities, in terms of micro-level person-to-person interaction, in the hopes of enabling work for change from both the bottom up and the top down. (Hornberger 2003, p. 266)

The cherished concept of voice, on which classical linguistic ethnography first established its fieldwork credibility, also found renewed traction in applications to education that foregrounded both the multivocality of almost all educational settings and the inequalities of utterance linked specifically to the alleged abjection and “muting” of children and young people within the pedagogical processes, recreational spaces, and disciplinary influences most directly affecting their lives (Hardman 1973; Hohti and Karlsson 2013). Since its founding scholarly rejection

of the orientalist silencing of the Other, linguistic ethnography had recognized the baleful force of the deracinated or “ventriloquized” voiced, possessed by the hierarchies of bureaucratic authority and trapped within the approved registers of professional or (in the case of the young, especially) subordinate and delinquent speech. The principle of ethical advocacy applied to this primary analysis too, commissioning linguistic ethnography not only for the task of *interpreting* the many voices of educational experience but for *liberating* them from the constraints of permissible, desiccated utterance. Such an openly emancipatory rationale clearly implied a determination to give back a voice to the voiceless or to free autonomous talk—through the tested and celebrated strategies of linguistic ethnography itself—from illicit possession by heteronomous, sovereign third parties requiring of research subjects that they speak only that which the third parties wished to be heard:

Research in linguistic ethnography and linguistic anthropology is fundamentally about the reconstruction, recontextualization, and representation of the voices of others. As such it involves speaking about, through, alongside, and in those voices. Furthermore, and often hidden from view, it is about making meaning from those voices. (Creese and Blackledge 2012, p. 317)

This stance has of course also required of linguistic ethnography that it safeguard its own political integrity and itself avoid becoming a “ventriloquized voice” disguised by the convenient registers and managed consensus of progressivism. It is not entirely clear that this trap has been circumvented, and concerns remain that ethnographers have been more directive in working with, e.g., young people than the model suggests is possible. Extraordinary steps have been taken, however, to try to ensure that the ethnographic exchanges of researcher and researched in educational settings are processual and incremental, open to ongoing renegotiation, accepting even of what Bourdieu terms “conflictual cooperation” (1990, p. 122), and triangulated by the extensive corroborative and verificatory measures available from the application of wider ethnographic and sense-checking resources (Aunger 2004).

Does Religious Education Work?

Does Religious Education Work? An Analysis of the Aims, Practices and Models of Effectiveness in Religious Education in the UK was a major educational research project (2007–2010) led by the University of Glasgow and stemming from the *Religion and Society* collaborative research program (2007–2013) of two of the major British Research Councils: the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (Conroy et al. 2013). The project set out “to track the trajectory of RE in secondary schools in the UK from the aims and intentions represented in policy through its enactment in classroom practice to the estimations of its impact by students nearing the completion of their compulsory study of the subject.” It pursued these goals through

“a combination of philosophical, theological and ethnographic approaches” for the purposes of “investigating the local, social, cultural, pedagogical and professional practices which determine and shape the delivery of RE in secondary schools” (Lundie 2010, pp. 163–164).

From its outset, the project foregrounded linguistic ethnography and employed a team of field anthropologists and investigators to work collaboratively with teachers and pupils in the detailed critical analysis of pedagogy and practice in RE in the sample schools. The reasons for this were in one sense obvious. Ethnographic research methods lent themselves to the vernacular, learner-centered aims of the project. This included explaining the ways in which the actors involved understood and generated a meaningful disciplinary and pedagogical reality. The deployment of a range of related, complementary research methods—including focus groups, high-stakes interviews, and the collection of documents, visual records, and artifacts intended to provide enriched contextual information—further reinforced the ethnographic rationale (Webster and Lipka 2004). Rather than deploying the fieldwork in a secondary (or confirmatory) fashion, the project leaders chose also to use the ethnographic data sets as a source for the fashioning of subsequent quantitative instruments, such as a student knowledge-and-attitude questionnaire, on the assumption that the ethnographic detail would support a better-informed tool for the alignment of statistical data to the trends initially observed and identified in the field.

Another important justification for the ethnographic emphases resided in the core questions of the project itself and especially in its critical attention to the vexatious topic of religion and the place of religion in modern, liberal-democratic educational systems. The *Religion and Society* program represented a concerted campaign on behalf of the UK Research Councils to restore religion to the center of social science attention in the wake of a decade and more of turbulence around religious and civic belonging in the UK and beyond. In part a response to the unexpected post-secular “return of religion” to the post-ideological global stage (in forms ranging from the decorative to the lethal) and in other respects a more localized attempt to understand the character of religious affiliation and commitment in twenty-first century multicultural Britain, the successful launch of *Religion and Society* was attended by some express anxiety that the standard procedures of social science empirical inquiry had grown over the preceding 30 years constitutively desensitized to the experience of religious faith and its possible implications for shared social life in late modernity (Conroy and Davis 2008; Cadge et al. 2011). *Does RE Work?* sought to take the measure of this difficulty by setting aside normative secular recordings of religious belief and doctrine within the sample schools and examining the schools’ treatment of faith on their own highly individual and distinctive terms, ranging from the pluralist to the catechetical. Linguistic ethnography lent itself naturally to this inclusive methodological accommodation, possibly because of its long history of respectful encounter with the realms of the sacred and the magical in indigenous societies and minority groups (Scharen and Vigen 2011, pp. 28–47).

Anterior and preliminary phenomenological research within the project approached the dimensions of religious commitment by focusing chiefly on

experiential meanings, or what Findlay has termed the “life world” (2009). The life world comprises the “world of objects around us as we perceive them and our experience of our self, body and relationships” (p. 7) and is the locus of interaction between subjects and their overall perceptual environments. Ashworth (2003) notes that the various interlinked components of the life world such as a sense of self, embodiment, sociality, spatiality, temporality, project, discourse, and mood as atmosphere act as a lens through which to view ethnographic data gathered in relation to it. Findlay further observes that phenomenological research seeks to explore the “structural whole that is socially shared while also experienced in individual and particular ways” (p. 2). Dahlberg et al. add that such life world research aims “to describe and elucidate the lived world in a way that expands our understanding of human being and human experience” (2008, p. 37). Phenomenological research is also, Findlay underlines, concerned with the “subjective interconnection between the researcher and the researched” (p. 8), in a manner which recognizes the indeterminacy and ambiguity involved in such an inherently unpredictable process.

As had been demonstrated above, the classical ethnographic method is also deeply preoccupied with experience and with the intersubjective relationship between researcher and researched. However, it often strives to go beyond the limits of the phenomenological framing by also excavating the wider social context of the various social actors *from their own points of view*. That is, it seeks to understand the individual in terms of the social constructions and identities of which he or she makes use, including where relevant the refractory demands and rewards of faith. This juxtaposition allowed the research team more fully to comprehend “Religious Education” by going to the very source of its practice and construction in the classroom and the school. It permitted the inclusion of actors’ accounts and interactions (including those of non human actors, such as books and artifacts), along with other contextual material and objects positioned to illuminate the ways in which the various representative modes in Religious Education were choreographed and, importantly, the extent to which events taking place in the classroom reflected broader Religious Education policy and professional thinking in relation to these modes. Placing an ethnographic approach at the core of the research thus allowed the gathered data and information, in essence, “to speak for itself,” in accordance with the sequences and formats elucidated by distinguished commentators on ethnography and the “spiritual” such as Carspecken (1996, 2001), Nader (2011), and Hymes himself (1996).

Attempting to see and understand social and religious phenomena from the point of view of the subject is not without its challenges. Some of these practical challenges were etched upon the project from its outset, exercising a regular pressure on the relationship of participant-observers to the observed. The project was therefore certainly not exempt from the “observer effects” that stalk ethnographic integrity. However, spending protracted periods of time with those involved in the research schools, building rapport and trust with them, meant that the behaviors, interactions, and accounts of the actors were more “natural” than might have been the case had the engagement been more perfunctory or episodic, as

is often the approach in research into religion. The research team forged relationships over a 3-year period that were intended to underscore the pervasive presence, rather than the absence, of highly charged value attachments—and in respect of which, it was accepted, researcher prejudice, aversion, and values might potentially influence, or interact with, the analysis. Nonetheless, and with a deferential glance at Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), the project strove to be aware reflexively of potential biases in the process of gathering and analyzing the information and to deal with these using the intersubjective resources and insights concentrated through the research itself (Lefstein and Snell 2013). Such sensitivity extended to the potentially controversial and conflicting issues of belief, skepticism, and toleration that were highlighted through every phase of the ethnographic process.

The ethnographic paradoxes of “voice” documented throughout this essay were also pervasive in the unfolding and implementation of *Does RE Work?* over the course of 3 years. There were also, however, specific instantiations of voice that served to showcase both the dilemmas and the breakthroughs of contemporary ethnography precisely in relation to the challenges attendant upon the legitimation of, and attentiveness to, the religious utterances and investments of the ethnographic subjects. These were always of course—even in the context of the confessional or faith-based schooling that figured in the project—authentically *educational* inquiries, deliberately silent upon the question of faith-based teaching and firmly neutral towards the wider doctrinal claims of religious faith. In this regard, they echoed the positionality of many teachers in the sample schools. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of what might be termed “liturgical” or “ritual” interpellation of the interpretative ethnographic encounter, as the exchanges of fieldworker and subjects (whether teachers or pupils) pressed the discourse more deeply into the intractable terrain of existential, moral, and theological absolutes—perhaps closer to the muffling secrets of Murdock’s oneiocritical medicine men than modern ethnography would normally find agreeable or normative (Conroy et al. 2012). In the face of these sometimes intransigent yet compelling realities, the ethnographic layering of the experiences within the selected schools sought self-consciously to draw out the translocality of the participant-observed phenomena as it materialized cumulatively in events, interactions, and interpretations that were embedded *diachronically* in the distinctive histories and identities of the specific schools, while resonating *synchronously* with the unsettled hermeneutics of contemporary Religious Education as these were manifest across all of the schools and, indeed a fortiori, in the wider culture beyond (Maclure 2003). The schools then afforded the ethnographic turn within the research its “analytic vignettes” (Erickson 1990) from out of which were crystallized highly indicative feelings, attitudes, stances, and narratives that incrementally consolidated the project’s critical understanding of Religious Education as a social and pedagogical practice—and even in places as a fideistically formational system.

At the shared threshold of religion, education, and learning, discussions with teachers, particularly, enlisted the verticality of the central linguistic ethnographic methods through which the project fieldwork was undertaken in order to highlight particular nodes of response, behavior, interaction, reflection, cognition, and

justification which resonated consistently with the conceptual preoccupations and questions from out of which the projected rationale originated and from which it subsequently developed. The mapping of these iterative patterns of nondeterministic utterance and exchange echoed Rampton's perception of the anthropological inquiry as "a site of encounter where a number of established lines of research interact, pushed together by circumstance, open to the recognition of new affinities, and sufficiently familiar with one another to treat differences with equanimity" (2007, p. 585). The resultant interpretative synthesis was intended not to disparage the established modes of quantitative investigation and qualitative interpretation by which questions of educational purpose and meaning are commonly (and cogently) pursued, but to enrich them by forms of representative "situated interactionism" (Goodwin and Goodwin 2000) which foreground the selected nodes as discursively illuminating of the frequently obscure or concealed dynamics of power, choice, and agency operative in almost all educational settings. The eventual complementarity echoed the findings of more mainstream methods of educational research: that the teacher-participants were dignified social actors functioning within environments where their contextual awareness and commitment was high, their disciplinary understanding strong, and even their professional autonomy relatively flexible. It nevertheless disclosed in the unfolding ideological patternings of speech, judgment, and disciplinary ownership the adjacency of other influences and assumptions, conditioning what Holmes and Stubbe (2003) refer to as the structure/boundary interactions between the controlled and the uncontrolled in any classroom or educational episode. Recognition of these patterns in the evidentiary record argues in favor of depth rather than breadth in ethnographic plotting, close textual reading rather than statistical comparison, allowing researchers, as Scollon and Scollon suggest "...to transport selected and carefully focused slices of life out of the original nexus of activity for collegial, peer-reviewable examination in richer more multimodal formats" (2007, p. 620). The principal data vectors with which the classroom ethnography was concerned were then seen to reinforce—while also further complexifying—sensitive critical interrogation of the principles of effectiveness and coherence in Religious Education as these were shared and negotiated within and beyond the subject's authorized institutional parameters (Erickson 1984), including in the elusive and sometimes inaccessible sphere of committed religious belief itself.

This issue of the imperfect "mesh" of RE with other aspects of learning, teaching, and believing is also obtained, both positively and negatively, in many of the schools in the project. In the vibrant, cosmopolitan atmosphere of a busy multi-faith (nonreligious) London Grammar School, for example, the Head of Department (HOD) of Religious Education viewed these continuities and discontinuities between the subject as currently configured and messiness of "the rest of life" with some ambivalence:

It's not religious education any more. It's not like when I was at school even. I was doing it 15 years ago and it wasn't anything like that now. It's ethics and philosophy and the GCSE and the A level: their exam is ethics and philosophy because I think religious education has got such connotations with it that it's just not about that. (Conroy et al. 2013, p. 88)

In one respect, the rebranding of RE as an inflection of the fashionably literate and intellectually respectable “ethics and philosophy” culture of the twenty-first century UK senior school classroom rescues it from the eccentricities and obscurantism of “religion” as widely perceived in the surrounding liberal educational environment. The HOD is experienced and astute enough, however, to state provocatively that the outcome is “not religious education any more,” removed as it is from his personal and professional recollections of a period when the expectation in the traditional Religious Education classroom was that “At the end of this lesson you will all know what the Ten Commandments are and why you should know them” (p. 89). This incisive insight into the now problematic place of “religion” in a Religious Education curriculum that (for good or ill) is in important zones colluding in its own secularization of course ramifies throughout the project. It subtly underlines the impression that the subject may at last be submitting to the internal logic of the classical Enlightenment drivers through which modern mass education was brought into being in the first place and for which religion per se was a superannated form of thinking for a pre-rational, indeed pre-educational, age. It is also instructive in micro-ethnographic terms that an experienced teacher is prompted by the ethnographic query to raid his own memories in search of an originating pedigree for the subject alternative to current secular professional norms.

At what might superficially be regarded as other end of the confessional spectrum, in terms of disposition towards religious commitment—a Scottish Catholic secondary school—the charting of ethnographic self-examination moves in a quite different direction, towards a pervasive sense of a performative (even theatrical) religious discourse where the language of education is constantly invoking the registers of faith from obscure sources beyond the school. In sustained dialogue with the fieldworker, the head teacher of the school quietly insisted that

In a Catholic school in particular—maybe somebody from a non-denominational may disagree—it’s not just about the two periods of RE. In essence, it’s a way of life. What we’re about in RE isn’t just refined to two periods a week or to the RE classrooms, but that it’s out and about; it’s everywhere; the standards we’re setting; the behaviours; the expectations of attainment—they all come from our vision of what RE is: a response to the call of God and faith which is what the whole school is about. (Conroy et al. 2013, p. 92)

One of the school’s Religious Education teachers strove in his comments to the same ethnographer to bind this leadership perspective on religion and institutional purpose to the school’s grassroots aspirations for the individual learner, as well as for the outworking of the key disciplinary aims and objectives of RE:

RE is about giving the child a sense of identity: recognition of himself and their role to play within the community. . . in a microcosm of the wider community; starting off in the school, school community; that they are valued, that they are special/unique; really to give them a self-regard for themselves, to give them that recognition and to get them to recognise their importance and with that their responsibilities as well. (p. 93)

In context, the sincerity of these convictions and their attendant hopes for faith-based Religious Education is indisputable: staff faithfully pursue a vision of the good life in which Catholic values stamp the corporate, community, and individual

experiences of the school at as many levels as they can sustain. The values foundation upon which these intentions for the school are raised runs deep into indigenous traditions of minority Scottish Catholic religious practice and educational history in modern Scotland, as well as into the key educational pronouncements of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. It is nonetheless at least arguable that in some of the semantic slippages and displacements in the contributions of the staff that are documented in the field ethnography, we can see a sometimes uneasy oscillation between Catholic identity, Catholic ethos, ecumenical citizenship, and the subject of Religious Education which risks presenting the discipline as placeholder for *everything* about its distinctive mission that the school in fact values and wishes to project (Boeve 2012). This may be in part a genuine effort to de-enclave “Religious Education” from the narrow confines of the school timetable and to embed it in a wider construction of contemporary experiential, pupil-centered learning and teaching. But a Religious Education that is *everything* might also be a Religious Education struggling to define and establish its academic (indeed, in confessional terms, its *theological*) credentials within the curriculum.

Webb Keane (2004) has related this discursive juxtaposition to a particular version of the core ethnographic concept of “mediation” that is uniquely operative when the distinctive claims and calls of religious fealty are in play in the ethnographic encounter. Keane argues that ethnographic exchanges that admit the presence of religious entities or loyalties into the research relation—even in exclusively second-order, interstitial, or symbolic terms—always inescapably call forth an alternative or superordinate order of signification which impinges on what can be learned or interpreted within the confines of even the most comprehensive anthropological hermeneutics. A condition of endemic, repetitive “allusion” then obtains—close, perhaps, to Murdock’s esoteric “secret”—where ethnography must find ways of managing the spectral presence of specific and often recondite organizations of language associated with, e.g., liturgy, catechesis, prayer, initiation, ritual, or “spirituality,” none of which may actually be expressly realized in the field interactions:

Religious practices therefore require an appreciation of mediation in at least two respects. First, beliefs are mediated by the linguistic forms and practices through which they are remembered, transmitted, and made available for acts and reflections. . . . Second, those linguistic forms are not fully deterministic but are subject to reinterpretation within particular social and historical circumstances. (p. 444)

Established ethnological models of “voicing” and “ventriloquism”—for all their essentially emancipatory origins—soon prove too schematic in their understanding and application to capture and uncover the dynamics of this kind of ethnographic performance. The proximity of the religious in the interview or dialogue is not concerned chiefly with the possession of the subject-speaker by a supervening ontological power or doctrinally driven credal lexicon (however much actual religious structures and their habitual logic of submission may suggest this). Instead, it is manifest in sporadic allusive gestures made towards something much more improvised, fragmented, incremental, and heteroglossic. Prevailing styles of educational rationality find this difficult to contain, perhaps because the volatile registers of religious utterance have been progressively delegitimized in the

advance of Western mass education and its implicitly secular assumptions (Wexler 2014). The “channeling” of the religious in these settings may then actually be closer to a species of “mediumship,” in which the character and socialized positionality of the research subject disturb and pluralize the concept of voice, disclosing each seemingly unitary speaker as a voluble antiphonal chorus of speech that may be sometimes educationally cogent and autonomous and sometimes heteroglossically multiple and ambiguous:

From the first point it follows that close attention to language is required for any ethnographer who wants to gain insight into what people “believe”, or even identify “who” the actors are in any particular situation—neither the invisible spirits presupposed by some acts nor the collective entities entailed by others may be immediately apparent to the external observer. It follows from the second point that linguists must bear in mind the importance of the social field for the interpretation of linguistic form in its ethnographic realization. (Keane 2004, p. 444)

In the distinctive context of Scottish Catholic schooling, it may seem self-evidently obvious, for example, that the formulation of truth claims within Religious Education has assumed a relatively seamless dogmatic shape by virtue of the interlocking guarantees afforded by credal assent, personal faith commitment, and the elective nature of parental choice. The comportment of the head teacher in the Catholic school referenced above offers a beguilingly simple and honest account of this backdrop to the work of Religious Education, couched in the familiar discourse of the Catholic catechism. However, the word “honest” is, again, a recurrent and unstable lexical marker in the school’s ethnographic record, sometimes functioning as declaration of intent (“so they honestly believe”), sometimes as conspiratorial admission (“I have to be honest and say. . .”):

The formation is the first part: you’ve got to give the youngsters the sense of the last two thousand years and the development of Christianity and in particular the Catholic faith. . . [and] the experience of their faith, so they honestly believe that is where the real growth can come through. There’s no point telling them if they can’t experience it. So in the day-to-day life of a school how do you experience your faith? Through the love of your neighbour, and through that, the love of God. (Conroy et al. 2013, p. 109)

The concentric circles of Church, community, Religious Education curriculum, and (inevitably) “*experience of faith*,” reinforced through the fine-grained textures of daily school life, induce the production of a self-contained (and, in its own terms, completely coherent) yet expansive proclamation of revealed truth. This truth is in turn partially “ventriloquized” from research subject to ethnographer. There is sustained throughout the public mission of the school a consistent view that Religious Education can be inherently educational *and* constitutively evangelical without prejudice to either motivation. Closer ethnographic inspection does test some of the apparent homologation of faith and education here by pointing to certain discontinuities in the relations between the various, mutually validating centers of authority with which the school supposedly articulates. As well as admitting to first hand acquaintance with “other” Catholic schools where Religious Education is paid only “lip service” and treated as a site where “you can just do your homework,” senior managerial and departmental staff are also conscious of unequal

distribution of responsibility for catechesis across that community of which they are considered to be a part:

I have to be honest and say that for a lot of the pupils—and I’m talking here of children who are defined as being Catholics—the school was probably the only place where they were getting any formal regular Catholic education. A lot of them didn’t go to Mass. A lot of it was just down to the school. There can be a mindset that says, ‘Well I’m sending him to Catholic School, what else do you want me to do?’ (Conroy et al. 2013, p. 110)

This is of course a constant challenge for the Catholic school in modern secular society and perhaps explains better than any other cause the recent intensification of catechetical endeavor in much Catholic Religious Education throughout the developed world, as the subject absorbs responsibilities previously discharged across a variety of community and parish agencies now figuring much less conspicuously in the lives of increasingly sophisticated and socially mobile populations. The enhanced influence—indeed in classically ethnographic terms, the *sacred power*—accumulated by Religious Education as these historic secularizing processes work their way through the ecclesial and educational structures may appear attractive to the officers of the faith community. The ethnographic record also nevertheless conveys some professional misgivings among the research subjects that it is a status that has been purchased at considerable cost, leaving the spaces for genuinely “religious” stimulus, surprise, and imagination within the Religious Education curriculum to contract before the weighty yet conflicted requirement to form the baseline commitment of the next generation.

Moreover, if Keane’s admonitions are correct, then the tensions and uncertainties he identifies with the limitations of certain orthodox styles of ethnographic engagement with religion will not be confined to Religious Education in the confessional sector. These confusions—and possible ways forward from them—certainly were also exhibited throughout *Does RE Work?* at numerous and diverse locations. In what is conventionally known in the UK as “non denominational” education (non-faith-based state schooling), a tacit yet semiofficial vocational understanding of the teacher of Religious Education clearly prevailed, one which described a professional who will implement programs of work fundamentally aligned to the interests and “lifeworlds” of pupils just as assuredly as the faith-committed teacher within the confessional school. The task of mediating the apparently less “relevant”—or unfamiliar or exotic—features of (especially) the “religious” in Religious Education remains highly prized within this set of expectations (Withey 1975; Egan 2003). It was a quality widely evident in the non-denominational schools examined throughout the project and across the UK, often expressed in the near-talismanic invocation and embrace of certain multicultural and interfaith priorities to which Religious Education is expected by school management and local authority overseers automatically to respond, from out of the near-universal perception of the subject’s supposed historic moral values and intrinsic pedagogical principles. In one Scottish non-denominational school, the HOD recalled that

...our...material for racism has been moved forward because Guidance suddenly decided to do *Show Racism the Red Card* which we’ve always done, but suddenly...it’s all the flavour of the month for them to do that, so we’ve given them a copy of the unit that we do...and we’re having on 1st September a *Show Racism the Red Card* day whole school activity...and every

class that you teach has to have something to do with the racism theme in it. So you're thinking OK great, might do this and might do that. (Conroy et al. 2013, p. 101)

There is of course nothing essentially untoward in the conscientious dedication of the school to the tasks of antiracist education; nor is it at all unreasonable to assume that the Religious Education department might have something edifying and enlightening to contribute to it—even when it stems from *Show Racism the Red Card*, a celebrity-led media initiative originally conceived to banish racism from soccer. The non-denominational London Grammar, given its geographical location and ethnically diverse intake profile, possessed an even more pervasive commitment to antiracism and multicultural education and saw the work of Religious Education as central to the successful discharge of these obligations. The London HOD reflected that

We've got kids who come from London and in a London where you've got huge diversity. This whole area is just huge diversity and I think it's more now. It's not so much 'let's sit down, this is what they need to know.' It's like relating it and how it's relevant. . . .it's about making the kids well-rounded and understanding one another. Again, like, all my kids were aware who were fasting during Ramadan; all my kids were aware who were celebrating Eid; they're all aware who's going to be celebrating Diwali. It's about creating that. . . let's be honest, I wouldn't be able to do that with those classes if I don't teach them the way I teach them because you couldn't have that discussion. (pp. 101–102)

The lexical moves and shifts within this cache of revealingly autoethnographic professional discourse—from both school contexts—are pregnant with the modulation of treasured, if fluctuating, professional identities and the pragmatics of politically and culturally shaped disciplinary priorities. The speech records map multiple sources of ambiguity, with the indexicals and passive deictics of place, time, and event spatializing the speaker's locus in a discourse of which she is both the channel and the agent (“suddenly decided. . .”; “has to have. . .”; “do this. . .do that”; “relating it and how it's relevant”; “aware. . .aware. . .aware”) (Ewing 2006). This might be a permanent tension for those occupying appointments of curricular leadership in Religious Education: the pressures of manifold external imperatives and heterogeneous decision makers laying periodic claim not only to the content and focus of the curriculum but also to the modes of inquiry and communication by which that content and focus is to be mediated and sustained. Multicultural and antiracist education are by no means repudiated in this assessment of their influence, but the assumption that their relationship to Religious Education—and more broadly to *religion per se*—is an educationally straightforward one can be challenged by a close reading of the linguistic ethnography, both in terms of their secular superordinate claims on the shape and pattern of the curriculum *and* their contiguity with a highly defined—even inflexible—discursive and pedagogical regime within the classroom itself (Barry 2000; Sikka 2010):

There's a lot of enquiry with the students and I find that particularly in this school because of it being so multi-ethnic. They're just so terribly interested in certain things—and even topics that would be deemed as unacceptable in other subjects. They will enter and engage with it. I'm using the subject like, for instance, circumcision. It's a really weird thing to say, but they have heard of the word; they want to know. But it's also a good way to explain why these things happen and then you can branch out from there and talking about human rights as well because of the gender issues and it's an opportunity. (Conroy et al. 2013, p. 102)

Once more, although the teacher's planning here is perfectly creative and enterprising, the multicultural driver draws together paradigm, pedagogy, and ethical principle—propelling the learning sequence from the regulative social context of the classroom to the validating normative order of universal human rights, where Religious Education becomes tacitly absorbed into the language of citizenship. Closely read, the ethnography suggests that it is not at all self-evident that potent cultural and religious practice of circumcision can actually be comprehended at all in properly religious terms by this act of translation from the sacred to the secular. The teleology of classroom learning, here and elsewhere, may require some searching scrutiny if the academic integrity of Religious Education in an increasingly interdisciplinary curriculum, and an increasingly learner-centered school culture, is to be explained and maintained.

For the Scottish non-denominational school, the explicit cultivation in the upper school of the “individual's understanding of religious beliefs, transcendent issues, and critical and evaluative thinking” (HOD in Conroy et al. 2013, p. 111) was idealistically motivated by a similar radical pluralism, which in certain important respects *did* question the limitations of mainstream phenomenological, multicultural, and critical-realist accounts of religious experience. Intriguingly, senior pupils in dialogue with the fieldworker recuperated much of this energy by explaining that the central purpose of their learning in Religious Education was, first, to “gain awareness of other faiths in order to promote tolerance” and, secondly, “promoting positive values contributing to citizenship” (p. 111). This is in no sense a reproach to the HOD or her effectiveness in the school, nor does it minimize the young people's enthusiasm, but it may again underline the internal inertia and vulnerability in the subject that often impedes the committed engagement with *religion* to which the HOD aspired. Revealingly, some pupils defended their reductive account of the effectiveness of Religious Education by adverting to the skepticism with which significant numbers of their peers—and several of their teachers—viewed the role of the subject in the school timetable. The HOD remained refreshingly unapologetic about her own personal and professional investments and uncertainties, resorting again to the protean indexical of “honesty” to explain and project them:

You've also got to be honest enough to say 'No, I don't know the answer to that. I'll find out.' They don't. . .there's no way you *could* know everything about all religions. . . I will say to a class, 'You've taught *me* that. I didn't know that; that's great.' And you can see they go 'Oh, I taught teacher!' It's about. . .knowing yourself and having enough basic knowledge and being supportive. (p. 111)

The discursive patterning of evolving teacher subjectivity—and teacher–pupil intersubjectivity—shifts ironically and revealingly through these sentences and fragments, the texture of speech disclosing intermittently a powerful rapport of professional personality and the idealized representation of the subject matter at its very best. Remarkably, the apodosis of the final statement draws both person and concept back to an abiding insight taken straight from the annals of both faith and philosophy: *know thyself*—not, we might observe, in the Apollonian version of rational self-mastery, but clearly and daringly in the older, archaic, oracular awareness of the liminal, the threshold, the edges of shared meaning making

(Conroy 2004). This is Religious Education become mantic: the teacher glimpsed for a moment by a “charged” ethnography as mystagogue, rather than philosopher. It comes as little surprise, then, that in some of the department’s most enthusiastically received lessons—on, for example, the origins of the universe—this same voluble cocktail of intertextual learning across science, myth, and faith pushed at precisely the same heteroglossic boundaries of certainty and agnosticism, movingly fluently and imaginatively through a multimedia palimpsest of cosmological theory, creation stories and quiet personal meditation, and finding no secure point of conclusion about truth or the claims to it.

A range of realist perspectives on the teaching of Religious Education, claiming vindication from the disclosures of traditional classroom anthropology, has been trenchantly interrogated in recent years by commentators such as Anna Strhan (2010) and David Aldridge (2011). Strhan in particular proposes that

Current models of RE, emphasising the importance of conceptual transparency and the ability to logically evaluate and critique the rival truth claims of religions are already misconstruing the nature of religion. (37)

In place of this predetermination of religious meaning, Strhan and Aldridge, from by no means identical points of departure, each exhort teachers to a recovery in their classrooms of a species of “textualized hermeneutics,” where the vaunted “openness” of modern progressive, pluralized Religious Education, wherever it is practiced or ethnographically tested, ceases to govern in advance its objects of pedagogical interest (be they “experiential” or “transcendent”) and opts instead for an authentically deregulated, interruptible learning, “the subject matter” of which “must be constituted in the hermeneutic exchange” itself if religion is to be penetrated seriously as a human reality on its own terms (Aldridge 2011, p. 43). It can also be reasonably inferred from this speculative mapping of a fresh terrain for the conduct of Religious Education that the forms of post-critical engagement with religion essayed in any such new paradigms for the subject must equally incentivize an ongoing institutional *microethnography* of the kind championed throughout *Does RE Work?*: a drill-down into the illocutionary force of text, voice, command, and happening across school actors and circumstances, alert to all of the intertextual and heteroglossic strata where the production of localized personal and professional speech inadvertently discloses the unspoken costs involved in creating and sustaining a meaningful, confident commerce between Religious Education and the principal, defining objects of its interest.

Voices Lost and Found

In his searching critique of the neglect of materiality in the dominant Western metaphysics of voice, the cultural theorist Mladen Dolar links problems in psychology and anthropology to everyday misrepresentations of free indirect self-narration:

If we speak in order to “make sense”, to signify, to convey something, then the voice is the material support of bringing about meaning, yet it does not contribute to it itself. It is, rather, something like a vanishing mediator. . . it makes the utterance possible, but it

disappears in it, it goes up in smoke in the meaning being produced. Even on the most banal level of daily experience, when we listen to someone speak, we may at first be very much aware of his or her voice and its particular qualities, its color and accent, but soon we accommodate to it and concentrate only on the meaning that is conveyed. The voice itself is like the Wittgensteinian ladder to be discarded when we have successfully climbed to the top—that is, when we have made our ascent to the peak of meaning. The voice is the instrument, the vehicle, the medium, and the meaning is the goal. This gives rise to a spontaneous opposition where the voice appears as materiality opposed to the ideality of meaning. The ideality can emerge only through the materiality of the means, but the means does not seem to contribute to meaning. (Dolar 2006, p. 5)

While he articulates an account of language and subjectivity based on a psychoanalytic reading of the materiality of the abstracted voice, Dolar's suspicions also extend to ethnographically prized qualities such as “the prosody, the intonation and the accent, the melody, the redundant, the variations and so forth” (p. 9) that characterize individual speech acts and interactive exchanges—and which, of course, figure ubiquitously throughout a social scientific undertaking such as *Does RE Work?* These are the features, after all, that carry speaking subjects along specific social and cultural (and religious) axes, both enabling and impeding horizontal and vertical mobility over the difficult terrain of identity, attachment, status, and individuation. In this demanding process, Dolar discerns a pervasive linguistic bias, one that treats the voice as “*what does not contribute to making sense*” (p. 5, emphasis in the original). The consequence is that important dimensions of the function of language in the agitated formation of subjectivity and cultural and political consciousness become marginalized, attenuating the concept of ventriloquism, especially, to the narrowest constructions of heteronomous annexation and third-party propaganda or possession (Kroskity 2000).

Dolar seeks to recover an older, more archaic appreciation of the power and potential of the voice by highlighting the extensive catalogue of physical and transformative actions that may actually be *performed* by it—from the whisper to the shout, the curse to the prayer, the promise to the threat, the thrown voice to the singing voice. The last of these, especially, dramatizes for Dolar the active production of the corporality and artifice of vocal and polyphonic subjectivities in terms consistent with the Lacanian “object voice”—the rendering of the voice as *objet a*, an object that emerges from the body but is neither fully defined by matter nor completely detached from it. Dolar aptly describes the “object voice” as “a bodily missile which has detached itself from the source, emancipated itself, yet remains corporeal. . . . So the voice stands. . . . at the intersection of language and the body, but this intersection belongs to neither” (2006, p. 73). Occupation of this liminal threshold makes vocal production much more transgressive than most mainstream accounts of the ethnographic encounter suggest, freighted with a surplus of meaning that does not necessarily collude with the declared message in an act of communication but may actually subvert it. Indeed, such “voice fetishism” indicates that there is something to the voice that is “different from” the meaning of the utterance. Rethinking the voice as an excess or an internal difference of communicative action, Dolar describes it finally as the “vanishing mediator” of meaning: “the voice is precisely that which cannot be said” (2006, p. 15) (Dohoney 2011).

The transgressive character of the singing and speaking voice illuminates its particular and polymorphous materiality but also runs the risk of essentializing vocal acts as ontologically excessive and overflowing. Such a “romantic” portrayal of vocalization is problematic because it might too easily overlook the vital sociocultural conditions for such vocalizations that are in fact so finely documented by the best expressions of achieved ethnographic exchange and analysis. As Jonathan Sterne has observed of the cultural history of sound and its technologies in Western modernity: “that elusive inside world of sound—the sonorous, the auditory, the heard, the very density of sonic experience—becomes perceptible only through its exteriors. Sound is an artifact of the messy and political human sphere” (2003, p. 13). While the speaking, singing, praying, lamenting, celebratory, teaching voice might periodically transcend specific socio-material boundaries, joining and simultaneously separating bodily interiorities and exteriorities, no act of human utterance cannot be fully detached from the ambiguities of the social and cultural matrix of which it is a determinant part. It may be possible, nonetheless, to cooperate with this very ambivalence actively to take creative command of the voice as a material artifact of spontaneous expression.

At the conclusion of *Does RE Work?* a remarkable attempt was made to exploit the potential of this much freer, rhizomic understanding of the research subject’s voice and speech than conventional linguistic ethnography had hitherto appeared to afford. It took the form of supporting undergraduate student teachers in creating a Boal-style Forum Theatre interpretation of the project fieldwork data and the case studies and classroom episodes surrounding it (Lundie and Conroy 2012). Few innovations could have more successfully extended the hermeneutical parameters of the linguistic ethnographic model on which the project framework had so depended—inviting students to find and express not only their own stakeholder voices as aspiring teachers, but the voices of the often anonymous characters and actors submerged within the vast data sets. Liberated by the political and performative impulses of the Forum Theatre rationale and practice, the participants transformed the perception of voice and vocal subjectivity, repurposing ventriloquism as a multidirectional and reversible process opened out to new interpretative possibilities by play, impersonation, mockery, interrogation, repetition, and the sustained scrutiny of many and varied audiences, live and virtual. Such overt “democratization” of the primary materials of the linguistic ethnographic encounter, perhaps more than any other single intervention, beckoned at the end of whole project towards new and untested opportunities for evolving ethnographic inquiry to still more reflexive levels of collaborative recognition and educational understanding.

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8.2 Making an Appearance on the Shelves of the Room We Call Research: Autoethnography-as-Storyline-as-Interpretation in Education

Elizabeth Mackinlay

Introducing a Story

But, you may say, we wanted you to write about autoethnography and education—what has that got to do with interpretation, teaching and learning, theory and story, social justice, and Indigenous people? The title autoethnography and education might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, autoethnography and what it is like, or it might mean educators and the autoethnographies they write, or autoethnographers and the educative process of doing ethnographic work; or it might mean education and the autoethnographies written about it; or it might mean all are inextricably linked together and you want me to consider them in that light (after Woolf 1929/2001, pp. 1–2). And yet even before I begin, I realize I will fail—like Virginia Woolf whose words I have already, perhaps cheekily, but hopefully carefully, paraphrased—“I should never be able to fulfil what I understand is the first duty of a writer – to hand you . . . a nugget of pure truth wrapped up between the pages of your notebooks to keep on the mantelpiece forever” (Woolf 1929/2001, p. 2). The only thing I can promise is a moment to think with and about autoethnography as interpretation in educational research. It is for you to “decide whether any part [of this story] is worth keeping” (Woolf 1929/2001, p. 2).

Let us then begin there then—with and about story, for story and autoethnography are long-standing friends in this academic playground. If I use the word “story,” what does it mean to you? Perhaps like me, the word story takes you back to a place in your childhood where everything was lived through your

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imagination. For some of you, the word story might easily be replaced with others such as fairy tale, fable, or fiction, or it might even take on a more cynical twist to mean a fanciful retelling of facts. Riessman (2008, p. 4) reminds us that stories, in an Aristotelian sense, are indeed always interpretive because “they mirror the world” rather than copy it exactly. Story is a kind of remembering, and Frantz Fanon might mischievously suggest that stories are revolutionary which should “properly be called a literature of combat” (1967, p. 193) for they evoke dangerous truths about a nation’s history and identity that “won’t stand still” (Denzin 2006, p. 334). If Hannah Arendt were here, she might say “storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it” (1968, p. 105); and Virginia Woolf would insist stories are essential for us to begin moving from the “cotton wool of daily life” to “moments of being” (1976, p. 72). Which is truth and which is illusion, is it fact or is it fiction (Woolf 1929/2001, p. 12), and are we locked inside or outside as ethnographers? “Fiction,” writes Woolf, “is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners” (1929/2001, p. 34) and likely to contain more “truth” than fact (Woolf 1929/2001, p. 2). Autoethnography, I would argue, is the same—woven by the intercorporeal threads of life that we emotion, embody, and experience, to make an appearance on the shelves of the room we call research as story.

The threads which interlace and form the narrative web in this chapter bring together my work in Indigenous Australian communities as a music ethnographer; my feminist work related to gender, performance, and music; and my role in teaching, learning, and researching in and around educational issues with Indigenous Australians. The personal *becomes* the political *becomes* the performative *becomes* the pedagogical *becomes* the passion in this chapter and does not promise to be neat—I have delighted in doing away with the “angel in the house” (after Woolf 1974) that might predicate the writing to be otherwise, a risky but ever so tantalizing strategy which enacts the very essence of what autoethnography as storyline might and perhaps will do. “What it will do” is an interesting phrase in and of itself, don’t you think? Framed in this way, autoethnography as storyline no longer sits stagnantly in the corner of a room which is not her own, but shifts in agitation from one foot to the other ready to claim her space and dance her way with words about, in, and through life. She holds heartlines in her hand—looking outwards, inwards (Ellis 2004, pp. 37–38), and back and forth in time (Denzin 2014, p. x) at the self and the social so that the power of embodied, “emotioned,” and ethical ways of thinking, being, and doing autoethnography as storyline can take center stage. She urges us to consider the ways in which an ethical, wise, relational, and loving politic is key to social justice in our practice as qualitative researchers, and she finds her expression through autoethnography as storyline, a kind of writing which seeks to uncover the heart of the world, even for a moment, by drawing us into a space of “heart thinking” where emotion becomes entangled with experience and epistemology so that all and everything we have left is our response-ability. Is this not what you thought autoethnographic writing as storyline will do?

Together then, as always already readers, writers, and researchers, let's take an adventure into the educational performative story telling playground I alluded to earlier, to "work together to unconceal what is hidden, to contextualise what happens to us, to mediate the dialectic that keeps us on edge, that may be keeping us alive" (Greene 1995, p. 115). Let's promise ourselves in educational research that will not rest in our search for "wide awakeness" to social justice and be brave enough to hold the storylines in our hands and hearts as we play. Take a seat beside me on the wooden swing of educational research and listen to the creaking chains of interpretation beginning to move in ways familiar and strange. Backwards and forwards our legs will fly, higher and faster we will swing, inwards and outwards we will look, until the lines between the personal and the cultural (Ellis 2004, pp. 37–38), experience and theory (Holman Jones 2005, p. 765), the creative and the analytic (Richardson, in Richardson and St. Pierre 2005, p. 962) become loose and irrelevant and ruthlessly let go. We will wait with baited breath, hoping not to and yet desperately wanting the thrill of the fall as we become dizzy with the uncertainty of it all—for who can say who can say what will come flying out (Behar 1996, p. 19)?

But, do not be misled, our play is *serious* (Weber 2010, p. 136) and comes with a warning. The way in which some or all of this story is told may come across as dismissive, mocking, and disparaging of people whose identities are firmly embedded in by no means simple ways within discourses of "imperial white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks 2013, p. 23), and indeed the very academic institution education and research would be deemed to serve. If you are offended, I understand for I am stuck in and out of those discourses too; but I cannot say that I am sorry. This chapter as story is intended to be both troubling and troubled by the relationships it invokes (Gandhi 1998, p. 4) about the tangled up nature of race, responsiveness, and representation in our practice as educators. It travels, as does Conrad's (1899/1999) novella, into the "heart of darkness" where words like ethics, social justice, relationship, compassion, vulnerability, and love make space for the difficult and unsettling issues of race, politics, power, and representation to take center stage in our theoretical, methodological, and interpretative narratives in education. In this playground, you will find me on the swing, watching myself watching the world to share moments of my experiences in educational research which came to life and continue to live through autoethnography as storyline, performative and interpretative work. Fragmentations of words written long ago, writing which mimics and plays with the poetics of others as though we were friends, and ideas and ideologies embodied as characters are the whoosh and whisper carried on the breeze as I swing backwards and forwards. I look to my left and notice the spare swing beside me. I wonder whether you as the reader will sit next to me, whether you might rather stand behind me and push, or whether in fact you might prefer to place yourself on the see saw which stands before us. After all, the positioning and performance of us all in the playground of research and education is a matter of interpretation.

Entering the Playground of Educational Research: A Tra-re-jectory

I swing backwards to look at my PhD in ethnomusicology, the moment that saw a group of Aboriginal women from the Yanyuwa, Mara, Garrwa, and Gudanji nation located in the remote community in Burrulula in the southwest gulf region of the Northern Territory of Australia begin the process of “growing me up.” I went there as a young white woman, wanting to right/write the research record about unknown Aboriginal women’s performance practices in this region, believing that research was my right/rite and that the right/rite thing to do was research. I went without invitation but as family, married to a Yanyuwa man and always already in relationship but not fully understanding what “being in relation” would come to mean. I began to make meaning, to interpret, and to write the words that fitted the research right/rite. I smile, nostalgic with memory and emotion of people and places, as I read my present in the past: *The end of the wet season had not yet brought the much desired ‘knock em down rains’ and the fan was switched to full strength in the small flat as we tried to keep ourselves cool. The three of us sat cross-legged in Eileen Manankurrmara McDinny’s flat in Darwin, talking and singing together. I was showing Eileen and her half-sister Jemima Wuwarlu Miller some of the musical transcriptions of Yanyuwa song that I had recently completed. Upon seeing the music, Eileen commented: “Yeah . . . you gotta give me this one, that [song] and I can show and I can tell [everybody] my sister bin working for that song now! . . . This girl is doing this work for us, not for herself for us, write down this song for us! . . . This girl bin write [song] and he [she] sing!”* (pers. com. E. McDinny 1995) Eileen’s comment illustrates the nature of my relationship with Yanyuwa people. Eileen recognised the dual role that I have to play in writing down Yanyuwa songs and also in my relationship with her as sister. Thus I am at once partial insider and partial outsider, a family member on the one hand and a researcher on the other (Mackinlay 1998, p. 60). My smile becomes a grimace as I read on and remember the way I analyzed this duality and its effect upon the type of representation, which could have been possible and the type of representation it actually became. As I wrote, I knew that the worlds these words represented were not really mine, and yet I was in the business of representation so I needed to find the words. I continued to write them, trying to find a way to appease the discomfort which had begun to emerge through what I imagined to be a dialogic process. *This performance ethnography hopes to present both Yanyuwa and my own perspective of the meaning of performance. I have concentrated and emphasised what performers of the a-nguyulnguyul [Yanyuwa women’s public singing genre] tradition have told me during singing sessions and in discussions elsewhere about performance of this genre in an attempt to involve indigenous [sic] perspectives in the ethnographic process* (Mackinlay 1998, pp. 40–41). I was no longer sure whose words were whose and what right I had to write them. I tried to write myself into the ethnographic and representational space. *I am a woman, an ethnomusicologist and a member of the extended Yanyuwa family. These three aspects of my life closely*

intersect and one can never be free of the others. My work is at once personal and professional. The literary style I have adopted in this work is as close as I can come to portraying the people with whom I have worked and the music they make while remaining true to my sense of family obligation (Mackinlay 1998, p. 82). These words starkly illustrate the inner turmoil I faced in trying to border cross between the professional and the familial, the personal and the political, the necessary and the self-indulgent in my retelling of a shared musical experience. Implicit here too is an acknowledgement that this ethnographic text will still not get it “right”—it is as close as I can come but not necessarily close enough to arrive at some kind of ethnographic *truth*. The words were still not right. I tried again. *Although I have attempted to have Yanyuwa voices heard throughout this study, statements from Yanyuwa people are inextricably bound up with my own theoretical and academic interests which are often quite separate from Yanyuwa interests* (Mackinlay 1998, p. 41).

I watch myself in this time past breathing out—for now at ease with the words I had written. My legs kicked lazily back and forth on the swing as I continue to stare back in time. More words flowed into publications, for after all, was this not my right/rite? “Music for dreaming: Aboriginal lullabies in the Yanyuwa community at Borroloola, Northern Territory” (Mackinlay 1999), “Maintaining grandmothers’ law: Female song partners in Yanyuwa culture” (Mackinlay 2000a), “Blurring boundaries between restricted and unrestricted performance: A case study of the mermaid song of Yanyuwa women in Borroloola” (Mackinlay 2000b), “Women play too: Didjeridu performance at Borroloola, NT” (Mackinlay 2003b), and more still. I was giddy and soaring with the *good* work I was doing as a music ethnographer, butterflies of excitement fluttering in body and mind as I planned what I might write next. The good work was embedded in the notions I held about the capacity of research to work towards social justice—I thought that writing about Aboriginal women’s musical worlds would somehow bring understanding, respect, and tolerance to Indigenous Australian peoples. I thought my academic work would somehow translate into “something better” for the women, men, and children whom I call family: better homes, a fair education, an end to racism, and the reinstatement of Indigenous Australians as a sovereign people. My PhD and the journal papers I subsequently wrote about the social and musical lives of Aboriginal women and men did not change anything, despite how well I wrote them and the prestige of the publications in which they appeared.

Ashamed and embarrassed, my legs propel the swing roughly forwards 10 years later to another PhD, this time in education. Write, my right/rite, everything changed. I began to write my right/rite differently. *“You now baba (sister)!” says Jemima a-Wuwarlu Miller as she turns to me to begin painting my body with white ochre in the appropriate body design for performance of the Yanyuwa women’s dance called Ngardirdji. Forty pairs of student eyes are upon us as Yanyuwa performers Dinah a-Marrangawi Norman, Jemima, Rosie a-Makurndurnamara Noble, Linda a-Wambadurnamara McDinny and I prepare ourselves for performance. We sit together and “paint up”, we make small talk and sing quietly. We take our time, we are well practised and yet nervousness, uncertainty and fear also*

pervade this moment. It is not the first occasion that we have performed this ritual for performance in the Indigenous women's music and dance . . . classroom at the University of Queensland. It is not the first time that I have sat and questioned what do they see in the actions of these four moving and animated bodies, three black and one white? (Mackinlay 2003a, p. 1) I had begun to ask different questions about performance, ethnography, and research and my own positioning within these discourses. *Being half on the inside and being half on the outside have lead to an overwhelmingly sense of personal and political commitment to an ethical and moral rel/presentation of knowledge in mainstream circles about Indigenous Australian women's performance practice. This study has provided a vehicle for me to understand my role as pedagogue in this setting, the impact that I have upon students, my relationships with performers and the efficacy of my praxis at building a teaching and learning environment with the potential to transform lives* (2003a, p. 2). I see myself writing these words, pen flying fervently across the page, fighting against the futility of knowing that these words were not right yet. There was something important missing. I realized that despite the new personal-is-political sentiment these words alluded to, I was still writing the research right/rite as it had always been done. I see myself wondering whether the words in fact had changed at all. For all my talk about resistance, social justice, and transformation within/against the boundaries of race in educational praxis, they were only words: empty words, hollow words, white words some of my Yanyuwa family might say. The words seemed to fall seamlessly into step with a research right/rite that no longer fitted a wide awakesness to the power and privilege of writing white. I see myself realizing that while people might be hearing the words I spoke at conferences and reading those that appeared in my writing, they were not listening—not with their hearts. Neither were the words I wrote those which my Aboriginal family wanted to listen to—they didn't tell a good story. My words were heartless and the butterflies were not excitement at all—they were harbingers of shame and guilt as I became painfully aware of my positioning as a non-Indigenous woman in relation to and in relation with Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and cultures and the enormous white power and privilege I held. Other kinds of words needed to be found—words at once curious and furious, cheekily refusing easy endings, brave enough to ban boring beginnings, and meddlesome enough to mix it up and mess around in the middle ground. Words replete with relationship and being in relation, words that went straight to the heart of the matter with no thought or care for return, racey enough to at once e/mb-race to the finish line knowing that you will be forever on the way (after Greene), all the while holding enough of the flesh, breath, and blood of life to speak to the heart. I tried to find different words. *I see the futility of so much of my earlier music research, dotted quavers on white pages trying to capture the sung magic of black singers – too many dots I painstakingly plotted so that I could take an understanding and text it into shape for a Western academic audience so that they too may have this understanding which was never given in that way. I think to myself how ironic it is that I began my work as an ethnomusicologist with the credo of preservation firmly in my front pocket. I am reminded of*

summer time at home with my Mum and my sister. We would stand in the cool kitchen and help Mum carefully cut and peel boxes and kilos of stoned fruit – peaches, apricots, plums – and delicately arrange them in glass vacola jars to preserve them for winter. We wanted to savour the flavour of these summer fruits for as long as we could, even though we knew they wouldn't taste quite the same. When children are hungry, when my kundiyarra cannot keep themselves safe, warm or healthy; when grog and so much other violence kills too much of life; when the words and ceremonies of ancestors can no longer be heard or sung because whitefella business steals, colonises, interrupts and destroys – any dots on a white page I may write, fancy presentations at conferences I may give, and written papers in academic journals I publish, are just not enough for me anymore. The intellectual thirst, greed and desire for more of the Others squeezes the life, the song, the voice, the essence out of what I do. The music becomes lifeless because the singers cannot take breath. Their mouths are smothered by the heavy blankets of analysis, transcription and theory. The less they breathe, the more we as researchers take – selfishly and without care for life, committing a further act of dispossession (Mackinlay 2009, p. 243). I refuse to write this research right/rite any longer. I look into the mirror of research and see music. She glares back at me and accusingly screams, “You didn't hear me!” And then so forlornly, “Such beautiful songs I sang for you, why did you leave me?” I turn my head away. Even then she keeps on with a tight voice, pursed lips and teeth clenched. “Why did you stop singing with me?” I put down my head ashamed. She shouts at me. “What is this performance you call research?” She pauses. And then comes a soft and sad whisper, “And why did he replace me?” I cannot bear her sadness. I know what I must do. I lift my head up and look bravely into the mirror. I stop seeing research and now I see music. I wonder how I could have ever let her fade away. I hear nothing but her . . . as I open my mouth . . . to sing (Mackinlay 2009, p. 226).

Finding Hope Within/Against Ethnographic Research: A Story

I jump from the swing and find myself in another kind of playground—an academic conference. I am reminded immediately of Ruth Behar's (1996, p. 161) desire to be somewhere else once she arrives at the place where she thought she needed to be. Behar describes the apprehension she felt when discussing the “difficult” aspects of her work to colleagues at an academic conference, and I am about to do the same. I have not presented in this forum since the arrival of my two children almost 10 years ago. I am nervous, unsure of whether I still belong. A young girl in a black t-shirt with the organization's logo scrawled in white across the front asks if I have received a program and hands me a conference bag. A brief peruse tells me that my name is not written anywhere on the conference schedule and my anxiety about whether or not I should be here increases in intensity. Even though my

doctoral research qualifies me to call myself an ethnographer—indeed, a music ethnographer, I am doubtful that the kind of ethnographic work I do these days is of the accepted disciplinary kind in Australia. And yet, that is partly why I am here. I want to give voice to the kind of applied and activist music ethnography—of autoethnography as storyline that I believe in—a personal and politicized research practice which aligns itself as close as is possible with Indigenous Australian peoples in a “struggle for rights, redress . . . empowerment and a commitment to produce knowledge in collaboration and dialogue” (Hale 2007, p. 105). Some might decry it as “black-arm” band or “heart on your sleeve” ethnography, but my relationships and responsibilities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a white Australian who has used her power and privilege to cross over into their worlds under the guise of research mean that I can no longer “do” ethnography any other way.

The paper I am giving is a direct hit on the colonial and patriarchal underpinnings of music ethnography in Australia. The irony of trying to negotiate a space to speak with the white male conference organizer *after* my erasure buzzes around in my head like a swarm of angry wasps poised to strike and sting. He apologizes profusely and makes space for me to give my paper at 5:00 pm. The air is close and still as my sense of foreboding thickens. My instincts are screaming at me to walk away and never come back, but my commitment to imagining and creating a different kind of ethnography compels me to stay. I am the final presenter of the day. I see many weary and ready to go home faces in the audience, and I promise them that I will try to make it lively and interesting. Imagining myself as the kind of iron butterfly that Regine speaks of—a woman who is about to make herself “radically vulnerable” (2010, p. 17)—I take a deep breath and words become the life of a new story.

*In the Beginning*¹

When the world of ethnography was first created, it was a happy place of discovery and adventure. Joining the crusade of Colonialism and scientific exploration, ethnographers armed themselves first with notebooks and then the gramophone and all manner of visual and audio recording equipment to collect, capture, and catalogue the world’s musical cultures (c.f., Cooley 1997, pp. 5–11). They worked alongside and oftentimes in collaboration with Colonialism’s soldiers, administrators, and missionaries, driven by a desire for the exotic sounds of the Other. The sun shone every day, but the ethnographers paid no heed to the shadows they cast in the

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lives and worlds of the Others. Their eyes were fixed firmly on the prize of detailed documentation, description, and explanation of the peoples, languages, musics, and cultures they found rather than on the white power and privilege which enabled them to be there in the field with the Others in the first place. At the end of each day, the ethnographers would return home to their world, suitcases heavily laden with words, artifacts, melodies, rhythms, and musical and cultural symbols not their own to be rewarded by the god Colonialism with praise and promises of potential expeditions, promotions, and professorships.

One afternoon, a woman called Ethnography was inside her office at the university carefully cataloguing the recent recordings she had made of Yanyuwa Aboriginal music from Burrulula in the Northern Territory, when Colonialism knocked on the door. Ethnography sighed heavily. Her colleague Aboriginalism, excited by the “traditional” and “authentic” Aboriginal melodies he said he had heard coming from her room, had already interrupted her many times today. She pasted the brightest smile she could muster on her face and opened the door. Colonialism stood there, bowed down to the ground holding a dark wooden chest that he was carrying on his shoulders. He looked as though he might collapse under its sheer imperialistic weight. Ethnography rushed to get the worn-out Colonialism a seat and called out to her colleagues to assist. Aboriginalism, Colonialism’s right-hand man, arrived quickly and dutifully to help the old man lower the chest onto the floor. It was tied shut with golden cords and carved with unusual musical markings variously resembling long-necked lutes, reversed treble clefs, and dancing women.

“Oh thank you my dear girl!” Colonialism sighed as he sat down heavily on Ethnography’s only chair. She bit her tongue in frustration at once again being patted on the head as the young female scholar—the dutiful daughter—doing her time. Looking directly at Aboriginalism and ignoring Ethnography, Colonialism asked, “My friend, I have come to ask of you a great favor.” Aboriginalism nodded eagerly, already agreeing to the something that Colonialism required of him. “This academic environment is so heated right now and I am finding this box, burdened as it is with artifacts of history and so on, too heavy for me to carry on the next leg of my neocolonial journey. Would you mind terribly if I left it here in your office while I take this backwards step forwards into a-colonial amnesia and a convenient forgetting of the trauma and aftermath of my actions?” Ethnography cleared her throat noisily, and when she spoke her voice was saccharine sweet: “With all due respect Colonialism, this is actually my office and I’m not sure I have that much space for your . . . what did you call them? . . . trophies of the past? Are you sure that’s what they are anyway?” Colonialism looked at Ethnography with a sneer that was filled with both incredulity and contempt. “My dear girl, how could you think they might be anything else? There is nothing else except for my legacy!” Worried that the two were headed for a showdown, Aboriginalism hastily interjected, “Ethnography was only joking, weren’t you E? Of course you can leave your box here!” After hauling the large box into Ethnography’s office, Colonialism furtively poked his head out to look up and down the hallway. “Are you sure no one will steal it?” he asked anxiously. “This is my box and NO ONE under ANY circumstances must challenge it, damage it, open it, or take it without my authority!”

Aboriginalism laughed a little too confidently, “Don’t worry Colonialism, I will always protect what is yours—in fact, I’ll fight to the death to make sure that what you own becomes dogmatically and directly enshrined in the theory and practice of ethnomusicology, that race is placed firmly in the back of the cupboard along with all of our other skeletons, and that our view of what constitutes Indigenous Australian peoples identities, performance practices, histories, and contemporary realities stays firmly in place.” Colonialism looked Aboriginalism squarely in the face and stared at him sternly. “Alright, I’m leaving my legacy in your hands. This box contains powerful and dangerous things that must not be released. It’s up to you to continue the grand narrative of whiteness and rightness—don’t let me down Aboriginalism—the very premise on which this grand nation of ours was peacefully settled depends upon it!” The two men shook hands as Colonialism left.

The Whispering Begins

Aboriginalism exhaled noisily. “Well, what are you going to do for the rest of the day E? Fancy a little bit of transcription and analysis?” Ethnography looked at him in disgust. Guys like him just didn’t get it. The postmodern move to self-reflection had brought Ethnography a crisis of representation—“jargon to some, provocative insight to others” (Barz 1997, p. 206)—whereby ethnographic texts in all of their guises were now deservedly subject to interrogation. She constantly questioned her right to be white, the power and privilege she carried because she was white, and the heavy mark that her whiteness brought to bear on her work and relationships with Indigenous Australian people. Ethnography knew in her heart that it was up to her to do something different, but she was torn. She was struggling. She felt uncomfortable. But she knew it was a discomfort that she had to own and live with—the comfortable alternative would only breed complacency and complicity with Colonialism, and Ethnography would rather die than jump into bed with him and his band of merry men.

Turning back to the here and now of Aboriginalism standing in front of her, Ethnography replied, “Oh why don’t you just f . . .” but stopped and frowned. “Can you hear that?” Aboriginalism listened hard, but heard nothing. “What are you talking about E? I can’t hear anything except Patriarchy clinking cups around in the tea room.” “No, listen Aboriginalism! I’m sure I can hear voices whispering!” Aboriginalism stood very still this time, tilting his head slightly to one side as if that would help his auditory perception. Ethnography sat down cross-legged next to the strange box and waited. “What the hell are you doing E? Colonialism forbade us to do anything to the box! Move away from it!” Aboriginalism was angry with Ethnography and roughly tried to pull her to one side. But she would not be moved. She was sure the whispering had come from inside the box. After only a few seconds, she heard the voices again. “Ethnography, listen to us! Decolonize

...” the voices were so low and whispery, she wasn’t sure whether she was really hearing them or imagining them. She bent down even closer and put her ear to the lid. No, this time she was sure—the box was calling to her. “De-col-on-i-ssss ... this whispering ... can you hear us? de-col-on- i-s-a-tion ... de-col - on - i - sshhh ...” Ethnography looked up at Aboriginalism who just stood there staring at her in disbelief. Why can’t he hear it? She thought to herself. Ethnography sat in the silence between them and realized that the murmuring she heard was stirring inside her alone. The voices were getting louder and louder. “Ethnography! Please let us out ... we are stuck in this dark box of colonialism! Please help us to escape!” Again Ethnography glanced at Aboriginalism. Surely, he could hear them now? Her breath caught in her throat. Why? Why can’t he hear it, this whispering so persistent? How can he stand there so indifferent to “[the] dispossession, death and despair” (Rose 2004, p. 5) she could hear in the voices?

There were so many voices. Ethnography imagined she could hear those of her Mara, Kudanji, Garwa, and Yanyuwa teachers, friends, sisters, family, and *kundiyarra*—her most necessary companions (see Mackinlay 2000)—as they sat around the campfire and lifted the songs of the Dreaming mermaids right up into the night sky. She heard the voices of many senior song men and song women who were no longer alive as they walked her through the country of their ancestors on foot and their feet kicking up sand on the ceremony ground. Ethnography heard her granddaughters as they put their own Yanyuwa words to silly made up whitefella songs and laughed until they cried. She heard the wailing of women as they cried for the stolen country, stolen innocence, stolen children, stolen identities, stolen knowledges, and stolen freedom.

“Ethnography! Don’t turn away from us! Listen to this whispering in your heart. Henry Reynolds (1998) did it, Ruth Behar (1996) has opened up to her vulnerability, Deborah Bird Rose (2004) has even taken us on a journey into the wild country and back again! You are not alone. Listen Ethnography! We beg you!” The voices inside the box were now reaching a fevered pitch. “Let us out so that we can work together to expose Aboriginalism and Colonialism’s research for what they are—vehicles of sustained oppression, a tool of colonization (Mutua and Swadener 2004, p. 14), machines which continue to dominate our worlds as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today.” Ethnography felt as if she were going mad and hastily covered her ears with her hands to block out the voices. “Ethnography, don’t you realize? Everything is in danger of colonizing—everything is suspicious (Cary 2004, p. 77)—just think about the Colonialism has protected this box which has now invaded your office! Listen to us, let us lead you to let go of your power and privilege so that you can really ‘look at us’—your-self at us, the Other!” Ethnography could no longer stand it. Suddenly all fingers and thumbs, she fumbled to untie the knots in the golden cords that held the box tightly shut and all the while pleading voices filled her ears. At last Ethnography undid the thick threads and the gleaming cords fell away. She took a deep breath and opened the lid.

Unconcealing Colonialism, Unleashing Ethical Ways of Being in Relation

Now we all know what happens next in the most well-known version of this Greek story—Ethnography opens the box and unleashes all kinds of unspeakable evils onto her disciplinary male-dominated world. She would be forever demonized as the woman who brought about the downfall of ethnomusicology just as another woman in a garden in another world was blamed for war, death, disease, and all of mankind's other ills. But if it is true, as bell hooks (2010) tells us, that what we cannot imagine cannot come into being, then, it is my wish to take this ending of the Pandora's box story on a very different turn.

As soon as Ethnography opened the lid, she realized what she had done. The box had been crammed with all of the secrets of Colonialism's past. The hush-hush hide it under the carpet actions and attitudes about Indigenous Australian people that he had never wanted anyone to know about because of the threat they posed to his position of as the civilizing presence and power in this country. All of these secrets came flying out. They flew out of the chest in a great swarm and fluttered all over Ethnography's skin. For the very first time, Ethnography felt pain, regret, and guilt, a guilt so heavy she began to struggle to breathe: Her baba Jemima telling the story of being a slave for the mijijis at the big house, the white boss smelling around the young gins to make or take yellafella kids, and the white trash selling grog to 7-year-old girls today; the Binbingga people who were led to a cliff and forced to jump or they would be shot, white men shooting Aboriginal people like wild animals, and white men using and abusing my mother-in-law and her children in exactly the same way; the missionary's car shining in the sun as it came to take ceremony, culture, and children away and the doctor's plane taking on the same sinister gleam as it similarly came and went with too much frequency; and young men and women dying from alcohol, gunja, violence and jail, suicide. She saw her white ancestors standing around, laughing, and pointing at her Aboriginal family, screaming at the top of their lungs, "See, we told you! They'll never be any bloody good—they were never *meant* to survive." Ethnography staggered and stared at them in disbelief. "These are *my* people," she thought, "these whites who knew and think they still know best." She began to wail with anger, confusion, shame, and despair, and all too late, she slammed the lid down onto the box.

Ethnography cradled her head in her hands and curled up into a tight ball on the floor of her office, oblivious to the coffee stains and ingrained dirt. She tried to calm herself, slowly breathing in and out, and again, and again until she almost choked. "Shit! There it is again!" Ethnography once more heard voices coming from inside the box. She had foolishly thought that all of Colonialism's secrets had flown away but she was sadly mistaken. "Let us out Ethnography!" Ethnography waited. Not daring to move. "Don't be afraid of us! We can help you!" came the voices yet again. Ethnography whispered, "What am I going to do?" Ultimately, she knew that there was only one thing she could do. Uncurling herself from the floor, she opened her eyes and turned to open Colonialism's chest for a second time.

Ethnography gasped. She saw with her own two eyes that Colonialism's box was not actually a box, but a beautiful large vase half buried in the ground. Before her demotion by Hesiod and later Erasmus in Greek mythology, Pandora was known as "she who sends up gifts," and the vase was representative of her status as the earth goddess who bestowed all things necessary for life (Marquardt 1982, p. 286). Ethnography gently lifted the lid, and one by one the whispers she had heard began to appear out of the vase. First to appear was Decolonization, holding hands with Postcolonialism, Critical Race Theory stood side by side with Whiteness studies, and lastly came Feminism in an embrace with the Ethical Necessity of Being in Relation with the Other. Decolonization spoke first.

"Ethnography, we promised that we would offer you something and so I bring to you openness. Somewhat risky I know because you 'do not know the outcome . . . one's own ground can become destabilised . . . one's self [is] available to be surprised, to be challenged, and to be changed' (Rose 2004, p. 22). However, openness comes hand in hand with situatedness and dialogue. What matters is that you take me on board as a way of thinking which requires us to be critically vigilant (hooks 2010, p. 26) about the colonial past in the present—to not be afraid to look into the dark corners of our fieldwork notes, recordings, and research papers to uncover what may be lurking there." Ethnography looked at Decolonization, "So what you're saying is that you want me to uncover and remember the history of ethnomusicology in Australia with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a racialized landscape, because after all, race is everywhere (c.f., Radano and Bohlman 2000)?" Decolonization smiled and made space for the Ethical Necessity of Being in Relation with the Other to speak.

Clearing her throat, Ethical Necessity spoke quietly. "Ethnography my message to you comes from Levinas and his good friend Rosalyn Diprose (2002). The face of the other—all of the Indigenous people we work with—calls the subject (that's you Ethnography) to responsibility . . . it does so in a way which that demands our attention to [her] call. [She] shows [her]self to us, and we cannot help but respond, because we cannot turn away" (Levinas, in Fryer 2004, p. 42). Ethnography immediately understood the truth of what Ethical Necessity said and a single tear fell down her cheek. "Through such literal, discursive, and intercorporeal looking," Ethical Necessity continued, "You and them enter into a relationship with and a responsibility to one another—lives, histories, memories, stories, conversations, emotions, and desires become entangled. You have to be brave enough to listen to the whispering in your heart and once you have heard, wear it proudly on your sleeve." Ethnography is unsure, "Is that all I have to do?" "Well no—there is one more thing," Decolonization interjected. "Don't waste the words we have given you—there are too many wasted words in academia. We ask that now you have released us from Colonialism's box, embrace the gifts from this vase, and begin the dialogue we have started with you with others—your colleagues, the ones that matter, those who have the power and privilege to start telling the stories behind Colonialism so that together we can deconstruct his discipline and reconstruct a future in the present." Ethnography was still not convinced. "But really, what good is that going to do? Colonialism is everywhere—he is too powerful. He is inside our

heads, our institutions, our disciplinary practice, our classrooms—I bet he’s even here in this office if we look closely enough!” Ethical Necessity moved herself closer so that she could look directly into Ethnography’s face. “All we ask is that ‘on the day that we [you] can conceive of a different state of affairs [and] a new light falls on [your] troubles and [you] decide that these are unbearable’ (Sartre 1956, pp. 434–435)” (in Greene 1995, p. 5), then you at least begin to imagine what a decolonized ethnography—and, indeed, education—might look like. “There are always vacancies: there are always roads not taken, vistas not acknowledged. The search must be ongoing; the end can never be quite known” (Greene 1995, p. 15). I can’t promise you that you will find what you are looking for, but is it not our responsibility to at least try?”

Seeing that Ethnography understood, Decolonization and Ethical Necessity kissed her gently on the forehead and waved good-bye. Ethnography felt terribly alone and did not know what to do. She turned towards the vase, remembering that Colonialism would soon be back and would want an explanation for why the box was now a vase and why the once box was now open and empty. As she turned to replace the lid, out of the vase came another whisper—it was Hope. Ethnography heard clearly in that moment the message Hope held—it was a belief in the capacity of humanity to recognize wrong doings, to be transformed, to engage with one another’s differences with honesty and openness, and thereby to enter into a relationship with a wise and loving politic necessary to achieve any measure of justice. Ethnography sobbed with relief as Hope fluttered gently against her skin, soothing her sadness and singing a song for a new tomorrow. And luckily, Hope has stayed with her ever since.

A Decision Is Made

The three colleagues from the Faculty of Social Science sat around a small round table in a square office far removed from the swing in the playground, each of them silent and deep in thought. They had all heard her paper at the conference and felt strongly that it was time to make a decision. One of them, head in her hands, sighed noisily.

“What are we to do then?” Amanda asked. “She’s gone and done it, she’s finally done it!”

“I know, I still can’t quite believe it,” Paul’s face was white. “I never thought she would actually do it. I mean; I know she’s been talking about it for awhile, but I thought it was all just talk.”

It was Sarah’s turn to speak. This is how their departmental committee meetings always went—Amanda first, then Paul, and last of all Sarah, always in that order and always with the same intent. Usually Elizabeth was there to add something to the conversation but today was different. Today, Elizabeth was absent and she

was the main item on the agenda. Sarah continued to sit quietly, waiting for the right words and moment to speak.

“Well, come on Sarah, what are we going to do about Elizabeth? We cannot simply stand by and do nothing—no, that won’t do at all,” Amanda shook her head vehemently.

Paul began to resemble a bobblehead on the dashboard of a car as he joined her.

“Yes, I agree, we have to do something. What Elizabeth has done goes completely against everything that we believe in as traditional realist ethnographers!”

They both looked at Sarah expectantly, waiting for her wise and considered response.

“Well,” Sarah began. “Her paper was very performative—I do remember somewhere reading or someone telling me that she was a dancer in a former life, but I am afraid I have to agree with you both. Can we seriously think that autoethnographic writing and research—or *whatever it is she calling it these days, storyline*—is proper social science? That is the question for us to consider today.”

“Are you kidding me?” Amanda was incredulous. “The goal of social science—of which she claims autoethnography to be an example of—is to study the social world; let me say that again, the social world. If the topic of autoethnographic research is the self, how on earth can it be considered valid and legitimate social science?”

“I mean what would our head of school say if he was there to hear her sanctimonious crap about heart, hope, and *storyline* in ethnography?” Paul asked. “Does he know this is what she does, gets paid a generous salary to sit in her office obsessing about herself writing narcissistic narratives? Sociology is an empirical discipline and we are supposed to study the social (from Delamont 2009, p. 60).”

“Mmm,” Sarah agreed. “I can see your point. I guess whether we like it or not—and I happen to not like it—the self has always been present in ethnography, and the postmodern turn has shifted our attention to issues of voice, power, authority, and representation in the work that we do in, out, and between the field. These theoretical, philosophical, and methodological debates have certainly laid fertile ground for the growth of autoethnography over the past 15–20 years.”

“But does this necessarily mean that this is a good thing?” Amanda wanted to know.

“A good thing for ethnography? These autoethnographers can’t even agree on a label for what they do—sociological introspection; critical autobiography; personal, self, reflexive, and/or phenomenological ethnography; psychobiography; self-ethnography; auto-anthropology; personal and/or self-writing; native and/or narrative ethnography; emotionalism; evocative and/or experimental ethnography; analytic; interpretive . . .”

Paul groaned loudly and dramatically, “Oh please don’t get me started on Norman Denzin (2014), I mean really, ‘A call to arms?’ What does he think . . .?”

“OK, we get the message Paul,” Sarah interrupted. “And yes, I am as frustrated by it as you are.”

“I wonder what happened,” Amanda began, “To Elizabeth, I mean. Why did she start writing like this? She used to be such a nice dutiful daughter of traditional ethnographic method. We’ve all read her early papers and PhD on the social and musical lives of Aboriginal women—such solid pieces of analytic research grounded in data from the field.”

“She erased the line between ‘the researcher’s self and the investigation’ (Delamont 2009, p. 60),” Paul offered. “She let relationship—god knows we’ve heard her harp on about that for years—cloud her judgement and blurred the boundaries between the familiar and the strange. Studying ourselves can never make anything ethnographically strange and our task has always been to fight familiarity.”

Amanda agreed. “It’s just a little too familiar and subjective for my liking. And quite honestly, we are not interesting enough to write about in journals, to teach about, to expect attention from others” (Delamont 2009, p. 59).

“Yes,” Sarah nodded. “And one of my main concerns relates to exactly that. Because of the reliance on the self and the telling of a good story, autoethnographic research is . . . well, it’s basically unethical.”

Amanda shook her head once more. “You know in this recent paper she gave about decolonizing ethnography, she talked about people at Burrulula—people she claims to have relationships with? Did she ask her family if she could use them in this paper? That’s a huge problem with autoethnographic research and writing—other social actors cannot be disguised or protected. Did she get their permission to describe their world and their experiences in such a revealing way?”

“I doubt it,” Sarah declared somewhat smugly. “And she dares to rant and rave about white power and privilege, social justice, and ethical necessity. From where I stand, when you write autoethnographically, you are standing categorically on the wrong side of the fence. Because you cannot see beyond yourself, you can only focus on the powerful—you. ‘Autoethnography is, whatever else it may or not be, about things that matter a great deal to the autoethnographer’ (Delamont 2009, p. 57), but I would argue that it’s the powerless to whom we should be directing our sociological gaze.”

A snide smile appeared on Paul’s face. “I can just imagine what she would say in her defence. It would begin with ‘from my experience . . .’”

“A-ha! Exactly!” Sarah was beginning to warm up now. “Autoethnography is all experience—there is no data. Research is supposed to be analytic, not experiential, and autoethnography is noticeably lacking in analytic outcome—there is no analytic mileage (Delamont 2009, p. 58). It abrogates our duty to go out and collect data.”

“And we can’t forget that sociologists are a privileged group,” Paul added. “Qualitative sociologists are particularly lucky as our work lasts. Think about what sociology is remembered for—the great ethnographies: *City of women* (1994) by Ruth Landes or *Boys in white* (1961) by Howard Becker et al. Autoethnography is an abuse of that privilege—our duty is to go out and research and write the ethnographies which will become the classic texts of the year 2090—not sit in our homes focusing on ourselves.”

Sarah slapped her hand on the table. “Damn it! There is nothing more to be said about it. The assumption that there is something more inherently authentic and authoritative about autoethnographic writing is total bullshit. It’s mischievous—some would say malicious even. Autoethnographers are nothing but bricoleurs—tricksters! They assert, exaggerate, speculate, improvise, and don’t test out ideas! Autoethnographers are essentially lazy—literally lazy and intellectually lazy. And what’s more, they all think that by being ‘artistic’ and ‘creative’ they are performing science! Most of them can’t even write well, they’re just second-rate, two bit, wannabe novelists and poets!”

Paul and Amanda looked wide-eyed at Sarah and would later solemnly swear they had actually seen smoke and fire snorting from her nose. Gathering as much courage as he could, Paul asked, “Well, we are still left with the same question Sarah—what are we to do?”

Amanda’s eyes glittered with revenge. “We can reject all and any of the work she submits for publication, ensure that she is never given an opportunity to speak at conferences, and when she does get a look in, we can heckle her from the back . . . I don’t suppose a good old-fashioned public burning at the stake is an option?”

Sarah’s mouth set in a hard line. “We can but do the only honest thing . . .”

Elizabeth leant back against the stone bricks lining the hallway, her breathing shallow and fast. She knew she was not supposed to have heard the words she had stumbled upon – they were about her and they were designed to hurt after the fact. She hadn’t meant to eavesdrop, but the conversation was too public and too loud to ignore once she had encountered it. The cold hard reality of the wall steadied her and as she looked down at the heartlines on her hand, she felt her blood pumping with a new sense of resolve to w/rite/right. She would leave this School of the Lifeless, replete as it was with inert concepts and colleagues, and return to the playground to begin writing life. Knowing that others were waiting for her there on the seats of the wooden swings, Elizabeth became filled with the ‘courage, the desire, to approach’ (Cixous 1993, p. 7) writing as a way of learning to die, to break with the darkness of dominator culture and write herself (Cixous 1976, p. 880). She would write herself and her being into new ways of becoming an educational researcher as storylines in her hand and heart, indeed, “From now on, who, if we say so, can say no to us [me]? We’ve [I’ve] come back from always” (Cixous 1976, p. 878).

The Only Honest Thing

The truth is, now that I have reached the end, I realize that a chapter about autoethnography as storyline in educational research always had “one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion” (Woolf 1929/2001, p. 2). My mind has become increasingly tangled as I have thrown around words,

turned over pages, written and rewritten carefully constructed sentences only to erase them and start all over again. I write autoethnography as storyline because it is the only honest thing I know to do in this particular personal–pedagogical–political somewhere I find myself. It is the only interpretative move, which holds the possibility for living the discomfort of writing, researching, and being in relation as a white settler colonial woman. If I imagine autoethnography as a person, she is woman, sitting in a room of her own (Woolf 1929/2001) writing in “white ink” and “draw[ing] her story into history” (Cixous 1976, p. 881). She is an “undutiful daughter” who loves the part she plays in conceptual disobedience and disturbance (Braidotti 2012, p. xii), and in the here and now, she impulsively tosses away her name to become in the moment of being storyline. She wears her heart on her sleeve as philosophy, theory, and methodology (Denzin 2006, p. 334) and is not afraid to break it once, twice, and then do it all over again. Relationship is the breath which gives flesh and life to the very bones of her existence as a researcher and an educator. Emotion, empathy, and experience are embodied in the storylines she writes because she knows from her heart to hand that “censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time . . . your body must be heard” (Cixous 1976, p. 880). She wants you to know intimately with every fiber of your being the good alongside the bad through the self and the social world. She loudly and shamelessly proclaims the personal-as-performative-as-pedagogical-as-political in a quest for education as the practice of freedom (Denzin 2003, pp. 258–559). Storyline demands a response and will continue to speak where some would prefer silence. She threw away her white naiveté long ago and dares to ask questions about moral discourse and ethical responsibility—and she refuses to stay quiet. She knows that not everyone likes her, respects her, understands her, or thinks she has a place, but she stays the course. There is too much at stake to give up now, and besides, that would be the easy way out. Hope is the steady and rhythmic swing to her storyline reason, punctuated with tumbles and turns towards giving and vulnerability, community and solidarity, conversation and compassion. The game she plays privileges relationship, relationship as pedagogy, and the power of such a pedagogy of heart—indeed, of love—holds for *not forgetting*, shifting, changing, and transforming the ways in which we think about, make representations of, and engage with Indigenous Australian peoples in education and ethnography. She wants the play to stay long after the sun goes down, the cold sets in, and the day ends, to carry you across the threshold from mere disinterested critique into a space where empathy, compassion, and mindful caring emerge as necessary recognition and a vital response to the “somewhere” we find ourselves. “[She] is the words; [she] is the music; [she] is the thing itself” (Woolf 1976, p. 46) and she must “write herself” (Cixous 1976, p. 875). I would like to think that if storyline were a person, she and I would be friends, swinging side by side in this educational playground we call research.

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8.3 Critical Interdisciplinarity and Noticing Absences

Heather Greenhalgh-Spencer

This chapter explores the *hows* of doing research by bringing a critical lens from an outside field of research to bear on one's own field of research: Critical Interdisciplinary Studies in Education. In this research methodology, one draws on various studies, metaphors, and terms from one field in order to ask questions of, illuminate, or challenge some assumptions in another field. While most critical interdisciplinary research tends to bring together knowledge fields from the humanities—languages, race studies, gender studies, and so on—I use the methods of traditional critical interdisciplinary work in a somewhat unorthodox way by marshaling fields of knowledge from anatomy, kinesiology, sociology, soma-cognition, and other areas more associated with both social sciences and natural sciences, to illuminate what goes on in the traditional classroom space. Using critical interdisciplinarity as a research methodology—as with any research methodology—involves acts of interpretation. In order to excavate how interpretive moments shape the research process, I will draw on my research study “Re-thinking Bodies in the Traditional Classroom Space.”

This “rethinking bodies” study was intended to push the field into rethinking assumptions about embodiment in both online and bricks-and-mortar classrooms and to interpret embodiment and the meanings of embodiment in a new way. Specifically, the study was intended to create a moment where new questions could be raised. It is, if you will, an interpretation of absences—of what is NOT generally talked about. As I saw it (and sometimes still “see it”), there is a pervasive assumption that online education is less “embodied” because people do not sit in a room together. A binary exists where online education is set in opposition to bricks-and-mortar classrooms, and then this binary is further fleshed out through

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speech acts (the writing within the field) that normalize the idea that online spaces are disembodied and bricks-and-mortar spaces are embodied, but not just embodied—bricks-and-mortar spaces are *produced* within the literature as places where, supposedly, this embodiment creates feelings of connection, liberation, and deep learning that cannot exist in online spaces. The point of my research study was to look more closely at these assumptions around embodiment; and this meant starting with a question: Are bricks-and-mortar classrooms creating spaces that are more laudable (than online spaces) because of how bodies are embodied within the space? In order to do this work, I juxtaposed knowledge sets from other fields—fields of sociology, technofeminism, kinesiology, soma-cognition, and haptics technology, among others—in order to question and challenge these assumptions about embodiment in classrooms that were playing out in my own field. I made my own classroom observations, in order to critically analyze what bodies were actually doing in the traditional classrooms space, but then I also drew on research studies from other fields to not only help me *see* what was going on in the traditional classroom but to help me make sense of, understand, and create an argument around the actual physicalities of bodies *as embodied* within the traditional classroom.

In this chapter, I will briefly talk about this research project on bodies, trying to key in on moments where acts of interpretation came to the fore during the research process. I will then highlight the *hows* of doing my research study by foregrounding the role of theory, the role of interdisciplinarity, and the role of background knowledges and experiences.

The Research Project

This research project, “Re-thinking Bodies in the Traditional Classroom,” was meant to challenge one of the more pervasive critiques of online education: that online education is a pale substitute for the traditional classroom experience *because* traditional education is embodied and online education is—somehow—disembodied. While this critique has lost some of its force in the last few years, it is one that I still hear at various conferences and see in the literature on education and teaching. It is an odd critique because it suggests that there are some places or times when people can literally be *without* their bodies.¹ As this is impossible, we can assume the critique is driving at the idea that having bodies together in the traditional classroom space creates a more humanizing learning environment. In the research project, I not only wanted to bring to the fore that this dichotomy between online and bricks-and-mortar classrooms was being *assumed*, but I also wanted to actively show the ways that students—and even teachers—are *actually* embodied in rather inhumane ways in the traditional classroom space. Critics of

¹ Even while using avatars in online world, or simply engaging in text conversations on a blog, we are still embodied. We are in our bodies, somewhere, even while we are interacting online.

online education tend to derogate the “absence” of bodies in a classroom while not attending to the ways that bodies are shaped by disciplinary regimes in real time and space in the traditional classroom. This research project was designed to make an embodied accounting—a phenomenological and soma-conscious accounting—of what happens to our bodies in the traditional bricks-and-mortar classroom spaces.

The paper examined the production of bodies in the material classroom by targeting four practices/objects of the traditional classroom: the gaze, the chair, the desk, and the ability to move and touch. While the project had its beginnings in a debate over online *versus* traditional schooling spaces, the bulk of the research project was directed to the bricks-and-mortar spaces. However, all of this research was in the context of attempting a critical examination of assumptions—interpretations of embodiment or disembodiment—that exist(ed) in the field of education, teaching, and learning.

The Debate

My first role as researcher was to critically analyze and dig into the debate about online spaces and bricks-and-mortar spaces. For this, I read deeply through the literature in the field of education, as well as other fields like computer science, technofeminism, and posthumanism, to get a sense of what was being said, expected, and left unsaid. In general, the literature reflected my own sense of the field: that both critics and advocates of online education were taking up online spaces in ways that assumed disembodiment. In the late 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, there were many claims that technology and the World Wide Web would revolutionize education and completely change the way we learned and taught. Barker² suggested that the Web would revolutionize the lack of resources experienced by most rural schools. Batey and Cowell³ proclaimed that the Web would provide greater access to information for all schools, thus closing the achievement gap. Chute, Brunning, and Hulick⁴ suggested that online learners did better on tests. Many critics came forward to push against these overblown claims, suggesting that online teaching was an exercise in dehumanization because bodies were never really *present*.

Notice the ways that the traditional classroom space is automatically assumed to be humanizing—because of the presence of bodies together—and the online space is positioned as bereft of bodies in the following quotes from critics of

² Barker, B. “The effects of learning by satellite on rural schools.” *Learning by Satellite Conference*. (Tulsa, OK: ERIC, 1987).

³ Batey, A. and Cowell, R. “Distance education: An overview.” *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory*. (Portland, OR: ERIC, 1986).

⁴ Chute, A., Brunning, K., Hulick, M. “The AT&T Communications national teletraining network: Applications, benefits, and costs.” *AT&T Communications Education*. (Cincinnati, OH: ERIC, 1984).

online education. This *noticing* of some of the key assumptions within the field contextualizes my larger research project; it is within the context of a larger field who seemed to reject online education based on the assumption that it was disembodied that I came to both see and challenge assumptions about embodied learning within the traditional classroom space.

Anderson⁵ advocates the “importance of the body in establishing and maintaining human relations.” Because of the centrality of the body to learning, Anderson⁶ concludes that cyberspace and its so-called communities of learners are actually “detrimental to establishing intimate lasting human communities.” Says Anderson⁷: “virtual communities by comparison to real ones [are] abstract, diminished, fragile and tenuous relationships, easily broken precisely because they lack the concrete situatedness of embodied subjectivity and intersubjectivity.”

Dreyfus⁸ furthers this critique by claiming that online education is but an anemic simulation of the real, embodied, experience of the traditional classroom. Dreyfus suggests that the traditional classroom creates an atmosphere of learning precisely because it is an atmosphere where people take social risks, and make social commitments, by choosing to engage with each other in a conversation. Says Dreyfus⁹:

Only those willing to take risks go on to become experts. It follows that, since expertise can only be acquired through involved engagement with actual situations, the possibility of acquiring expertise is lost in the disengaged discussions and deracinated knowledge acquisition characteristic of the Net.

Dreyfus is sure that learning can only take place when bodies work in nearness to each other. There must be the potential for physical, engagement, for the touching of the world and each other. Dreyfus believes that this potential for nearness is impossible online. In fact, Dreyfus has a section in his book where he suggests that “real” learning can only take place where there is risk—a kind of physical risk where it is possible for one student to physically strike another. Again, reading these arguments about embodiment and education challenged me to think about what constitutes risk and question why there was an assumption that there is no risk in online education and that there is no physicality in online education and, in the case of Dreyfus’s argument, why there would be a need for potential physical violence in order to create an educative moment.

⁵ Anderson, T. *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. (Edmonton, AB: AU Press. p. 153. 2008).

⁶ Anderson, *The Theory and Practice*.

⁷ Anderson, *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning* p. 156.

⁸ In: Dreyfus, H. “Overcoming the myth of the mental.” *Humanities, Social Sciences, and Law*. (2006). 25(1–2), pp. 43–49.; Dreyfus, H. “What could be more intelligible than everyday intelligibility? Reinterpreting of division I of being and time in the light of division II.” *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*. (2004).24(3), pp. 265–274.; Dreyfus, H. “Anonymity versus commitment: The dangers of education on the internet.” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 34 (4), (2002). pp. 369–378.

⁹ Dreyfus, H. “Anonymity versus commitment,” p. 374.

While I believe that bodies are important for learning, I was not sure that the traditional classroom space allowed for the use/performance/practice of our bodies in particularly laudatory ways. My research project attempted to make a phenomenological accounting of what bodies were actually doing in the classroom space in order to find out exactly *how* we are embodied in most classrooms. My research project targeted the ways our bodies interact with/are shaped by the gaze, the chair, the desk, and the ability to move and touch. I chose these artifacts or technologies of the classroom because they seemed—to me—to be a ubiquitous part of almost every classroom space. Also, as will be mentioned later, my background experience allowed me to notice the ways that bodies hunch over in their desks and chairs in ways that are not very healthy. I decided to do more work and delve deeper into what was physically going on as bodies come to learn in the traditional classrooms space.

The Gaze

In order to think through the ways that bodies exist in the traditional classroom space, I first delved into the literature in sociology on the ways that bodies are literally shaped through the expectations and practices that exist in society. I found Foucault's notions of technologies of the body and technologies of discipline to be extremely helpful in exploring the actual practices of the classroom space. I asked myself what goes on—perhaps unseen—to create the commonsense understanding of how one is supposed to behave in a classroom space. I tried to think through the ways that the technologies of the classroom work on bodies.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault¹⁰ considers that technologies of discipline presuppose “a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see, induce effects of power.” This is to say that the power to train or discipline a body becomes most effective through the “exact observation” of that body.¹¹ Says Foucault:

The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known; a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned.¹²

This description of the perfect apparatus of power to discipline bodies sounds remarkably like the traditional classroom space.¹³ For, while it is true that online

¹⁰ Foucault, M. *Discipline and punish*. (New York: Vintage Books. 1977/1995, pp. 170–171).

¹¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

¹² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* p. 173.

¹³ In *Discipline and Punish*, there is a picture—one of several between pp. 169–170—in the book depicting a lecture given at a prison. Notice how remarkably similar this picture is to one of the traditional classroom.

classrooms also involve surveillance, there is also the embedded disruption of that surveillance because, embedded in the online modality, is the choice to be seen and heard or not. Not so in material spaces; where the body is always under the gaze.

In the material classroom, students desks are usually situated to always face the teacher. The students are positioned to view the teacher as the locus of knowledge. Even when the teacher moves around the room, the students will tend to follow the teacher with their eyes. The landscape of the classroom dictates a traditional power structure. For example, think about how often you can enter a classroom and tell where the “front” of the room is meant to be. While rooms may have several walls of chalkboards or learning stations, there is often a larger desk, a more central chair, the location of a movie projector, or some other object that locates *how* the classroom should be situated in order that the students may be fully observed and the teacher may be fully followed.

In the traditional classroom space, students’ bodies are meant to be fully visible. It is that very visibility that is supposed to act as a dissuasion from texting, tweeting, Facebooking, Snapchat, Instagram, talking out of turn, daydreaming, or doing any number of things other than focusing on the teacher. While it would be nice to say that this visibility makes it possible for people to read body language in order to better understand the students, often this “reading of body language” is done as a means of finding out who is paying attention and who is not. In other words, often, visibility functions as a disciplinary technique more than a technique of loving attunement to or dialogue with one’s fellows. This argument is made more obvious when we reflect on the high level of errors that occur in the act of reading body language. I know students who are very good at nodding their heads and appearing to pay attention and be engaged in class discussions, when in fact they are texting a friend or simply daydreaming. Often these bodily signs of “engagement” are more of a performance than an actual bodily outgrowth of an inner state of mind. We all think we can read body language well, and, as teachers, we count on it to guide the pacing of the class. But, as Judith Butler¹⁴ reminds us, bodies are a tenuous collocation of performance by a body and the reading of the body by an “audience” within specific socio-ideological and institutional contexts. While I have no doubt that teachers understand that bodies give cues, I also have no doubt that the presence of the teacher walking around and observing the bodies of the students creates a sort of force, a gravitational pull, towards creating a certain kind of performance in the classroom. In the traditional classroom, the body is made visible in order to have *power over*, rather than to empower, students.

My background experience guided me towards the belief that the gaze is not the only thing that shapes bodies in a classroom and that objects—material artifacts—within the traditional classroom also shape our bodies in specific ways. Thus, the research project then turned to exploring the ways that material artifacts shape and condition our bodies. My hunch, based on previous experience and my background knowledge in anatomy, was that the physical artifacts of the classroom were doing

¹⁴ Judith Butler *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge), 1999.

some damage to bodies. But I needed to do more research to consider what bodies were actually doing—how they were sitting and writing and how they were physically positioned—in order to find out how physical objects actually shape bodies and whether or not bodies were actually suffering physical drawbacks from the ways that the physical objects acted on the bodies.

Chairs

I first took up the material artifact of “chairs.” This involved doing both research of my own into how students use and sit in chairs, as well as aggregating and analyzing research from the fields of disability studies, fat studies, gender studies, and kinesiology in order to better understand how bodies are shaped by chairs—and how the classroom both presumes and creates particular kinds of embodiment. Research from these various fields show that chairs—specifically office or classroom chairs with a particular type of tilt or connected to desks—tend to damage bodies. Chairs function to discipline, normalize, and captivate the body—especially within a traditional classroom space.

Jonathan Crary¹⁵ posits that, since the nineteenth century, Western Modernity has insisted that “individuals define and shape themselves in terms of a capacity for ‘paying attention,’ that is, for a disengagement from a broader field of attraction, whether visual or auditory, for the sake of isolating or focusing on a reduced number of stimuli.” The ways in which we “accomplish certain productive, creative, or pedagogical tasks” links in to power, ideologies, and histories.¹⁶ Crary deliberately points to the schoolroom bench/chair as a technology that functions to create “a subject [who] is productive, manageable, and predictable.”¹⁷ The chair literally positions the body to look forward, remain still, and be accessible. The chair also teaches the body through habituation to stop noticing other signals or stimuli around the body.

Galen Cranz¹⁸ talks more about the ways the chair actively erases the perceptions of the body—erases the ability of the body to *feel* and know itself. Cranz argues “that years of sitting in chairs have contributed significantly to this problem [of kinesthetic awareness] because chair sitting distorts and reduces . . . perception of comfort”¹⁹ Cranz suggests that, in order to successfully sit in chairs, especially for long periods of time and on a regular basis, we must teach our bodies to ignore

¹⁵ Crary, J. *Suspensions of perception: Attention, spectacle, and modern culture*. (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2000). p. 1.

¹⁶ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*.

¹⁷ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*. p. 4.

¹⁸ Cranz, G. “The Alexander Technique in the world of design: Posture and the common chair.” *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*. 4(2), (2000). pp. 90–98.

¹⁹ Cranz, “Alexander Technique” p. 93.

signals of pain and discomfort. We must teach ourselves to, literally, ignore the feelings and perceptions of the body. This bodily captivity—made possible through the chair—is justified by the societal expectation that chairs help us to “pay attention”: pay attention to our work, pay attention to those who are giving us knowledge, and pay attention to authority. The act of paying attention is discursively aligned with the act of sitting still, being quiet, tuning other things out, and focusing forward. This is problematic, says Cranz, because chairs *hurt*.

Cranz traces out exactly why and how chairs are harmful. She²⁰ critiques the types of chairs that are canted back, have no support, and are enclosing structures: chairs typically found in schooling spaces are specifically mentioned. These chairs tend to compact the head–neck jointure. “Any chair that puts people in a posture that distorts this joint upsets the equilibrium of the entire body.”²¹ If the head–neck joint is compacted, then the back slumps out, the shoulders round, and the body is thrown out of alignment. “The cervical vertebrae including the first cervical vertebrae extend forward, while the weight of the head comes back and down, rather than forward and up, in relation to the neck.”²² The problems of this off-kilter posture “include back ache, neck ache, problems with vocal production, eye strain, sciatica, shallow breathing.”²³ Often, chairs condition the body to slump back in the chair rather than sit with a tall spine. Chairs—specifically classroom and office chairs—cause “thoracic humping” where the neck and upper back must slump forward in order to counteract the backward canting of the chair. This move to bring the head forward causes such strain on the neck that, often, people will then move the upper chest forward in order to relieve strain on the neck. “This then collapses the ribcage over the abdominal region and exaggerates the curve in the mid-back.”²⁴ This will often lead to back injuries such as: glenohumeral tension, migration of the scapulae, cervical lordosis, brachial plexus compression, prolapsed discs, disc protrusion, spinal stenosis, and collapsed vertebrae. Repeated and prolonged tension on the vertebrae—produced from a slumped over or tucked under sitting position—often results in disc and vertebrae injury and neck and back pain.

My research found that, most often, bodies are not used to do some sort of kinesthetic performance that leads to a deeper understanding of truths—a deeper and more relevant learning. They are not used to find deeper levels of intimacy and relationality between students and teachers. Often, bodies *are used*—made to fit within a chair, forced to stay in that chair, and conditioned to ignore the perceptions of the body in order to more fully focus on the information delivered by the teacher. Desks can similarly be critiqued.

²⁰ Cranz, “Alexander Technique.”

²¹ Cranz, “Alexander Technique” p. 92.

²² Cranz, “Alexander Technique.”

²³ Cranz, “Alexander Technique.”

²⁴ Cranz, “Alexander Technique” p. 95.

Desks

In order to explore the ways that desks shape bodies in the classroom, I once again conducted my own classroom observations and then also drew on the literature from disability studies and fat studies. These fields of research show that desks assume a certain type of embodiment to be normal. They also shape bodies into a particular pose—uncomfortable and injury causing for all bodies, but particularly painful for bodies that do not fit within societal norms of average height, small-ish weight, not pregnant, and “able-bodied.” Hetrick and Attig²⁵ write extensively about the myriad ways that “desks hurt us.” And while Hetrick and Attig focus their research on the ways that desks confine and shame the “fat body,” I have found that much of their work and observations extend to the ways desks work on *all* bodies. Regardless of body weight, desks are not “neutral and benign spaces; they are, rather, highly active material and discursive constructions that seek to both indoctrinate students’ bodies and minds into the middle-class values of restraint and discipline, and inscribe these messages onto the bodies that sit in them.”²⁶ The research from the fields of kinesiology and fat studies show that desks function to both physically shape the body and socially normalize particular types of bodies.

Bodies are made visible as abnormal the moment they overflow or move out of the space of the desk. Bodies are noticeably *out* the moment we feel too big, too tall, and too fidgety, to comfortably contain the body under or within the space that the desk prescribes. This is to say nothing of the ways that bodies with impairments, or even left-handed bodies, are pinpointed as “not normal” in the classroom space where desks assume mobile, small, and right-handed bodies. The desk makes bodies visible only through the matrix of ab/normalcy. In addition to directly fashioning the body as a docile, quiescent, mind/subject, desks *hurt* our bodies.

The desk/chair combination creates a space of “hard materials” and “punishing shapes.”²⁷ The wood, plastic, and metal of the desk precisely surrounds most of the student’s body. This makes moving from side to side, or even bending over to fetch something from a backpack, almost impossible. The desk is actually placed quite low vis-à-vis the chair, which causes people with long legs to have to round their back more fully in order to comfortably fit the legs under the desk. This rounding of the back can lead to the backaches and other problems listed in the section above. The placement of these desks also means that many people have to lean forward, slouch to the side, and, once again, round their backs, in order to rest their elbows on the desk. And the act of resting the elbows is

²⁵ Hetrick, A. and Attig, D. “Sitting pretty: Fat bodies, classroom desks, and academic excess.” In *The Fat Studies Reader*. New York: NYU Press. (2009). p. 197.

²⁶ Hetrick and Attig, “Sitting Pretty.”

²⁷ Hetrick and Attig, “Sitting Pretty,” p. 199.

conditioned by the fact that the desk surrounds the body in such a way as to make it awkward to place the hands at the sides, in the lap, or anywhere other than on the desk. This further shapes the body into a hunched over position—leading to strain and compacting of the vertebra. Drawing on my own observations, my background in anatomy, and drawing on the research from kinesiology and fat studies, I was able to argue that school desks *produce* a painful posture in the body. But because we have become so habituated by these desks, we barely notice that our bodies are uncomfortable in them.

The desks and chairs of the classroom coerce, make visible, normalize, and physically shape the body of the student. Not only that, but the desks and chairs tend to forbid a very human aspect of flesh. Perhaps one of the more enjoyable and humanizing aspects of being together—in the same physical space—is the potentiality of moving together and of touching. These desks and chairs (incarnations of societal norms) inhibit moving and touching.

For me, this was one of the main arguments of the research project: that traditional classroom spaces that were envisioned as being these place where people learn together through the act of moving and touching in ways that create a more embodied learning experience are not at all the practice of the traditional classroom space. This was also an argument that I did not expect to make. Given my background, I expected that schoolroom desks and chairs were likely not the best things for our bodies and that the teachers gaze created more coercion and stricture than liberation. However, I was surprised by the research showing how much learning, especially learning on a deep level that challenges assumptions and that stays with us, is connected to movement and touch. I was also surprised by my own observations and aggregations of other studies showing that students rarely touched and moved in the traditional classroom space.

The Ability to Move and Touch

For this avenue of the research project, in addition to the literature from the fields of kinesiology and disability studies, I also drew from the fields of dance studies, anatomy, haptics technology, and soma-cognition. Drawing on these branches of research informed my own research but also offered a challenge as I became enmeshed in reading studies that drew on terms and metaphors—some of which were familiar to me as part of other background knowledge that I possess—but some of which were completely new. I had to judge whether or not I felt that I had understood the research from another field in order to use it to illuminate questions and assumptions—interpretations—in the field of education. I'll say more about this later in this chapter.

Dance theorists, soma-cognition theorists, and kinesiologists have all done multiple studies showing the connections between movement and learning.

Nunez and Freeman,²⁸ Clark,²⁹ Iverson and Thelen,³⁰ and especially Sheets-Johnstone³¹ have all written extensively on the importance of movement and touch to the acts of learning and cognition. In order to fully understand objects, and the self-object relationship, we must be able to move around said objects and touch them. Not only that, but as Sheets-Johnstone³² points out, the very act of moving strengthens our brain's ability to make connections between what we see, what we think, and how we reason. This is because, as we move, not only does our body take on a greater sense of awareness of the world (in order that we won't run into something or be harmed by something), but we are more likely to come into contact with (touch) other objects or subjects in the world. A body in motion *is* a body in learning.

Think of how often movement is limited within a traditional classroom space—not only by the actual objects of the classroom but by the teacher's eye—by societal norms. I have been in classrooms where the fidgeting of students is called out as being “disruptive”—all by a teacher's glance. How and why does the traditional material classroom space *signify* embodiment, if this classroom structure so rarely allows for the movement of the body? In fact, Nunez and Freeman³³ and Sheets-Johnstone³⁴ argue that students rarely move and touch in a traditional classroom to the disadvantage of the students. Bodies in the traditional classroom space are not only limited as to when and how they can move; they are also limited in their ability to touch.

Think about the proscriptions against touch in the classroom. Teachers tend to stay away from students' bodies—particularly in the context of secondary education—so as to avoid the appearance of sexual impropriety. There is an awareness of and the simultaneous disavowal of students as both sexual and physical beings. Students are also discouraged from touching other students. There are societal norms that prohibit and make shameful both sexual and violent touch in the classroom to the extent that *all* touch between students becomes suspect, ill-advised, and unexpected.

So often, the critics of online education argue that distance learning is inferior to the traditional classroom *because* it happens at a distance. There is no presence of bodies together. But then, what does this presence matter if those bodies—while together in this traditional space—are coerced, normalized, made visible, shaped,

²⁸ Nunez, R. and Freeman, W. “Restoring to cognition the forgotten primacy of action, intention and emotion.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 6(11–12). (1999). pp. ix–xx.

²⁹ Clark, A. “Visual awareness and visuomotor action.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 6(11–12), (1999). pp. 1–18.

³⁰ Iverson, J. and Thelen, E. “Hand, mouth, and brain. The dynamic emergence of speech and gesture.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 6(11–12), (1999). pp. 19–40.

³¹ Sheets-Johnstone, M. “The Primacy of Movement.” *Zeitschrift Psychology*. 2000, (2000). pp. 11–98.

³² Sheets-Johnstone, “Primacy of Movement.”

³³ Nunez and Freeman, “Restoring to Cognition.”

³⁴ Sheets-Johnstone, “Primacy of Movement.”

injured, enclosed, and precluded from touching and moving? The traditional classroom can hardly be said to serve the body in any humanizing way. Hence, it seems curious that *the body*, and being embodied, is so often deployed as the reason we should venerate the traditional classroom space above the online classroom space. When advocates of the traditional classroom invoke *the body* as the reason why traditional classroom spaces are superior to virtual spaces, what kind of body is being invoked?

To conclude the research study, I then focused on some of the emerging affordances of online education and the ways that online spaces specifically value and intersect with embodiment. My point was not to position online education as the solution to or the superior version of traditional education. Online education has many problems of its own. However, I was trying to point out that online education offers some creative ways of getting around some of the strictures of the traditional classroom space. This “conclusion” of the study was meant to offer some results or suggestions, based on my research on embodiment, to guide practice—both online and in bricks-and-mortar classrooms—towards more consciously embodied learning.

Productive Possibilities

My research shows that it is important to reflect on, create an awareness around, and guide practice towards a more embodied sense of learning. In some ways, this is easier online. Online, I am free to get up, walk around, sit on the floor, sit on an exercise ball, sit on a chair made for my body, use a desk designed for my size and height, use a book, use my computer, shift position, fidget, and make faces—all of this without the strictures of the material classroom space. I have the choice, through the use of my webcam, to make myself visible to students and teachers or to choose to avoid being “seen.”

My research has guided my own practice and pedagogy in online classrooms as I now try to create activities where students go out into their communities and interact with the world. Students then take pictures or videos and then talk about their experiences touching and moving in their communities—and how that links into their learning and critical reflections on whatever topic we are discussing as a class.

Additionally, the absence of touching each other can more easily be pointed out—or observed as an absence—in online classroom spaces. This “absence” can become fodder for productive conversations about how bodies learn through movement and touch. This noting of the absence of touch with each other contextualizes our classroom practice of going out into our neighborhoods and communities. Students to go out into their neighborhoods, to move, to touch and interact with the environment—the ecosphere—around them. We then critically engage with the ways that space and materiality shape what we expect, what we learn, and how we learn it. Online spaces create the possibility for interaction across time and

distance—a different kind of moving and touching. But noticing the importance of movement and sensing—perception is vital and sometimes made easier to point out and take up when we meet together in online spaces.

This research project has also shaped my pedagogical practice in bricks-and-mortar classroom spaces. I now try and find ways for us—as a class—to engage in learning activities that require movement and an awareness of physicality. The bricks-and-mortar classroom space has been productive for me as I am then forced to think about how to create opportunities for movement but also accommodate students with motor impairment in the classroom. Those chances to think about movement *as* learning, and the ways that learning intersects with bodies, expectations, and disability or impairment, have been particularly productive for me as a teacher striving to deepen my own sense of embodiment in the classroom.

All of these changes I have made in my own pedagogical practice, and argued for in my work, are based on my own interpretation of my research findings. The research showing that chairs and desks tend to do harm has influenced me into trying to figure out how to subvert the expectation that chairs and desks are a necessary part of learning. The research showing that the teacher gaze exerts a certain amount of coercion and shaping of student bodies has guided me into drawing attention to the practice and asking students to help me figure out how to use digital technology in ways that subvert the gaze. This particular research project has channeled my desire to incorporate movement and touch—even across time and distance—into my classroom pedagogy.

This research project has educated me towards a questioning stance vis-à-vis bodies and technologies. I am guided to ask: What is inherent in the traditional classroom space, and what kinds of educational spaces are yet to be fully used? What is made possible, and what is made awkward or unlikely in these various spaces and through the use of various technologies? There needs to be a deeper understanding of what every modality brings to the table—and not on a rush to condemn or laud one modality above another.

My research study on bodies in the classroom specifically aimed at questioning and parsing out the nature of embodiment in the traditional classroom; it aimed to begin, continue, and enrich conversations about technology and embodiment. The study itself, as well as work that has branched out from this study, was shaped by interpretive moves at every stage of the process. I will now take some time to flesh out some of the ways that interpretation—specifically as it connects to interdisciplinarity—shaped (and shapes) my own research.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche³⁵ argues that new types of researchers must emerge who are reflective of the shaping power and value of interpretation. Nietzsche argues that we must engage more deliberately and self-consciously in interpretation and notice the ways that interpretation is a practice that shapes our

³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil (Jenseits von Gut und Böse)*, 1886), trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1966).

understanding of truth and intelligibility and also that interpretation is in turn shaped by power, knowledge, and expectation. In alignment with that call for self-conscious interpretation, I will spend the rest of this chapter practicing a meta-reflection on what went into the research project described above. I want to show how I came to see and understand this research project, and I hope to show how my own interpretations influenced my understanding of the research. In order to do this, I will highlight three main themes that have emerged for me as I have reflected on the role of interpretation in my own research. The interpretations that researchers make and bring to their work—certainly the interpretations that I make and bring to my work—are influenced by: the theoretical lenses we use to view and question the world around us; the interdisciplinary sources we draw on to see things differently and ask new questions; and the role of our own background knowledges and experiences as a shaping power for interpretations and intelligibility. I begin by focusing on the role of theory.

The Role of Theory in Research

I see theory as a type of lens: different theories highlight or erase different things from our view. Like lenses for your camera or the different colors and finishes on sunglasses, different lenses allow us to see different colors, different levels of contrast, a wider angle of view, and a more focused or micro-oriented view; they show us the world in overlapping and yet also divergent ways. The field of education—especially in relation to the use of technology in education—tends to draw on a theoretical tradition rooted in a masculinist point of view. This theoretical lens creates a certain picture of what we do and who we are in relation to technology; it highlights certain relationships and erases others. Feminist theory, specifically technofeminist theory, tends to argue for a different view of technology, bodies, and the relationships between the two.

Many of both the critics and the advocates of online education have tended to draw on more masculinist theoretical lenses. Rene Descartes³⁶ proposed, in an extension of earlier Platonic³⁷ philosophy, that the mind is different from the body; that physical matter is different from thought or mental matter; and that it is the mental processes that get us closer to some sort of truth. Descartes rather lauds the idea of somehow being able to transcend the physicality of our bodies in order to get at some deeper level of truth or living and to get at the pure mind. Martin Heidegger³⁸

³⁶ Descartes, Rene. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 vols., trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch and Anthony Kenny, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–1991.

³⁷ From *The Phaedo*.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger exhibits this distrust of technology—or at least a distrust in humanity’s ability to really see and understand technologies—in both *Being and Time* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics), 2008, and *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics), 2013.

and Walter Benjamin³⁹ both argued for a view of the world where technology was set in contrast to a greater reality or a more humane understanding and living of life. Drawing on these notions—enabled by a theoretical lens that validates the idea that bodies are separate from minds and that technology separates us from living a fuller humane life—Hubert Dreyfus,⁴⁰ Sherry Turkle,⁴¹ and others argue for a sort of digital dualism, where not only should we contrast the virtual sphere with the material sphere, but we are guided, as readers of both Dreyfus and Turkle, to value the material world as always/already different from and better than the digital world. Perhaps Turkle and Dreyfus are aiming at offering a contrasting view to the also existing theory that the digital world is separate from and better than the material world. Megan Boler⁴² takes aim at this romantic view of the internet when she challenges the techno-optimists as represented in the old MCI telecommunications commercial: “There is no race. There is no gender. There are no infirmities. There are only minds.”⁴³ Into this space—where both pop culture and the dominant historical trajectory of research in the academy have divided and set as a binary the online space from the material or embodied space—it is easy to see how theory guides us into an argument about whether it is better to have the embodied experiences of the material classroom space *or* the disembodied experiences of the online space. This argument comes to the fore, rather than questions about the assumptions built into that argument: Are we disembodied when we go online? Do our embodied experiences cease to matter when we go online? Are the embodied experiences of the RL world so different from our experiences online? Are our embodied practices and interactions with each other really somehow more humane—more truly human—in the material space when compared and contrasted with the online space?

I believe that, for me, the questioning of the assumptions built into arguments that assume the disembodiment of online spaces began because of my background in technofeminist theory. This different theoretical lens assumes that not only are we always embodied but that our bodies are always shaping and shaped by our interactions with technology. Technology can be harmful or helpful, or somewhere in between, but it always has a relationship with bodies. Perhaps because of my background in science and technology and perhaps more because of my experiences of *awareness* of my gender within STEM fields—being a woman in a place that tends to be dominated by men—I have felt at home with technofeminism as a theoretical lens. Technofeminism is a theoretical space that combines the rigorousness of science with an attunement to the ways that gender, bodies, and

³⁹ Walter Benjamin *The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction* (New York: Classic Books America) 2009.

⁴⁰ Hubert Dreyfus “Anonymity vs Commitment.”

⁴¹ See Sherry Turkle’s work in *Life on the Screen*, and *Alone Together*.

⁴² Megan Boler “Hypes, Hopes and Actualities: new digital Cartesianism and bodies in cyberspace,” *new media and society* Vol. 9 (1), 2007.

⁴³ The MCI ad can also be seen at <http://www.brillomag.net/NO3/erasism.htm>.

technologies tend to intersect. Technofeminism is productive in its ability to illuminate the ways that bodies shape and are shaped by technology. And it is through the lens of technofeminism that we are able to interpret online classroom spaces as always/already embodied; and it is this lens that allows us to more deeply question how bodies interact with technologies (of discipline, of desks, of chairs, etc.) of the classroom.

Technofeminist theorists like Elizabeth Grosz, Terri Kapsalis, Susan Squier, Iris Marion Young, Toril Moi, and many others, have argued that bodies shape—literally suggest the shape of—technologies (the way that a phone is designed to fit into a hand or an IUD is literally designed to fit into a body) and also that technologies can literally shape our bodies (the way that prostheses or corsets shape bodies). Donna Haraway—perhaps the “mother” of technofeminist theory—argues not only that there is a reciprocal interaction between bodies and technology but that these relationships are not always/already good or bad, more humane or less humane.

In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway⁴⁴ shows both the potential for harm and the potential for new more freeing possibilities as we imagine the further hybridity of bodies and technologies. Haraway foregrounds the coupling of bodies and technology in the service or war, violence, bioterrorism, and environmental devastation. Writes Haraway⁴⁵:

Modern production seems like a dream of cyborg colonization work, a dream that makes the nightmare of Taylorism seem idyllic. And modern war is a cyborg orgy, coded by C3I, command-control-communication-intelligence, an \$84 billion item in 1984s US defence budget. . . The silicon chip is a surface for writing; it is etched in molecular scales disturbed only by atomic noise, the ultimate interference for nuclear scores. Writing, power, and technology are old partners in Western stories of the origin of civilization, but miniaturization has changed our experience of mechanism. Miniaturization has turned out to be about power; small is not so much beautiful as pre-eminently dangerous, as in cruise missiles. . . Our best machines are made of sunshine; they are all light and clean because they are nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum, and these machines are eminently portable, mobile—a matter of immense human pain in Detroit and Singapore.... The diseases evoked by these clean machines are ‘no more’ than the minuscule coding changes of an antigen in the immune system, ‘no more’ than the experience of stress.

But Haraway also signals the potential transgressive power toward liberation of the hybridity between bodies and technology. Haraway⁴⁶ writes:

So my cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work. One of my premises is that most American socialists and feminists see deepened dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism in the social practices, symbolic formula-tions, and physical artefacts associated with ‘high technology’

⁴⁴ Donna Haraway “A Cyborg Manifesto” Retrieved on May 14, 2014, from: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/donna-haraway/articles/donna-haraway-a-cyborg-manifesto/>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

and scientific culture. . . . Another of my premises is that the need for unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination has never been more acute. But a slightly perverse shift of perspective might better enable us to contest for meanings, as well as for other forms of power and pleasure in technologically mediated societies.

For Haraway, there is great liberatory possibility in the ability to see both the potential for calamity, oppression, and damage and the potential for unity and a politics of change. Haraway⁴⁷ argues:

From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet. . . . about the final appropriation of women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war. . . . From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point.

This double vision, the ability to see the ways that bodies interact with and become hybrid with technologies in both positive and negative ways, informs my own interrogation of the supposed divide of embodiment between online and bricks-and-mortar classrooms. It is the theoretical lens, offered by technofeminism, that helps me to notice the absences in much of the discourse in educational technology; this helps me to interrogate the assumption that the interaction of bodies and technologies is always/already, automatically and inherently, dehumanizing or liberating. It helps me to interpret our embodied relationships to technologies in ways that are new to the field of education.

To further this point, that we see things differently as we bring knowledges and practices from other spaces to bear on assumptions in our own field, I want to now explore the role of interdisciplinary knowledge in my own research project.

The Role of Interdisciplinarity

As mentioned in the description of the research project, the noticing and analysis of absences in my own field of research, the field of education, was made possible by bringing to bear outside lenses, outside knowledges and fields of research, in order to turn what is largely an assumption—that online education is disembodied and less humane education—into a critical question. For me, this interdisciplinary work involved gathering and analyzing research from fields that are close to my own, as well as fields that are not related—fields where there are whole different sets of terms, expectations, and metaphors for understanding. Critically engaging with the research from other fields not only necessitates some background knowledge that allows the researcher to delve into another field; it also requires a state of meta-reflection on the part of the researcher: you need to know when you

⁴⁷ Ibid.

know enough to really grasp the research from another field and also know when you lack enough knowledge to honestly engage the research from another field. You need to be able to see your own lacunae.

In order to trouble the assumption that we are embodied in liberatory and productive ways in the traditional classroom, I drew on research and literature from technofeminism, fat studies, sociology, disability studies, dance studies, kinesiology, soma-cognition, and haptics technology (the engineering field devoted to understanding how to create sensory experiences in virtual reality). The first few fields of research just mentioned have connections to the field of education, and this made reading the literature both familiar and disconcerting in a productive way—in the same way that seeing one's self in a slightly different light can be both startling but also familiar.

The fields of technofeminism, fat studies, sociology, disability studies, and to some degree dance studies, all have overlapping discourses, metaphors, terms, expectations, and goals as theories in education. Each of these fields, to one degree or another, acknowledges the theory of the social construction of embodiment. Whether the research one reads from these fields is for or against a social constructionist understanding, there is an acknowledgement of the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Robert McRuer, and other theorists who argue for an understanding of embodiment as a productive process—as a coinstantiation of social institutions, ideology, performance, and flesh. There is a Marxist backbone where we acknowledge that bodies are interpolated into the political economy and that ideology shapes what we see and how we see it, what we expect, and what we count as normal. Whether you agree with the terms or not—and whether or not you use the terms in precisely the same way—in all of these fields, there are echos of the idea of technologies of discipline, technologies of the self, performance and performativity, and the circulation of power throughout norms and social institutions. Throughout these fields, there is also a joint history of being influenced by phenomenology or the shaping power of material objects. Whether you draw on LeFebvre, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, de Certeau, or one of the many sociologists and anthropologists who analyze examples of material culture, there is a common assumption that ideology, culture, and social systems intersect with physical objects and materiality.

Reflecting on the shaping power of material objects, and the intersections of culture, ideology, technologies of discipline, and tangible things, was important for me in my own research project as I was able to aggregate data on the ways that chairs and desks hurt our bodies and create an environment less conducive to deep and liberatory learning. Both Hetrick and Attig⁴⁸ from the field of fat studies and Robert McRuer⁴⁹ from the field of disability studies—or Crip Theory which is the comingling of disability studies and Queer Theory—foreground the ways that chairs, desks, and schooling spaces can work to produce some bodies as invisible and other bodies as hyper-visible; some bodies are produced, through the material

⁴⁸ Hetrick and Attig, "Sitting Pretty."

⁴⁹ Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory* (New York: New York University Press) 2006.

objects within the schooling spaces, as normal and others are produced as abnormal. This was key for me as I was questioning the power that schooling objects have to shape bodies, often in painful ways. My own reflections on the power of tangible objects to change what we see and how we move was furthered and complicated by the work of Christopher Tilley who is a landscape phenomenologist. His work gives examples of how physical objects like hills, fountains, benches, rivers, and handrails can change how people move, what they see and what they do not see, and how their bodies are exerted and shaped. It was Tilley's work—from a research discipline apart from my own—that really inspired me to think more deeply about the shaping power of things. But this work, like many of the works in disability studies, sociology, etc., draws on ideas, terms, and even authors that are common among multiple fields of discipline. Tilley's work is inspired by the writings of Merleau-Ponty and de Certeau. In my own studies, I became familiar with these authors and ideas, so picking up the vocabulary and ideas in Tilley's work was not a difficult project.

By contrast, my experience aggregating and exploring research studies from the fields of kinesiology, soma-cognition, and haptics technology required learning new sets of terms, new norms, and new metaphors and required assuming a stance where I had to be much more aware of whether or not I knew enough to be fair or just in the way I was analyzing and using for my own purposes research from other fields. Drawing on the literature from other fields in order to subvert a commonsense understanding in one's own field can be a tricky act of interpretation. Reading and understanding the writings of people from one's own field is an act of interpretation that draws on one's own area of study in order to make sense of what is being presented or argued. Reading and understanding the research from *another* field—especially one that does not have many overlapping points of commonality—not only involves a different set of background knowledges but also involves knowing when you do not have enough of a background to truly understand and use the arguments and evidence from another researcher's work. This proved true in my critical interdisciplinarity research project on bodies in the traditional classroom.

While I was researching what happens to bodies—literally how are bodies shaped and molded by desks and chairs—I read many research studies from the field of kinesiology. While there are increasing intersections between the fields of kinesiology, sociology, feminist studies, and other social fields where there is an understanding of social constructivism, the larger body of the field tends to focus on the science of bodies at rest or in motion. It is a field informed by medical science, and, in the case of many of the studies that I read to inform my own research project, there is a prevailing sense that a body can be seen as a sort of machine that can be tweaked, trained, and shaped into optimal performance. There were no references to Foucault or Butler, but there were many rigorous accounts of what happens to vertebrae, spinal fluid, knee joints, hip joints, trapezius, and scalene muscles, when bodies are kept in chairs—arching over desks—for long periods of time. In order to understand these research studies, you need to know where to find the ischial tuberosity and how the positioning of these bones affects the sacrum and the posterior superior iliac spine. You need to know how to read anatomical diagrams.

You also need a good-ish understanding of geometry in order to grasp how the angle at which one is seated vis-à-vis another object—like a desk or table—changes the arch of the back, neck, and pelvic areas. Borrowing research from the field of kinesiology was necessary for me to really understand and make an accounting of *how* we are embodied in the traditional classroom space and exactly what happens to our bones, muscles, and tendons as we sit in chairs and use our desks. It was also difficult work that required both some background knowledge of anatomy and also the humility or self-understanding to know when I was out of my depth.

This same need for background knowledge and a meta-reflective stance also proved necessary when engaging with research from the fields of soma-cognition and haptics technology. Soma-cognition is a field of research devoted to understanding how our body—and movement of our body—shapes cognitive processes. Haptics technology involves the study of how our sense of touch and other sensory input can be manipulated or stimulated in virtual environments or with digital technology. Both of these fields focus on how bodies use and make sense of external stimuli. Contra the field of education, where the focus is on outcomes and outcomes are assessed based on external performance (how many people passed a test, how many people graduated from secondary school, how many people moved on to university), in the fields of both soma-cognition and haptics technology, the focus is on what the brain is doing; the assessment is on internal processes. Much of the data presented was a showcase for what was happening in the brain. It was very normal to show brain scans as part of the “evidence” for a particular argument. For me, as a researcher immersed in social theory that troubles Cartesian dualism, reading papers where the brain—and what was happening in the brain—was standing in for and linking into what was happening in the body was an odd moment of synecdoche. My background as a social theorist created a moment where I was startled by the elisions between brain, mind, and body. As I was aggregating and analyzing these studies, my background knowledge in anatomy was helpful, but there were also moments where I could tell that I was understanding the basics of what was being said but that I lacked the background to make full sense of it. There were also moments where I was completely out of my depth. There were some studies from the field of soma-cognition that made it into my own research paper, but oftentimes these papers from soma-cognition or haptics technology acted as a guide for future search terms, or a link to yet another paper—one that I could make more sense of and use more intelligently.

Let me provide an example. While aggregating and exploring research on what happens to bodies during learning and movement, I read several papers—from the field of soma-cognition and neuroscience of movement—that used fMRI machines to show what happens to our brains while we are trying to learn in/through/using movement. I read papers like “Contributions of the Basal Ganglia and Functionally Related Brain Structures to Motor Learning”⁵⁰; “Patterns of Regional Brain

⁵⁰ Julien Doyona, Pierre Bellecc, Rhonda Amseld, Virginia Penhune, Oury Monchia, Julie Carriera, Stéphane Lehericyh, and Habib Benalia. “Contributions of the basal ganglia and functionally related brain structures to motor learning” in *Behavioral Brain Research*. 199 (1), 2009.

Activation Associated with Different Forms of Motor Learning⁵¹; and “Cognition in Action: Imaging Brain/Body Dynamics in Mobile Humans”⁵²—which was by far the most attuned to my own research project. These papers, and many like them, attempted to model how learning was happening, and what counts as learning, by creating brain scans using fMRI—or related—technologies in order to see where and how much of the brain is activated during specific tasks. While doing this research, it became clear to me that the term “movement” had a very different meaning than the one to which I was accustomed. As a researcher who thinks about movement and learning in many of the same ways as my colleagues in Kinesiology, imagine my surprise to find that the act of moving two fingers to press buttons was considered “movement” by many of these researchers. This made me not only rethink what counts as movement and learning, but it helped me to interrogate my ableist world view that assumes a body should be jumping up and down or doing something that could possibly result in breaking a sweat to be considered a body in motion, or a body that is moving. In some ways this definition of “movement” reframed the research of kinesiologists and some soma-cognitivists who specifically argue for getting students out of chairs and desks—get students standing up and walking around—in order to create the optimum environment for learning. Because there were more research papers arguing that the benefits of movement for learning required more than just moving one’s fingers, I chose not to interrogate what counted as “enough” movement within my research study. This was an interpretive move on my part, and it frames in a specific way what the research tells us about movement and learning.

Another example of this kind of disconnect that resulted in some difficult choices for the research project comes from the paper “Cognition in Action: Imaging Brain/Body Dynamics in Mobile Humans.”⁵³ This paper argues that fMRI scans, as they have traditionally been done, leave out many of the possibilities of seeing how brains react to active movement as opposed to small movements using only fine motor skills. This paper argues for a new type of imaging—mobile brain imaging method (MoBI)—that is specifically designed to develop brain images while humans are active, using gross motor skills. This paper challenged me to think about the validity of other research that relies on fMRI-produced brain scans or neural models in order to make the argument that learning is enhanced through movement. However, rather than bringing this into the more formalized research study, I decided that the efficacy of fMRI scans and modeling was a paper for another day—and probably not one that *I* should be writing.

⁵¹ Maria-Felice Ghilardia, Claude Gheza, Vijay Dhawanc, James Moellerd, Marc Mentisc, Toshitaka Nakamurac, Angelo Antoninic, and David Eidelbergc. “Patterns of regional brain activation associated with different forms of motor learning” in *Brain Research*. 871 (1), 2000.

⁵² Klaus Gramman, Joseph T. Gwin, Daniel P. Ferris, Kelvin Oie, Tzyy-Ping Jung, Chin-Teng Lin, Lun-De Liao, and Scott Makeig. “Cognition in action: imaging brain/body dynamics in mobile humans” in *Reviews in the Neurosciences*. 22(6), 2011.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

There are moments of interpretation where what you are interpreting is your own knowledge base or lack thereof. You must decide when you—as the researcher—have grasped the research of another enough to do it justice and deal with it honestly in your own work; and you must also make the choice to put it aside if you do not know enough, yet, to take the research up in productive and faithful ways.

The ability to read and engage with research from other fields requires a wide array of background knowledges and experiences, as well as a sense for when you have enough background knowledge and when you do not. This leads me to the final theme of this chapter: the role of background knowledge and experience.

The Role of Background Knowledges and Experiences

Our background knowledges and experiences shape—not overdeterminedly, but still forcefully, shape—how we see the world, what strikes us as questionable, and what “feels right” for how one should exist and operate in the world. This sense of the world, produced through our accumulation of experiences and knowledge and information fields in which we operate and take part, shapes our research as well. Many researchers I’ve talked with express having a moment at the genesis of their own research where they looked at a known problem, a known solution, or just a commonplace practice in their own field and thought: that doesn’t make sense; that can’t be all of the story or there has to be more to it than that; or I think I could come up with a better solution than that. As I have furthered these discussions, most researchers that I know can trace this moment of discomfort with the way things are in the field—the productive discomfort that can lead to new research and new ideas—to a dissonance between their own background knowledge or experience and the commonsense understanding within the field. Emerging research shows that even our mother tongue can influence how we see the world and how we interpret the world around us. Guy Deutscher, a cultural linguistics researcher, argues that our mother tongue and the gender systems, or lack thereof, inherent in our mother tongue, shape how we see the world, what we expect from the world, and how we act and react to each other and material objects. Deutscher⁵⁴ argues:

The habits of mind that our culture has instilled in us from infancy shape our orientation to the world and our emotional responses to the objects we encounter, and their consequences probably go far beyond what has been experimentally demonstrated so far; they may also have a marked impact on our beliefs, values and ideologies. We may not know as yet how to measure these consequences directly or how to assess their contribution to cultural or political misunderstandings. But as a first step toward understanding one another, we can do better than pretending we all think the same.

⁵⁴ Guy Deutscher, from his book *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages*, Deutscher’s account of his book and this quote can be found at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/magazine/29language-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

In my research project on bodies in the traditional classroom, my research question as well as my ability to use critical interdisciplinarity as a research method were influenced by my background knowledges and experiences. I will briefly talk about two that tended to come up over and over again.

At the heart of my discomfort with the assumption that online spaces are disembodied spaces is my own experience working, playing, and interacting online. As a student in primary school, I designed my first computer game. I have played online games and been part of online communities since Netscape. I remember when RPGs were MUDs and ran on CompuServe. I grew up with a father who worked at a company that designed computer chips and touch navigation. I have also taught university courses online for over 5 years. I mention this as a way to point to my background experiences as formative for how I see and experience technology in the classroom. I know that bodies viscerally feel and physically react to what they are experiencing in virtual environments. I have personal knowledge of that melded moment when what is happening to your avatar online creates a physical reaction in your body. Your hands sweat when you are involved in a battle online. Your head and shoulders move out of the way—as if you can move your physical body to avoid the blow to your online avatar. I know the feeling of depression and mourning you experience when your character—the one you have nurtured and leveled up through multiple challenges and fights—dies. I also know what it is like to teach online courses—synchronous courses—where I can hear my students’ babies crying or the neighborhood noises coming in from a student’s open window as they sit in their kitchen taking an online course. For me, it is hard to take seriously the notion that we are disembodied in online spaces because my background experience of online spaces is so linked in with the visceral physicality of bodies. It was my own background knowledge and experience that guided me to challenge the assumption of disembodiment and to do research into what our bodies are actually *doing* in both bricks-and-mortar classrooms (for this research project) and online classrooms (a different research project).

In addition to background knowledges and experiences with online spaces and digital interaction, I also have background knowledge and experience working with bodies. I started university as a premed student. And, while that major didn’t last, it allowed me to take anatomy classes that helped me later as I pursued certification to become a yoga teacher. I have now taught yoga for over a decade, and this practice has not only made me more attuned to how my own body moves and works but has forced me to notice how others’ bodies move and work. As a yoga teacher, it is my job to notice alignment and to see what the muscles and bones are doing as students move through or stay in various yoga poses (*asana*). For example, when students move into Warrior II (*Virabhadrasana II*), as the teacher, it is my job to make sure that the front knee is tracking over the foot, but not beyond the toes. If the knee goes over to one side or the other, or tracks too far forward, it is easy to do damage to the knees. So, in order to keep my students safe, I watch what bodies do. This background knowledge and experience not only helped me to read and understand the anatomical terms and images in the research studies from other fields; it also helped me notice, in the first instance, that bodies were not embodied

in humane and liberatory ways—certainly not in properly aligned ways—in the traditional classroom. The ability to see a problem where others saw nothing at all—to see bodies in pain or doing damage to themselves rather than “common-place” classroom sitting postures—was aided by my background knowledge and experience. What we have done and who we are (or were) in the past shapes what we see, what we question, and the types of research we do; we interpret the world through the lens of personal experience.

Concluding Thoughts

Interpretations and the incitement to interpret exist all throughout the research process. Whether we are conscious of our acts of interpretation or not, interpretation is woven into every question, every view of the world that causes questions to arise; it is woven into data sets and the determination of how to go about acquiring data sets; it is woven into how we interpret data or how we make sense of or make intelligible what we are seeing in the data; it is woven into how we write about our research projects. Interpretation is everywhere. For this research project, it was my own background knowledge and my personal experience that lead to questions about assumptions in the field; but it was the interpretation of what was considered normal in the field and my interpretation of the “reality” of online education—interpretation through the lens of personal experience—that allowed me to come up with questions about how we are embodied in classroom spaces and online spaces in the first instance. It was my interpretation—an interpretation, again, guided by background knowledge and previous experience with various interdisciplinary theories and studies—that channeled my interest in studying embodiment through a critical interdisciplinary method. Interpretation existed at every stage, during my observations of classrooms, and throughout my readings of various studies aggregated from multiple fields. My decisions, throughout the process, to focus on one question around embodiment rather than another question around embodiment was driven by my interpretation of what was meaningful. My interpretation of the research as well as my interpretation of how to create a written account of the research project guided what went into the final research paper. Interpretation, shaped by personal experience, background knowledges—including knowledges from other fields of research—and the expectations of one’s own field as well as one’s sense of what is “normal” for an academic paper, guides both the process of research and what, in the end, is produced.

8.4 Theorizing Relational Privacy: Embodied Perspectives to Support Ethical Professional Pedagogies

David C. Lundie

In almost all situations in which people must choose between privacy and just about any other good, they choose the other good. The list is long. . . People choose the options that offer convenience, speedy passage, financial savings, connectivity, and safety rather than those that offer privacy. (Nissenbaum 2010)

Mobile phone location-based services, ubiquitous surveillance, “dataveillance,” SOCMINT (SOCial Media INTelligence), and a range of innovations in communication technologies are rapidly changing the legal and folk definitions of what counts as private. Growing concerns over the gathering and sharing of data by government and corporate repositories of “Big Data” have led to calls for a digital charter to protect openness and individual freedom online (WebWeWant 2014). Revelations about government appropriation of private data (Gustin 2014) and private acquisition of government data (Ramesh 2013) have ramifications at the global diplomatic scale, with the “safe harbor” agreements which protect the free movement of data around the world being called into question (Article 29 Data Protection Working Party 2014). As accepted definitions of public and private are renegotiated, individual self-determination, democratic governance, and the legitimacy of government action are called into question.

Education is not exempt from this critique. The range of metrics used by learning analytics software to measure the private learning of the student include text highlighting (SparTagUs), comprehension questions (Zementis-ADAPA), and visual models (Cognos). Often, such software measures effectiveness in terms of the transfer of information, offering an attenuated view of the learner as subject and eliding under-determined spaces where personal exploration and interpretation can add meaning to learning. The extent of investment in educational technology research by Pearson, Google, AMD, News Corp, and others underscores the

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imperative for a humanizing function to be found for educational technology. The theoretical interpretations offered in this chapter are aimed at developing effective ethical reflection on privacy and technology among a range of professionals engaged in work with private information. This includes reflection on the ethical discourse among software engineers responsible for designing privacy-aware systems (Schrader et al., [under review](#)), the use of Big Data for intelligence-led decision making by police and security services (Mulqueen 2014), and the need to develop critical awareness among schoolteachers around the pedagogical changes wrought by the technologies at their disposal. The paper begins with a critique of empirical studies of privacy, which report value without meaning, before developing an interpretive direction aimed at understanding the meaning of privacy to human subjects, and finally a pluralistic approach through which interpretive and empirical directions can mutually illuminate one another in future studies of privacy in practice.

Gilles Deleuze's brief but prescient *Postscript on the Societies of Control* highlights and elucidates a fundamental shift in, or rather away from, the relations of social control in recent decades. Deleuze argues that the information society operates by a new locus of control, decentering the enclosures of earlier disciplinary societies: factories, schools, and, archetypally, prisons (Deleuze 1992). While the societies of control functioned by enclosing bodies in a space, in the information age, the individual is divided among a constant plurality of controls which operate regardless of where the embodied person may be. While many of the critics of changes to perceptions of privacy have pointed to the dangers of a digital panopticon, evoking Bentham's disciplinary prison *par excellence* (Solove 1997; Wicker and Schrader 2011), Deleuze argues that a different force, *dividuation*—the dividing of the individual among the ceaseless entailments which make a claim upon their identity—has thrown into crisis the entire logic of enclosure by which social control operated in modernity:

The family, the school, the army, the factory are no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge towards an owner – state or private power – but coded figures – deformable and transformable – of a single corporation that now has only stockholders. (Deleuze 1992, p. 6)

The work e-mail at 6 am, the educational podcast to listen to at the gym, the social network feed at the office desk, and the surveillance of map searches triangulated against speed camera data, all point to the dividuation of the subject. According to Deleuze, the human subject in the information age is constantly divided within his or her subjective identity. This concept of dividuation is taken still further by Baudrillard (2001) who sees the dividuated subject as laying bare the mere informational character of the self, infinitely reproducible and therefore without value. Baudrillard's somewhat fatalistic account of dividuation differs in important respects, however, from the theory expounded here, which addresses itself largely to applied approaches to the recognition and flourishing of the human person in informational exchange.

Privacy is not only a concern for users to negotiate, nor is regulation sufficient to secure the right to privacy. In a study of 45,091 internet interactions, Bakos et al. (2009) found that fewer than 2 in every 1,000 users even accessed the privacy

policies of websites before indicating their consent. Only around 3 % of users even read the privacy policies of their online banking provider (Harris Initiative 2001). Such findings are hardly surprising, with PayPal’s end user agreement more verbose than Hamlet (Jennings 2012), the opportunity cost in lost time if users actually read every end user license agreement before clicking “agree” has been estimated at around \$365 bn for the USA alone (McDonald and Cranor 2008). Notice-and-consent approaches to privacy, which place the onus on the user to negotiate the ethics of disclosure decisions in cyberspace, are doomed to failure due to lack of awareness and transparency (Carson 2014). The design of a system can intentionally compromise or bolster individual self-determination (Dodig-Crnkovic and Horniak 2006). Preexisting biases in systems design can replicate and even intensify inequalities in the material world (Friedman and Nissenbaum 1996).

If the threats to privacy of the first generations of the Internet are a concern, the much more radical challenges brought by Big Data and the Internet of Things require a response which cuts to the very theoretical core of the meaning of personal information. The growing interest in, and capacity for, the systematic acquisition and mining of fine-grained demographic data has applications in improving business performance and state and corporate intelligence and for other actors in online space. Big Data, a term coined to represent the exponential growth of information storage (by some measures, more data is generated every 2 days in the 2010s than in the whole of human history up until 2003 (Siegler 2010)), brings in its train a tangle of technological, socio-legal, economic, and moral questions. The Internet of Things, the networking of the ambient environment—sensors in energy meters communicating directly with the supplier, digital toys responding to crowdsourced data on the mood of the child, and dog collars “tweeting” data on your pet’s activities—is increasingly becoming normalized. As technology advances and is adopted at a rate that outpaces technological literacy, a sense of “enchantment” is fostered; the tendency to look upon such objects as magical (McEwen and Cassimally 2014) masks their status as manufactured and socially embedded. The technologies employed in these new developments are not value neutral and rely on assumptions regarding what counts as meaningful information, the origins of which are rarely exposed to scrutiny.

As the mixed results of the first generation of massive open online courses (MOOCs) illustrate, far from democratizing access to elite higher education, digitization appears to have further reinforced the advantages of those possessed of digital cultural capital. For information systems to be instruments of equality and democracy, every user must have equal control over his or her private information. Systems which replicate inequalities may further exacerbate and accumulate disparity, leading to “informational injustice,” disproportionate control over privacy decisions by one party over another (Van den Hoven 1997). Recent concerns about the civil rights implications of the potential use of mined metrics to create discriminatory hiring policies have prompted action at government level (Sullivan 2014).

Unforeseen biases may also emerge as the consequence of design algorithms as they interact with an evolving user culture. A search engine which displays the ten

most highly rated results on page one, for example, may exacerbate the discrepancy between result 10 and 11, granting one a level of exposure disproportionate to its utility. These unforeseen consequences of interface design can create threats to moral autonomy, cueing users to imitate unhealthy social practices, including the disclosure of private information. Significant changes have already occurred in the way subjects conceptualize privacy (Boyd and Marwick 2011), and it is widely acknowledged that legislative and regulatory frameworks are constitutively incapable of keeping pace with innovation in the technology/use nexus (Schrader and Lundie, [in progress](#)).

The concept of privacy encompasses such diverse concerns as “freedom of speech, freedom of religion, search and seizure, and marital rights” (Wicker and Schrader 2011), making a purely normative definition understandably elusive. Competing interdisciplinary definitions draw on disparate normative and disciplinary perspectives. These contestations are constitutive, representing the different foundational assumptions of diverse disciplines; privacy is variously conceptualized as individual right, legal guarantee, exchange value, or secure system. Faced with such contested definitions, theoretical explorations tend to fixate on legal and regulatory frameworks, despite the acknowledged limitations of such an approach. In order to render intelligible the concept of private information, it is necessary to explore the phenomenon of privacy as experienced by the subject. A small number of empirical studies (John et al. 2011; Loch and Conger 1996; Schrader et al. 2011) have sought to define privacy empirically, by drawing upon definitions given by participants under a range of conditions. The outcomes of such studies are often determined by the norms within cultures of practice and the design of interactions (Friedman and Nissenbaum 1996). The interdisciplinary approach undertaken by the Privacy-Aware Design Strategies project, to which I played a small part prior to the interpretive work here theorized, sought to bridge normative, empirical, and design aspects of the question of privacy (Schrader et al., [under review](#); Wicker and Schrader 2011).

The anthropology of privacy which I have derived from reflections upon this approach recognizes that the experience of information as private is intersubjectively constructed between human actors and information interfaces. This interpretive approach furnishes future empirical work with an important sense of the “inscape”: the way subjects understand and experience meaning in the complex decisions they make about their private information, with varying degrees of awareness, every day.

This chapter reports the process of interpretive reframing as I transitioned from empirical work with quantitative and ordinal data on privacy decision making (Schrader and Lundie 2012) to a normative consideration of private information in the context of the philosophy of computing and information (Lundie 2014). Crosscutting a reflection on my involvement in the experimental study, I introduce interpretive and normative reflections drawing on the work of Deleuze and Marion, positing a normative model for the relational understanding of privacy. Exploring important absences and dichotomies which run through the experimental paradigm, I highlight a transition from value to meaning as experienced by the subject.

By conceptualizing the human experience of privacy relationally, the empirical paradigm is problematized. In taking cognizance of this important interpretive dimension, empirical researchers can develop more anthropologically truthful instruments for future work.

Educating Privacy Professionals

The aggregation, mining, and strategic use of the vast reserves of data openly available on the internet, dubbed “Big Data,” has become a source of great knowledge and power as well as a cause of significant controversy and concern among government and industry bodies alike. Educating software engineers to create a more ethically aware discourse was a key aim of the work carried out by the Cornell team (Schrader et al., [under review](#)). Working with the security analytics sector, the UK Intelligence Futures Group at Liverpool Hope University has been developing CPD events and courses which draw upon interdisciplinary studies in media, ethics, information science, and security studies to explore the complex implications of the big data revolution for a range of security professions. Recognizing that this change signifies the end of neatly separated disciplines and forms a new scientific field, this course explores new methodologies, tools, and normative resources which are required to navigate the practical, policy, and ethical complexities of big data, not ignoring the normative, interpretive, and critical perspectives. The courses are aimed at a range of professionals whose roles increasingly require the management of complex data sets, designed to grow as the field grows, to provide plural perspectives on privacy and information as these issues are encountered by police in their day-to-day experience.

By making use of methodological resources appropriate to their professional context, our students have been encouraged to develop solutions which recognize the limitations of traditional disciplinary responses, as well as the embodied expertise of professionals in the field. To give just one example, out of the many data sets handled by analysts, headline data reports may be generated to disseminate to neighborhood patrol teams. Matters as simple as the choice of graphical visualizations can foreground and conceal key aspects of data, subtly biasing pedagogy and practice. Two approaches may be compared and contrasted—a statistical analysis driven by performance targets could enable officers, through multivariate analyses such as principal component analysis, to identify areas likely to be subject to burglaries and vandalism. Such approaches, however, rely on correlation without consideration of agency—externalities from this data-driven approach could include neighborhood police focusing on “knowable” crimes to the detriment of other events or innocent parties being targeted due to incidental correlations. The interpretive approach, on the other hand, drawing upon the practical wisdom and ways of knowing among neighborhood policing teams, makes use of reflections from officers, in the light of critical incidents, to identify headline data which they believe would be of benefit. While this approach is less

likely to skew policing practice, it risks leaving out information the officer is unaware exists. The aim of UKIFG is to develop a pluralistic community of inquiry to discuss, compare, and contrast practical, professional working practices with regard to data privacy and intelligence, drawing on practical ways of knowing, Big Data, and interpretive perspectives from the humanities and social sciences, bridging the divide between data-driven and values-driven approaches.

Economics and the Limits of Experimentation

The optimality of privacy-aware design for economists depends on the tradeable value of privacy—if its value is ambiguous, individuals may take decisions based on “herding” effects, disclosing private information because others are doing so, rather than based on rational behaviors (Acquisti et al. 2009). Where decision processes are based on familiar stimuli, judgment processes may be implicit, not subject to rational consideration; users click “agree” without even thinking. Given the importance of understanding the effects of prerational decision making, the Cornell Privacy experiment drew upon the behavioral economics paradigm. Unlike the standard economic model, which presumes that humans are rational agents acting to maximize their own utility, behavioral economics recognizes that risk, endowment, and affect can have a profound effect on subjects’ valuations of exchange (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Behavioral economists refer to this as System 1/System 2 thinking: System 1 is associated with affect, intuition, and diffuse attention, while System 2 with logic, focused attention, and explicit cognition (Kahneman 2011). Put simply, people are naturally risk averse, more willing to accept payment than to pay, and more willing to go with their instincts unless their attention is focused on rational decision making. Particular emotional factors, such as fear and stigma, can exacerbate this irrationality (Schulze and Wansink 2012). Given the difficulties in defining privacy enumerated above, behavioral economics experiments are designed to uncover the degree to which participants have a stable, rational sense of the value of their privacy.

A dominant model of moral development theory in contemporary social psychology is derived from the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. Grounded in Piagetian cognitive psychology, Kohlberg addresses the relationship between moral judgment and moral action, proposing a staged model of moral reasoning. In the highest, “post-conventional” stage of moral reasoning, Kohlberg assumes a universality and in his original formulation a universal conception of shared values, but in later revisions a universality in the forms of moral reasoning (Blum 1990). While Blum categorizes Kohlberg’s work as giving primacy to dialogic approaches in arriving at post-conventional reasoning, Sullivan (1977) points to a liberal bias in Kohlberg’s methodology. Sullivan’s critique in particular highlights the contextual limitations of Kohlberg’s work to late industrial modernity. The theoretical reflections in this chapter, and in particular the notion of divided identity, call into question whether the norms of late industrial modernity continue to hold in cyberspace.

A number of experiment studies have been carried out, making use of this or similar paradigms to understand the phenomenon of privacy. John et al. (2011) carried out a web-based survey on New York Times website users. Participants who were able to disclose information covertly were 1.48 times more likely to disclose sensitive information than when asked intrusively to disclose. A distraction study among female shoppers found that there is a significant endowment effect—people accept the privacy conditions of the first product they are given, rather than swap it for something which preserves their privacy (Acquisti et al. 2011). A “herding” effect has also been identified, in which participants who receive information indicating that others have disclosed sensitive information are more likely to disclose information themselves (John et al. 2009). Many of these economics studies seem to point to the importance of the givenness of context over the value of the private information as a commodity.

Some peculiar features of experiment conditions must be addressed, which problematize this methodology. The disembodied nature of the interaction design, which appears to mimic the paradigm of sharing private information over social networks, may be compromised by the reality of situating subjects in close proximity to one another. Subjects may be swayed by the appearance, the “gaze” or embodied reality of the other in the lab environment, representing a departure from the lived experience of online privacy disclosure as disembodied. The lab experiment paradigm is one of enclosure, with participants isolated and focused upon the task in hand, whereas the reality of online privacy decisions is that of dividuation, barely conscious acceptance of the externalities associated with giving away private information in exchange for some other task at hand—access to information, making social connections, and convenient purchases.

In contrast to this model, which assumes subjects to be isolated individuals concerned with maximizing utility, the interpretive framework I propose draws upon the intersubjective dimension of privacy. Privacy disclosure decisions are experienced fundamentally as social and interpersonal choices, and critical phenomenology seeks an interpretive clarity by understanding the individual in terms of the social constructions and identities he or she makes use of. Phenomenology seeks to effect a projection of oneself into the other (Trondman 2008). Moving beyond attempts to map the conversation on privacy (Schraeder et al., *under review*), the language of privacy is examined with regard to meaning, rather than motivation. “[W]ithout entering the issue of individual motivations for such behaviours. . . the notion of preference is not individually but collectively defined” (Duranti 1997, p. 263). Collective representations are essential to the experience of privacy, as is acknowledged even in the economic literature around the effects of herding, cueing, and status quo bias. To understand privacy decisions as occurring in a dividuated rather than an embodied environment requires a recognition that the *place*, the context in which privacy decisions matter, is both essential and ambiguous. As already noted, people make very different decisions about their privacy based on the biases designed into human–computer interactions. *Place*, in this sense, denotes

more than physical location; it is bound up with *voice*, agency, and autonomy. It is the position “from which one may speak to important issues... without being challenged about identity or the right to engage in dialogue” (Gerhart 2003).

The Act of Abduction

A single note, buried in some of my exploratory and descriptive numbers marks the interpretive turn in this investigation:

Perhaps there is something about foregrounding what others ‘know’, rather than whether they/you ‘care’, which has an impact [on valuation decisions], but this cannot be measured with any accuracy with this instrument.

The “know”/“care” dichotomy, which was suggested in one of the questions in Schrader et al.’s debriefing survey, and its enigmatic bifurcation of the decision categories we had anticipated set off a journey into further layers of interpretation which would lead me to diverge from the broad empirical direction of the ongoing Cornell project, as I left to pursue a career in the philosophy of education.

The relationship between the earlier empirical methods, which draw upon behavioral economics (Kahneman and Tversky 1979), moral development theory (Colby and Kohlberg 1987) (Haidt 2001), and phenomenology (Marion 1998), is one of niche complementarity, a model drawn from ecology, wherein the robustness of the conceptual ecosystem

increases with diversity because no monoculture is as productive as some combination of two species, and no combination of N species is as productive as some combinations of $N+1$ species. (Tilman et al. 2001, p. 843 cited (Kassam 2010))

The concept of niche complementarity when applied to pluralistic interpretations in the social sciences suggests that the addition of overlapping interpretive perspectives entails a more robust conceptual model. In the case of the privacy study, the interpretive approaches discussed in this chapter are intended to inform more sensitive empirical instruments and illuminate spaces of absence in findings drawing on the economics experiment paradigm, e.g. (Acquisti et al. 2009), rather than to essentially undermine or problematize. This positive pluralism cannot proceed without active commitment to the meaningfulness of plural perspectives on all sides. Two interpretive reframings took place: The first involved the gathering of intersecting empirical perspectives and is the intellectual property of the investigators at the Privacy Ethics project in progress at Cornell University. Only the second is described here. This second reframing involves a normative leap, interrogating spaces which intersect and bifurcate the foundational assumptions of the research instruments. Reading beyond the data, this second reframing enables the development of a model which can be retroactively applied as an explanatory framework upon the data. This normative leap proceeds by means of what CS Peirce (1903) terms “abduction”:

That process in which the mind goes over all the facts of the case, absorbs them, digests them, sleeps over them, assimilates them, dreams of them, and finally is

prompted to deliver them in a form, which, if it adds something to them, does so only because the addition serves to render intelligible what without it, is unintelligible. In the act of abduction as described here, data, art, theory, and metaphor all played an important role.

Data

One enigmatic but unfinished hypothesis, interpretively derived from the earlier experiment data, functions as the jumping-off point for this act of interpretive induction:

Subjects overwhelmingly describe this valuation in interpersonal terms (foregrounding the other), they are divided on whether this is about what someone else ‘knows’ or whether they ‘care’

This finding seems to open up a space of absence in the underlying method, if not the methodological paradigm. These are draft conclusions and likely to remain in draft. Analyses of the data are currently being carried out by the Cornell team, with continuing economics experiments and various manipulations. The act of “abduction” by which interpretive approaches were incorporated to these findings underwent a number of iterations. Designed into the experiment methods, an initial approach to the apparent intersubjectivity of privacy focused on the problem of contextual integrity: when making decisions about private information, the anticipated scope and audience of disclosure is an important factor. As information becomes infinitely reproducible, the open-ended scope of disclosure makes this form of reasoning problematic. If subjects make decisions to reveal private information based on the audience, this will prove problematic in the case of social media, where audiences are invisible, and information can be infinitely replicated and searched (Boyd 2007). Based on this conception of networked intersubjectivity, a subsequent approach I attempted in theorizing privacy focused upon an honor ethic (Appiah 2011), understanding ethical change in terms of densely networked cultures of social norms, changing not through argument but through shared mimesis of praise and blame. The honor ethic did not appear to account for this distinction in the data and required a departure from empirical findings into interpretive explorations in order to be tested.

Art

Pick a work on which to base your own. This original you will henceforth know as ‘the cadaver’ . . .

Of course we by no means insist on derivation from photorealist work. We do, however, demand that you pick for your provocation a painting in which representation outweighs abstraction.

Stand before your cadaver. Tap your temnic intuition. . .

Temno-: to slice.

Extend a conceptual slice through your chosen scene. It may continue into the picture at any angle on any axis, so long as it intersects both the left and right vertical edges of the hanged cadaver. . .

Your task is to depict a cross-section of your cadaver. (Miéville 2014)

Besides presenting an intersecting critique and reframing of the experiment findings, the normative reflections below draw upon insight from the creative arts, recognizing the limitations of existing form and method in representing the complexity of privacy in the new relational interactions which exist in an information age. Given that conventional legislative and regulatory approaches seem constitutively incapable of responding to the pace and nature of socio-technical innovation and given the seeming incompatibility of such approaches with the intersubjective reframing attempted above, opportunities to influence policy and practice through theoretical research may be attenuated by too abstract an analysis. Collaborative work with the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) and the Creativity Research Adaptive Roadmap (CRE-AM) observatory project enabled alternative presentations of the personalistic and intersubjective core of this work. Moving from denotation to inspiration, Liverpool-based artist Laurence Payot's project <http://1inamillionyou.com> creates a virtual tribal identity, at once masking the subject and expressing shared identity through a tattoo-like mask, spread through social networks; the project elicits video, images, and text exploring subjects' self-concept and experience of the masked identity. China Miéville's commissioned writing *Science Fiction: New Death* explores the concept of relationality in virtual space by imagining a subjective turn in death and dying. The temnic nature of this interpretive research, crosscutting empirical studies of the same, is designed to highlight a "conceptual slice," not to present a conclusive account in itself, but to illuminate dimensions of the privacy debate conceptually inaccessible to positivist research:

It is not the end of the physical body that should worry us. Rather, our concern must be to live while we're alive – to release our inner selves from the spiritual death that comes with living behind a façade designed to conform to external definitions of who and what we are – Elisabeth Kubler Ross. (Freehand Connects 2014)

Theory

The singular note above regarding the question of knowing or caring about private information opened a doorway into the study of Heidegger's phenomenology of being, as interpreted by two different traditions of scholarship. Is privacy enframed as object or as property? Two contrasting definitions presented themselves. In an analysis of Heidegger's metaphysics of objects, Harman theorizes referentiality—the phenomenon is a tool with reference to an object (Harman 2002)—while the personalist philosopher Zahavi theorizes indexicality: the phenomenon is a

property with reference to a subject (Zahavi 1999). In both cases, the directionality of considerations of private information seems to be important. If private information is referential, subjects ought to report their considerations with reference towards some other person, or some other end. If it is indexical, subjects ought to foreground the information being “mine” in contrast to some other person or end. It was not the design intent of the experiment method to gather such data, and so this theoretical insight remains only a staging post on route to an interpretive framework.

Metaphor

The concept of enchantment is advanced by a number of theorists as a metaphor for technological design. Heralded by some as an opportunity to push imaginative boundaries and free humanity from passion and necessity (Bailey 2005), for others the concept of enchantment alludes to the return of premodern superstitious ways of being (Taylor 2007). As metaphor, enchantment speaks both to the ways technology can lead us down a rabbit hole into a world that both explores what we are and distances us from embodied reality; its explanatory force is in dividuating, not elucidating, the entailments of the information age. So far, the magic of most information solutions is of a more mundane kind than that found in myth and fairy tale, but enchantment can denote the sense that personalities are permeated by forces beyond their scope, whether granting invisibility and invincibility or simply navigating a less congested commute.

In previous work, I used the notion of the seer to critique false ideas of transcendence in the curriculum (Lundie 2011). Unlike prophets or oracles, seers are not possessed of unmediated access to a metaphysical realm, but involved in a process of meaning making that includes exposing culturally excised and concealed realms. In the postmodern satire *The Seer* (Smith 2006), the playwright Ali Smith uses the device of her antagonist’s awareness of the stage and the audience to destabilize an otherwise closed culture—the encroachment of the audience on the scene establishes the seer as at once distinct from, and part of, the insider group, a fellow character yet also a doorkeeper. Smith draws here on the tradition of Scottish seers, such as the Brahan Seer, who claimed a power to

foretel of happy marriages, good children, what kind of life men shall live, and in what condition they shall die. . . [yet this] seems a thing troublesome and uneasy to them to have it, and such as they would fain be rid of. (Anonymous 1775)

The idea of foresight guides much of the analysis of privacy, at once something dismal in that it disenchants the wonder of the technological world but also necessary if we are not to throw away important aspects of reality, such as the long developed distinction between public and private in liberal democracies, in the name of illusory enchantments.

Theorizing Privacy

A more fruitful direction for my own work presented itself in the idea of “propriety.” Reflecting upon Sullivan’s critique of dominant theories in moral psychology as limited to late modernity, a key feature of late modernity appeared to be that of “propriety.” While preindustrial publics had limitations on surveillance by necessity—through relations of deference, personal authority, benefit of clergy, and the technical limitations of the age—in the societies of control (Deleuze 1992) of industrial modernity, polities limit their own surveillance by choice. The exemplary instantiation of state propriety, limitation of the public knowledge/power by choice, is found in the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution, around which much subsequent Anglophone privacy law has been built. Spousal privilege, by which spouses cannot be compelled to testify, is another such formal instance, and a range of informal arrangements of propriety characterize much nineteenth- and twentieth-century legal practice. Drawing upon the work of Giorgio Agamben (1998), the concept of propriety was theorized as belonging to the “bios” the political life of the citizen—propriety is given as gift, a legal fiction, to be recognized even to the detriment of justice, and may be distinguished from an earlier, embodied concept of privacy, derived from a sphere of “zoē,” bare life, anterior to social interpellation.

This distinction further draws attention to the nature of privacy as belonging to an aspect of the person not theorized by modernity. Agamben’s distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas*, with *potestas* denoting a totalitarian power of life and death, distinct from governance (Agamben 2011) prompted reflection on the origins of the discourse on privacy. Reflecting on the embodied origins of privacy in the *zoē*, the bare life of the person, prior to governance, it is possible to bring in a deeper level of normative reflection than is common in much of the information ethics literature. The relation between the private and the “privy,” and their origins in embodied *potestas*, personal power, are illustrated by the most intimate of medieval monarchs’ courtiers—the “Groom of the King’s Close Stool” who alone had access to the royal body at its most “private” of moments. Far from a menial service, such intimacy connoted power and prestige, deriving from the physical body of the king.

An inversion of such embodied modes of the private occurs with the shift in emphasis from embodied *potestas* to *auctoritas*, public governance by written statute, with the embodied sovereign elided. This shift to “authorship,” with its concomitant relation “auctor,” “autenim”—authenticity (Donovan et al. 2008)—brings us closer to the disembodied concept of “privacy” with which the experiment was initially concerned. The privacy of the “privy,” attaching to the embodiment of the person, gives way to the privacy of the thought; privacy becomes the privacy of the ear, not of the body; trust is to be negotiated through written statute. As the private person becomes increasingly disembodied and dividualized, the conception of privacy advanced by digital scholarship distances itself from this embodied origin.

Building on previous scholarship on embodiment and agency (Lundie 2009), this line of investigation tends towards a definition of the “privus,” that construct of

identity which is “set apart” to participate in public life. The negotiation of such an identity proceeds by way of two processes—as a “gift” of the public sphere, choosing to limit itself by its own authority (propriety), what the other is deemed to **know**, and as an act of concealing/revealing on the part of the subject, what the subject **cares** to reveal. Further exploration of the notion of privacy as gift led to the final interpretive framework, that of “indexicality”: that human subjects (unlike computer systems) value their *own* information incommensurably with information *simpliciter*.

An information-theoretic account of knowledge dominates the philosophy of computing, including the field of information ethics. This account can be defined as “K knows that s is F = K’s belief that s is F is caused (or causally sustained) by the information that s is F” (Dretske 1982). While this account is highly satisfactory in the design of information communication systems, the argument that an informational causal chain is sufficient to account for human subjective knowledge fails in an important regard. Beyond that attenuated privus, the self-authored person, open to collective representations, there is an embodied individual subject, a particular *isness* of the self. This *isness* or indexicality, though situated in a network of cultural and technological representations, transactions, and interactions, retains an irreducible interior complexity.

The work of Jean-Luc Marion on givenness and the subject is of particular significance in refuting the information-theoretic account as it relates to subjective, “private” information. For Marion, I may know that I am, but not what it is that I am; the inference from existence to essence is not valid. Because the subject remains always insufficient to its own informational truth value, the subject is always incapable of fully appropriating itself. The human call–response includes an intersubjectivity not found in TCP/IP protocols; the *I* cannot authenticate itself without remainder (Marion 2003).

In contradistinction to the causal authentication proposed by the information-theoretic account, which underpinned the notion of private information as a “packet” of information, bearing stable value in itself, Marion draws attention to “responsibility” as characteristic of the human call–response. Responsibility is not caused but given, a function of

‘Mineness’ – the characteristic according to which I am at issue, in person and without any possible substitution – . . . a claim imposes a choice on me; or better; that a claim poses *me* as the *there* where one might recognize oneself. . . In short, the claim does not destroy the irreducible identity-with-self by diminishing any *I* in me, but inversely, underscores and provokes it. (Marion 1998, p. 201)

A causal chain of information is insufficient to such an approach but is also, importantly, unnecessary because responsibility according to this account consists of a response not reducible to authentication and therefore to information.

While Husserl did indeed use the analogy of photographic plates to describe the phenomenon, Marion describes responsibility in terms of gaze or witness; this is not a causal claim, akin to downloading a .jpeg image, but rather the responsible agent’s gaze necessarily involves affect. Data is not necessary for the phenomenon because

there is nothing *behind* the phenomenon from which to form a causal chain, nor is data sufficient for the phenomenon, because data cannot cause the affect, the gaze of the responsible subject. Marion proposes three criteria for the givenness of the phenomenon which by definition render it incompatible with an informational account of knowledge:

1. Intrinsic – givenness involves a bracketing out of the giver, there is no recourse to a cause
2. Irrevocable – the given is not reproducible or repeatable [one may say it is in-dividual]
3. Radical – no gap exists between the givenness of a phenomenon and the phenomenon itself (Marion 2002a)

Consequently, as I have argued elsewhere (Lundie, [under review](#)) human responsible subjectivity is not reducible to repeatable, communicable, or causally sustained data. Therefore the data of human subjectivity cannot be regarded as meaningful or well formed according to the information-theoretic account of knowledge. Put simply, human persons value *their* information incommensurably with information *simpliciter*. Human information is always encountered as given, or as gift, and the giver and receiver engage on a level other than transmission or transaction.

From Theory to Practice

In the information society, as theorized above, the dividuated subject is at risk of being alienated from the private realm in a way that cuts much more deeply than the revelation of sensitive secrets. In the information age, transmission of information and production are coterminous, and this points to a paradigm shift for education. For the programmable information agent, nothing is gained by work which was not already inherent in programming:

Because the [information] technology operates at the traditionally human level of control in enabling the achievement of any and all objectives, we cannot expect to discover or design new requirements for control that only people can fulfil. (Spencer 1996, p. 73)

The formerly human element of control alienated, human education as education for control of means no longer furnishes a sufficient account of the purposes of education for the information age. An indexical understanding of the human subject requires an education which is open to the irreducible, an education which recognizes an element incompatible with even the most fine-grained of metrics. Indexical pedagogies, particularly in online learning, require an understanding of private information as relational, an understanding that human agents do not only learn in order to know, but in order to become:

Autonomous individuals do not spring full-blown from the womb. We must learn to process information and to draw our own conclusions about the world around us. . . ‘Autonomy’ constitutes an essential independence of critical faculty and an imperviousness to influence.

But to the extent that information shapes behavior, autonomy is radically contingent upon environment and circumstance. The only tenable solution – if ‘autonomy’ is not to degenerate into the simple stimulus-response behavior sought by direct marketers – is to underdetermine environment. (Cohen 2000, p. 1400)

By grounding the autonomous subject in the givenness of their phenomenal experience, and not in information transfer, it is possible to imagine a learning technology which respects the private subject as a learner. Examples of the use of such values in the design of educational technologies are still thin on the ground; one example of note is the Conservation Bridge project, a dialogical learning project which enables children learning about conservation in American schools to connect with scientists working in China’s Yangtse gorges, as well as with children living in the region, fostering a pedagogy of authentic encounter (Conservation Bridge 2013).

Returning to the development of ethically informed, digitally literate professionals, the intersubjective approach to privacy informs the work of the British Intelligence Futures Group, which was established as a national support unit to enable UK intelligence to sense, seize, and exploit the opportunities of Big Data. Bringing together police, academics, industry, and creative and artistic interests, the overriding objective is to reduce risk and harm to communities, recognizing that the over-collection and inappropriate use of information damage trust and legitimacy. In practice, this means the creation of spaces for dialogue where police analysts are able to consider the subjective dimension of how mined data will be used in practice by officers in a range of roles, drawing positively on the skillful means and practical wisdom of officers in their communities.

Further development of experimental methods which respect this interpretive perspective is possible. Reflective accounts which take into account the complex intrapersonal dimensions of private information, whether this is constructed as a commodity of the divided self, or as a gift, part of the givenness of the self. Far from a rejection of empirical methods, it is my contention that these reflective and critical perspectives can illuminate interdisciplinary spaces in the discourse, leading to further refinements. These refinements include both a methodological pluralism within academic studies of privacy and a pedagogical pluralism which recognizes that the irreducibly human element of practical wisdom has a contribution to make, no matter how data driven our professional practices may become. Such phenomenal reflections may contribute to the design basis of future privacy-preserving regulations, systems, and learning environments.

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8.5 Interpreting the International and Intranational “Translation” of Educational Policy and Practice: A Case of Opportunism, Serendipity, and *Bricolage*

David Bridges, Kairat Kurakbayev, and Assel Kambatyrova

The Research Project in Context

This chapter reflects on a piece of research carried out during 2012 and 2013 on “school reform and internationalization” in Kazakhstan. The research grew out of a partnership between the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and the newly established Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan’s capital, Astana.¹ The university was and is being grown through international partnerships between the schools within the university and selected international institutions. The Cambridge Faculty of Education advised on appointments, course development and administrative process, admissions, and even the organization and equipping of teaching spaces. It was also tasked to help build research capacity, which we did through a few workshops, but we decided at an early stage that the best way to do this was through a thorough collaboration involving NU staff in every stage of the development and conduct of research from initial planning to conference presentations and publication.

This paper was written by and in the authorial voice of the first named author, David Bridges, but since it draws heavily on material from the collaborative venture which was the original paper on which it is based and other discussions, all three original authors are acknowledged here.

¹The partnership also included the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education whose research focus is on higher education.

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Some papers arising from this collaboration have been or will be published in national or international journals, but we were also successful with a proposal for a book under the title *Educational Reform and Internationalisation: The Case of Kazakhstan* which will be published by Cambridge University Press (Bridges 2014a). One of the chapters in this book was the result of a collaboration between myself and Kairat Kurakbayev and Assel Kambatyrova, two early career researchers from Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education.

The membership of the research team fluctuated a little over the 2 years, but the core group consisted of six staff of the Faculty of Education, three to six staff of Nazarbayev University, and, for fieldwork in 2013, three staff from a sister organization of the university, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. Eight of the team could speak Russian, six Kazakh, and one Ukrainian. The research was funded through the University by the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan.

In 2012 most of the Cambridge team were new to Kazakhstan, and we conducted a scoping study informed primarily by document research and interviews with key players around the central organs of educational administration. We wanted to understand something of the policy context, to identify the sources of policy (in national and international terms) and what our colleague Olena Fimyar called “policy rationalities” (Fimyar 2010). In 2013 we decided to look at the system from, as it were, the other end of the reform process and through the eyes and experience of teachers and school directors who had to implement the reform and (to some extent) those in the local administrative system and in-service training institutions who were part of the process of “transmitting” or “translating” messages from the center to the periphery.

To this end, we divided into three teams and went to locations in three very different parts of Kazakhstan: to Shymkent in the south, deep in the heartland of Kazakh people, to Pavlodar in the north (mainly Russian, but with, in one locality we visited, a significant Ukrainian population), and to Aktau in the west on the Caspian Sea. We focused in each location on two schools, one urban and one small rural school, as well as the administrative and training organizations that were the vehicles for translating national policy to them. Our aim was to produce rough hewn case studies (case data with only a light thread of linking commentary) of the schools in the context of educational reform in their localities. These would then be available to all members of the research team for cross-site analysis leading to the production of thematic analytic papers grounded in the case material.

In advance of two periods of fieldwork in Kazakhstan, we agreed among ourselves on the central research questions which we would seek to address through the research. The overarching question was:

How do mainstream schools in Kazakhstan perceive and understand the aspirations, expectations, and requirements of the contemporary educational reform in Kazakhstan—and how are they responding to these?

But we also asked, among other things:

What issues were identified in translating educational policy and practice from international to national contexts and from the center to the periphery in Kazakhstan?

What was the role of school directors in the reform process?

How do the requirements for reform impact on teachers' professional identity?

Each team agreed to collect data which would help members of all teams to address the research questions which most interested them. The data were in the form of documents, photographic evidence, transcripts of semi-structured individual and group interviews with people at all levels in the school and local system, and questionnaires administered to both teachers and students. With this substantial data set to hand (coded using NVivo software), we could then interrogate the material and write about the issues that interested us. For Kairat, Assel, and myself, our particular interest was in a nest of issues around the notion of the translation of educational policy and practice, and this was the focus of the paper that I shall discuss here.

These, then, are the bare bones of an account of what we did. In the context of this handbook, however, I should reflect a little on what lay behind this approach.

Reflecting on the Project Plan

I should acknowledge, perhaps, that I am a researcher with a rather long history in education and, worse perhaps, one that I have an increasing tendency to revisit. In this case, when wondering how we might best begin to understand what “educational reform” might mean if you were situated somewhere on the edge of Kazakhstan’s vast geographical spread (the country is the size of western Europe with a populations just over 16 million), I drew, in particular, on the model of the first empirically based project in which I participated between 1979 and 1981, the Cambridge Accountability Project, directed by John Elliott. This project looked at six “self-accounting” schools in the East of England and their relationships with parents and other local stakeholders. Eighteen months of fieldwork (for all but one of the team in one school) was issued in six case studies, which we were then all able to use as a basis for cross-site analytic papers (published in Elliott et al. 1981). This always seemed to me a very effective way to combine depth of study with a sufficient range of examples to stimulate comparison and on some issues to develop cross-site analyses and generalizations—grounded theory perhaps—that were at least not contradicted by these cases.

My own interest in case study as a vehicle for educational inquiry was sustained through a range of other research initiatives, for some of which the “case” became individual people, i.e., it morphed into life histories and biography I had quite recently written a defense of case study approaches (Bridges 2011) and had found myself railing against attempts to restrict the research that might inform policy to large-scale populations studies and randomized controlled trials (Bridges 2008; Bridges et al. 2009). I was drawn back via the edited collection of essays by Isaiah Berlin published under the title *The Proper Study of Mankind* (Berlin 1997) to Giacometto Vico, the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher, and *La Scienza Nuova*, the post-Enlightenment reaffirmation of the role of *fantasia* and the humanities in informing our understanding of human action (Bridges 2012; Vico 1725/2002).

All this juggled with more pragmatic considerations about how we outsiders might even begin to understand Kazakhstan education if we did not engage over time with schools and their communities, how to satisfy the genuine research interests of a large and diverse team, and, in the light of our mission to “build capacity,” how to give colleagues from Kazakhstan a variety of research experience. Personal history and pragmatism thus combined to produce a fairly loosely defined methodology that gave scope for different members of the research team to give emphasis to their own interests and approaches in what I hope was a spirit of mutual support and collaboration.

The Research Paper

The focus of the paper that Kairat Kurakbayev, Assel Kambatyrova, and I wrote out of this work was on the international and intranational “translation” of educational policy and practice. More especially we were intrigued by what happens as these policies and practices moved across national boundaries—invoking the discourses of “policy borrowing” (Phillips and Ochs 2004), “policy transfer,” and “policy traveling” (Silova 2005) and the “internationalization” and “globalization” of educational policy (see, e.g., Sayed 2006, p. 12; Giddens 1990, p. 64) and of “international socialization” (Sayed 2006)—and then what happens within the country when policies and practices are “translated,” “transmitted,” “rolled out,” “cascaded,” and “mainstreamed” from the center to the periphery. It is generally recognized that, as Robert Cowen put it with admirable succinctness, “when it moves it morphs” (Cowen 2009)—but how are we to interpret, understand, or respond to this morphology?

The language and literature tend to divide at this point. At one extreme, the response draws on a rhetoric of criminality with references to “subversion,” “hijacking” (Silova 2005), and “brand-name piracy” (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006, p. 2 ff). Many are tempted, as we were, to write of what is “lost in translation,” but something more positive is indicated perhaps by those who write of the “indigenization”—as, for example, in the country which is the focus of their major study, “Mongolization” (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006, p. 2 ff). For my part, as I worked on the paper and read the evidence from the case studies, I became increasingly convinced, first, that reframing and reinterpretation of policy and practice messages were inevitable in the process of translation and, secondly (and more interestingly perhaps), that, conceived of in terms that might be borrowed from work on linguistic and literary translation, the co-construction of meaning from the original source, the creative interpretation of meaning, and the realization or discovery of new meaning in the literary, policy, or practice “text” could be viewed as something very positive, something to be engendered rather than feared. To return to our cliché, meaning could be found as well as lost in translation. This then pointed to the engagement of stakeholders at all levels in the system in critically examining and creatively interpreting and developing policy and practice—something of which we found a number of examples in our school-based studies.

In the context of this handbook, I should perhaps pause to note one or two features of the writing process I have described. I wrote in the previous paragraph that “as I worked on the paper and read the evidence from the case studies, I became increasingly convinced. . .” Some models of academic writing seem to suppose that the author has a clear idea of the “results” of their research or the conclusions to which they point before they start writing their “research report.” In such cases, the inquiry, the research, is seen as something independent of the writing or the report. For me, by contrast, the writing is emphatically part of the inquiry, the research. In general I do not know when I start writing what I shall conclude or where I shall end, and on more than one occasion, I have been rather surprised to find where my argument has taken me. (I do not as I write this know where this paper will end up either, though of course there will come a point of rereading and revision when I shall know the destination and perhaps lay clearer markers as to how I get there.) My own practice is to take in as much of the “evidence” and the “literature” as I can, then set it aside for some time, and then construct a narrative or, in my more philosophical mode, an argument, and an interpretive pathway through the sources and data. Only when I have completed a first draft do I go back to the sources for confirmation, for contradiction, and for illustration and example. But the interpretation comes through the writing process itself: the writing is an attempt to make sense of and to convey to others what I have read, seen, or heard.

Except that the writing starts before I put pen to paper (so to speak). The writing begins in conversation (Bridges 2014b): accidental conversations over lunch in the university cafeteria, in the pub, on the staircase, trying out ideas, making connections, rehearsing what I might be beginning to want to say. In the case of this paper, a conversation with Lynne Parmenter, Associate Dean, Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, in the cafeteria at Nazarbayev University in Astana helped to open up for me the literature on literary translation, which turned out to be one of the most fruitful sources for our conceptualization of policy and practice translation. But before coming to this, let me provide a more sequential account of our search (more accurately, feeling around) for ways of making sense of interpreting “translation.”

Interpreting “Translation” in the Context of Educational Policy Transfer

None of the authors brought to this writing project any grandiose or very systematic theoretical framework. Our paper was, rather, something of a theoretical *bricolage*, with images, metaphors, and theories snatched from some rather different sources in the hope that they might help to illuminate, describe, and explain. I will here refer to just five of these.

From Flow Diagram to the Silk Road

At an early stage, we tried to produce a flow diagram showing pathways through the educational system that policies and practices traveled in the process of international and intranational translation. This was helpful insofar as it became immediately obvious how many stages there were in the process of translation and how many points at which someone was involved in selecting and interpreting the message to be passed on. We noted that “In the UK there is a children’s game, known as ‘Chinese whispers’ in which a message is whispered from one person to another round a room. The fun is in comparing the message that is announced at the end of this process with the original – to which it rarely bears any resemblance.”

But the flow diagram was all too tidy, and we then realized that Kazakhstan’s own historical position on what has been since the nineteenth century known as the “Seidenstrasse,”² the Silk Road, provided a more accurate picture of its complexity and diverse pathways:

The term is a misnomer: the Silk Road was not really a road at all – it was vast network of land-based and maritime trade routes, and the merchants who used it carried far, far more than silk... Along with trade goods came new ideas – religions, medical knowledge, scientific and technological innovations passed in both directions and the Silk Road became a complex network of veins and arteries, carrying the lifeblood of nations across the then known world. (Tucker 2011, p. 1)

In the paper, we wrote:

The Silk Road had not one starting point nor one destination but several. Nor did goods necessarily travel all the way from one end to another: rather they were traded at different points, carried on through a kind of relay, sometimes worked on and processed to add value and thus transformed as they were transported. This, rather than the flowchart, is a richer, more complex and more accurate picture of the process of the translation of educational policies and practices.

Piaget Revisited: Towards a Cognitive Model of Translation

It is 50 years ago since I was introduced to Piagetian cognitive psychology on my teacher training course, but the notions of accommodation and assimilation were clearly well embedded in my consciousness (even if I had to go back to the source to check which was which), and they resurfaced when I was thinking about some of the difficulties encountered for individual learners and for social groups in coming to terms with, especially, radical new ideas. Both processes, or so it seemed to me, are usefully understood as learning processes and might usefully be illuminated by learning theory. In the paper we explained:

²So named in 1877 by the German geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen, great uncle of the Red Baron (Tucker 2011).

Piaget (1978) points, then, to two sides of the coin of the absorption of new ideas or practices. On one side the ideas themselves get re-shaped in order for the receiver to be able to accommodate them to their existing conceptual apparatus. In the extreme case, where they are too far removed from what the subject can make sense of, they may simply be totally rejected. On the other side, the understanding, the thinking, the conceptual apparatus of the learner gets changed to a greater or lesser degree in order to accommodate the new ideas. Either way a new balance or ‘equilibrium’ is struck between previously held beliefs and the new ways of thinking.

This perspective also forewarns us of the need to prepare people for the reception of the new ideas. A Kazakh colleague herself, while studying in Cambridge, had become enthused by the notion of classroom action research. On one of her visits back to Kazakhstan, she had held a workshop in which she had tried to explain this practice to colleagues from schools in Kazakhstan. She came back despondent: “They just don’t get it” she said, so we started to talk about why they might not “get it” and began to identify a whole series ideas and practices that needed to be in place before anyone could really make much sense of action research:

It presupposes perhaps a different concept of small scale applied research from those that teachers are mainly familiar with; it pre-supposes a higher level of self actualisation and professional autonomy than teachers in a country like Kazakhstan may be accustomed to; it pre-supposes (in most of its forms) a professional collaborative culture which may be non-existent in schools in which teachers are encouraged to compete with each other for credit for innovative practice.

As with individual learners, so also with social communities. The “indigenization” of educational policies and practices is from this perspective essentially part of this process of assimilation. Understanding these processes through the lens of even this very basic learning theory helps us to normalize the changes that take place in translation rather than seeing these as an aberration but also to see how one can structure individual and social learning so as to achieve, perhaps, a learning outcome which has a reasonable proximity to what is sought.

Deconstructing the Indigenous

The notion of “indigenization” itself was, however, not straightforward in a country for which its position on some of the main arteries of the Silk Road, nomadic past, and its multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural population are powerful components of contemporary political rhetoric and cultural identity. We quote in our paper one senior government officer, who explained:

We are Kazakhs, nomads, and many cultures crossed our steppes. Even during the USSR, Kazakhstan became a refuge for many repressed nations. Many nations found a second motherland – Germans, Koreans, Chechens, Turks and various Caucasus nations. We have more than 137 nationalities and we have rich experience in tolerance and multiculturalism. [Respondent A MOES]

To a significant extent, the contemporary educational reform agenda is (rightly or wrongly) about moving away from Kazakhstan's Soviet/Russian past, though the respect for Russian culture is deeply embedded even in its iconic Kazakh scholars like the nineteenth-century poet and philosopher Abai:

One should learn to read and write Russian. The Russian language is a key to spiritual riches and knowledge, the arts and many other treasures. If we wish to avoid the vices of the Russians while adopting their achievements, we should learn their language and study their scholarship and science, for it was by learning foreign tongues and assimilating world culture that the Russians have become what they are. Russian opens our eyes to the world. By studying the language and culture of other nations, a person becomes their equal and will not need to make humble requests. (Abai 2005: Word 25, pp. 124–5)

So is “indigenization” about embedding internationally sourced policies and practices in the Russian/Soviet tradition... or in contemporary conceptions of Kazakh culture ... or...? In a country that is trying to hold these and many other traditions together in the interests of national harmony and cohesion, the answer is not a simple one. In a sense what is perceived as and can be presented as *international* “best practice” provides a safe haven from these issues of internal identity.

Positionality and Perspective

As I have already indicated, over the first 2 years of this research, we consciously changed position in relation to the reform process. In the first year, we tried to understand what was going on through the accounts provided in official policy documents and through interviews with people who saw themselves as driving change from the center. Theirs was in a sense a rhetoric of aspiration and intention. In 2013, we deliberately set out to find out how things looked from the periphery. We asked, if you are working on a day-to-day basis in a school, what does the education reform agenda mean to you? And through what channels is it communicated? I suppose that we should not have been surprised that many of the answers were very uncertain.

When we asked teachers and headteachers what were the main features of the government's educational reform program, they were often at a loss to answer, and when they did answer, they tended to come up with two fairly tangible responses: the introduction of computers and the twelfth year of schooling. We very rarely encountered any reference to, for example, shifts in pedagogy. It is not so much that schools are resistant to its demands or to change in general: they were greedy for knowledge of how things were done elsewhere. But, in a sense, for those whose daily lives are wrapped up in a school and the demands of its children, the school *is* the center.

We had at first understood that we were dealing with a very strong “center to periphery” model of change, but it became rapidly obvious, first, that the center itself (in the form of the ministry and its agencies) was seriously uncoordinated and following disparate paths but also that the “center” itself was not, like the rainbow, always somewhere else, but rather:

The ‘centre’ seems sometimes to be wherever you are situated. Officials locate it in the Ministry, the Oblast or the Rayon, but the Vice Director of a local ORLEU was also able to claim ‘We are the centre of all educational reforms’. It does not stop there: one deputy head explained: ‘time has shown that we have already anticipated all the reforms that later have come from education authorities’ (Deputy Head 2, School F). And finally, and perhaps most compellingly: ‘Everything depends on the teacher. . . Speaking frankly . . . everything depends on the teacher’. (Biography teacher School F)

There were other issues of positionality and interpretative perspective that we did not fully explore but can nevertheless offer some observations—and these were to do with the positionality not of research participants but of the research team. The Cambridge team included two post doc researchers, Olena Fimyar, who was originally from the Ukraine, and Natallia Yakavets from Belarus. Both commented in their own writing on the way they were perceived both as insiders (“You as a former Soviet person, you should remember this . . .” (Interviewee A, NIS)) and outsiders, since they did not come from Kazakhstan.

We relied heavily on our Kazakhstan colleagues for translation, especially where we needed Kazakh, and being mainly young and female, they struggled to get acknowledgement as *bona fide* researchers rather than as interpreters. Being mainly city dwellers themselves, they came to some of the country schools with some of the unfamiliarity of outsiders. One of the men in this team, Kairat Kurakbayev writes about his own position on an insider–outsider “pendulum”:

I have perceived my role as an insider because I have been generally familiar with school settings in Kazakhstan and have even worked in some of the schools in our case-based research. I have considered myself to be an outsider because I have been away for so long from complex realities of the schools in Kazakhstan and now come to visit those rural schools from Astana. This distance prompted me to question my experience of having been a school teacher and “to make the familiar strange”. (Stenhouse 1975)

Doing collaborative educational research with international researchers has also been a great stimulus for not taking everything for granted. For example, if you, as a child, have grown up in a school where every classroom has one and the same layout, you would have learned to expect them to be that way. But for international co-researchers the universal conformity to this organization was, in the words of one colleague “mind-blowing”. “Making the familiar strange” often requires the assistance of someone unfamiliar with our own world who can look at our taken-for-granted experiences through, precisely, the eye of a stranger.

My own struggle, perhaps, was judging when to accept gratefully and when to try to discard in the interests of inquiry and authenticity the status that the combination of age, gray hair, and Cambridge University bestowed on me among these deeply respectful and hospitable communities.

My point here is that participants in the research selected in different ways for this rather diverse research team what they wanted us to hear according to their perception of us; and we inevitably selected too from the experience that the research provided what we were interested in seeing and hearing, explicitly according to the research questions that guided our individual and collective inquiry but also less self-consciously according to who we were and our relationship with the research field.

Understanding Policy Translation Through the Lens of Literary Translation Theory

Where do the ideas come from that enter our analysis and interpretation of educational research? On doctoral programs, students are taught to immerse themselves in “the literature” (but which literature—perhaps they should be reading the Norse sagas?) and then from this to select a theoretical framing for their research. Perhaps our paper would have been more scholarly if I or we had adopted this approach, though in fact all of us brought to the research a familiarity with at least some relevant “literature(s).” But for me at least the story is rather one of serendipity, opportunism, and *bricolage*.

One of the ways of thinking about our narratives about the translation of educational policy and practice that seemed to me most illuminating was looking at it through the lens of literary translation theory. Perhaps this is a fairly obvious move, but in practice I arrived at this place via a long and winding path. It starts in the early 1960s with me sitting outside Basel cathedral with a Swiss friend watching a performance in German of Schlegel’s translation³ of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Even with my limited German, the poetry of the translation was eloquent, powerful, and moving. My friend explained that in German literary circles, Schlegel’s translation was regarded as an outstanding work of literature in its own right. This idea of a translation that brings something rich and new to an existing work intrigued me then and lay at the back of my mind (as you may see) to the present. The idea was reinforced some 30 years later when I was teaching at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. UEA was the first university in the UK to establish a degree-level course in creative writing, and for a number of years, it ran a conference on literary translation. I never entered beyond the edges of this event, but it reminded me that translation was a literary art in its own right—and that it had an accompanying literature. These serendipitous events from my personal biography resurfaced when I sat looking at what we were writing and found the notion of translation and the evidence of the reconstruction of meaning in front of me. Surely there might be something in literary theory that would illuminate this phenomenon.

At this point, my conversations with Kairat and Assel about this approach led to their having a conversation with a recently appointed colleague at Nazarbayev University, Lynne Parmenter, who, as it turned out, was familiar with some of this literature. She provided us with a selection of material, including, most interestingly Walter Benjamin’s (as I now know) celebrated *L’essai sur la traduction*.

Much of what we read about literary translation resonated with and enlarged our thinking about policy translation. We noted, in particular:

³To be accurate, the translation of Shakespeare’s works to which I refer here was initiated by the Romantic poet, August Wilhelm Schlegel, but ultimately completed under the supervision of Ludwig Tieck by his daughters Dorothea and Wilf Heinrich Graf von Baidissin in the early nineteenth century.

The active role of the translator in interpreting the source material: “Translation ultimately depends on dynamic, contextual reading, understanding and sometimes creative reception of a source text. In the process of translation, the mediator’s own understanding or “misunderstanding” of the source text will be realised in the translated text” (Wang 2002, p. 284).

The importance of understanding the possibilities and limitations of the destination language and culture if the meaning of the original text is to be successfully conveyed: According to Brisset (2010), “the cultural turn” in translation studies that revolutionized translation studies came in the wake of post-colonialism, though the need to problematize the cultural context of translation came from as far back as the anthropological work of Malinowski. “The problem for anthropologists,” writes Brisset, “is that the translation of other cultures is always beset by the dangers of distortion posed by interpreting indigenous concepts in a conceptual system that is foreign to them” (Brisset 2010, p. 71). Such also, we argued, is the problem of translating educational policies and practices.

The charge of neocolonialism when there is a one-way traffic in translation: Wang (2002), for example, discusses this in the context of the rather unbalanced traffic of translation between China and the English-speaking world. The UNESCO *Index Translationum* suggests that only a trickle of books get translated from English compared with the flood that get translated from other languages into English. In education policy terms, Kazakhstan is clearly a major receiver rather than a transmitter of texts, though, as we illustrated in the paper, the sources are very diverse, and it has explicit ambitions to offer models of educational reform at least across Central Asia—and institutions established for this purpose.

The role of the reader and not just the author or translator in constructing meaning from text: Dobson writes of the translator as pedagogue and of the pedagogue as translator, and he highlights “the teacher’s need to teach the pupil to be active and collaborative with the pedagogue in order to co-author meaning through acts of translation in the classroom” (Dobson 2012, p. 283). We saw the translator of educational policy and practice as emphatically in this pedagogic role and those at the destination of translation as actively engaged in redefining and co-constructing the locally applicable meaning of what is received.

The scope for creativity and the bringing of new meaning through translation: This is a rather crude way of expressing something that, for example, Walter Benjamin conveys rather more subtly in *L’essai sur la traduction* (1997). Benjamin points out that translation proceeds not so much from the life of an original, which are rarely translated in the age in which they are produced, but from its “afterlife” or “survival” [*Überleben*] and perhaps because of their continuing life [*Fortleben*]. “Translations that are more than transmissions of a message are produced when a work, in its continuing life, has reached the age of its fame. . . In them the original’s life receives its constantly renewed, latest and most comprehensive unfolding” (Benjamin 1997, p. 154). Further, “in its continuing life, which could not be so called if it were not the transformation and renewal of a living thing, the original is changed. Established words also have their after-ripening” (ibid, p. 155).

There are, however, dissimilarities between the literary and policy translation which are also revealing.

One of the ethical obligations of the translator of the literary text is as far as is possible to *faithful* to the text, to be *true* to the original work. The translator of policy or practice—at least in the context of the international translation—really has no such obligation. Indeed it is almost the opposite: the policy translator has a responsibility to adapt international practice to local requirements and to the functions they are expected to perform in that context. Derrida allows room for a slightly pragmatic function of translation even in his discussion of literary translation:

A relevant translation would therefore be, quite simply . . . a translation that does what one expects of it, in short, a version that performs its mission, honours its debt and does its job or its duty while inscribing in the receiving language the more relevant equivalent for an original. (Derrida 2001, p. 177)

But, we asked, does this freedom/responsibility of translators to adapt (e.g., at regional level or at school level) apply equally to the intranational translation of policy and practice, or does the center here have an entitlement to require conformity rather than adaptability?

Secondly, the translator/interpreter of a given text does not assume responsibility for the truth or value of what that text has to say. His/her task is to translate, not to make any judgments enter into any debates about the truth or falsity of what is being said or written. It is not obvious, however, in the context of policy or practice translation that the translator can avoid some such responsibility. The position is analogous to the contrast that the philosopher G.E.M. Anscombe draws between the interpreter and the teacher:

Consider the belief reposed in what an interpreter says – I mean the belief reposed in the sentences he comes out with. If you believe those communications, probably – i.e. in the normal case – you are believing his principal: your reliance on the interpreter is only the belief that he has reproduced what his principal said. A teacher, on the other hand, even in no way an original authority, is wrong if what he says is untrue, and that hangs together with the fact that his pupils believe (or disbelieve) him. (Anscombe 1979, p. 147)

We argued that neither government officials nor external consultants are simply in the business of describing how things are done elsewhere; by deciding to translate practice or policy from one place rather than another, they are giving it their own approval and authority, and they have to take some responsibility for the validity of what they are putting forward.

In short we felt that both an examination of both the similarities between literary translation and policy translation and the differences helped to illuminate and give shape to our observation and understanding, and they served to provide a helpful summing up of what had become a rather long (12,000 word) paper.

Interpretation, Interpretation, Interpretation

One of the first points we made in our original paper was that the “translation” of educational policy and practice always requires interpretation, evaluation, and selection, so in a sense the research paper that I have discussed here was already an attempt to interpret what was going on in a process of interpretation.

Now I have added another layer of interpretation by reflecting on our own attempts to interpret the interpretation/translation. This reveals, in short, no grand design, but rather a seeking after a metaphor, a descriptive or explanatory framework, a theory that might illuminate what we have read, observed, experienced, and reported. I have also indicated the part played in this process by really rather serendipitous episodes from personal biography, ideas that have been reawakened by the focus of our research, and chance encounters that have proved timely and fruitful—all seized gratefully and assembled in a *bricolage* of interpretation which, if it lacks consistency, is hopefully put together in a form that itself prompts reflection, interpretation, and ongoing conversation.

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8.6 Five Conversations and Three Notes on the “Soviet,” or Finding a Place for Personal History in the Study of Teacher Education Policy in Kazakhstan

Olena Fimyar

Scoping the Scoping Study: An Introduction

The purpose of this part of the chapter is to introduce the study and the original paper that this chapter uses as a basis for reflection and analysis. This section discusses the multiple contexts of the study which influenced the authors’ decision to approach the analysis and interpretation of teachers’ professional beliefs somewhat unconventionally—i.e., by bringing the elements of autoethnography and memory research into the study of policy. These multiple contexts include the research and education policy contexts, the state of existing scholarship, and the intellectual biographies of the authors. Each of these elements represents a building block which enabled and at the same time set limits to the range of analytical and interpretative possibilities available to the authors.

The original paper “The “Soviet” in the memories and teachers’ professional beliefs in Kazakhstan” (Fimyar and Kurakbayev, [under review](#)) analyzed in this chapter is part of a 1-year scoping study, *Internationalisation and School Reform in Kazakhstan* (Bridges 2014). The data collection for the study was jointly conducted by an international and multilingual (English, Kazakh and Russian) team of researchers from August to September 2012 in Kazakhstani capital Astana. The primary objective of the study was to document the most recent educational initiatives in the country and to identify research areas in need of further investigation. The study was conducted in parallel with three other educational support initiatives jointly delivered by the Faculty of Education of the University of

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Cambridge (FoE) and Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in Kazakhstan. These initiatives are:

1. Support for innovation in curriculum and assessment at Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS)
2. A research and capacity building program at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE)
3. A “training of trainers” program at the NIS center of excellence (CoE)

One of the key objectives of the study was to map these multiple initiatives and understand their impact on the wider education system in Kazakhstan. The study was also interested in understanding a model of educational reform whereby national governments directly, or through the centers of national expertise, recruit international research and consultancy networks to address national policy problems. The study involved two field trips to the Kazakhstani capital Astana in August and September 2012. In the course of the study, six team members conducted 25 interviews with policy makers in the government as well as newly established NIS and NU.

Prior to interrogating the theoretical, methodological, and interpretative approaches used in the original paper, we briefly outline the educational policy context, without which it will be difficult to understand the significance and persistence of the “Soviet” in contemporary policy debate in Kazakhstan. The question about the role of interpretation in the study will be addressed directly in part three entitled *Three Notes on Methodology*, which explains how the context, theoretical perspectives, and intellectual biographies of the authors, the development of disciplines, and opportunities of working at the intersection of different disciplines together created an interpretative framework for the study.

Understanding Education Policy Context: Rapid Change Amidst Persisting Inequalities

The size of Western Europe, Kazakhstan as a country remains a large “terra incognita” in most of the academic literature. Apart from a handful of illuminating studies on the history and politics of Central Asia (e.g., Hiro 1995, 2009), the attempts to offer a sociological analysis of the complex and diverse region have been unsystematic. In education research the surge of interest in the question of how “traveling policies” are manifested in local settings (Seddon 2005; Silova 2005) was followed by a relatively small number of studies attending to the questions of education reform (Heyneman and DeYoung 2004; Silova and Steiner-Khamsi 2008), the impact of economic crisis on the teaching profession (see, e.g., DeYoung 2006, 2008; Niyozov and Shamatov 2010; Niyozov 2011; Silova 2009, 2011), and the analysis of teachers’ professional beliefs (e.g., Niyozov 2011, pp. 287–313; Burkhalter and Shegebayev 2010, 2012). A renewed interest in educational problems in the region is reflected in a number of reports by international organizations predicting and documenting acute educational

and social crises in Central Asian countries (e.g., International Crisis Group 2011; WHO/UNICEF 2013).

The factors contributing to the virtual absence of the region in social science literature are many. Some of the most prominent ones include the policies shaping the focus of the government-sponsored *Bolashak* (*Future*) study abroad program. The emphasis on technical, economic, and applied disciplines as priority areas for the country’s future development and the preference (up until recently) towards undergraduate and master’s degree courses set limits to the research and publication input of program alumni. Due to the language barriers and other structural divides, local scholars rarely publish in English-language journals. To reverse this tendency and firmly establish Kazakhstan’s presence in research literature are some of the key tasks delegated to the newly established Nazarbayev University (NU, established in 2010 in Astana) and the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research (KIMEP, established in 1992 in Almaty).

This lack of attention to Kazakhstan in academic literature, and consequent lack of reliable data on recent social and political developments in Kazakhstan, makes it difficult to discuss the country’s context without falling into the trap of the following dominant political discourses and ideology praising the country’s accelerated strides towards world-class standards. By recognizing the powers of dominant political rationalities in producing a particular view of social progress in the country, we, as the authors of the paper, made the first interpretative move towards problematizing the existing policy narratives in Kazakhstan. By distancing ourselves from existing political and policy narratives, we have created a space for early interpretations to enter the analysis. These early problematizations have allowed us to look critically and with caution on dominant political rationalities shaping education policy debate in Kazakhstan.

Faced with the problem of the lack of research data on Kazakhstan, we had to rely extensively on the reports, policy documents, and media coverage by national and international organizations. The understanding we gained from reading these reports differed from the official narratives in one important detail. While recognizing the progress made in educational and social spheres in the last two decades, an acknowledgment of the problem of poverty and other structural inequalities is what is sometimes missing in the official policy reports. Drawing on the reports of international organizations, we came to the conclusion that the most recent developments in education and society in Kazakhstan are best described as rapid changes amidst persisting inequalities. The economic collapse of the early 1990s set in motion processes which were beneficial for some, but which left the majority, especially in the rural areas, economically disaffected and marginalized (International Crisis Group 2011; WHO/UNICEF 2013). Recent accounts presented in the national media reported a 30-fold difference between the income of the rich and the poor in the country (Tengri News 2012).

In education we found only two policy documents that critically approach the question of rural/urban inequalities. These are the “State Program of Educational Development 2011–2020” (MOES 2010) and the most recent presentation by the new Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Aslan

Sarinzhipov (MOES 2013). In particular, the “State Program of Educational Development 2011–2020” admits that “37.4 % [of schools] don’t have access to drinking water,” “201 schools [out of 7576] are in poor condition,” “25.1 % of schools need an overhaul,” and that there are “70 three-shift schools and one four-shift school” (MOES 2010, p. 9). Further, it is stated that:

Every fifth school lacks either a dining room or canteen. Depreciation of equipment and inventory in school canteens is 80 %. 26.4 % of schools do not have gyms. (ibid.)

What is particularly disturbing is that the above disparities in educational provision and school infrastructure are disproportionately evident in rural areas, which are 4.5 times more likely to have schools without gyms, 4.5 times more likely to have schools working in three shifts, and 13.2 times more likely to have schools in shabby buildings as compared to the number of schools in the same conditions in urban areas (MOES 2013).

Against the background of schools lacking drinking water and basic hygiene facilities, a multimillion dollar investment in Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), which serve directly less than 1 % of 1-year student cohort in the country, is criticized by some as a move that may further deepen inequalities (Bartlett 2012). NIS responded to these criticisms by launching a number of “translation” initiatives, including curriculum transfer and a teacher professional development program in the mainstream sector.

We conclude this contextualization, which follows our initial thoughts in making sense of a diverse and highly unequal landscape of Kazakhstani education, by proposing a metaphor of two Kazakhstans, which we encountered in the course of our research. One Kazakhstan, for which Astana’s glamorous architecture provides a powerful visual metaphor, is urban, modern, mobile, and rapidly changing. However, there is also another Kazakhstan—rural, remote, traditional, and crying out for investment in basic hygiene facilities and infrastructure. Significantly, the level of educational achievements and educational opportunities open to children in these two Kazakhstans differs sharply across these divides. Bridging these divides will remain a key national policy priority for the years to come.

Introducing the Original Paper or Why Focus on the “Soviet”: Now?

In this part of the chapter, we will closely follow some of the key arguments advanced in the original paper. The discussion is organized around *five conversations*, each focusing on a particular meaning of the “Soviet”: (1) starting the debate about the “Soviet,” (2) “Soviet” in the recollection of the last generation of Soviet children, (3) “Soviet” in the view of knowledge, (4) “Soviet” in the punitive function of assessment, and (5) “Soviet” in teaching methodology. By organizing the discussion around these five conversations, we aimed to achieve two tasks. First, we wanted to reflect the frequency of references to the “Soviet” in research

interviews in relation to each of the themes: losses and achievements, our recollections of school architecture, knowledge, assessment, and teaching methodology. Second, we wanted to keep enough space between those conversations to allow interpretations and recollections of the readers to come into place. Thus these conversations worked not only to communicate data but also to stimulate new conversations about the “Soviet” in our and our participants’ present.

Due to the country’s recent history, the references to the “Soviet” in research interviews were not entirely unexpected, but the number of those references was highly significant. The exploratory nature of the scoping study has allowed us to analyze the meaning behind those references in greater detail. At the outset of the study we were particularly interested in two questions: *What memories and practices of Soviet education are still dominant in the field of education in Kazakhstan? How do these beliefs continue to shape educational debate in the country?*

Yet, throughout the study for ourselves, for our critics, and reviewers, we had to rationalize again and again: *Why focus on the “Soviet” amidst fast-paced educational initiatives and why now?* As we argued in the paper, a proper engagement with the history of educational thought in the country is what is missing in the current education debate.¹ At a time when the official policy discourses are primarily concerned with raising the economic competitiveness of the country, many practitioners are still coming to terms with the breakup of the Soviet Union and hold true to the practices of teacher-centered education, which the current reform agenda frames as “outdated” and “resistant to change.” Understanding the centrality of practitioner beliefs in the process of educational change, the paper was written with the intention of bringing the concerns of the practitioners to the attention of policy makers and those involved in the reform agenda.

The paper was also written with the hope that it can challenge an established approach in international and comparative education and move the debate forward. This is because at a time when mainstream research is preoccupied with comparisons between the global “east” and “west,” and “north” and “south,” very few attempts are being made to learn from the countries’ histories or, to put it differently, to examine how the “east as it is now” is different from the “east as it was 20 years ago” and, crucially, to learn from this comparison. Although calls to learn from the countries’ own histories rather than uncritically adopting best international practices are becoming more pronounced in the field (Steiner-Khamsi 2013), in our paper we have actually attempted to deliver such analysis.

¹There are a number of studies by local scholars on the history of pedagogy and education in Kazakhstan. However, the majority of those studies tend to focus on the issues of ethno-pedagogy and national identity, rather than approaching the question of Soviet education, its legacies, and ways of socialization from a sociological perspective.

Five Conversations About the “Soviet”

Conversation One: Starting the Debate About the “Soviet”

‘We had Sputnik, . . . but we lost our [Kazakh] language.’
(Interviewee A, early-career professional, NIS)²

Our research participants expressed rather ambivalent attitudes towards the Soviet past. They would start their recollections with a statement acknowledging the achievements of Soviet education. Among these, just to name a few, were universal literacy, free access to all levels of education, provision of preschool and extracurricular education, and the rate of participation in higher education. This statement would be followed by a more revealing account about the inadequacies and failings of the Soviet system. This ambivalence towards the past was very well captured in the account of one interviewee who acknowledged that, on the one hand, “we had Sputnik, Soviet education was successful” yet, on the other hand, “we lost our [Kazakh] language” (Interviewee A, early-career professional, NIS). Indeed, during the Soviet times titular languages of the nations other than Russia suffered great losses and neglect (Shturman 1988, pp. 211–12; Fierman 1998).

The interviewees reported that the use of languages of instruction in secondary schools was also severely imbalanced:

In especially difficult situation are now schools with the Kazakh as the medium of instruction, because they were severely affected during the Soviet time. There was a very small number of Kazakh-language schools left in the Soviet time. As an example, in Almaty [with approx. 250 000 inhabitants of ethnic Kazakh origin] there was only one school with the Kazakh language of instruction. All others switched to Russian, because if you didn’t know Russian then you will not have your career at that time. (Interviewee B, mid-career professional, International organisation)

The lasting legacies of the neglect of the Kazakh language in Soviet times continue to affect the quality of teaching and the provision of textbooks in the Kazakh-medium schools. Some interviewees were self-critical enough to admit that they themselves, and their lack of knowledge of Kazakh, are the lasting legacies of Soviet education:

Unfortunately, I am not reading or writing in Kazakh . . . so you can see me as the ‘outcome’ of the Soviet education system. (Interviewee C, mid-career professional, International organisation A representative)

²All interviewees are assigned letters A–K according to the order they appear in the article. These letters do not correspond to their initials and are used here to indicate the number of respondents quoted in the paper. The respondents’ career stage (early, mid, late) is also indicated because the involvement of early-career professionals is a significant feature of the new initiatives. The gender of the respondents is not indicated as it could compromise the anonymity of the interviewees. However, it is important to mention that our sample was overwhelmingly female. Out of the 11 respondents cited in the paper, 8 are female and only 3 are male.

And this interviewee is not alone: Fierman (1998, p. 174) uses the 1989 census to illustrate how severely imbalanced the use of languages in Kazakhstan was at the time. According to census data, over 80 % of Kazakhstan’s population reported either native or close to native fluency in Russian. Yet, this did not mean they were bilingual, because while over 60 % of ethnic Kazakhs claimed fluency in Russian, only less than 1 % of Russians claimed fluency in Kazakh. Other numbers from the census were even more disturbing, with only 40 % of ethnic Kazakhs claiming fluency in their native language.

In the second conversation on the “Soviet” we have combined our authorial voice and our children’s voice to explore our memories of Soviet schooling. We saw this exercise as highly beneficial for understanding the prevalence of the “Soviet” in the accounts of our interviewees.

Conversation Two: “Soviet” in the Recollections of the Last Generation of Soviet Children

We could closely relate to the description of Soviet schooling provided by one research interviewee:

I was born in 1981 and our generation was the last to study under the Soviet education system. In the Soviet system, we had the ‘upbringing’ [Rus. *Vospitaniye*] component and I even was an *Oktyabrienok* [a first level of socialisation into communist ideology followed by Pioneer, Komsomol and Communist Party membership]. I was also a Pioneer but did not achieve the Komsomol level [Soviet Union collapsed]. (Interviewee D, early-career professional, NIS)

Yet the formal structures of Soviet schooling and membership of *Oktyabrist* and Pioneer organizations are not the only things that came to mind when we thought about Soviet education. The presence of the Soviet ideology everywhere in school was another strong memory. Everyone who went through Soviet schooling can recall how powerful and omnipresent Soviet ideology was in school. It manifested itself on paper and in stone. Everything from the school curriculum to the school architecture and classroom organization was subordinated to Soviet ideology. We could all remember how methodologically and purposefully we were socialized into the values of the Soviet regime. Every school subject from literature to mathematics and science was imbued with the communist ethos and an unshakable belief in the supremacy of the communist world view and societal organization over the capitalist ones. It was not only through the subject knowledge that we were continuously molded in the image of and in line with the communist ideals; indeed, the arrangement of the classroom, the iconography on the walls, and the whole architecture of the Soviet school served the same purpose. Outside the classroom, we were continuously reminded of the values, principles, and founders of the regime through countless slogans, statuettes, portraits, and posters in every Soviet school. Grant (1964) refers to some of the famous slogans of the time (which we can also remember) including “Forward to the building of communism,” “We must study and work as Lenin taught,” “Glory to the Soviet people – the people of heroes” (Grant 1964, p. 24).

Another vivid memory of Soviet schooling is the classroom set-up with its strict rows of desks which were hard to move and which were often nailed to the floor. The classroom set-up was a material embodiment of the Soviet ideology, and, apart from its most obvious function, worked to promote and reinforce the values of structure, order and control. A similar role of reinforcing uniformity, standardization and control was played by the school uniform, which was hugely disliked by the students for its lack of functionality, unattractive design and gloomy color palette among which the most memorable were various shades of gray, brown and dark blue.

Perhaps these recollections will not strike the reader as anything intrinsically “Soviet,” rather they are features of any traditional system of education which relies on teacher-centered pedagogy, strict subordination, order and control. We will not argue against this interpretation, but we insist on the use of the “Soviet,” because for us it represents the time that we lived in, the country we all inhabited: this is our history, this is our lived experience, this is our “Soviet” childhood.

Conversation Three: “Soviet” in the View of Knowledge and the Preoccupation with the Systemic Approach

In further exploring the references to the “Soviet,” we came close to the question of knowledge and the preoccupation with the system approach in Soviet education. Partly drawing on our own memories of Soviet schooling, partly on our teaching experiences in newly independent Kazakhstan and Ukraine, and partly on the studies of Soviet education, what can be said with a great degree of certainty is that Soviet education prided itself on its use of theoretical knowledge in all areas, from curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy to the organization of extracurricular activities and school timetables. Everything was considered to be a part of a greater system, an endpoint of which was the holistic, all-round development of Soviet citizens. All school lessons and planning objectives were prefixed with the “systemic approach,” “system of procedures aimed at,” and similar phrases postulating the primacy of systemic, i.e., the scientific foundations of education.

In the organization of school subjects and selection of subject knowledge, preference was given to material which was systematic and organized in blocks susceptible to explanation through rules or exceptions to these rules. Knowledge itself was viewed as solid and fixed in time. Teaching preference was given to classical texts, formulae, and algorithms. The overall purpose of education was viewed as an orderly, systematic, well-organized process of acquiring and consolidating knowledge through formal instruction in fairly large classrooms (Muckle 1988, p. 188).

This is how one of our research interviewees described the prevalence of the knowledge-based approach in teaching at the outset of Kazakhstan’s independence:

Twenty years ago we were deeply convinced that the priority should be given to the content of each subject, and we believed that if we provided students with systematic, fundamental knowledge in every subject, then our educational objectives would be achieved. (Interviewee E, late career professional, NIS)

In the literature on education reform in CIS countries and the wider region, several attempts have been made to grasp conceptually the shift from the traditional, Soviet, teacher-centered view of education to the more innovative, liberal/Western, and student-centered approaches. Fimyar (2010), for example, put forward the term “changing rationalities” of postcommunist education reform. Drawing on a different country context, Cheng (2008, pp. 14–15) proposed the term “paradigm shift toward the third wave,” by which he means the movement towards world-class standards in education.

Our preferred term is “paradigm”³ because it encompasses the changes not only at the level of conceptualization but also at the level of practice, teaching methodology, curriculum, and assessment. Useful in this respect is Borytko’s (2005, pp. 38–39) conceptualization of educational change as the move from a *sciento-technocratic* to a *humanistic*⁴ paradigm. Drawing on Kolesnikova’s (1991) earlier work, Borytko (2005) identified the following differences between the two paradigms (Table 1).

Table 1 Changing Educational Paradigms: from a sciento-technocratic to a humanistic model

Paradigm name	Sciento-technocratic	Humanistic
Motto	“Knowledge is power”	“Learning is power”
Core value	Cognitive experience	Mode of knowledge acquisition
View of knowledge	Fixed, fundamental, theoretical	Fluid, multiple, constructed
Teaching and pedagogy	Rote learning, memorization, teacher centered	Activity-based experience, student-centered
Assessment	Identifies “gaps” in knowledge, lack of knowledge equals to inadequacy, incompetence, weakness	Assessment for learning, focus on what students already know, not the “gaps” in their knowledge
Outcomes	Well-informed students with encyclopedic knowledge	Students able to argue, interpret, synthesize

Adapted from Borytko (2005, p. 38)

³The calls to change educational paradigms are heard all around the world. This is not something specific to the CIS countries. For an informative and thought-provoking example, see Ken Robinson’s TED videos on “Changing Educational Paradigms” (2010a) and “Bring on the Learning Revolution” (2010b).

⁴In the original paper, Borytko (2005) uses the term “humanitarian,” but we think that “humanistic” is a more appropriate term.

Conversation Four: “Soviet” in the Punitive Function of Assessment

In our review of literature on Soviet schooling, we found that the role of assessment in Soviet education received very little attention. This is rather surprising, because in any education system assessment, apart from measuring academic progress, performs a very important social function. It works to discipline an individual and submit him/her to the standards, behaviors, and ethos of schooling. In an attempt to provide a sociological, Foucault-inspired, reading of the functions of assessment in Soviet schooling, we turned to an inspiring and thought-provoking study *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: The Study of Practices* by Kharkhordin (1999). Through a rich and compelling analysis, Kharkhordin demonstrates how deeply “the rituals of revealing one’s weaknesses in the presence of the relevant community” penetrated the logic and organizational structure of Soviet society.

Assessment as a particular form of “hierarchical surveillance,” to use Kharkhordin’s words, was often conducted in the public gaze, when an individual exposed his or her guilt to the judgment of the collective, be it classroom, university, teacher, or factory meetings. Public criticism was considered an effective tool for ensuring the improvement of individual behavior and, by extension, academic progress. This conviction was in line with the belief that the child could be molded in the image of the heroic “Soviet man” through intense reflection, admittance of one’s guilt, and self-criticism—rituals which, according to Kharkhordin, had their antecedents in the Orthodox Christian practices of doing penance in the public gaze (Kharkhordin 1999).

From the conversations with our parents, we can recall that the organization of parents’ meetings followed a similar logic. The teacher would publicly read out the grades each student had received, starting by praising the best-performing students and criticizing the worst performing. For similar disciplining and revelational purposes, each classroom had a register of students’ achievements on public display.

Our interviewees criticized the assessment practices of Soviet schooling not so much for their repressive nature but for the exclusive focus on recall of knowledge as the primary goal of assessment:

The system of assessment and learning in the USSR limited the competencies of students by getting them just to reproduce knowledge. That is why many knowledgeable pupils were not successful, they could not adjust to the realities of life. (Interviewee F, early-career professional, NIS)

The link between the assessment of high-performing students and their success in life is an interesting one. Another interviewee followed a similar line of argument, stating that Soviet schooling failed to provide students with the tools for using knowledge in their everyday life:

[In Soviet times] throughout many years, we have been noticing that the best high performing students, the so called ‘*otlichniki*’, who finished the school with the gold medal, were not becoming ‘*otlichniki*’ in their lives after finishing the school. . . . Due to some circumstances, they were getting lost in life, and they were failing their lives. . . . Why? Because, at school, they were not taught how to make use of the knowledge they learn, how to be successful in life – that is why. (Interviewee G, early-career professional, NIS)

However, as well as criticizing the knowledge-based assessment practices in Soviet schools, these interviewees equally pointed towards another underlying critique, which is a lack of entrepreneurial spirit in those who were successful in Soviet schooling. This is because soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, for many “success in life” was redefined primarily in material terms and income had become the single measure of “success.”

Conversation Five: “Soviet” in Teaching Methodology

The teacher tries to fill students with all this knowledge, practically, by chewing it for them. (Interviewee H, early-career professional, Teachers’ focus group, CoE training)

Soviet education was notorious for producing conceptual binaries which many of its prominent thinkers and theorists were aiming to overcome. Two such binaries which continue to structure educational debate in Kazakhstan and other CIS countries are *theory and practice* and *education and upbringing* (Rus. *vospitanie*). In the interview process, there were frequent references made to the disjuncture between theory and practice. On the one hand, the Soviet curriculum was often criticized for being overloaded with factual knowledge. On the other hand, this theoretical density was something that many of the respondents took pride in as one of the greatest achievements of Soviet education. One of the respondents explained how successfully theory and practice were integrated in the Soviet schools and universities:

The material and technical base of schools at the Soviet times were very well supported. Our curriculum always had practical assignments side by side with learning the theory. The same was true about the funding and support for universities. For example, I studied mineral and raw materials, the stage between the mining and smelting metallurgy. Our department had all the necessary devices, mechanisms and units, which would be found at any factory. We had the same machineries, maybe of a smaller size. We used the same chemical reagents and obtained the same process but in its smaller size. Approximately until the year of 1996 we had this base. But then everything collapsed, everything was lost. Buildings were sold and bought, and the base which supported the theory was lost. (Interviewee I, mid-career professional, Teachers’ focus group, CoE training)

However, another respondent views this legacy of the theoretical overload of the curriculum as counterproductive:

In our system of education we learn a lot of theory, and then what happens is that a teacher tries to fill students with all this knowledge, practically by chewing it for them. And then students go to university and they cannot apply any of that knowledge there. They do not know how to work independently; they do not know how to find useful information in textbooks and other sources. After this they graduate and go into profession. And there they do not know how to deal with any arising question or task. (Interviewee H, early-career professional, Teachers’ focus group, CoE training)

The discussion of teaching methods and the scope for innovation in Kazakhstani schools brought attention to another deep-seated tension, which is a tension between the statuses of senior and newly qualified teachers. This is how one of the research interviewees described this tension:

Experienced teachers often do not even allow young teachers to do something. They say, they are more experienced, and young teachers have to do exactly what they are told to do. (Interviewee J, early-career professional, Teachers’ focus group, CoE training)

Another interviewee anticipated resistance to the new initiatives on the part of senior colleagues and articulated the need to shift the status quo for the successful unfolding of the reform:

The young teacher comes to the mentor and says that he/she has got this and that idea, and the mentor says: ‘What is that? This is absurd! It will not work!’ as he/she knows better because of his/her experience. Our task will be to change this mentality. And many teachers will not want to do it. (Interviewee K, early-career professional, Teachers’ focus group, CoE training)

Therefore, in the Kazakhstani context, careful consideration should be given to the tensions and relationship between senior and newly qualified teachers. Without an intergenerational dialogue, mutual respect, and collaboration, sustaining the momentum of reform will be problematic if not impossible.

Five Conversations Revisited: A Call for a New Debate

We concluded our paper by appealing to key actors in the educational policy field with the hope of starting a new debate. In formulating our initial propositions for this new debate, we were inspired by conversations with our colleagues, particularly David Bridges. We gained important insights into seeing the value and centrality of individual experiences in understanding complex societal transformations from watching Robin Hessman’s “My Perestroika” documentary (2011). The tone and style of our appeal was shaped by the key messages from Ken Robinson’s TED videos on “Changing Educational Paradigms” (2010a) and “Bring on the Learning Revolution!” (2010b). These are some of the important conversations and reference points which shaped our approaches to interpretation, writing, and analysis.

We suggested that the key message policy makers could take from our discussion is the need for an informed and engaging discussion with practitioners and society at large about why reforms are necessary and what new set of values and practices they entail. For the reform to gather its full momentum, reform objectives need to be communicated to the practitioners in the same dialogic ways as we would like practitioners to communicate and engage with students. Policy makers should be able to unite practitioners around the idea that the new policies are implemented not because they are “best international practices” from somewhere else but because they can enhance learning here and now in each individual classroom in Kazakhstan.

In appealing to international consultants, we stressed the importance of understanding the country’s history, including the histories which shaped professional practices and meanings operating in the field. This task requires the ability to find the points of divergence between the old and new practices and the skill to start an engaging intercultural dialogue exploring these differences. Our second proposition for international consultants was to reconnect with their own experiences of the “Soviet,” by which we meant traditional ways of teaching which surely all of us

(perhaps to varying degrees) experienced in our lives and bring these experiences into their training and conversations.

Practitioners—particularly those who had experience of Soviet schooling—could find beneficial the idea that, for new experiences and understanding to emerge, it is important first to embrace the previous, i.e., the Soviet, traditional, and conservative experience. This reflection would allow space for observation and analysis of how far the new practices depart from the traditional ones. Our key proposition to the practitioners was that professional judgments about the appropriateness of particular methods should always be guided by the question: *Would I enjoy this as a student?*

For those researching the field of international and comparative education, our intention was to show the value of autoethnography for the study of policy. We did not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis of the foundational ideas of Soviet education—these were presented in broad strokes and in relation to the issues addressed by current reform initiatives or to illuminate the point of rupture or continuity between previous and current understandings of education.

For us as the authors of this paper, the pleasure of writing the paper was mixed with the opportunity to continuously reassess, question, and critique our own experiences of Soviet schooling, those of our respondents, and those presented in the literature. Secondly, we gained an appreciation of the vital importance of the past, which for us, and the majority of our interviewees, is still “Soviet,” and of how it can be mobilized to construct new meanings and practices. What came as something of a surprise for us is that for many of our respondents, regardless of their gender and career stage, “Soviet” was not a distant past; it was here and now, despite its historical closure twenty years ago. And most importantly, that whatever there is that is “Soviet” in the field or in us and in our teaching practices and beliefs, it is keen to engage in conversation with the “Western” and “global” and, to quote one of our respondents, to “have a critical look” at it and at ourselves.

Three Notes on Methodology

In this part of the chapter, we will reflect on methodological choices and considerations that guided our analysis. The discussion is organized in three sections each attending to a particular methodological question. The overarching goal of the discussion is to retrace methodological choices and explain the role of interpretation in the study.

Note one: writing between criticism and nostalgia:

‘– Do you have any questions?’

[we asked the participants of an ‘Action Research’ workshop
in one of the Kazakhstani secondary schools]

‘– Yes, why do you think the Soviet Union collapsed? . . .?’

By writing our paper we contributed to the studies which explore the “Soviet,” its legacies, paradoxes, and inherent tensions in educational and social settings in the countries of the former USSR and its satellite states (see Aydarova 2013; Griffiths and Millei 2013; Koshmanova and Ravchyna 2008; Silova 2010; Yurchak 2005). Unlike those studies, however, researching the “Soviet” was not a part of our initial task, and only the exploratory nature of the scoping study has allowed us to pursue this area of research.

In writing the paper, we engaged with the “Soviet” concept twice. First it entered the analysis from the accounts of research interviews. The second time it entered the analysis was from our own memories of Soviet schooling. Instead of dismissing our narratives as unimportant, we approached them as useful resources for illuminating some of the most contentious issues in contemporary education debate. As a result of this double engagement, our authorial voice emerged as a dialogue which we initiated at different levels with actors in the educational debate. We were in the conversation with our interviewees, with each other, and with our own memories of Soviet schooling. The *double-voiced discourse* which permeates the analysis (cf. Bakhtin 1981; White and Peters 2011) is also a result of our complex “situatedness” (Haraway 1991 cited in Yurchak 2005, p. 6) as both insiders and outsiders in relation to our interviewees and the object of analysis.

Note two: who are the authors?

Our intellectual biographies as the authors of the original paper and scholars who made forays in academic publishing (Fimyar 2008a, b, 2010, 2011, 2014a, b; Kurakbayev together with Bridges and Kambatyrova 2014a, b) worked as sources of inspiration and interpretation in the paper. Our theoretical perspectives and research interests in the issues of education reform, academic migration, governmentality studies, and discourse analysis (Olena Fimyar) and the question of how teachers make meaning and respond to educational reforms taking place in Kazakhstan (Kairat Kurakbayev) map out the horizons of our analytical endeavor and place at our disposal interpretative frameworks offered by these disciplines. By engaging with the disciplines and the arguments advanced in our previous publications, we were developing our “expert voice.”

By embracing the possibility of revisiting memories of our Soviet childhoods, we were encouraging our “children’s voice” to fully participate in writing, interpretation, and analysis. Born and raised in the two republics of the former Soviet Union, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, and later educated to degree level in UK universities, we as the authors of the paper have acquired what Pavlenko calls “the joys” and we also add *the burdens* “of double vision” (2003, p. 182). Being able to see close and far, we encouraged both our “expert” voice and “children’s” voice to equally participate in the study. In encouraging our “children’s voice” we were inspired by autoethnographic writing by Charon-Cardona (2013), Pavlenko (2003), and also Miller (2008) and Richardson (2000, 2001).

We were convinced that the “children’s” voice has a lot to say to the participants of the education debate about the future directions of policy. This is because student’s voice is still silent in the definition of education policy objectives. In

eliciting our children’s voices, the process of writing played a critical role. Writing in such a mode was at once restricting and liberating. It was restricting because it made us feel very strongly that our understanding depends on discourses available to us at a particular point of time, space, and positioning within the field; but it was also liberating because it freed us from the need to produce “a single text in which everything is said at once for everyone, a text where the “complete” life [and story] is told” (Richardson 2001, p. 36). The challenge of the task was, following Yurchak’s observation, “to avoid a priori negative accounts of socialism without falling in[to] the opposite extreme of romanticising it” (Yurchak 2005, p. 9). Taking this observation on board, writing worked for us as a balancing act between criticism and nostalgia.

Note three: the functions of the “Soviet” in research interviews:

You as a Soviet person, you should remember this . . .
(Interviewee E, late career professional, NIS)

Continuing the discussion of the methodology used in the original paper, it is important to stress that out of all 25 research interviews and two focus group discussions conducted in the course of the study, the research participants who made the most references to the Soviet past were the six teachers from the center of excellence (CoE) training. This is not surprising because these teachers anticipated that in delivering their own training, they would be at the front line between the new approaches and conceptualizations of education and those which are deeply rooted and still dominant in their schools. The way these teachers described themselves also deserves attention. They view themselves as professionals “with the classical Soviet secondary and higher education who [through participating in the CoE training] have a unique opportunity to look with a critical eye at the Western system of education, which is being introduced in our country” (Interviewee I, mid-career professional, Teachers’ focus group, CoE training).

Yet it was not only these six research participants who felt the need to explain and reflect on the points in the reform agenda that might be most difficult to implement or might encounter the most resistance. The majority of research interviewees felt the need to refer back to Soviet practices at least once during the interview and explain these practices to the UK-based researchers who were leading the interviews. The UK-based research team included two Russian-speaking researchers of Ukrainian and Belarusian origins whom research participants would address during such recollections: “You as a Soviet person, you should remember this . . .” And, of course, we did, and by writing this paper, we paid a symbolic tribute to all who went through the Soviet system of education and who are now, with professionalism and passion, attempting to understand this critical period in their lives and in the lives of millions affected by it.

As was mentioned earlier in the chapter, the concluding part of the original paper, in its appeal to various actors in the field of policy, was reminiscent of the style of a manifesto (cf. Fimyar 2011). We would like to conclude the overall discussion in a similar manner, this time appealing for policy analysts to view auto-ethnography as a useful interpretative lens in the analysis of policy.

Instead of Conclusions: Finding a Place for Autoethnography in the Study of Policy

Autoethnography and policy analysis represent distinct analytical traditions, which rarely cross each other's intellectual trajectories. Despite offering a more direct and productive way of *getting to the culture through the self* (Pelias 2003, p. 372), autoethnography as a method of inquiry is not used by policy makers and educational practitioners as a tool for zooming into educational practices and understanding the forces that inform professional beliefs and guide professional behaviors. A widespread belief that sets these two traditions even further apart maintains that "objective" data required by policy makers is incompatible with the personal and evocative writing which characterizes most of the works on autoethnography.

The irony of the situation is that by maintaining the established separations between disciplines, both intellectual camps deny the possibility of producing more nuanced and engaging analyses. The article which this chapter uses as a basis for reflection and analysis has attempted to break with this tradition and use the authors' memories of Soviet schooling as resources for understanding present-day teacher professional beliefs in Kazakhstan. However, to bridge two analytical traditions in a meaningful and engaging manner is not an easy task. For the authors of the original paper, two related tasks turned out to be particularly challenging. These were (1) redefining the role of writing in a research study and (2) addressing the questions of the authority of the author.

Writing as it is practiced in the works on autoethnography (e.g., Alvesson 2003, pp. 174–91; Anderson 2006; Coffey 2002, pp. 313–31; Doloriert and Sambrook 2009, pp. 28–30; Ellis 1997, 2004; Holt 2003; Humphreys 2005, pp. 841–43; Learmonth and Humphreys 2012, pp. 103–5; Miller 2008, pp. 348–50) is an all-encompassing activity. It is never diminished to a "mopping-up" task one does in the aftermath of a research project (Richardson 2000, p. 923). Writing is always "a way of "knowing" – a method of discovery and analysis" (ibid.). Through practicing autoethnographic writing, one masters the art of "heightened self-reflexivity" (Anderson 2006, p. 373). Through interrogating a particular aspect of our being, consistently and reflectively we learned "new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it" (Richardson 2000, 923) and by doing so reached a deeper stratum of "knowing" (Miller 2008, p. 349). It takes courage and time to produce writing whereby "form and content are [truly] inseparable" (Richardson 2000, p. 923).

The second issue we needed to attend to was the question of the authority of the author. Continuously reflecting on the question "Do I have enough authority through *my* story to reveal a particular aspect of the *social*?" (cf. Ellis 2004, p. xviii – authors' emphasis) allowed us to write from a more authentic place, the place of truth from within. In searching for answers to the above question, we found Richardson's and Foucault's observations about the fault lines of reasoning about subjective/objective and personal/theoretical divides particularly illuminating. We tend to agree with Richardson that in social sciences, humanity suppressed under the guise of "objective science" "thankfully keeps erupting in [the] choice of

metaphors, topics and discourses” (Richardson 2001, p. 34). This is precisely because “the old idea of a strict bifurcation between “objective” and “subjective” – between the “head” and the “heart” – does not map onto the actual practices [of] production of knowledge” (ibid.).

Foucault’s observation about how his lived experiences provided a fertile ground for theoretical reflection echoes our own stories of entering the world of research:

Every time I have tried to do a piece of theoretical work it has been on the basis of elements of my own experience: always in connection with processes I saw unfolding around me. It was always because I thought I identified cracks, silent tremors, and dysfunctions in things I saw, institutions I was dealing with, or my relations with others, that I set out to do a piece of work, and each time was partly a fragment of autobiography. (Foucault 2000, p. 458)

The above observation has also strengthened our belief that we, as children of the last Soviet generation, have not only authority but also a moral duty through our memories to bring to the attention of the participants of the current educational debates in Kazakhstan the lines of argument which are neither visible nor audible otherwise.

To conclude, our lived experiences and intellectual trajectories and, most importantly, the desire to start a new debate on post-Soviet education served as most productive sources of interpretation in our paper. Such tasks imposed on us, to use Denzin’s observation, “an obligation to develop a personal style that brings meaning and morality into discourse” (1997, p. 40). It made us search for a style of writing which would balance our need to attend to criticism and nostalgia, to bring “children’s voices” and “expert voices” into the conversations about the values and purpose of education. It made us recall and embrace our childhood memories with the hope that such reflection will contribute towards making the educational experiences of today’s children meaningful and memorable.

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8.7 Masks as Methodology and the Phenomenological Turn: Issues of Interpretation

Ruth M. Leitch and James C. Conroy

*within the eye
a potent chemistry
unmasks the faces
beneath the terrors
and fills the silences
of anguished journeys.
dreams live serenely
in our singing
and our eyes
(We sing absurdities: Ben Okri)*

Introduction

Educational research has been increasingly subjected to normalizing accounts of “what counts.” On occasion this takes the form of “what works” (which is not actually so much a research question as concerned with political choice). Alternatives have included, among others, various claims to the efficacy of randomized control trials (RCTs) and large-scale secondary data analyses among other forms of empirical determination. Barone (2007) in the USA, for instance, refers to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 where the law calls explicitly and exclusively for the use of *scientifically based research* (a phrase used 111 times within it) as the foundation for any educational development or pedagogical application (p. 455). The underpinning assumptions of such advocacy include the claim that the arithmetic offers an adequate cipher for the experiential. In his “Fragments of the World,” Castoriadis (1997) argues that the arithmetic has been endowed with an ontologically originary status in late modern cultures. While this deep attachment to the arithmetic offers a kind of security to a political class

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concerned to demonstrate how their policies are endowed with a self-evident quality (Conroy and Davis 2002), we would argue that the being and nature of the world cannot easily or comprehensively be captured numerically. If, for example, one is to decide that social security directed towards helping the most vulnerable in society is an intolerable burden on the commonweal, then it has to be demonstrated axiomatically and be accompanied by the attendant discursive practices of inevitability. In such political speak, a government spokesperson is apt to opine, “It is obvious that we need to do something about the overspend on social security – just look at the numbers!” The embedded claim is that the numbers demonstrate the folly of particular social actions and entailments and (re)assure others by overcoming the poverty of our subjective judgments. So it is increasingly in educational research, witnessed most obviously in the rise of RCTs and “Big Data.”

The claim that the success of particular forms of educational intervention can be measured without reference to the dynamics of human relations, including the relation individuals have to their own interiority and biography, rests on the assumption that social and educational patterns and performances are to be considered technical achievements:

What we’re learning in our schools is not the wisdom of life. We’re learning technologies, we’re getting information. (Campbell (with Moyes) 1988, p. 9)

As with the practices of education so too, such “technologies” are to be considered the apogee of educational understanding. In what follows we wish to argue for and illustrate an alternative (or at the very least a complement) to such a technicist account of educational research that is rooted in older forms of human understanding and disclosure. Given that educational research is not the same kind of thing as technological or indeed biological research and that causal connections are rarely to be considered in terms of straight-line trajectories, we suggest that these other more deeply fissured accounts and expressions of human exchange and encounter can rescue much educational intervention from its own sterility. Educational research requires from time to time the introduction of modifications that entail a studied attention to the ways in which psychological and social forces intertwine and indeed the ways in which these intertwinings manifest themselves in, and shape, forms of practice. It is in this intersection that the public and private face each other in a series of veilings and unveilings where the individual begins to recognize and acknowledge the multiple and complexly refracted encounters with personal and social history as well as individual and collective consciousness. Such encounters are not singular; that is, they are not easily encapsulated by the arithmetic or the algorithmic.

Inquiring into Subjectivity

It is a truism that we live embodied, emotive lives, nowhere more so than in educational spheres with the powerful emotionality that runs through the veins and arteries of those who encounter each other daily, in colleges, schools,

classrooms, curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices constitutive of education systems worldwide. It is these ongoing individual subjective and collective transactions that are the often unrecognized undercurrents of educational life that have the capacity either to enhance or resist educational endeavor, innovation, and improvement, even those endorsed “scientifically” through the outcomes of the “what works?” tradition. In research terms we wish to retrieve the notion of self-understanding as of having inherent value in the conduct of educational research. For a fuller, indeed richer, account of educational life, we must seek other creative research possibilities that help us understand and represent the nuanced nature of human experience and where the personal and the political are seen as deeply intertwined. As Haug (2000) observes:

Experiences are both the quicksand on which we cannot build and the material with which we do build. . . . A method has to be found that makes it possible to work on experiences and to learn from them. (quoted in Walsh 2006, p. 978).

While we consider this work to be of the utmost importance in educational research, we are not insensible to its challenges and complexities. Questions as to how we inquire into and understand the dynamics of human experience, into the subjective states of first-person consciousness, have perennially perplexed philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists. The study of consciousness as central to the very understanding of our everyday existence as human beings has been caught in numerous volatile debates across time. William James (1890) considered consciousness as “the stream of thought, . . . of subjective life” (James 1890, i, 239). More recently, in one of the many philosophical and psychological turns of modernity and its aftermath, Blackmore (2001) has decried consciousness as nonexistent: “There is no stream of vision. And if we think there is, we are victims of the grand illusion” (p. 3). With developments in computer science and neurotechnology, disputes about consciousness have duly shifted, evident in contemporary scientific turf wars. Searle (1997) and Dennett (1991) notoriously have been at loggerheads on whether conscious states are little more than the epiphenomenal echoes of neurochemically induced brain activity.

This chapter however does not concern itself directly with the veracity of these deeper ontological and philosophical questions. Rather its intention is to focus more pragmatically on the question of how to inquire meaningfully into multilayered subjective states of human consciousness (given our belief that such states are at least as significant as resource and material conditions in the determination of educational outcomes). In particular, how can we come to understand, interpret, and potentially transform the psychosocial meanings attached to our sense of self-identity in the shifting worlds we inhabit and, in particular, the shifting worlds of education? Traditional notions of self-identity as something fixed and unchanging, something inside of us “like the kernel of a nut” (Currie 1998, p. 2), give way to alternative notions that self-identity can never be something that is solely interior because identity as lived and experienced is necessarily relational with the world, with the Other, and with our own and others’ histories (O’Grady 2014). Given the largely unsayable and unknowable dimensions of our so-called “fluid, protean, and problematical” lived

experience (Lasch 1984, p. 32), aspects of which are difficult to grasp and articulate, we draw on the use of the mask in research as a specific, culturally rich, mediating object that holds complex notions of identity and self as its essence.

We also draw on those notions of “self” articulated by Kristjansson’s “alternative self-paradigm” (2010, p. 237), which is rooted in something like a commonsense view of the self. Here the self is not fixed, immutable, and intransigent but a composite, fluid, dynamic entity—a locus of one’s core and peripheral/transitory senses of personal history, memories, emotions, positionality, commitments, traits, aspirations, and ideals, some or all of which may be more or less salient depending on external conditions or specific context. Here we emphasize three essential elements that facilitate our understanding and use of the mask as both object of enquiry and heuristic tool in the practices of educational research: (i) The mask, with its inside/outside materiality, opens up and metaphorizes the paradoxes or contradictions inherent in self-material. (ii) Following James, we see the self as not “cognized only in an intellectual way,” but rather than when “it is found, it is felt” (1890, p. 299) with emotions essential to the sense of selfhood. The mask as object incarnates or enfleshes, makes manifest, the immateriality of the “felt.” (iii) The arithmetic, for sure, offers an account of behavior and achievement but such an account must perforce avoid the spiritual, the unsaid, or, to put it another way, the nooks and crevices wherein both student and teacher occupy spaces that have no business being performatively recast. “Elected silence sing to me and beat upon my whorled ear. . . .” In these lines from “The Habit of Perfection”, the nineteenth-century poet, Hopkins opens up this spiritual or transcendent self to the possibility of embracing what Rudolf Otto considered “das ganz andere” (the (w)holy other). This sense of the spiritual and the mystical (even if it is merely epiphenomenal of material life) remains real and is often to be found in the students withdrawing from the practices of the classroom or the teacher’s desire not to be cast performatively. The mask facilitates, what Hopkins terms, “the inscape” of personal and social life (Conroy et al. 2013). In other words, landscapes paint a kind of exterior and inscape of the whorled interior—so too with research—the numbers may offer a set of contours by which we can map certain pathways across a given terrain, but what is of interest and what determines what happens on the way across such a path may lie underneath—in the inscape.

Faces, Masks, and Embodiments of Self

Masks and mask making have rarely, until recently, been associated with social and educational research. Yet, from the rock paintings of the San and other preliterate cultures to the theaters of antiquity, masks have been ever-present artifacts in psycho-spiritual being and social exchange. They are most often associated with the stylized artistic expression in classical Greek and Roman theater out of which eventually emerged the culture of facial acting. More recently, academic research has been undertaken in mask iconography and in anthropology, but, as Johnstone (1981) has

argued, we do not know much about masks in Western culture, partly because, historically, the church considered masks as pagan, confiscating them because of their perceived association with native rituals and trance states. In the fields of anthropology and theater studies, there has however been a resurgence of academic interest in masks. In modern performance, for example, in the *commedia dell'Arte* tradition, masks are enjoying a comeback, where, theatrically, they are viewed as “a sort of vehicle, drawing the whole body into an expressive use of space, determining the particular movements which make the character appear” (Lecoq 2005, p. 56).

For most individuals, a consciousness of self includes a sense of embodiment and, as Cole (1999) suggests, perhaps “the body-part we feel most embodied in is our face” (p. 301). The face is a unique identifier¹—“masks can be the face itself, something worn before the face or the entire body” (Sorrell 1973, p. 3). Moreover, facial embodiment is also central for our emotional existence and for our social relations—“I exist in the facial expression of the other as they do in me” (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 113). And it is in this potential—the power of the mask to instantiate, embody, and project lived experience—that drives us towards its unique possibilities as a mediating tool in research concerned to inquire into the multiple and contradictory dynamics of the subjective experiences of those who engage in social and educational spaces.

Masks as Elemental to the Imaginary of Teaching

Parini (2005) considers teaching as a creative form of theater in which teachers craft their teaching personae as deliberate choices and use different appearances on different occasions. In this sense this donning of the persona in the service of the moment; the occasion is redolent of the changing of theatrical masks. It is indeed a modest step to recognize the role of the mask as both metaphor for and the embodiment of the professional persona. Hence, in one interpretation, the promulgation of the teacher’s mask in educational discourse is suggestive of some sort of necessary bifurcation in the professional personality/identity whereby teachers *should* construct some prosthetic and some false self at the expense of their “true (r) self,” which they *should* keep hidden from the external world of the classroom, including personal beliefs, and passion only some of which *should* be permitted to progressively filter through the teaching persona. In this reading the mask is deemed to be yet another singular and limited stratagem in the pursuit of a technician and performative agenda. In other words, it is a professional cover to be deployed in the pursuit of particular ends and as such is vulnerable to being stripped away to reveal the “real.” It is this somewhat clichéd reading that, in the everyday transactions of schooling, exposes it to a loss of force, mostly prosaically seen in the desire of students to strip it away.

¹ Identical twins excepted and even then there are unique elements.

There is however an alternative more “promethean” way to construe the mask. Drawing on the conceit of the persona in Greco-Roman theater, Jung regarded the “social mask [as something] that one wears to adapt to the perceived expectations of others” (Russell-Chapin and Rybak 1996, p. 173). More than a “thing” to be donned it evinces “a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, . . . designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual” (p. 93). For Jung the mask as persona is an archetype, suggesting that there is an inevitability and ubiquity to its “being.” While differing cultures or societies may establish the value and hierarchy of differing personae, nonetheless whatever the context, they function as a means of facilitating relationship and exchange between the social world and the interiors that individuals inhabit. Early on Jung frequently deployed the concept of archetype as akin to a Kantian category or a Platonic idea—a type of “organising form to our mental life” (Mayes 2010, p. 1). Later, however, he revised his thinking, defining archetype more as a universal inclination or image that attaches to highly charged universal emotional states. Segal (1999) describes an archetypal experience as not any emotional event but one, which is overwhelming or extraordinary. Thus, masks are to be considered as archetypal, constructive, and purposeful means of self-representation that both present and disguise and portray and conceal the passions themselves. Post-Jungian therapist, Hopcke (1995) observes that Jung “saw the persona as a vital sector of the personality which provides the individual with a container, a protective covering for his or her inner self.” Despite the postmodern critique of Jungian essentialism and its apparent lack of political and cultural engagement (see Hauke 2000; Rowland 2001 for well-presented defenses), we argue that there is a contemporary, heuristic value in adopting a Jungian framework of the persona as a constitutive feature of subjectivity for exploring the complex interface of the personal and professional in teacher identity and of understanding the role of myths and archetypes in teacher identity. In doing so we recognize that in the course of a lifetime, many personae will be worn and several may be combined at any one moment. Masks viewed as archetypal personae represent and disguise the passions that inhabit classrooms and mediate sensibly (consciously and unconsciously) between internal and external worlds. So it is that the masks embody a plurality of selves; a polyphony of masks pertains rather any singular notion of the teachers’ mask, thus more fully reflecting the diverse range of activities, obligations, and entailments of teaching in contemporary culture. Despite political imperatives over the last 10–20 years that aim to reduce their spheres of professional influence, teachers, individually and collectively, continue to assert/reassert their desire for autonomy and capacity for judgment.

Research, Mask Work and Archetypal Reflexivity

Of course within the research domain, if we are to understand the important effect of facial experience on our whole experience of and sense of self, we have to do something more than simply introspect. Reflection and reflexivity have become

ubiquitous, almost virtuous, in educational research (Lynch 2000), most frequently presented through forms of introspective writing that insinuate themselves into research texts and, while occasionally insightful, rarely offer more than mundane exposition of under-interrogated thought and behavior (by the researcher and/or the researched). As things stand it can be challenging to determine whether reflexivity offers a methodological basis for enhancing objectivity or functions as a critical weapon for undermining forms of deracinated objectivism (Lynch *op cit.* p. 26).

Nevertheless, the world of social and educational research has been extending its boundaries, increasingly embracing more artful, nonverbal, and creative methodologies that enrich possibilities for capturing the ineffable. The task of using such “transgressive” modes of research encounter is to ensure that they are not, in their turn, domesticated as yet one more banal datum in an agglomeration of surface accounts of efficacy and experience. A willingness to experiment with alternative approaches carries the potential to challenge traditional/empirical methods that reduce human experience to knowledge claims of certainty, rather seeing truth and knowledge as individual, contextual, contingent, and always in process. Embodied knowledge is a way of knowing that goes beyond the intellectual, logical, and rational mode of thinking to include emotions, culture, physical sensation, and life experiences. Writing and traditional forms of inquiry and representation, we argue, do not completely convey embodied knowledge in the same way that an image, a poem, a sculpture, a performance, or indeed a personal artifact like a mask can do (Leitch 2006).

Arts and artifacts in research are becoming more commonly used in social and educational research (Barone and Eisner 1997). At its most prosaic, an artifact is defined as an object produced or shaped by human craft out of raw or found materials for a particular set of purposes. Possible artifacts range from simple doodles, drawings, sculptures, graphics, photographs, and clothing items though to computer-generated images and film. Although controversial, in arts-based research, poems, plays, musical pieces, and dances are viewed as both artistry and artifact. For research, artifacts can be considered as means to generating data, most commonly verbal. Soroke (2003), for instance, argues that an artifact can serve as a thinking–reflexive tool for researchers, as means to data generation with participants and as opening up opportunities for reciprocity between the researcher, the researched, and the public sphere. Masks we would argue can indeed be considered as research artifact, as a rich-mediating tool that leads to the unfolding of the storied worlds of educators and students, and others but also to be viewed as something more, as a symbol, and as an extension of the physical and spiritual being of the person who created it.

Creatively deployed in research masks are created self-images that can serve as “mediators” between “inner felt experience” and the outer world and, indeed, within and between our “inner” selves, including the deeper resonances with the collective. They act as the selective membrane between the “blooming, buzzing confusion” of inner, cognitive, biographic, emotional, kinesthetic, and sensate experience and the external world while also mediating between differently un-cognized or not yet cognized internal states of individuals, including the mythic.

So What Kind of “Mask Work” Are We Considering?

Data for this chapter are taken from Leitch’s (2003, 2006, 2008, 2010) systematic inquiries on teacher identity and teacher personal and professional development using creative self-study methods in various studies across UK and Canada. It is supplemented by Conroy’s readings of the liminal metaphors of teachers and teaching (Conroy and Davis 2002; Conroy 2004). Elsewhere, Leitch (2010) has reported the findings from her inquiries with teachers at differing stages of their careers, which have utilized mask making as performative self-study. In these exercises participants agreed to undertake a series of mask workshops for research purposes creating three-dimensional representational images/artifacts as embodiments of what (and who) they present professionally and what remains beyond the surface. The process initially required participants to work individually on the composition of one or more masks that represented the face(s) or personae they experienced in being a teacher. They were asked not to think too deeply about the task nor to be overly concerned about aesthetics, given that they were not artists, but rather to work intuitively, allowing whatever appeared from their “felt sense” or their imagination to find form as their mask(s). To do this, the teachers either selected from a range of preformed mask shapes or made their own papier-mâché mask using a range of available basic craft and art materials. In either case they could then decorate their artifacts in whatever way they chose using the range of available materials.

This was a contemplative yet practically engaging activity that required an unhurried sense of time and space where ethical boundaries had already been carefully negotiated. The decoration of the mask was considered as the vehicle for forms of self-disclosure not normally available to standard forms of educational research. Hence this exercise was not primarily pedagogically determined but was the ground upon which research was founded. In this way the mask functions as both a thing in itself and a heuristic.

What is distinctive about such creatively engaging forms of research is not to be found only in the “object” under consideration but in the way in which the role of researcher is considerably at variance from that of privileged “scientific observer.” Here she or he occupies a space that is self-evidently more that of a facilitator (or shaman) who keeps faith with the ineffable that cannot be expressed in words alone but can be better represented in the face, the eyes, the mouth, the gestures, and the symbols that come to adorn the constructions of self that are formed. This move evokes Campbell’s (1968) conceit of the “mythogenetic zone” which he describes as any space in which the language of symbols and related rites can be shown to have sprung into being:

The mythogenetic zone today is the individual in contact with his own interior life, communicating through his art with those “out there,” (Campbell 1984, p. 93)

We recognize that these inscapes (interior landscapes) can only be represented indirectly, symbolically, and partially. To allow for the possibilities that these

inscapes find meaning and expression “out there,” the researcher builds an “enclave of shared experience” where the images, words, patterns, signs and symbols, colors, textures, and sensations can subsequently be decoded, where the mask makers/mask wearers can bear associations to their present and their past and, vitally, to the occluded worlds of myth and symbol. For each participant moves in two worlds—the inward world of their own awareness and the outward world of understanding how social and cultural forces have become inscribed within their being and in their turn how they impinge on professional identity.

The resultant masks in all their color and variety then are the visual research texts, but they also proved to be avenues to self-mediation and self-definition, ones that rendered the invisible world visible not just to researcher but perhaps more significantly to the participants themselves. What we have found is that participants’ imaginations are roused by “the waking power of symbols” (Campbell, *op cit* p. 94) through encounter with their own and others masks and where they return to the world having learned from their own depths the grammar of symbolic speech.

Illustrations: Interpretation

In this final section we (a) consider how we are to interpret mask work as a form of research into the complex, porous, and striated persona of the teacher and (b) offer an illustration of how this material can be understood. What is at stake here is a consideration of the mask in research as a mode of reflection and understanding that not only challenges the easy dichotomy between inside and outside but also between researcher and researched. Of course dichotomizing tendencies pervade human exchange. Indeed, as teachers made and enacted their personal masks, the separation of “inner” from “outer” was common among participants. However, whatever its broader merits in the search to understand professional identity, we are not, here, primarily concerned with interpretation as a process of individual psychologizing. Rather the turn to the mask is an attempt to disclose some of the ways by which the relationship between individual representation and archetypal myths, such as the promethean teacher archetype (Conroy 2004), is to be considered. Interpretation is not linear and contained. Indeed, as they reflected on their masks as personal (and cultural) symbols and motifs that embody different meanings from inside or outside, participants found themselves encouraged to note the tensions and the meanings marked by these distinctions. Looking from multiple vantage points, masks offer embodiments of being simultaneously inside and outside self-experience and culture. This multiperspectival positioning was important to both researcher and researched alike. It offered a complexity that somehow approximates to the complex ways in which the inner and outer, the personal and the social, and the political and the professional are porous and interwoven in the lived experience of the teacher. It also keeps open the possibility of revision and refinement in interpretation for, as Peshkin (2000, p. 9) suggests, it is to be considered not as an endpoint. Interpretation is rather a journey, an act of

imagination and logic, on behalf of the researcher, which entails perceiving importance, order, and form in what emerges in the observations and reflections that relate to the stories and narratives that are, in a state of flux, constantly being created and recreated. Simultaneously attending to that which is presented on the surface and that which hides behind or is occluded pulls mask makers out of the narrowness of idiosyncratic and dyadic meanings, and demands confrontation with wider universal patterns and meanings.

If we accept mask research as opening up spaces where interpretations and meanings are continuously layering and delayering, accreting as we go we must, perforce, accept that these outworkings constitute a dynamic interplay between participants and their masks as symbolic artifacts and the researcher. Hence masks are texts replete with meaning in and of themselves while also being the objects of ongoing individual and collective interpretation. The research processes act as intermezzo that progressively permits unconscious contents *safely* to surface in consciousness. Notions of a singular evidentiary narrative provided by the authoritative researcher rapidly give way to more blurred boundaries between researcher and participant. But more than this, the kind of mask work we are proposing here offers a communion between researcher and researched that normally evades the standard compacts of educational research

Of course, as we have suggested earlier, this sense of the polyvocal is underpinned by the claim that the unconscious is irreducible to its personal manifestation; hence, in the interpretative phase, we propose a loose coupling of a form of archetypal reflexivity (Mayes 2002; Villate 2012) with a synthetic form of Jungian analytical psychology. Here “archetypal reflexivity” might be described as a type of deep reflection where people consciously consider the archetypes that are active in their lives as a form of teacher (and/or researcher) insight and renewal. The distinction made here is that participants extend their understandings by exploring through literature, religion, anthropologic readings, and the arts some of the key archetypal symbols and motifs that are actively invoked through their masks, amplifying these through further artistic endeavor and/or creative writing particularly in the forms of story, poetry, fairy tale, and myth:

Not only is a symbol autonomous, but it remains unknown and inactive till at some particular moment it is activated by an access of energy and so rises above the threshold and assumes a form capable of being perceived by consciousness. (Harding 1961, p. 2)

The synthetic framework/method of Jungian analytical psychology (Jung 1916) works to support this reflexivity by being both indirect and interpretive which, although this sounds somewhat paradoxical, is grounded in the *transcendent* function that forces the energies of the conscious and the unconscious together. It is the transcendent function that puts an end to division and that creates a symbolic bridge between the realm of the unconscious and the phenomenal world of human experiences (Semetsky and Delpech-Ramey 2012). It is through the encounter with the mediating object, the mask as artifact, that otherwise unconscious content is given form and made conscious and where meanings can be understood. The trickster figure as shamanic teacher is a notable representation of this symbolic bridge

between the imposed order of the contemporary classroom and the potential disorder that lurks within and beneath. As Jung eloquently has it, the trickster emerges from and refers humanity back to its earliest encounters with a world prey to disorder and danger, a world where rational, scientific morphologies, typologies, and analyses do not obtain. But more than this (and of particular salience here), “the trickster motif does not crop up only in its mythical form but appears just as naïvely and authentically in the unsuspecting modern man – whenever, in fact, he feels himself at the mercy of annoying “accidents” which thwart his will and his actions with apparent malicious intent” (Jung 1972, p. 142). It is this “cropping up”/emergence and disappearance that interest us in the use of the mask as mediating research object. It is through the encounter with the mediating object, the mask as artifact, that otherwise unconscious content is given form and made conscious and where meanings can be understood. For Jung the unconscious is irreducible to its personal dimension solely but draws its color from the individual consciousness and its interplay with the social and cultural. This perspective is reinforced through a reading of Vygotsky’s conceit of the imagination as constituting a functional unity drawing together the interplay between realistic and fantastical (Wertsch and Stone 1985). For him maturation, the high point of conscious development, holds the key to greater integrity of consciousness and the possibility of transcending the limits of one’s socialization. It is this dynamic interdependence of social and individual (John-Steiner and Mann 1996); the archetypal and mythic process that so strongly recommends itself to the educational researcher who wishes to develop a more intense understanding of what is at stake in the “life” of the teacher. If we wish to understand more fully why “what works” doesn’t always work, we would do well to understand the ways in which the life of the imagination intersects with the rational and performative.

While we are not here arguing for generalizability in the “traditional” empirical sense, we nonetheless consider the discussion of the following example as offering a case illustration of how mask making provides an intersection between subject and researcher. In doing so we unearth the teacher’s interpretation of the symbolic realm as integral to both their experience of mask making and the nature of the interpretation. This, in turn, facilitates the emotionality inscribed in visual symbols to reveal itself to the extent that the individual teacher is prepared to address and interpret the meaning. What also emerges from Leitch’s work over many years at this interface is that teachers are open to develop interpretations in radically shamanistic ways—ways that rarely takes place within the orthodoxy of educational life. What follows is an exemplification of how one young teacher engaged with the process of mask making meaning over a period of 6 weeks.

Case: Mask and Archetypal Reflexivity

In the case under scrutiny here, the teacher, E-M, who was 4 years into her teaching career, agreed to participate in a mask research workshop along with a group of eight other teachers at varying stages of their careers. The process was carefully

ethically negotiated. (Clearly dealing with such sensitive material requires a level of informed consent that goes beyond plain language statements and their like.) E-M worked in the behavior support unit of a special school for children with moderate learning difficulties, teaching general subjects and acting in a peripatetic role with children aged 6–9 years. Fuller details of the participant's professional narrative are discussed elsewhere (see Leitch 2010); however what we wish to draw attention to here is how embodying the mask and turning her gaze on significant visual symbols not only led her to engage with her current lived experience but also drew her into the realm of the archetype.

E-M took the task of composing her mask eagerly, using a blank papier-mâché mask as her base. She reflected later, "*I didn't falter in that I didn't think, "Oh, what'll I do? Oh, I'm not sure!", you know, I didn't have to stop and think about what I could put on it; it just did it itself really.*" Interestingly, the joy of making the mask was in sharp contrast to her experience of wearing it "*I don't like putting my mask on, It takes on a persona of its own. It's eerie and sad and somehow emptier than when it is off me.*" The final artifact was elaborate but decorated on the external surface only, and it was characterized by two sides:

I couldn't make two masks, one of my inner self (personal) and outer self (professional), because I could not portray the tension that lies between the two, so I represented this by the tornado on my forehead.

At one level of disclosure, performing her mask crystallized her professional crisis of identity; although previously obliquely aware of it, she found she was living and suffering from a seemingly irreconcilable contradiction between the values of the organization and those of her own deeply held, child-centered values. Composing and embodying the mask through enactment brought this dilemma sharply into her awareness. Subsequent processes of dialogue and reflection on the mask gave her permission to place these emotional issues and tensions within her wider biography where she began to formulate something of a rational resolution.

Turning her gaze on those images and symbols embellishing the mask that for E-M held the most intense emotional energies led her to engage with the archetypal realm, opening up deeper ways of making meaning and understanding herself and her relationship to the world. Her engagement with three of her most significant symbols serves to demonstrate the power of this form of archetypal reflexivity to unveil deeper refractions of subjective experience that are too readily dismissed from common scientific accounts of human existence and public (professional) experience.

The three symbols that most attracted her gaze for deeper inquiry were: the "All-seeing eye/vortex," "Chain," and "Spirit." Some of E-M's understanding and interpretations arising from her mask are presented directly from transcriptions of dialogue (between herself and other participants in the mask research workshops and between herself and the researcher), creative writing reflections, and a journal she kept. These narrative excerpts are interwoven with some interpretive commentary to aid understanding of the partial narrative.

The All-Seeing Eye

I could not convey the tension between my personal and professional context; I could not illustrate the tension that lies between the two. This is symbolised by the tornado on my forehead.



On the material plane, I read that a tornado occurs when two different linear forces meet and interact. And in the cosmos, this tornado is like the cosmic Vortex which encompasses the boundless universe. In my own inner spiritual word the forces are gaining their momentum – like a maelstrom of emotions.

Here she moves her attention to the pivotal feature of her mask, the eye of the storm, placed in the position of the “third eye” at the center of her forehead, on the sixth chakra point, that seemed to act as referent to her most intense experience:

The eye of the storm is the still point, it sees all; it sees the calm, happy, logical and bright side, a side that is true to me. It sees the confused, frustrated, angry and scared, dark side, a side that is also true to me. The tension lies in how the two can live parallel and in tandem with each other, as I cannot control one and I cannot define the other. There is a tension . . . like being caught in the maelstrom. . . . that is almost mirrored in the tension I feel in my job.

From this “still point” on her mask, she temporarily steps out of the maelstrom to gain some sense of perspective, while simultaneously reaching to realms beyond her own immediate professional dilemma, opening up not just to her own deeper emotional substrates but also to the eternal/numinous.

The “Eye of Providence” or the open eye is the invisible eye which provides perception beyond ordinary sight. It is seen as the symbol of watchfulness and the eye of God as the symbol of Divine watchfulness and care of the universe.

The Chain and Primordial Matter/Chaos

I'm not one thing outwardly and something else totally different inwardly, I'm, well, I think I'm kind of, I just am a mixture of the two (sides) all the time constantly transforming one thing into the other . . . the other, I don't even want to say "dark," but it's just messier . . . and yet sort of stronger in many ways than this side, but more layered, I think . . . and grounded by the "Chain" . . . which is felt like a big weight sometimes that's unbreakable and . . . I still don't know where this comes from. I think everybody has this messy, darkish side . . . but I don't think people have it as heavy as me. And yet, it is what grounds me

As we indicated earlier, standard accounts of the distinction between the internal (private) and external (public) life are challenged by this more nuanced account of the self. Inner perception is so often concerned with dealing with opposites, not thought but sense and "It is the archetypal symbolism that presents us with those inner unconscious meanings that, while being outside of the conscious thought, are nonetheless 'located' within our embodied experiences, in which the archetypal patterns are embedded" (Semetsky and Delpech-Ramey 2012, p. 71). Here E-M touches and finds reassurance in the universal through engaging with the concept of *prima materia* as part of her inner experience. *Prima materia* is the chaos and raw material of the universe out of which the "lapis philosophorum" is to be formed, an alchemical process which for Jung was symbolic of the individual's journey to wholeness.

Myth and Teacher as an Archetype of Spirit

E-M's mask subsequently became a source for storying. Creating myths or fairy stories opens up avenues to embed these symbols in narrative form such that their complexity can be marked even if not completely understood or grasped. It is in these forms that we find access to refractions and personifications of various archetypal forms rooted in teacher thinking. Singer (1988, p. xi), for example, observed that the texts and subtexts of the narratives that a person constructs regarding his or her life and work often have archetypal images and motifs. Towards the end of the process, E-M wrote a spontaneous child's spirit tale inspired by ruminations on her mask:

Once upon a time there was a being, she wasn't girl or a woman or man or human or animal but merely a being. She doesn't walk but flits from place to place, not flying or jumping or hopping or even swimming but seamlessly moving in a fluid alive kind of way. She lives in buttercups and other such pretty flowers, in hems of lovely ladies' dresses and in the clean fresh upturned cuffs of gentlemen's shirts.

She is the bright light, the inkling of something good stirring in your stomach. . . She is the little thing that makes your tears stop flowing when you have cried too much. . .

She can be found on the white foam atop thunderous waves, in the smile of a passer-by, the velvet of a horse's muzzle and in the pinky hue that promises a shepherd's delight. . .

It's sad that the world can't have her. It's sadder still the soul that cannot see her. On days she is not seen, those times are bleak. . . . If we are in doubt she will shrivel and decay, the birds will pick her bones and the mice will nibble. So let her not be 'Once upon a time,' but rater in abundance in our lifetime.

Here all E-M's magical allusions can be viewed as symbolic expressions of her inner unconscious drama and desires, which had become accessible to her through projections of herself as "free spirit." Early alchemists thought there was a spirit hidden in the darkness of *prima materia*, and Jung considered that the archetype of spirit was usually occluded by the chaos of everyday life. While she doesn't have access to the theoretical frames of Jungian psychology nor indeed feel its necessity, E-M has nonetheless access to the archetypal tropes of fairy tale and myth. She, herself, loved the surprise of this story, curious at how it emanated from apparently nowhere, and, even though not crafted, gave her a great sense of release and lightness. In "The phenomenology of the spirit in fairytales," Jung (1970) argues that "the hallmarks of spirit are, firstly, the principle of spontaneous movement and activity; secondly, the spontaneous capacity to produce images independently of sense perception; and thirdly, the autonomous and sovereign manipulation of these images" (Jung 1970, p. 90).

E-M's archetype of the spirit was her way of embodying her human quest to discover freedom, become spritelike, and rest in the psycho-spiritually foundational ground of being human. It is evident that her "sense of calling" in terms of one of the most significant archetypal motifs—teaching—is being severely challenged even at this early point in her career and, through the mask research, she declares that the work has instilled in her new ways of viewing her personal and professional life, arriving at a place where she begins forging some kind of resolution:

If I can manage my own feelings then I may instill some self awareness and emotional capabilities in my students which will give me some peace at least in my professional context where too much is mandated and prescribed for these children (in the special unit for Special Educational Needs) and at odds with my conscience.

Conclusion

Jung (1954) proposed that self-knowledge is an indispensable basis of self-education and that the route to such inner self-knowledge was by means of symbolic mediation between the conscious mind and the unconscious (Semetsky 2011). In the world of research, researchers are not psychotherapists. Consequently, it is not the role of the researcher(s) to search out the meanings or psychological significance of symbols but to act as mentor to a "sacred way of working," which acknowledges that there are no road maps in processes such as this. The researcher's role then is to act as guide, supporting the participants' searches for meaning, holding the research group as a safe space for deeper penetration, and emphasizing to the individuals that expression leading to self-understanding rather than analysis is the goal. In this way the subject herself is a partner in the research as a form of self-disclosure. Yet for the researcher, these adventures in mask-based research open up new ways of understanding the forces at play in the life of the teacher and how these might impact on professional practice.

(continued)

It is no part of the argument here that this form of psychosocial research offers a comprehensive account of qualitative research. Rather, we wish to suggest that many of the accepted accounts of educational research intended to establish forms of efficacy require supplementing with more nuanced accounts of how the self is placed in relation to the spaces of professional life. After all, the kinds of things that are likely to impede educational success are social, personal, and interpersonal rather than simplistically cognitive. Understanding how the myriad, yet archetypally grounded, ways in which individual teachers stand in the world and consequently assisting them in the exploration of the self and unconsciousness, is apt to open up new (relational) personal and professional possibilities. Moreover there is ample evidence (Day 1999) that the relational is a key component in the securing of educational research. Perhaps uncomfortably for a deeply grounded materialist culture, it is also likely to signpost the spiritual as a motive force in education. As E-M observes understanding herself carries the potential for improved understanding of her students. In this, it stands as a transgressive practice, interrogating and calling into question the normalizing homogeneous stratagems of standardized ethnographic research.

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8.8 Writing and the Articulation of Disciplinary Identifications: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Methodological Practice

Claudia Lapping

Introductory/Concluding Narrative: The Process of Production of the Paper

I want to begin with a reflection on the process of production of the paper that forms the basis of this chapter, which was originally written for the *Journal of Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*. There are aspects of the process of production that I am not going to explore here: for example, psychical resonances or punctuations into my personal history and upbringing that, perhaps, constitute significant associative strands in my ambivalent yet persistent attraction to methodologies of non-meaning, lack, and the failures of interpretation. The process can also be traced in my interest in the way we are captured by knowledge, which was first formulated, for me, in the concept of ideology, and in Althusser's (1971) "Ideology and the State," which I encountered as an undergraduate, and which later constituted my introduction to Lacan and to psychoanalysis. These histories, associations, and practices that constitute the process of writing a research paper are enigmatic and impossible to fully capture. My introductory reflection here, then, focuses on some of the more concrete stages or aspects of the process of writing the paper, as I remember them. My intention is to notice some tensions between different aspects or experiences in the writing.

One anxiety or motivation I was aware of might be described as a concern to better understand some aspects of psychoanalytic and, in particular, Lacanian theory and to explore how these might be used in empirical research. I always feel that my understanding is lacking and that I need to read more to avoid

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oversimplifying or revealing my ignorance in my writing. In tension with this is my concern not to be overly obedient to this theory and a sense that my ongoing engagement with Lacanian concepts can lapse into something that feels too dutiful, too captured by his ideas, in the place of an articulation of my own. Both these aspects—the desire for a better understanding and a desire not to submit—were present from the start, but reemerged in different stages or moments of the writing.

One starting point for the paper was a (mis)interpretation of a small extract of data: a moment in an interview where my participant, an academic, had stated quite emphatically that she “hated” it when colleagues tried to avoid teaching. My initial interpretation explored the possibility that she might be projecting her own ambivalence about teaching onto her colleagues. Initially, I was pleased with the way this seemed to trace an instance of unconscious projection and in doing so also constituted a (re)iteration of my own still tentative identification with psychoanalytic ideas. However, in discussing the interpretation first with the participant, and then with colleagues in a research seminar, I felt less convinced, and I couldn’t find additional data in the participant’s interviews to support my interpretation. Following from this, my initial idea was to write a paper that would explore how my interpretive process had been driven by a desire to identify with psychoanalytic theory. It is also worth noting that as I became less convinced by my initial interpretation, this reading of the data became more shameful and difficult for me to write about, and the initial instance of “hate” doesn’t appear in the paper. However, the notion of shame, specifically Zizek’s (2005) Lacanian account of shame as a response to a confrontation with lack, emerged as one strand or conceptual focus in the paper.

At the same time as I was thinking about my initial, shameful, moment of (mis)interpretation, and I was also reading chapters by Zizek (2005) and Butler (2005) about the (im)possibility of recognition of the other. These resonated with my attempts to trace my interpretation of my participant as not recognition but an imposition of my own insecure disciplinary identifications. In my first draft of the paper, then, I drew heavily on both these authors and the different ways they account for the subject’s experience of the enigma of the other. Their accounts of the impossibility of recognition between subject and other fitted neatly alongside my exploration of Lacan’s rejection of the notion of interpretation and his repositioning of truth in the discourse of the subject. This reading of Butler, Zizek, and Lacan enabled me to develop a more precise conceptualization of (mis)recognition, while remaining securely within a field of theory and theorists that was already familiar to me.

I submitted the first draft of the paper to the journal and received comments recommending, as I remember, major amendments. The two more critical reviewers both suggested that I needed to engage with wider methodological debates within the field and that the issues I was exploring had been discussed by other psychosocial or psychoanalytically informed researchers, whom I needed to acknowledge. I was in fact already familiar with, but inclined to dismiss, the debates the reviewers were referring to, but their comments forced me to rethink. Their feedback led me to reorient the conceptual focus of the paper from subject/other, to contrasting conceptualizations of “countertransference,” the focus of recent debates within empirical psychosocial research. These debates set up

opposing positions on the extent to which the analyst/researcher might legitimately use their own affective responses in the development of an interpretation of patient/participant. Reexploring these debates in relation to my analysis of data in the paper constituted an expansion of my previous, more abstract, writing on this topic (Lapping 2011). The additional interpretive work this involved enabled me to shift the status of interpretations within the text: to unfix and to speculate in a way that was both more independent of and also, therefore, I think, truer to “Lacan’s” ideas than the initial draft had been.

The process of engaging more seriously with other approaches helped me to loosen a fixed attachment to a Lacanian epistemological position that foregrounds ambiguous, associative features of language and is skeptical of individualized affective experience as a direct source of understanding. On reflection, I think, this identification had infiltrated my work beyond the epistemological, infecting my methodological and interpretive practice. Previously, as I suggested earlier, I had been both aware of this attachment (methodological attachments have been a central focus of my research; see Lapping 2011) and unable to find a way to escape it. At an epistemological and political level, I still react quite strongly against methodological approaches that foreground affect and recognition without paying what I consider to be due attention to the risks this poses in terms of the power to impose the interests and frameworks of the analyst/expert onto the other. However, the process of writing the paper, juxtaposing conceptions of countertransference to open up contrasting interpretive trajectories in relation to moments of data, enabled me to better tease apart epistemological and interpretive concerns.

I began the paper wanting to use psychoanalytic theory to explore some problematic aspects of interpretation in empirical research. The process of writing the paper has opened up, for me, the complicated interrelationships between epistemological and interpretive aspects of methodological practice in ways that perhaps aren’t yet fully articulated in the paper itself. They are hinted at in the contrast or disjuncture that emerges, I think, between the epistemological insistence on the dangers of interpretive authority and the similar but different interpretive itch to continually scratch at the surface of discourse.

One resource I might use to develop these ideas is Arkady Plotnitsky’s (1994) account of complementarity: an anti-epistemological practice that at the same time allows contradictory epistemologies to coexist. Complementarity, as formulated here, involves not a rejection of classical theories or epistemologies but rather their “*rigorous suspension*” (p. 11, italics in original; see also Escandon 2014). This suspension of epistemology allows and requires the constitution of radical disjunctions and associations between concepts, in a way that, rather than producing a new synthesis, acknowledges the inevitable loss, fragmentation, and metaphoricity inherent to the production of theory. Coming across Plotnitsky’s work after finishing the paper helps me begin to clarify the shift in the status of epistemology that was tentatively, perhaps, articulated in my writing. So, I am finishing this introductory reflection by looking forward to work yet to be done: to recognize epistemology at the level of methodological practice and, in doing so, perhaps to maintain the practice of interpretation in a state of rigorous suspension.

Which Subject, Whose Desire? The Constitution of Subjectivity and the Articulation of Desire in the Practice of Research¹

There is always a question about the extent to which an interpretation, in research or in analysis, articulates the desire of the researcher/analyst, as opposed to that of the participant/analysand. Is an interpretation always, to some extent, an imposition of our own discursive or psychological attachments? Is it possible to construct a relation to an other in such a way that an “interpretation” might emerge that does not simply rearticulate our narcissistic attachments to recognized identities? This paper is an exploration of the relation between subject and other. It is an attempt to keep contrasting conceptualizations of this relation in play, in an analysis of an encounter between two subjects within my recent, interview-based research project investigating academic practice. This aspect of the paper is an attempt to think through some ongoing questions that have emerged in my attempts to explore what happens to psychoanalytic concepts when they are deployed in empirical social research (Lapping 2011). My general stance has been to argue against the reification of concepts, or of psychoanalysis, or of the clinic, as a unitary origin for psychoanalytic practices or ideas. I would argue, instead, that concepts are necessarily reiterated and transformed in the process of research and analysis. So, in this paper I am raising a series of ongoing methodological questions and exploring these in relation to instances from my interviews.

My first methodological question is: how might contrasting conceptualizations of “countertransference” suggest different approaches to the process or action of interpretation within research? The epistemological status of affect and language is of central importance here. Within psychoanalytic theory significant positions are marked out in relation to the conceptualization of affect, understood either as directly accessible knowledge or as an experience that is always already culturally or linguistically mediated. These contrasting epistemological stances have implications for the direction of interpretive work and have been the subject of considerable debate within the field of “British Psychosocial Studies” (Layton 2008; Parker 2010). Broadly speaking, there is an opposition between those who articulate a naturalized, universal conception of psychological processes, who seem comfortable with the notion of an “expert” using their affective experience to produce an interpretation of an other (Hoggett 2008; Rustin 2008) and more constructionist perspectives that foreground the dangers of claims to authoritative knowledge, focusing instead on the discursive construction of the interpreting subject (Frosh and Baraitser 2008; Lapping 2011).

My second methodological question emerges from this constructionist perspective and the problems it raises for an understanding of the objectives of interpretive

¹The remainder of this chapter is a slightly revised version of a paper that originally appeared in the *Journal of Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* (2013) 18, 368–385.

processes: how might Lacan's (1991) distinction between "interpretation" and "the action of interpretation" help us to understand the articulation of desire in the process of research? For Lacan, the analyst's interpretation constitutes an imposition of preexisting psychoanalytic theories of desire. This is in contrast to the "action of interpretation" that occurs when the analyst provokes the analysand's articulation of their own desire: "...what's important is to teach the subject to name, to articulate, to bring this desire into existence . . . If desire doesn't dare to speak its name, it's because the subject hasn't yet caused this name to come forth" (p. 228). It is only when the analyst is able to bring the subject to the point of naming (their) desire, bringing forth "a new presence in the world", that what Lacan calls "the action of interpretation" can be conceived (ibid, pp. 228–9). However, since within Lacan's framework desire is precisely that which is excluded from language, any articulation of desire is only a fragile disruption of the more rigid discursive contexts that constitute the encounter between subject and other. This leads to my next question: how might we recognize an action of interpretation in the research encounter?

Jason Glynos (2002) provides a useful elaboration of how the Lacanian action of interpretation relates to a conception of "truth," and of what this might look like within psychoanalysis. He asks: "What kinds of evidence qualify as legitimate indices of the effectiveness of the analyst's interventions?" (p. 32). He suggests that an intervention will be judged "by whether or not it facilitates the production of more material" (p. 33), which itself can only be judged in relation to the singular discourse of the analysand: the "truth" of an intervention depends on whether or not it brings about a change in the structure of a specified discourse. An additional important feature of an effective intervention is "the experience of surprise," evoked when the subject is confronted with their own unconscious formations (p. 35). So, my final methodological questions are the following: How might we bring this insight about the specificity of the discourse of an individual subject, surprise, and confrontation with unconscious formations into a practice of empirical research? And whose discourse might be the site of "truth" within research?

The paper explores these methodological questions through my provisional analysis of moments from my interviews with one academic, a participant in my project. This analysis develops an argument about the encounter between contrasting disciplinary identities, suggesting some of the complex ways in which academic subjectivities are constituted in relation to methodological discourses. We may intend to be open to new ways of thinking, but we also defend key attachments to disciplinary and professional identities. This is both my fear and my interest in this paper. I am interested in disciplinary attachments, in the ways in which they support our narcissistic desire to establish an identity and in how they might be disrupted. This aspect of the paper explores the responses or disruptions that emerge in our encounters with the radical difference of other disciplinary and methodological identities.

I'm going to develop this argument by looking at articulations of subjectivity in an encounter between myself and one participant in my study of knowledge practices in higher education. The next section introduces this project. In the

following sections I explore three instances from multiple interviews with one participant, F, a lecturer in literary studies. The first instance is extracts from my field notes. I begin by speculating on the interpretive directions that might be suggested by three contrasting conceptualizations of “countertransference”. I then look in more detail at the way the relation between subject and other is theorized in the work of Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek and use their ideas to develop a fuller interpretation of my field notes. The second instance from the interviews comprises a series of moments in which F appeared to be exploring or attempting to name my desire or the desire of my research. The analysis traces the way her interpretation of this desire shifted in the course of the research. The final instance from the interviews is a moment where F and I were discussing a case study I had written relating to one of the other participants in the project. I use this to explore what it might mean to talk about a participant as subject of an action of interpretation that provokes a new articulation of desire within the research process.

The Project

The aim of the study was to enhance understandings of unconscious relations within institutionalized disciplinary practices. In order to do this, the methodology drew explicitly on psychoanalytic approaches. Participants in the project—eight academics in the humanities and social sciences—were interviewed eight times each. For the first five interviews, participants were asked to select a text that in some way represented their field of research, and this text acted as the initial prompt for the interview. The interviews began with participants reflecting on their choice of text, their experience of reading/writing the text, and their thoughts and feelings about it. My interventions within the interviews were intended to elicit additional meanings or associations. I also shared initial “interpretations” with participants during the interviews. These interventions were intended to draw participants’ attention to ways in which they might be idealizing, denigrating, objectifying, or identifying with aspects of their practice and to provide opportunities for them to elaborate, correct, or refine these interpretations. In practice, in the early stages of the project, it didn’t feel as if there was as much time as I had hoped to discuss and refine interpretations within the interviews, so I introduced an additional stage to the study. After the fifth interview, I wrote a detailed (10–12,000 words) case study of the first five interviews. After checking that they would be happy to read a written analysis of their words, I sent the case study to the participant, and in interview six, we discussed their responses to my interpretations. The focus/prompt for the final two interviews (7 and 8) was left open. In several instances we agreed that I would send the participant a chapter I had written that included case studies of other participants. A part of the following meeting was then spent discussing responses to these case studies.

Interpretive Directions in Contrasting Conceptions of “Countertransference”

The participant, F, whose interviews form the basis of this paper, was a lecturer in literary studies. Most of her work involved tracing connections between texts and cultural artifacts in order to “reconstruct where forms of thought come from” (Int. 2, 41:28): for example, exploring the use of metaphors of magic by literary and nonliterary authors. Much of her work was on the borders between literary and cultural studies, and she was familiar with the kinds of psychoanalytic and post-structural approaches that I use in my research. However, while I am relatively new to academia, F had been working in her field for over 20 years, and at times this difference in experience and seniority seemed to become relevant in our meetings.

The first instance of data comes from field notes I wrote following our first interview. Before this meeting F had sent an image as her chosen text. In the interview she talked about the way she felt the image in some way constituted a connection between different projects she had undertaken throughout her career. As she talked, I found it difficult to follow shifts between different projects and themes. She also talked about policy and practice in higher education, which I felt was of less relevance to my project. My notes suggest a sense of dislocation or a lack of a sense of recognition. The first thing I recorded was my sense of not having listened properly, and I speculated on possible reasons for this:

- *I felt slightly absent—not as engaged as I should be—not always following during the interview. I felt moments of being out of my depth when I couldn’t follow exactly what she was saying about her work. At one point I explicitly reminded myself to try to concentrate on her. . . but I don’t know if I did, and I’m not entirely sure at this minute why/whether that would be the right thing to do.*
- *. . . at the very beginning of the interview, F said about having just been interviewed for a longitudinal medical study. . . and how she’d wondered how anyone could possibly be interested in what they were asking her about.. she seemed to be equating my project with that. . . so perhaps I felt quite distanced/objectified. . . as a researcher in a strange other discipline. . . a social science. . .*
- *Her account [of higher education] felt rehearsed, unspontaneous, possibly defensive.*

As I have suggested, contrasting conceptualizations of affect and language suggest different understandings of the status of affective responses recorded in field notes of this kind. I want to use these extracts to explore the way contrasting epistemologies of affect and language, and conceptualizations of “countertransference,” might initiate different interpretive processes.

Some psychoanalytic approaches suggest that we might interpret our affective responses as direct signals or communications of our participants’ emotions. Racker, for example, suggests that if the analyst listens carefully, they will be able to identify with the patient’s “thoughts, desires and feelings.” He explains: “If the analyst is well identified with the patient, then the thoughts and feelings which

emerge in him [sic] will be, precisely, those which did not emerge in the patient” (1982, p. 17). This account of the possibility of communication of unconscious or repressed desire both universalizes and essentializes affective experience: it presumes that processes of identification can replicate the affect of the other and that we can distinguish an affect from its contextual relations. A slightly more cautious formulation of this conception of countertransference suggests that our experiences of affect might be interpreted as responses to the unconscious communications of the other. This foregrounds the way we respond to bodily and linguistic signals that communicate something other or beyond that which is within the subject’s conscious control. However, this still downplays problems associated with distinguishing a communicative origin of affective experience. This conception of countertransference has been adopted in various ways within psychosocial studies. Some researchers have been excessively ready either to claim identification with participants, suggesting, for example, that after working on a participant’s transcript, they might “feel inhabited by that person” (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, p. 69), or to interpret participants as controlling the affective responses of the researcher (Clarke 2002). There are also instances of more careful practice. Sue Jervis (2009) traces the physical and affective sensations that she experienced in an interview, linking these to specific elements of her participant’s account, and warns that researchers “should be careful not to make any interpretations based on the feelings evoked in them unless they are supported by other evidence within the research material” (p. 155). This echoes Racker’s warning about the dangers of becoming carried away by affective responses without carefully tracing their origin in the analytic material (1982, p. 19).

These approaches suggest that our experiences of affect might alert us to look for related signals of unconscious communication. So, my sense of dislocation in my interview with F might be a response to something in F’s own feelings about taking part in my project that she is unconsciously communicating when she tells me about her previous participation in a medical study. Or her unspontaneous, or “well rehearsed,” account of shifting practices in higher education might in some way communicate her own sense of detachment from her institution, so that my sense of rejection might correspond to her rejection of aspects of her working environment. However, the individualizing opposition this sets up between my affective responses and my participant/the other elides the multiple intersecting discursive contexts that constitute specificity of our subjectivities (Parker 2010, p. 20). As Frosh and Baraister (2008) have pointed out, the dangers of this approach, foregrounded in constructionist and poststructuralist critiques, relate to the colonizing effects of expert systems that claim to produce knowledge of other subjects.

Jessica Benjamin’s (2004) account of an intersubjective third space is one response to the difficulty of avoiding this colonizing relation of “doer and done to.” She suggests the possibility of creating a position of “thirdness” through a recognition of the inevitability of mutual influence that can help us to move beyond interpretations that depict one subject of the relation as imposing on the other (F imposing her affect onto me; or me imposing my interpretation onto her).

Benjamin argues that the ability to accept our own inevitable contribution to communication with the other “opens the space of thirdness, enabling us to negotiate differences and to connect” (p. 11). This shifts the meaning of interpretation:

Rather than viewing understanding – that is, the third – as a thing to be acquired, a relational view sees it as an interactive process that creates a dialogic structure: a shared third, an opportunity to experience mutual recognition. (p. 23)

In order to create this dialogic structure, Benjamin suggests that at times analysts might need to be able to communicate their own failure and vulnerability in relation to the interpretive process to their patients (p. 32). Returning to the question of my interpretation of my field notes, the relational approach that Benjamin proposes would foreground the way that F’s communications in the interview were inevitably structured in response to communications from me. It would suggest that one way to explore the meaning of my initial responses to F, to shift them from the “complementary” doer/done to dynamic, might be to share the interpretations represented in the field notes in order to develop a dialogic shared third.

The Lacanian perspective is similar to the relational approach in recognizing the dangers of imposing interpretations onto other subjects. However, in contrast to Benjamin, Lacan does not see this insight as the basis for reconceptualizing recognition, but rather as necessitating an alertness to *mis*recognition. As Bruce Fink suggests: “Lacan’s perspective is not that countertransference feelings do not exist, but that they are always and inescapably situated at the imaginary level and thus must be set aside by the analyst” (Fink 1995, p. 86). The claim that these feelings are “situated at the imaginary level” implies that they are always a misrecognition, at least in so far as they may be taken to indicate the feelings or unconscious of the other. For Lacan, the unconscious is revealed not through affect, but through symbolic relations. He shifts the emphasis of the training from the analyst’s receptiveness to affect to the analyst’s duty to disrupt imaginary recognitions, in order to situate experiences of affect as signifiers within the symbolic register. The symbolic register is a register of ambiguity rather than fixity, of incompleteness rather than closure, and a register that allows for the flow of desire across signifiers, rather than insistent, repetitive demand for “interpretation, recognition, approval” (Fink 1999, p. 26). From a Lacanian perspective, Benjamin’s suggestion that the analyst might share vulnerabilities with the patient in order to “experience mutual recognition” constitutes an imposition of the analyst’s demand onto the patient.

A more Lacanian approach to interpreting my field notes, then, requires me to shift my understanding of my sense of dislocation into a more symbolic register. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to sketch out some aspects of the signifying context of my interviews with F. This includes the discourses that constitute the “psychosocial” methodology of my project, the current institutional context of higher education, and, most significantly, the discourse of literary studies.

While it might be presumed that some mode of attachment to signifiers of literary studies is constitutive of F’s identity, I also have a relation to this discursive

field. My doctorate was an investigation of undergraduate literary studies modules, and my experience of the lecturers' facility in tracing complex chains of meanings within and across cultural texts left me with a sense of something tantalizingly beyond me in the interpretive processes of contemporary literary studies. My ambiguous feelings about my first meeting with F, then, might relate to my position in-/outside the contrasting disciplinary discourses of social science and the humanities.

So when, at the beginning of our first meeting, F's account of her previous experience of being interviewed constructed an association between my project and her interview for a medical study, I felt in some sense emptied out, not recognized, or too well recognized as someone on the outside of literary studies. At the same time, I found it difficult to follow F's account of her work, reiterating my sense of exclusion. The context of the interview might thus be said to have constituted a web of signifiers that fixed existing discursive identities, blocking the movement of affect across signifiers that might allow for a shifting of subjective positions within the interview. This blocked desire found articulation in my slightly negative responses to F, recorded in the field notes. This approach constitutes my sense of "dislocation" as a signifier, rather than taking it as a direct experience of affect, and thus understands it not as representative of itself but in symbolic relation to other elements in the discursive terrain. That is, my consciously felt affective response to F during the interview encounter is understood as a representation of a displacement of an excess of affect that escapes discursive articulation. It is a misrecognition articulated as a demand. This interpretation can be extended if we explore the theorization of the impossibility of the relation to the other a little further.

The Failure of Castration: Lack and Other(ness) in Disciplinary Identities

In order to develop my interpretation, I am going to draw on Judith Butler (2005) and Slavoj Žižek's (2005) conceptualizations of the relation between subject and other(ness) and of the disruptions that might emerge in our encounters with the radical difference of the other. For both these authors, rather than recognition, the relation to otherness implies a confrontation with lack, with the discursive limit to my subjectivity, and with the impossibility of knowledge of the self as a unified entity. For Butler, however, while direct recognition necessarily eludes us, it is possible to recognize a universally unknowable aspect of human subjectivity in our relation to an other. For Žižek, in contrast, the encounter with the other is an encounter with a specificity that is radically nonhuman. I will elaborate these two conceptualizations of otherness a little further and then come back to the extracts from my field notes.

For Butler, the social/the other is constitutive of the subject but also leaves an unknowable excess, an opacity within the subject. It is this unknowable, excessive

quality of the material out of which we are constituted that, she suggests, might also constitute an ethics of recognition based on the unknowability of the other: “It would be, perhaps, an ethics based on our shared, invariable, and partial blindness about ourselves” (Butler 2005, p. 41). This “blindness” relates precisely to that part of myself that is constituted from the overwhelming imposition of otherness that brings me within the realm of the social. Butler’s argument here draws on Laplanche’s account of the initial formation of an individual subject: “Jean Laplanche contends that the limit to full articulation arrives [. . .] because of the overwhelming and enigmatic impressions made by the adult world in its specificity on the child” (p. 70). This account is suggestive of the materiality of the unformed subject’s uncomprehending experience of the social world of the adults/others with whom they interact, and, crucially, it foregrounds the impossibility of these impressions being fully articulated in the emergence of the subject. Butler suggests that this impossibility constitutes the basis for our relation to the other in the transference. She says: “What emerges as enigmatic within the transference, then, is a residue of a primary situation of being overwhelmed that precedes the formation of the unconscious and of the drives” (p. 71). The relation to the other is here formulated as key not just to the formation of subjectivity but also to its persistent, enigmatic, unknowability.

It is easy enough to assert an understanding of this opacity within the subject, but, Butler seems to suggest, it can perhaps be evoked in its specificity when we attempt to narrate ourselves before another subject. She suggests that psychoanalysis offers a model for this encounter and describes the effect when this relation to an other who might receive ones words breaks down:

Subjects who narrate ourselves in the first person encounter a common predicament. There are clearly times when I cannot tell the story in a straight line, and I lose my thread, and I start again, and I forgot something crucial, and it is too hard to think about how to weave it in. I start thinking, thinking, there must be some conceptual thread that will provide a narrative here, some lost link, possibly some chronology, and the “I” becomes increasingly conceptual, increasingly awake, focused, determined. At this point, when I near the prospect of intellectual self-sufficiency in the presence of the other, nearly excluding him or her from my horizon, the thread of my story unravels. If I achieve that self-sufficiency, my relation to the other is lost. I then relive an abandonment and dependency that is overwhelming. (Butler 2005, pp. 68–9)

As I understand it, in this passage, Butler is trying to articulate the way the experience of the trace of the other is evoked at the point at which she, perhaps in therapy, in the presence of an other, attempts to provide a self-sufficient account of herself and at that moment is invaded by overwhelming affect. She constructs an association between this emergence of affect and her dependency on the other to receive her words, in order to constitute or affirm her subjectivity. This, then, is the transference: the reiteration of the original overwhelming constitutive relation with the other that is both formative and incomprehensible. It is through this encounter, Butler suggests, that it might be possible to constitute an ethical relation that does not exploit the other, by coming to recognize the other as an unknowable constituent of the self.

For Žižek, in contrast, the other evokes that *specific* excess that is excluded from the discourse of the subject. He suggests that what is evoked in the encounter with otherness is the inhuman excess associated with *jouissance*; and he describes the nightmare quality of an encounter with an object that might best be understood as that which is both beyond subjectivity and its eternal/external mark. Otherness is thus “*jouissance* embodied” as both “that which we can never attain *and* that which we cannot ever get rid of” (p. 164). In other words, the other reminds us of that which was both excluded and not fully excluded in the constitution of our subjectivity, on entry into the symbolic order: it is the failure of castration, the hidden shame of the human subject. He explains:

...shame displays a desperate attempt to keep the appearance: although I know the truth (about castration), let us pretend that it is not the case. This is why, when I see my crippled neighbour “shamelessly” pushing toward me his disfigured limb, it is I, not he, who is overwhelmed by shame. When a man exposes his distorted limb to his neighbour, his true target is not to expose himself, but the neighbour: to put the neighbour to shame by confronting him with his own ambiguous repulsion/fascination with the spectacle he is forced to witness. (Žižek 2005, p. 171)

This shame is ambiguous, focused not only on the fact of being castrated but on the failure of castration, in what is left behind, the continuing fascination with the possibility of *jouissance*, and thus the failure of castration to fully impose the law.

For Žižek the ethical stance is thus not to recognize or construct some commonality between subjects but violently to disrupt individualized, humanized relations by introducing the specificity of the faceless “thing” that had to be excluded in the constitution of my subjectivity. In contrast to Butler’s somewhat humanistic elevation of the subject as a primary point of recognition, even in its very unknowability, we might see a more theological humility in Žižek’s account of our subordination to an excess that we cannot capture in terms of individualized human identities. Alternatively, we might see Butler’s position as one from which it is possible to let otherness be, while Žižek reiterates the Lacanian itch to continuously scratch away at the surface of discourse.

So, in so far as literary studies constitute a specific other from which my subjectivity is constituted, and in so far as there are opaque aspects of literary studies that cannot be articulated within this subjectivity, it might be said that my interview with F evoked a disturbing otherness. This experience of otherness confronted me with my incompleteness, the gap in my ability to perform as researcher, and a certain, inevitable limit to my ability to concentrate on or attend to my participant. Because I don’t understand F, because I am in a sense overwhelmed by her otherness, I attribute my lack to her: *she* reduced me to a dull social science interviewer; *she* was being defensive (when in fact it is the unconscious relations between signifiers that constitute these interpretations). It is thus possible to see the research encounter as an analogy for my attempt to constitute an identity as a researcher. As Butler suggests, it is when I attempt to narrate myself as self-sufficient, omnipotent researcher while in the presence of an other that I am suddenly overwhelmed by a forceful affective experience of lack. This experience of lack is articulated, I think, in a sense of confusion as I am writing the field notes: “At one point I explicitly reminded myself

to try to concentrate on her. . . but I don't know if I did, and I'm not entirely sure at this minute why/whether that would be the right thing to do."

In some ways this encounter with the specificity of our ignorance, our unknowingness in the process of research, seems to me to be absolutely what we should be aiming for, as we investigate something that, from a Lacanian perspective at least, cannot be known and has not yet been articulated. If we don't at some points experience this kind of dislocation, methodological attachments may become fixed, in a rigid fantasy of control. However, there is a question about what we do with this dislocation. For Butler, it indicates, perhaps, a possibility of recognition of a similar overwhelming lack in the other (my participant, F, or the field of literary studies). For Žižek, it comes with an ethical demand that this very specific otherness—which is in no way similar to me—be allowed to disrupt the established discursive order (Žižek *ibid.*, pp. 137–8). In this instance this demand to scratch at the surface of discourse might require me to allow the terrifying or incomprehensible aspects of literary studies to enter into my practice in the field of social science research.

The final two sections of this paper look at two instances from my interviews with F where this struggle over discursive boundaries to disciplinary identities emerged in slightly different ways.

Relations to Signifiers of the Disciplinary Other: Identifying, Naming, Rearticulating?

Complex reiterations and disruptions of disciplinary boundaries were articulated throughout F's interviews. Sometimes these related to F's engagement with other disciplines. She seemed both fascinated and surprised by the questions that occupied them, and her account shifted between denigration and idealization of their practices. In other instances F's exploration of disciplinary boundaries seemed to relate to my own work and an attempt to name my desire, or the desire of the research. In these instances, it appeared possible that just as the interpretations of the analyst articulate desire as reiterated demand, so F's interpretations of the project reveal something of her own reiterated demand for recognition. This appeared to relate to her overwhelming sense of institutional pressures.

In our first interview, when she was describing the pressures to publish and the impact that had on her field, F made a reference to what my other participants might have told me:

I've been around before this kind of real pressure descended on us, and there was a time when, in my field – I'm sure your other interviewees have said this or will say this to you – that you could know your field. (Int. 1, 25:20)

There are several interesting things about the parenthetical interjection in this extract. The fact that it emerges at all is suggestive of the way a concern about the nature of my project hovers nearby, punctuating the interviews. More specifically,

this concern is articulated as a comment relating to institutional pressures. While there is an explicit identification with other participants in the aside, there is also an identification with me/my project. In a sense F is naming my project here, suggesting what it might be about the kinds of things participants might say and therefore, implicitly, the kinds of things that I might be interested in. What is foregrounded and generalized in this identification is the institution, or institutional pressures, while other possible aspects of both the participants and the project are momentarily obliterated.

F's interpretation of my project seemed to shift significantly as the interviews progressed, and she drew on her ongoing experience of my responses in our meetings. For example, when she was talking about her participation in a multidisciplinary seminar where there had been a discussion of the ethics of ethnography, she speculated about a "voyeuristic desire, something that is about your own pleasure and being able to look upon the practices of these others" and suggested "they're your fundamental questions aren't they? Why do we do it? And how do we feel about it?" (Int. 5)—naming my desire/the desire of the project. In interview six, when she had read the case study based on her own interviews, she began by commenting: "It's interesting. None of it's a surprise, really, I think." This apparent refusal of difference suggests, perhaps, an attempt to occupy the desire of the other, my project in this instance. It replicates, perhaps, the interest F also showed in other disciplinary fields, rearticulating their questions, subsuming their interests within a language that she could control. One way of dealing with the disciplinary other seemed to be for her to take the position of subject within the interpretive process.

This is, of course, my interpretation, an imposition onto a brief moment in F's discourse. One aim of my approach throughout the project was to find ways to disrupt my own interpretations. In line with this, in interview 8, when I was in the early stages of writing this paper, I told F my provisional thoughts about her attempts to interpret the project. She reflected:

Perhaps the process starts off with me wondering what's required of me. And then once you'd shown me the work that you'd done, and then I get some sense of what you're doing with it, and that's sort of revealed, isn't it? And then I suppose it's that reflection on whether that's what I thought I was doing, and whether it's a surprise that it comes out in that way, or it's a surprise that those things come out of it. Yeah, it does make sense. (Interview 8, 03:35)

I wonder if this moment of joint reflection on my interpretation in some way corresponds to Benjamin's account of the construction of a dialogic space: Does this represent an open negotiation of our differences, in which we, momentarily, experience recognition? Or does it reaffirm the ongoing unraveling of the attempt to interpret? Where Benjamin's approach suggests we might allow this exchange to rest, as a momentary construction of a dialogic, shared third, Lacan directs us to scratch at each signifier for eruptions of affect and exclusions of meaning. We might, for example, note F's repetition of the signifier "surprise," which I hadn't used in summarizing my interpretations to her, but which had appeared in the previous interview. F's use of the word again here might suggest that this signifier

captures something and that it perhaps covers over a more complex affect in her relation to knowing and not knowing.

It is thus worth noting the way alternative psychoanalytic frameworks might suggest contrasting interpretations of F's relation to other disciplines. A Kleinian interpretation might foreground the reparative aspect of her interest in my project and in other disciplines, as in some way making up for her more negative fantasies about their oddity or lack of worth. A more Lacanian interpretation foregrounds the way F's very identity is bound up in the discursive constitution of literary studies, suggesting the dangerous territory of nonidentity that she enters when she trespasses into other fields. However, in order to explore the specificity of F's unconscious relation to these other discursive identities, we would need to explore her own articulation of what this might mean to her. When, later in interview eight, I suggested that her interest in other fields might be understood as "your own kind of colonial expansion" or "a kind of acquisition," she reflected:

I don't know which way round these two things come, but I hate ignorance, and any kind of unfounded statement, kind of proclamation, and unquestioned assertions of things. And I really, really dislike it, in a disproportionate way, when people say things like, "well, this is the case," "global warming is this." And I think I have a responsibility not to say things like that or to let things like that go unchallenged. (Int. 8, 17:15)

This initial, provisional account of her relation to ignorance opens up a possible direction that might produce an action of interpretation and a new articulation of F's unconscious associations to knowledge, to ignorance, and to other disciplines.

The Action of Interpretation: Disrupting Disciplinary Boundaries

The final instance I want to explore suggests how our encounter within the research process might have constituted an action of interpretation—in Lacanian terms—that, momentarily, allows desire to speak its name.

As I have suggested, the study was designed to enable participants to engage in the interpretive process: the multiple interviews, the case study, and the possibility of reading and responding to the chapter with case studies of other participants. Although this had been in my mind in designing the process, I had not fully thought through how I might respond if a participant fully took up this offer that I felt I was making, to explore what the project means for me. In the event there were moments that felt quite dangerous, when I was drawn into/enjoying the opportunity to engage in speculative conversations about one participant with another. These moments foregrounded questions about the ethics of interpretation of human subjects; they seemed to break some established boundaries, offering a moment of disruption to disciplinary discourses/identities. In a sense they constituted a liminal space in which the desire of the project was not in the possession of either myself or my participant.

One instance in which I was confronted with the instability of my position came in interview 7, when F had read summarized case studies of three other participants. She had been talking about her response to “Andy,” a lecturer in cultural studies, who was also an animal activist and a vegan. She began by speculating on his feelings about bringing his politics into his academic research and teaching. She then raised a question about the way I had interpreted his account of his writing. Andy had talked about the pleasures of writing but also about what he described in relation to one piece of work as “the fantastically anal way I structured the project.” This involved deciding a structure in advance—possibly generated from a literary source or a conceptual framework—and then rigorously sticking to this preconceived structure. F suggested that there might be further possible interpretations:

F: Yes. And I thought his stuff about writing was interesting, production, that very – producing, it doesn’t matter what it was, just the writing pleasure that – Is that something that you’ve thought through in analytic terms, about what that is? Because you’ve sort of thought about it as a relationship between form and content [. . .] but it seems so Freudian. It seemed much more like a kind of, *jouissance*, didn’t it, that he was describing. (Interview 7)

In my memory of this moment, I felt discomfited by the sense of the inadequacy of my initial interpretation and also immediately felt that F’s interpretation was far richer than my own. When she suggested that there was a Freudian interpretation that I had not explored, I attributed to her a far greater understanding than my own—the signifier “Freudian,” for me, both obscuring and challenging. There was a sense, at several moments in this interview, in which I was being positioned as student and I was consciously trying not to either resist or conform to this positioning. However, F’s reference to other possible interpretations of Andy’s writing evoked an overwhelming flood of ideas and questions and excitement at the possibility of talking about these, as well as insecurities about my grasp on these not yet formulated thoughts, some of which I had deliberately left aside because of various “ethical” difficulties I associated with this line of analysis. Where F had referred particularly to Andy’s account of the pleasures of writing, my garbled response raised the possibility of a relation between his use of preconceived structures in his writing and veganism as a mechanism for control:

CL: Yeah, an abstract – it’s also about – I haven’t thought it through, but the whole notion of veganism and the reason for veganism, the reason for animal activism, there’s something quite similar in that. There’s something similar in this kind of control and having a system to direct you, once you’re a vegan you know what you’re doing, that’s kind of – I don’t know if this is what you? – And when he talked about the ‘why’ – I can’t remember if this came up in one of the late interviews, some kind of an account of how he became – what is it? Is it, in fact, an affection for animals? And he presented it as a pure rational argument, he said, ‘the animal activism is because I thought about it and it was the right thing.’ I wasn’t expecting that kind of refusal of affect there, and that, to me, felt – it resonated with this abstractive structure, which isn’t really an abstractive structure, because there is something underneath it, why would you – I can think through the rationality of veganism and I’m still not a vegan. So, there’s obviously something else, there’s that sort of other thing that’s kind of driving this slightly –

This intervention feels like a garbled tumbling of ideas. First I refer to reasons for veganism—meaning, I think, psychoanalytic interpretations, which I had briefly discussed with Andy and which I was aware that he found reductive and not particularly helpful. Then I make a direct appeal to F—“I don’t know if this is what you?”—seemingly wanting some sort of affirmation of this idea. In the next sentence I leap to another moment in my interviews with Andy, where I had been surprised by an apparent resistance in his account of why he became a vegan. I’m also coining this odd word “abstractive.” At the end of the extract I seem to make a link back to something like the unconscious or, perhaps, F’s reference to “jouissance.” This inarticulacy is suggestive of something not yet named, a desire waiting to be spoken.

In the following interventions F seemed to articulate a coherent version of ideas I had failed to formulate, talking about eating and the codes of what goes into/out of the body. I interrupted to make a link to Andy’s use of the term “anal,” and we appeared to come to a moment of shared interpretation, when F responded:

Yes, absolutely. It’s just what I was thinking about him. (Int. 7. 26:41)

Whether or not our interpretations of “Andy” might constitute a productive line for further analysis, there were several troubling aspects to this exchange. As we both interpreted this human subject in my research project—and there is something truly repulsive in this appropriation—we lose aspects of our own identities as neatly castrated disciplinary subjects. I am displaced from researcher to student; F is displaced from participant to tutor; but, further than either of those, we are both detached from the regulative security of our usual disciplinary boundaries. My garbled intervention might be interpreted in terms of Žižek’s account of shame as respect for castration, “an attitude of discreetly covering up the fact of having been castrated” (Žižek 2005, p. 171)—the “scientific” origins of social science forbidding the imaginative associative excesses of literary interpretation. This moment in the interview confronts me with both my inadequate, castrated knowledge and my inability to conform to the codes (self-) imposed by the castrating regulative context of my research. F’s fluency in articulating her speculative interpretations evokes and reveals my own ongoing fascination with the shameful excluded other that I have not been able to completely cast out from my practice: the failure of castration, as Žižek describes it. The castrating boundary between empirical social science and literary studies is ruptured in our exchange.

While it is easier, in a sense, for me to document my own shame in confrontation with otherness, it seemed that F was also troubled by the rupture constituted in our exchange. As we continued to speculate, she made an interjection that reaffirmed or attempted to reaffirm disciplinary boundaries:

F: Yeah, it’s very – if it were a literary text, if he was a literary text, that would be what I was thinking about. (Int. 7, 33:24)

The formulation of this intervention constitutes a striking repair to disruption of this boundary: the conditional “if” obliterating the already articulated speculations. It foregrounds something of the liminal and potentially violent nature of the

interview space: a space that, in this instance, actualizes an otherwise conditional disruption of our specific subjective discourses, allowing for the fragile emergence of new material. What happens when we are confronted with this evidence of the unconscious limits to our subjectivity? Can we accept these new eruptions of desire? Or do we need to obliterate them immediately to reassert the established orderly boundaries between subjective/disciplinary identities? The shame we experience in the encounter seems to work against the action of interpretation that evoked this disruptive articulation of the new.

Conclusions

I have been trying to draw attention to the shifting locations and modes of articulation of desire within the research process. In the context of research, I have suggested articulations of desire might be understood as tussles over its location in the possession of the researcher or of the research participant: Who can name? Who can bring forth a new articulation? Whose desire is the object of investigation and what does it mean to posit the desire of a subject as such an object? By positing the participant/project as the subject of a Lacanian action of interpretation that can bring the researcher to the point of a new articulation, we can begin to shift our understanding of the position of desire within research. However, it is also important to recognize—as Žizek suggests—the shame that is associated with a new articulation that confronts us with the unconscious limits to our subjecthood. This explains the rapidity and relief with which we retreat to more comfortable, discursively established identities.

This is important because, if we accept this Lacanian insight, it can help us to clarify the political objectives of research. In the Kleinian tradition there is a politics of reparation between distinct identities, and Benjamin's relational approach suggests a possibility of working towards an "authentic," co-constructed thirdness. In contrast, the Lacanian/Žizekian politics of disruption foregrounds the intense difficulty of moving beyond established discursive identities. This foregrounding of powerful unconscious attachments also points to the impossibility of controlling the effects of our interpretations. No framework can predict, and it is partially towards the seductive illusion of control inherent within reparative or relational approaches that Lacan's disruptive politics is addressed.

Finally, it is worth noting that a mode of this disruptive or shameful troubling of boundaries is also in play in the attempt to work with contrasting theories of psychoanalysis. I wonder if this is why we find it so difficult to engage productively across epistemological frameworks: our commitments to the epistemic status of different materialities act as guarantor to our academic and professional identities (Lapping 2011). However, while consideration of epistemological issues can help us to clarify and refine our engagement with

(continued)

research data, it can also distract us from an interest in the material itself. Any framework will produce unconvincing interpretations. Lacan may say we should attend to the specific discourse of the subject, but, as others have noted (Parker 2010), a Lacanian conceptual vocabulary is no guarantor that we will do this. My experience of the fixing and unfixing of interpretations in the process of writing this paper simply confirms how obvious this should be: that what is at stake in research is the attempt to keep my own desire in flow, to avoid the sedimentation of desire into a claim to know. To do this it may sometimes be necessary to stop the continual undoing, to pause, and let the words of the other be.

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8.9 Strange Attractors: Myth, Dream, and Memory in Educational Methodology

Alan McManus

Academia and the Art of Memory

It was my intention when writing my doctoral thesis on education (*Alchemy at the Chalkface: Pirsig, Pedagogy and the Metaphysics of Quality*) that it would be useful. While the academic adage, “there is nothing so useful as a good theory,” may be true, academic language is often dry as dust and meaning can be lost in rarefied concepts. This may seem a strange comment from one who spent 6 years (re)writing 92,000 words on metaphysics, and I do not claim that my writing is especially entertaining, but I have tried to make it memorable. Having taught English language for years at home and abroad, I appreciate the smoothness of a well-turned phrase and the jarring effect of a mixed metaphor. But good academic writers also know when to break the rules for rhetorical effect and will not slavishly follow the word order of grammar rules designed for Latin and not English. Indeed the revival of rhetoric among critical theorists such as Terry Eagleton¹ is leading to a reappraisal of the rigidity of academic writing style.

Even so, dialecticians’ distrust of rhetoricians is ancient. Philosophers tend to see Socrates as a martyr for the truth discovered by dialectic, executed for his opposition to rhetoricians. This distrust is not limited to philosophers but to the many academics and professionals who situate themselves in the tradition of Socrates’ condemnation of rhetoric, a condemnation continued by Plato, founder of the Academy. Critics of this continuing tradition see the “spin” of politicians today as utilizing the same sleight-of-word techniques used by glamorous *rhetors* in the Athenian *Agora*.²

¹ See Richards 2008, pp. 156–161.

² Richards (2008, p. 10) critiques “political journalists whose dismissive view of rhetoric as ‘spin’ makes them inattentive to the persuasive strategies that they also use casually every day.”

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Given the huge loss of military and civilian life which the emotional and non-factual use of language in the UK and USA has recently caused abroad, and given the fact that most of the political “spin doctors” responsible are still very publicly operating at high levels of political power, condemnation of rhetoric may seem justified. Rhetoric is a major theme in the work of Robert M. Pirsig (1999, pp. 359–381), and, to do it justice, I discussed it throughout my thesis. Without anticipating that discussion, I felt that my use of a rhetorical technique (a mnemonic system to structure the argument) needed, in the Introduction to my doctoral thesis, an *apologia*—especially as this system has, today, a low academic repute—and it is from that section of my thesis that this first part of the present chapter is derived.

Academic repute, of academics or of their ideas, while supposedly deserved by intellectual prowess, is a *social* value. It is one of the main functions of rhetoric to propose an intellectual argument in such a way as to overcome any contrary social prejudice. The history of scientific revolution provides famous examples in Galileo Galilei and Charles Darwin of both the support and the obstruction, by changing social values, of evolving intellectual values. The mob, the Church, the market, the state each and all may fight for ideas which are convenient to them (at one time) and against the same ideas (when they are not). Rhetoric becomes a necessary defense of an idea when the idea is perceived as “incredible” because it is against the mood of the mob, the *sensus fidei*, the force of an the market, and the concerns of the state. When these values are in support of an idea, rhetoric is unnecessary: the idea is “commonsense” and need only be stated as “obvious.”

Mnemonics are useful because they make argument and knowledge memorable. Familiar examples of mnemonic phrases are as follows: “Every Good Boy Deserves Fun” (for the lines of the treble clef) and the various versions (some more vulgar than others) for kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genera, and species. *The Art of Memory* by Frances Yates (2001, pp. 17–41) describes the classical application of the art: the imagination of a theater or palace of memory where *topoi* (“places” in Greek), perhaps under an arch, are repositories for themes or items to be remembered. Images (imaginary or material) in those places would locate, group, and sequence the “topics” to be declared. A method would spread with its success, and when different orators used the same topics, they became known as “common-places.” Commonplaces are “vulgar” because they are known to the “*vulgo*”—the population as a whole. The mnemonic system employed must be memorable; therefore it must be reasonably well known. The rosary and the Stations of the Cross (the latter involving a physical peregrination of the topics) are Catholic examples of the use of mnemonic images, while the trumps of the tarot and the Decans of the zodiac, once famous sequences of images, are now “esoteric.”

For a thesis on education as alchemy, my first choice (as the stages of alchemy are variously described and ordered and in any case known to few) was the periodic table. Primo Levi’s book of tales by this title is a lovely, funny, and moving example of a selection of tales each one based on an element—but in no particular order. Order is as crucial to mnemonics as liveliness (see Yates 2001, p. 97), and as I wanted to start with lead and end with gold (preferably encompassing mercury, sulfur, silver, and salt), this would have involved over 70 elements. And who,

nowadays, apart from industrial chemists and science teachers, knows their periodic table? Therefore, as elemental alchemy can involve the transformation of lead to gold, I chose instead the traditional rulers of a set of seven elements (or compounds). This set includes those two elements (lead, tin, sulfur, copper, mercury, silver, gold): the five planets and the two luminaries known to the ancients. These planets are: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury; the luminaries (light bearers) are the Moon and Sun,³ respectively. These seven rulers named my seven chapters (subsequent to my Introduction), and I allocated topics to a chapter according to the correspondence between the topic and the ruler.

In English and in many other European languages, the traditional rulers of the planets are Græco-Roman deities, whose mythology is multitudinous with images. I chose and then sequenced certain of these images, not in accordance with any inherent logic but rather with their ability to personify and link stages of my argument. Images for the chapters of the two luminaries are of alchemy (the Moon) and of gold (the Sun). Each ruler (chapter) has five images. Under each image are grouped the topics of my thesis. The fifth image of each ruler is what is commonly known as a “sun sign”: a place through which the sun “passes” on the ecliptic—its apparent yearly orbit around Earth. “Sun signs” are more formally known as “constellations.” The name denotes a group of stars (star is *stella* in Latin). There are 12 constellations and I employed them not in their usual order (Aries–Pisces) but in a sequence according to their rulers. The five planets each rules two constellations; the two luminaries each rules one. The 12 constellations are, following the above-explained order⁴, Capricorn and Aquarius, Sagittarius and Pisces, Scorpio and Aries, Libra and Taurus, Virgo and Gemini, Cancer, and Leo.

These 12 constellations are each traditionally associated with fairly well-known personality types or characters, which I used to illustrate my argument. These characters may be imagined as *extreme* examples of the variety of teachers found in school staffrooms (or department/faculty “bases”). They are intentionally stereotypical, as their mnemonic value depends on them being vividly drawn (*cf.* the traditionally very disturbing images of the zodiacal “Decans”). It is important to remember, even when contrasted or opposed, that each character is portraying values which—together and in harmonious relation with all the other characters—can compose Quality. Quality arises under certain conditions and the various topics discussed concern these conditions, especially as they occur in schools.

My use of the passive voice above “the variety of teachers *found* in school staffrooms,” masks the subject of the sentence. *I* found this variety of teachers in

³ Another traditional order, the “Chaldæan,” has the Sun between Venus and Mars. Both of these astrological orders are geocentric. See Couliano 1987, p. 131. The order I employed has the advantage, for a thesis on alchemy, of starting with the ruler of lead (Saturn) and progressing to the ruler of gold (Sun).

⁴ For each planet I started with the constellation traditionally known as its “day house” and then that known as its “night house.” The scheme works for either the “natural” or “tropical” zodiac—i.e., for constellations of differing or even lengths of ecliptical circumference (respectively). See Campion 1989, p. 35.

schools in Scotland, Mexico, Brazil, Spain, England, Italy, Turkey, and Greece, since starting teaching in 1990 (the order of countries is chronological of first employment). I started by teaching English as a foreign language in small private schools abroad and on summer courses in the UK and then in 1996 did the autumn term of a PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) and returned to EFL and care work and then did a full PGDE in 2005 (“diploma” and “certificate” are basically identical). One course was denominational (Roman Catholic) and the other non-denominational; both studied in Scotland. A result of this variety of employment was a rich pedagogical experience which, spanning two decades and the western hemisphere, would have been difficult to present as formal (auto) ethnographic data. This experience informed instead the passages which illustrate this variety of teachers.

Epistemology and Narrative Flow

An example of the mnemonic structure of the thesis may clarify its purpose and value: Chapter 1 is named “Saturn/Κρόνος,” first in this sequence of traditional rulers of elements and compounds. Saturn rules lead the base metal for much elemental alchemy. A traditional image of Saturn is “Old Father Time,” with his scythe of adamant associated with age and death—cutting off life from a body as a farmer cuts off stalks of wheat from their roots. Saturn is also associated with breakdown, caution, coldness, colorlessness, contraction, control, cutting, division, gloom, isolation, justice, knives, locks, melancholy, narrowness, negativity, obsession, pedantry, pessimism, rectitude, restriction, rigidity, sharpness, skeletons, structure, tension, thrift, weakness, and wounds.

The first image I employed in Chapter 1 was the “knife,” also an image Pirsig uses to illustrate the epistemological partition of knowledge into a hierarchy of concepts. Under this image I gathered together related topics of political and philosophical divisions analyzed (literally “cut”) by an epistemological knife, dualism, obsession, and nervous breakdown. All of these topics have Saturnine associations. Even the term schizophrenia (the diagnosis for Pirsig’s former mental state) literally means “ripped personality.” These topics were not only grouped by mythological association for mnemonic value: this association is highlighted by Pirsig as the origin of culture and therefore of philosophy. As “Quality is the *generator* of the mythos” (Pirsig 1999, p. 351, emphasis original), so too the *logos* (the rational order) is also generated by Quality—but born from the mythos. That we cannot recognize this is because we believe so devoutly in a modern “scientific” mythos. Therefore, only an ancient “prescientific” mythos will seem mythological (*ibid*, p. 373).

The topics in each chapter are associated with its main argument and also prepared for the further development of the argument in subsequent chapters. Grouping topics under images of Græco-Roman deities organized them and brought out the mythological associations which philosophers, ancient and modern,

debate. As the argument developed, it became apparent that the topics positioned at the beginning of the thesis allowed the stage to be set for Pirsig's philosophical and fictional performance. Other topics provided a backdrop to today's philosophical conflicts, with metaphysics highlighted and the *dramatis personæ* of Pirsig's first novel presented. As the argument progressed, image by image, the backdrop changed or different parts of the backdrop were highlighted as either Pirsig's fictional characters or my fictional teachers came onstage to embody the developing argument.

As the 35 images (5 in each of the 7 chapters) were chosen and sequenced to carry forward the argument, they provided at once the branches of an epistemological hierarchy and the tributaries of a narrative flow. The two constellations/characters for each of the five ruling planets (10) and one for each of the two luminaries (2) gave a total of 12. The number 12, in many European and Semitic languages and cultures, has connotations of plenitude and completeness.⁵ In personifying the argument, the constellation characters functioned both as exemplars and explanation. In each case, the constellations employed were not totally coterminous with the juxtaposed argument they illustrated; however the richness of the symbolism allowed me to choose those characteristics of the constellation which best highlight these juxtapositions.

Author and Authority

For a thesis which discussed, and consciously employed, rhetoric, obviously the issue of authorial voice was important. The first two chapters discussed the polyphony of Plato and the contending voices of Pirsig. While it would be possible—and perhaps illuminating—to conduct an *ad hominem* critique of Pirsig, my line of enquiry was in keeping with his authorial request that his narrative “must be regarded in its essence as fact” (Pirsig 1999, Author's Note). Therefore I focused on the narrative and not on his “private life.” When, however, Pirsig shares events from his life in the *addenda* to his books, I judged that he does so in order to inform interpretation of his argument and I employed these personal revelations accordingly.

For my own voice, I was inspired by a choir of educators who are not always in harmony (or even singing from the same page); however their contrapuntal tones are full throated in their expression of personal, professional, political, and intellectual values. Pirsig, of course, but also Plato, Martha Nussbaum, Mary Midgley, and, at the end, Grace Feuerverger. Plato as he is the ultimate court of appeal, as founder of the Academy, when dramatic narrative or lyrical exposition (as in Plato's *Phaedrus*) is considered not to be “academic” by people who have forgotten their intellectual heritage.⁶ Nussbaum (2001) and Midgley (1992), as the

⁵ For example, 12 tribes of Israel/apostles; 144,000 (12,000 from each tribe) “sealed” in Revelations 7: 4–8.

⁶ See Plato 1952.

unassailable erudition of their writing is combined with myth, metaphor, and passionate argument. Feuerverger, because when I was tempted to lose hope that the current orthodoxy, a perversion of pythagorism, “teaching-by-numbers,” could ever be overcome, or that policy makers, run by numbers, would stop treating pupils as products and schools as factories or permanent staff stop treating student teachers, probationers and supply teachers as scapegoats and punchbags; her *Teaching, Learning and Other Miracles* (2007) inspired me.

Voice became a central concern in the production of this thesis due to my over-enthusiastic months of typing resulting in repetitive strain injury and in dictation, employing both scribes and voice recognition technology. A supportive matrix (in my case both human and technological) embraces the lone researcher and problematizes any claim to absolute autonomy. The combative language of academia (“stance,” “defend,” “position,” “strategy,” “interrogate,” etc.) does not lend itself to the expression of the polyphony in which “we live and move and have our being.” This polyphony is often heard as a feminist (or simply female) chorus: “the language of women” of Ursula K. Le Guin; the blurred ego boundaries of Nancy Chodorow, and Dianne Tiefensee’s critique of “the male artist.”⁷ Mine is not a feminist reading of Pirsig—and the claim that someone biologically and socially male could have the experience necessary for such a reading is problematic. Nonetheless, I mention this topic here as it provides a context for the issue of authority, with its attendant academic supporters: quotation and reference. Although Pirsig does not focus on feminist critique, the intersubjective nature of his patterns of value may mean that his metaphysics of Quality is a conceptualization of reality more hospitable to feminism than the various versions of Plato’s abstractions which reduce our existence to numbers.

English-language academic style tends to favor sparse quotation and prefers paraphrase and translation. This is not the only academic style in the world. Its vaunted virtue is clarity and lack of clutter. Its result is a monolingual hegemony of discourse which privileges the authoritative academic voice over its interlocutors. My own academic style reflects my years of living and studying in Latin cultures whose language politics are not (now) as imperialistic as those of English. It has been wisely said that “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9), and the use of alchemy as a paradigm for education is no exception. Bill Marsh’s *Plagiarism: Alchemy and Remedy in Higher Education* quotes Michel de Montaigne plagiarizing Seneca on little boys among books as bees among flowers: they gather nectar not their own, but, by dint of their labor of appropriation and transformation, theirs is the honey of that harvest (Marsh 2007, p. 82).

⁷ Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Left-Handed Commencement Address* (1983, Mills College, CA. www.pacifict.com/ron/Mills.html); Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978, University of California Press, Berkeley) p. 169; Dianne Tiefensee, *The Old Dualities: A Deconstructive Reading of the Prose of Robert Kroetsch* (<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/6037/1/b14424897.pdf>) p. 243; respectively. All accessed 18/11/09.

The practice of “show and tell” (beloved of US American schoolkids), the process of contemporary documentary making, Italian Renaissance *poesia commentata*, the spirituality of Hugh of St. Victor, the pedagogy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the *Sentences* of Peter the Lombard are all in this great tradition of appropriation and transformation. Marsh situates education as alchemy—explicit in Montaigne, the Moravian bishop John Amos Comenius and Ivan Illich—in this tradition. In Pirsig’s terms, the pattern of values shown, documented or commented on, is not only contextualized but is appropriated by being valued differently. In this thesis, the melodies were diverse in origin, but the composition was my own.

Patterns of Value

The novel approach which I took to educational methodology is really not so strange when viewed from its point of origin: my dissertation (McManus 2002) written some years previously, for a master’s degree in religion, culture, and critical theory, which took the form of preliminary considerations for ethnographic study. The link with the work of Pirsig is at once theoretical and biographical, as one of the main inspirations for his conceptualization of “patterns of value” was a discussion of a “contrarian” in Ruth Benedict’s famous work: *Patterns of Culture* (see Pirsig 1992, p. 132 & *ff.*). Whereas, for my doctoral thesis, the patterns of value which operated as strange attractors were Graeco-Roman mythical rulers of the planets, for my master’s dissertation, they were those mnemonic sticky webs of meaning which the ancient Greeks and Romans believed to be the stuff of oracle (and we, mostly, the effect of overeating): dreams.

Text, Lust, and Researcher Bias

In the Temple of Reason (*cf.* Pirsig 1999, pp. 151–153), if the sophist is priest and the scribe acolyte, then the proofreader exercises the oldest profession. Whether our work has been in the production, the supervision or the correction of social science research text, the varieties of that ubiquitous illustration of “the research onion” in the Methodology chapter will be familiar to us all. Having been officially two of the above professionals over the years, and unofficially the other, the philosophical (at base metaphysical)⁸ categorical confusion and coercion of that illustration is as familiar to me as the scanty nature of the paragraph which typically follows the identification of possible researcher bias—and then blithely asserts how this possibility has been rendered improbable. At this point the thesis or dissertation

⁸ See McManus 2010 p. 115.

usually skips on to tricky problems envisaged in the data analysis and how they are to be solved. Researcher bias is, typically, never mentioned again.

It ain't necessarily so. Viewing educational research in the broader lens of social science allows us to take into consideration the debate on participant observation and observer effect which has, since (at least) the late 1960s, preoccupied anthropology in general and ethnography in particular. Published posthumously in 1967, 25 years after the death of the author (Llobrera 1990, p. 53), the real scandal of Malinowski's 1914–1918 field diaries of Mailu and the Trobriands (Malinowski 1989) was not their racism, homesickness, and lust but the fact that his official ethnography bore no trace of this and so pretended to be an objective account of the essential data. In terms of racism in particular and cultural imperialism in general, anthropology has come a long way since Malinowsky, Mead, and Radcliffe-Brown and is (at least) *aware* of its researcher bias in this regard. Edward Said has shown that "Orientalism is [. . .] a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient" (Said 1995, p. 6) and cites the use of a description of a village in Egypt to describe one in Syria (*ibid*, p. 23).

Josep Llobrera has a similar critique of the sign "Mediterranean" and speaks of "the Myth of Carmen" whose "Mediterranean" characteristics are clearly not to be found in either Catalonia or the Piedmont:

La etnografía del Mediterráneo constituyó su propio objeto al crear comunidades sin historia ni milieu. The ethnography of the Mediterranean constituted its own object by creating communities with neither history nor *milieu*.

(Llobrera 1990, p. 80, translation mine)

This debate betwixt and between anthropologists and ethnographers challenged my own cultural imperialism, when in the autumn of 2001 I spent 4 months in the Iberian Peninsula doing preliminary ethnographic fieldwork in an *okupa* community of *libertari@s*⁹ near Irunea/Pamplona and writing up and reading anarchist theory and Iberian anthropology in Granada, Andalusia. My near-native grasp of Castilian Spanish and my familiarity with the philosophy and indeed some of the members of the community from previous visits encouraged my rather naïve optimism for the success of the project. Concerns voiced by the community about confidentiality and academia called for a sensitive methodology. This was in tune with my own desire to write ethnopoetry (I have two anarchist poems on the community published in the Peninsula) inspired by the work of Hubert Fichte (1987) *Etnopoesia: Antropologia Poética das Religiões Afro-Americanas*, on *Macumba* in Brazil. I combined this with an (Italian) renaissance pedagogy of

⁹The "@" is one of the strategies of Spanish anarcho-punk feminist orthography. All Spanish nouns and adjectives show a binary division of gender: this "@" neutralizes gender and visually privileges the feminine "a" as well as referring to the anarchist capital "A" in a circle. Hooper speaks of the "use of a 'k' . . . [as] one of the orthographic innovations employed by the founder of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana, to differentiate Basque from Spanish, and for recent generations it has come to symbolize Basque rejectionism" (Hooper 1995, p. 284). My ethnopoem, the original of "A Perfect Anarchist" uses this orthography.

poesia commentata, which I had studied in the Spanish mystical poetry of San Juan de la Cruz.

I had lived in several, diverse, communities, and several facts endeared me immediately to this particular one, which I called “Erkametzza”¹⁰: I had known one of its members over a period of 2 years, when we studied together at university and when I visited him in two other *okupa* communities, also in the Pyrenees; I was used to community life, “roughing it” and working on organic farms; I was in the process of bitter conflict with the Dept. of Religious Studies of my university over fair funding, grading, and staff professionalism—and I made great scones! My previous sojourn in the Peninsula had culminated in 18 months of utilizing Freudian methodology to read poetry as dream. I felt that *The Interpretation of Dreams* might be useful in dissolving the emic/etic (insider–outsider) division and foregrounding the process of identification/rejection undergone by the ethnographer in the community as well as highlighting the fractured and/or relational self. The process of using this alternative methodology in the field (quite literally!) brought up a number of questions, considering the appropriateness of my methodology, which I decided to explore as *prolegomena*:

- (i) From a postcolonial perspective, what “Mediterranean” stereotypes may influence a northern European ethnographer studying anywhere in Spanish territory?
- (ii) What do theories on the “self” contribute to a self-aware methodology?
- (iii) Is anything of value in Sigmund Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams*?
- (iv) How adequate is a bipolar division of gender and of work/nonwork?
- (v) How should dreams with difficult and offensive matter be interpreted and reported?

My purpose was neither to attempt a complete ethnography (whatever that may be, apart from cultural arrogance) nor to exhaustively answer all these questions. Instead I aimed to illustrate the perspective of an oneirocritical methodology on the ethnographer, the community studied, and the relationship between them and to discuss the effect of this on an ethnography. In terms of ethnographic theory, I was attracted to Geertz’ (2000) “thick description” and ethnography as “deep hanging out” and Clifford’s (1997) work on transient populations. I was also influenced by the experiences of a growing number of—mainly female—ethnographers such as Donner (1982) and Cesara (1982) who, in foregrounding the integration process, do not see this process simply as a step towards the real goal (objective data) nor as a hindrance. Instead, as the ethnographer develops more emotional bonds with the community, the research becomes at once more subjective, more nuanced, and complex. Geertz defines the “study of other peoples’ cultures” as “discovering who they think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it” (Geertz 2000, p. 16). No doubt there is substance to Llobrera’s complaint that Geertz’ conflation of (social) anthropology and ethnography is

¹⁰I also spent 10 days in a sister community, “Chinebro.”

unjustified (1990, p. 39) and that, in “thick description,” “*el bosque de la descripción no deja ver los árboles de la precisión fatiga*,” [the forest of description doesn’t allow the trees of factual precision to be seen] (Llobrera 1990, p. 40), but his excommunication of Geertz is overdone.

Further to this argument, if Geertz and Llobrea are championing a right brain/left brain methodology, respectively, then science nowadays (as in pre-Enlightenment days) can sit happily in either hemisphere and especially in their connection. Can what Kitcher (1992) warned of in interdisciplinary sciences be a helpful corrective here? Should such sciences, basing their epistemology on other (“hard”) sciences, must constantly check and keep up to date with developments in those supporting bases otherwise the whole edifice falls?¹¹ Lloberea’s simplistic nomenclature of “*la antropología subjetiva, interpretiva o dialógica, o como se quiera llamarla*” [subjective, interpretive or dialogic ethnography, or however one would wish to name it] (*ibid*) ignores everything since Einstein about the effect of the observer on the system observed. If Geertz (2000, pp. 12, 13) can, tongue in cheek, state “Everyone knew that . . . the Tepotzlanos [were] either unshakeably unified or hopelessly divided (there were two anthropologists who studied them, one the student of the other),” then my questions would be: Did they hate each other? Did one cut off the other’s funding and the latter take ethnographic revenge? What moods were they in most of the time? Did they like the Tepotzlanos? How were they dressing, eating, speaking, and working and who were they attracted to and what differences did all that make to the community?

Ethnography Step by Step (Fetterman 1998) recommends choosing between a mentalist and a physicalist theory of anthropology—as a first step. Also called cognitive/idealist or materialist, the author considers this division as a given in social science. From Plato to Pirsig these contending options and their related aesthetics, Classical and Romantic (or Apollonian and Dionysian, as named by Nietzsche), have waged war: the former concerned with underlying form and the latter with outward appearance. However in my general reading of recent anthropological accounts, I felt that both approaches are important for the apprehension of the *Gestalt* experienced in the field. Kurt Lewin, commenting on the “variety of facts which social psychology has to treat” and listing examples (“values,” “ideologies,” “cultural,” “psychological,” “physiological,” “physical”), states that “it is utterly fruitless and merely a negative scientific treatment to put these facts into classificatory pigeonholes [. . .] we need positive means of bringing these various types of facts together in such a way that one can treat them on one level without sacrificing the recognition of their specific characteristics” (Lewin 1939, p. 871). He recommends a “field-theoretical approach [as] a practical vehicle of research” (Lewin 1939, p. 872).

Using this approach to discuss “the problem of adolescence” (*ibid*), Lewin feels that “a way must be found to treat bodily changes, shift of ideology, and group-belongingness within one realm of scientific language, in a single realm of

¹¹ Paraphrase of Kitcher’s entire thesis. See her critique of Freud, which I discuss below.

discourse” (*ibid*). His method utilizes “constructs which characterise objects and events in terms of interdependence rather than phenotypical similarity or dissimilarity” (*ibid*). He goes on to an example of a concrete research methodological problem in the field of adolescence “whether or not one is permitted to combine concepts of values with those of bodily weight” (*ibid*)—which “vanishes when confronted with the simple truth that both facts influence the same situation” (*ibid*). Iain Ross Edgar’s work on dream groups (1994) was interesting as at first I wondered if we were doing something similar. However, as the following quote shows, he is very definitely using a mentalist approach:

The base of my study is a “psychoethnography” as Obeyeskere (1990, p. xx) defines the study of the transformation of symbolic forms from and into culture. The base of the ethnography is a textual construction of the dream reports and the process of developing meaning in emic terms by the group members. Such a ‘thick description’ shows the creation of the ‘webs of significance’ that Geertz (1973, p. 5) defines as ‘culture’. ‘Psychoethnography’ cannot see the description of a material universe or a set of economic and political realities as its main task. Rather I describe the processual construction of meaning in a group setting. (Edgar 1994, p. 12)

From my (hopefully) more holistic approach, both “economic and political realities” and “symbolic forms” come clearly into focus. I have mentioned other ethnographers, but perhaps I was most inspired in my presentation of ethnographic material by Margery Wolf, who, in *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (1992), used field diary, short story, and standard anthropology speaks to tell her tale, bringing out different aspects of a dramatic incident in a village in Taiwan.

Freud in Crisis: Theory, Methodology, and Values

The self-conscious methodology that I adopted was to record and analyze my own dreams while in the community, using *The Interpretation of Dreams* as a toolbox. I hoped to observe not only the transition from English (and Scots) to Spanish (and Basque) but also the *Gestalt* of resistance and attraction to my self-definition as a member of the community. Using Freud’s theory of everyday events stimulating appearances in dreams, my dream analysis necessarily included substantial ethnographic material of a more traditional kind. Thus my ethnography was an example of the double discourse of symbolic/semiotic coined by Julia Kristeva and, while not pretending to objectivity, highlighted the selection of data and hypotheses which “objective” studies do not. My data was my dreams, a fitting form with which to study a utopia. Patricia Kitcher’s subtitle of *Freud’s Dream: A Complete Interdisciplinary Science of Mind* indicates her belief that Freud too was interested in “a single realm of discourse” (Lewin, cited above) in fact in “the synthesis of the mental sciences at the end of the last century” (Kitcher 1992, p. 219). However she believes that “the unsavoury reputation of psychoanalysis is due largely to Freud’s

misunderstanding of the interdisciplinary structure of his theory.” Even so, she feels that “perhaps psychoanalysis still has substantive insights to offer in the fields of personality and motivation, and even in anthropology and sociology” (*ibid*).

One of the principles of scientific research is verifiability: in this study I limited my choice of lens to that of Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1977) and published my dreams and selected analyses and forswore other readings so as to foreground the Freudian reading which could thus be verified or challenged. I am neither a psychologist nor an unquestioning adherent of Freud. Cognizant of the many flaws and ethical problems with his theory (not least his hetero/sexism), I nonetheless feel that his work on *latent* and *manifest content* of dreams has yet to be surpassed. Freud summarizes his theory of dreamwork (mental processes of the person while dreaming: not while undergoing analysis, *pace* Edgar) as:

investigating the relations between the manifest content of dreams and the latent dream-thoughts, and of tracing out the processes by which the latter have been changed into the former. The dream thoughts and the dream content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages [...] The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learned them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts. (Freud 1988, p. 381)

This pictorial script gives rise to Freud’s use of symbols and also the dramatization which is the “grammar” of the manifest content. By “condensation” Freud means “the amount of compression that has taken place” (*ibid*, p. 282) in the dream narrative (e.g., compression of time, space, and people/objects), while “overdetermination” signifies that “each of the elements of the dream’s content turns out to have been ‘over-determined’ – to have been represented in the dream-thoughts many times over” (*ibid*, p. 389).

“What” asks the proverb, “do geese dream of?” And it replies: “Of maize.” The whole theory that dreams are wish-fulfillments is contained in these two phrases. (Freud 1988, p. 212)

My Freudian reading consisted of accepting his basic premise that dreams are wish fulfillments although I grant with Osborne (1993, pp. 111–2) that the introduction of the concept of Thanatos (as opposed to Eros) complicates this, unless desire is seen as often also sadistic or masochistic. I then used Freud’s forensic interrogation of the dream in reference to the events of the previous day and the concerns of the dreamer (Freud 1988, p. 247) in order to reverse the dreamwork processes of condensation, displacement, overdetermination, and secondary revision so as to observe the latent content of dream-thoughts. Freud’s dream analyses can be challenged, but not all of these challenges run counter to his theories. In his famous dream (Freud 1988, p. 182) about a patient he names “Irma,” for example, he interprets this “overdetermined” figure as a condensation of different women (by such associations as her position in the room and reluctance to open her mouth). Another analyst may not see these associations as primary but may well accept that the *mise en scène* can be read as extremely “Freudian”—with the symbolism of

a “dirty injection” and a gang of men around a woman coercing her to open her mouth! In the same way my published self-analyses left levels of analysis unread (or unwritten) either from personal reserve, resistance, omission as inappropriate to the study, concerns of confidentiality, or simple oversight and thus are open to other readings, verifying (or not) my conclusions. Edgar’s *caveat* on the popularization of Freudianism, as distinct from Freud’s work, warns against the (fashionable) dismissal of the latter because of the former:

Freud’s pioneering work on the psyche and the role and function of the unconscious is extremely well known and many of his insights have passed, *not always exactly*, into the popular culture of understanding dreams. (Edgar 1994, p. 45, emphasis mine.)

Although I place more faith in Freud’s work than Edgar, I do however agree with Edgar’s comments on *bricolage*, and this is in fact the main use I made of the dreams—to observe the ethnographic data they accrued:

as myth for Levi-Strauss is a form of bricolage (1966, p. 17) so the dream for Kracke is a form of bricolage which gathers, [“]from among the day residues ready to hand, and uses them to express metaphorically an emotional conflict, and to work out (or work toward) some resolution of it[”] (1987, p. 38) (Edgar 1994, p. 7)

I recorded 32 dreams over a period of a (lunar) month. I chose this initial period to record as I was continuously in Erkametza or Chinebro, and these dreams most highlighted my integration. Freud interprets “propinquity in time as representing connection in subject-matter” and so saw that as “one of a series of dreams” was “surrounded by the others it must have dealt with the same subject.”¹² Therefore I numbered all dreams in the same night as the same but used letters to differentiate their successive parts. The total word count for the dreams themselves was about 8,000 plus a further 13,000 for analysis. This is unsurprising as in Freud’s famous dream about “Irma,” the dream sequence consists only of almost a page, whereas the analysis extends to over 15 (Freud 1988, pp. 182–199). Freud uses such lengthy analyses not only to analyze them but also to fully illustrate his method of the reversal of the above-noted dreamwork processes. In a compromise between space and verifiability, I included all the dreams recorded leaving intact the inserted numbers relating to the analysis, of which I used some that illustrate my perspective on the community and myself. The dreams seem to show a progressive identification (notwithstanding a countercurrent of repugnance) with the community. In the first dream, where my position vis-à-vis the group was one of the aspirations to enter, this was symbolized by a semicircle, which I compared in the analysis of one of 3 weeks later, when the dream featured a complete circle (which I felt may symbolize acceptance of my membership).

¹² All three quotes from Freud 1988, p. 346. Each numbered dream, therefore, is a different night, while letters refer to chronological priority and bracketed roman numerals to the notes of the analysis.

Monsters from the Id: Revenge, Racism, and Erotica

The cross-referencing and overdetermination of dream narrative meant that certain themes featured frequently. One about conflict with the department, usually involving Harry Potter, was so pervasive that I seriously considered reversing my ethnographic focus from the community to the department—in the spirit of that “parochializing” which Gayatri Spivak calls for. I complained of this in a letter to my supervisor where I told him to try and resolve money matters (the promised financial support for fieldwork upkeep never arrived) so that I could stop dreaming about how angry I was with them! This conflict was often symbolized by the figure of Harry Potter who had become an important persona for me of winning against the odds, given the departmental powers which I felt (rather histrionically) were stacked against me, as the discussion under Oneirocritical Methodology shows.

The negative portrayal of known persons (even departmental powers that be) in dreams, for purposes of revenge or self-aggrandizement, must be read as subjective caricature. Racism and other prejudiced materials are more difficult to deal with. If my dreams present a friend in a negative light, the astute reader or listener will give the friend the benefit of the doubt. If I, as White, represent a Black person negatively, then a White reader sharing unconscious/conscious racist assumptions may let my racism by uncensored. Edgar comments on racist assumptions in identifying “shadow” imagery:

With regard to the example of racial stereotyping, Jung’s analysis of the “black man” as representing the “shadow”, or inferior, personality is now rightfully seen as racist by contemporary commentators on Jung’s work. (Edgar 1994, p. 52)

Two dreams out of the 32 (#17 and #30) portray Black men as drug takers and muggers. The former activity, as my analysis of that dream points out, was quite normal in the (White) community, so why did I need an image of a Black man? I am aware of this racism only in the analysis of dream #17, rather than in the dream itself, but in dream #30 itself I attempt not to be prejudiced—only to then create confirmation of my fears. This racism is mitigated only slightly by my own, ambiguous, Black identity in another dream (#1) in the analysis of which I consciously employ a technique of multiple allusion so as to have positive alternatives to the “shadow” imagery. I have the same political motivation as Edgar, but I see that White people are still generally racist. So if an image of a Black person is obviously functioning as a “shadow” in a dream, that dream will be misinterpreted if this function is ignored. However, is there hope in this technique of conscious positive allusion and can it change the way White people dream? Could I better struggle with my own racism in dream #30 because I had tried to “de-program” my racist responses in dreams #1 and #17? Is the Black man in Dream #30, as well as mugger and Harry Potter/George Weasley, also an angel (in Hebrew a “messenger”—the consciousness of my own racism?) with whom, as Jacob, I struggle with/embrace all night and who leaves me wounded and wiser?

#30(iv) A short story I wrote (after the very successful “Sun on Pale Skin” presentation to the Dept. and before the bitter parody – both based on Harry Potter) involved the “transmogrification” of Harry Potter from White to Black and George Weasley (who’s White) putting his arm around Harry after dealing with the evil Draco Malfoy. This image is a reversal, the Black guy embraces me (presuming that in the dream I’m White!)

A very prominent theme was sexuality, and some of my dream analysis may well be an instance of what Llobrera entitles “*pornografía*.” I can see what he means in the sex scene at the end of the ethnographic work, *Shabono*, by Florinda Donner (1982), a work which she interestingly describes as “a subjective account of the surplus data.” Is that because she stood up from her folding table, left behind the hamper from Fortnum and Mason’s, and walked off into the forest with the Iticoteri clad in nothing but *onoto* paste and underpants and thus discovered what she never could have otherwise? James Clifford comments on this level of involvement:

Only recently, and still rarely, has the taboo been broken (Rabinow 1977; Cesara 1982). Why should sharing beds be a less appropriate source of fieldwork knowledge than sharing food? (Clifford 1997, p. 72)

Johnathan Culler (1997) notes that:

“schools” of literary criticism [tend]. . . to give particular kinds of answers to the question of what a work is ultimately “about”: “the class struggle” (Marxism); the possibility of unifying experience (the New Criticism); “Oedipal Conflict” (psychoanalysis). . . (Culler 1997/64)

Employing a Freudian analysis, one should not be surprised at so much sex! I could have used Jung, but in my experience of Jungian dream interpretation, everything ends up very beautiful and vaguely spiritual (but mostly just vague, which is why I didn’t use him). The decision to include dream #2 (the best example of classic Freudian forensic analysis) was a difficult one, and I’m sure there was a reason why I did not remember my dreams of the night between dreams #7 and #8. The sexual content of the dreams was more of a problem for me than for the members of the community who were very open to such discussion and were often complimented by having starred! This open attitude helped me to limit my censorship of the dreams to two instances: dream #21b and dream #2 (iv/v). Not doing groupwork, I did not face the problems with interpretation which Edgar notes:

My gender in the research process was probably most manifest in the interviews with some female members when I felt less than confident in pursuing very emotive and intimate issues for them when they emerged. For instance when one female member referred to having “blue pencil”¹³ dreams about other group members I didn’t follow it up. (Edgar 1994, p. 19)

I feel that the amount of self-revelation (even of unconscious impulses) should be up to each individual ethnographer but to cheerfully record Inuit avuncular initiatory *fellatio* or adolescent free-for-all in western Samoa and then to pretend to the sexual stoicism of a medieval monk¹⁴ is to risk the Malinowski syndrome.

¹³ “a [phallic] ‘mini-archetype’, to borrow Jung’s term (1959, p. 3), for the group” Edgar 1994, p. 13. “Especially if one thinks of the rubber on the tip!” as a fellow student, David Fairbairn, noted in conversation, Stirling, Aug. ’02.

¹⁴ For which see Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*!

Oneirocritical Methodology: A Shut Eye View

Freud informs us that “in the later years of antiquity, Artemidorus of Daldis was regarded as the greatest authority on the interpretation of dreams, and the survival of his exhaustive work [Oneirocritical] must compensate us for the loss of the other writings on the same subject.”¹⁵ The “oneirocritical” methodology I used for this ethnography came to me upon waking one morning in the Youth Hostel where I worked after a restful sleep in which the problems with the department had receded to reveal bright hopes for my forthcoming fieldwork. *Contra* Edgar I use “oneirocritical” with the full and open value of its long use and resist his attempt to replace it with the misnomer “dreamwork”:

Hierognosis (Corbin 1966, p. 384) refers to the hierarchical classification of the different orders of visionary knowledge displayed both in dreams and waking realities. Therefore dreams would be interpreted by oneirocritical means by reference to the status of religious imagery appearing in any dream. (Edgar 1994, p. 43)

Dreams themselves are not simply outpourings of excess *libido* (as some psychologists view them) but also have a critical role. Dream #10b mentions “. . .(a book) and the Dedication to Harry Potter.” The accompanying note in the analysis (iv) has:

. . .it would be interesting to note what is written in the dedications of the Harry Potter books I have read (1–4). The folder which encloses these notes is of Harry Potter, which I bought in Tesco in Stirling in a fit of impishness as a member of the R.S. Dept. condemns it as “Capitalism” cf. note (vii) dream 26.

In the latter dream’s analysis I now:

. . .wonder if the “dedication” is actually the motto of Hogwarts “*draco dormiens nunquam titillandos*” which is a version of “let sleeping dogs lie” but literally “never tickle sleeping dragons”. [Dream 26(vii)]

Having decided this to be so, I then apply this motto in the analysis of dream #28(v):

#28(v) A short story I wrote about Harry Potter and “transmogrification” was based on an incident in the book (Book 3 I think) where he and Ron shapeshift into the form of the enemy (Draco Malfoy and his sidekick) to learn their secrets. . . (“Draco” means “dragon” and thus the motto of Hogwarts would apply). . .My conflict is whether to “let sleeping dogs lie” or to set them at each other’s throats. . .

However what dream #26 actually says is: “Reading a book from Denise to Harry the dedication is confused.” Its explanation [note (vii) of the analysis, quoted above] is misleading. The dedication of the book of the series I’d most recently read, Book 4: *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, is:

To Peter Rowling, in memory of Mr Ridley and to Susan Sladden, who helped Harry out of his cupboard. (Rowling 2000)

¹⁵ Ch1 *The Scientific Literature on Dreams* p. 60. Book title added as gloss by Freud’s Editor.

Given the amount of homoerotic reference in the dreams, I obviously had a few candidates in mind to help out of the closet! Also, given the position of Harry in the Dursley household (forced to live in a cupboard under the stairs), dream #28 also makes more sense with this reference, as the following analysis shows:

#28(ii) On the eve of my departure to the Basque Country I pinned a satirical episode on the Religious Studies Students Board – it was immediately censored – describing my feelings at the shoddy treatment by the department and manifesting the support of Hermione (F and K. from Stirling and also my sister A.) and the power of magic.

Thus dream #26 can be read as an attempt to jog my memory because there was an association I was not seeing. In fact I was only able to confirm this when back in Scotland. Freud sees the super-ego (as well as the Id) as unconscious (and Anna Freud even the ego in its self-defenses), so this critical, corrective faculty of dreams would I hope serve to challenge the ethnographer when an interpretation of the culture of a community was misconstrued. Although ambiguous, the unconscious is extremely perceptive. With all this evidence of my subconscious using dreams intelligently to try and communicate with my conscious mind, I cannot agree with Edgar in his chillingly rationalist and positivist conclusion:

Symbols then, can be said to mean nothing except what is produced by the audience and the group interaction. If this thesis is correct then dreams do not represent the fundamental truths of the personality as psychoanalysis asserts. Rather they are formed through the bricolage process and their essential nonsense is made culturally meaningful solely through the group process. Such a perspective positions social anthropology, and perhaps sociology, in a powerful position to claim an increased role concerning the elucidation of the processes and outcomes of dream interpretation in modern society. (Edgar 1994, p. 80)

This seems to be at odds with his own, previous, work in which he observes:

the impact of dream imagery on the dreamer, in this case the ethnographer, and the congruence of at least parts of the imagery with central preoccupations of the community in question (Edgar 1994, p. 81)

What did I gain from employing oneirocritical methodology and what if I were to expand this prolegomena into a fuller ethnography and recommend it for educational methodology, would I do differently? The first bonus was acceptance. My willingness to be object of study reflected my academic gaze onto myself and, though Llobrera (1990, p. 47) complains that the “*problema del etnografía moderno, con su énfasis en el problema dialógico del encuentro entre sujeto y objeto, es su carácter narcisista*” [the problem of the modern ethnographer, with their excessive emphasis on the dialogic problem of the encounter between subject and object, is their narcissistic character], this vision is “warts and all.”

To continue the metaphor, if I am gazing into the pool of my dreams to see my own face, I also see those of the community. In a “back to nature”-type community such as this one, preindustrial skills are greatly valued, and as noted above, being able to interpret dreams and share this skill gave me a valued place—especially (as in most communities) when rubbing along together needed more lubrication than the leaky Landover! This acceptance was crucial in a community where vigilance was the order of the day, when day or night uniformed thugs could roar

up to harass, beat up, and arrest members of the community and destroy all their painstaking agricultural and artisanal labor and their very dwellings. This methodology enabled me to mitigate people's fears that the information might be misused, my dreambook was always lying about, and several people read English and the native and near-native speakers could translate. People would ask me what I'd dreamed and be interested in my interpretations—often as a prelude to bringing up a dream of their own.

The second bonus was that, in the process of information gathering, the dreams functioned as Tony Buzan's "mind maps," or, perhaps better, as the "link system," a mnemonic technique in which "you throw things together, place things on top of each other, or substitute one for the other." This description, of a very similar process to Freudian dreamwork, is combined with "outstandingness... the combined image must be larger than life, garishly coloured, humorous or absurd; and you must where possible, be able to imagine yourself tasting, touching, hearing, seeing and smelling it" (all Buzan 1988, pp. 43, 44). A good example of this is the Documentary Comic Book Series. I can easily recall information from Osborne's *Freud for Beginners*, but as for Webster's (1995) *Why Freud Was Wrong*, what sticks in my mind are precisely Freud's dream analyses because, unlike Webster's prose, they are so lively.

The dreams, written down upon first awakening, would stay in my mind during the day as well as being discussed with other people while we were working. In dream #9, for example, the image of a member of the community as Coppelia making robotic movements yields the information about the *Billera* (meeting), its function and frequency and her worries about court action and decision to prioritize the latter. Further notes to this would have included the informal postal system [a lawyer's letter arriving at the local village—as alluded to in dream #24(xv) — was driven and walked up to Erkametza by a friend of the community, whereupon it was relayed by shouting up the mountain to this member of the community, walking beside me to Chinebro] and the relationship of the community to a network of individuals (helpful lawyers and social workers) who worked free of charge to help in the effort against the dam. This mnemonic excellence¹⁶ of overdetermined dream images and their subsequent agglutination of material meant that the use of this methodology freed most of the day for normal community life instead of time-consuming questionnaires,¹⁷ interviews, "counting things," and general anthropological head measuring.

Finally, oneirocritical methodology is aesthetically pleasing. The right/left brain blend that it necessitates gives rise to poetry naturally and jokes and puns of language, mythological allusion, and stories upon stories. Luisa Teish, my *Voudou* teacher in the Institute of Culture and Creation Spirituality (CA), said that Yoruba spirituality is like a circle: you have to go all the way round to know where you're

¹⁶ See discussion above, on Harry Potter and dream memory.

¹⁷ My supervisor wondered what the result would have been had I sent questionnaires. I laughed out loud as I imagined the examples of Dadaist artwork I may have received in response!

starting from.¹⁸ The representation of another's culture is not only made richer by story, poem, and dream: it is made possible. While my methodology, as I have noted above, did proceed with the helpful suggestions and information of the community and an explicit censorship which I was trusted to internalize, I could not say that it was undertaken with strictly anarchic principles. I confess to having been swayed by reading of the experiences of ethnographers who attempted to write ethnography by consensus and whose "native informants" collaborating on the editing process "turned it into mush."¹⁹

One justification for this could be the ethos of the community that, recognizing the inequality of skills among the members, those with less know-how would simultaneously defer to those with more, while learning the skill and thus equalizing the levels of ability. This is of course an ideal situation (anarchist groups seem to have the ability to be at once extremely idealistic and to rub along with very botched circumstances and far from perfect people); individual people's abilities and inclinations to learn do not usually extend to all the skills necessary for the life of a community. However I wonder what would happen with more time, when the community was more *au fait* with Freudian dream analysis (which needs only a fairly forensic mind and an ability to spot bad puns). I had participated in "dream groups," in ICCS (mostly Jungian based) but did not attempt to start one in the community. The reasons why it did not occur to me were my desires both not to disrupt the normal life of the community (a fallacy since the addition of one to a group of ten is a big change) and also, aware of their suspicion of academia, to work discretely. This "discretion" diminished as I shared more of my work, but I at first wanted the people to get to know me rather than consider an abstract academic proposal sent by letter (which I feared they would refuse). As is apparent in the first dream, although a member of the community (who was a good friend of mine) had vouched for me, I was still wary of my perception by the community. More honesty and more trust (and possibly more patience as to starting time) may have dissolved that apprehension. Edgar's more participatory role²⁰ as "dreamwork facilitator and resource person for a, more or less, autonomous group" (Edgar 1994/1) was neither autocratic nor anarchic but democratic, and it encountered the problems of representing the majority and quashing the minority that democracy always will:

Four main areas of conflict emerged in the dreamwork groups studied. These were the nature of dream interpretation; the nature of the group; the role of myself as facilitator; dealing with the evidently 'different' orientation of one of the group members. (Edgar 1994, p. 35)

¹⁸ ICCS is now The Sophia Centre, California. Louisa Teish is the author of *Jambalaya* (1986) London. HarperCollins. I paraphrase her words from class, Autumn, 1990.

¹⁹ I confess to amnesia over this striking reference, but Agar (1980, p. 186) makes the same point.

²⁰ Although he and his colleague "usually did not work on our own dreams in the group" (Edgar 1994, p. 38).

The “nature of dream interpretation” seems fairly predetermined (Edgar 1994, p. 1):

The analysis proper proceeds in four stages.

The first is concerned with “dreamwork”, the way that the narration to and within the group can be shown to be collectively converted into a verbally expressed narrative of an experience seen as having hitherto been concealed and confined to the imagination. Second, I turn to the analysis of structure and process in the group itself and the communicative context in which this dreamwork took place.

Third, I use an hermeneutic analysis to unpick the emic and etic interpretive, and to some degree feminist-inspired, perspectives used by the group to make sense of the narratives they have collectively created.

Finally, I move outwards to the processual, meaning-creating and outcome, analysis of such groupwork methods as gestalt, psychodrama and imagework which are used to elicit meaning from narrated dream imagery.

I conclude that dreams are transformations of cultural symbols and that their interpretation is an example of what Obeyesekere, significantly calling on both psychoanalysis and cultural analysis, has called ‘the work of culture’.

Even so, there is considerable variation in “the range of interpretive schemata within which group members explored, explained and understood their reported dreams” (Edgar 1994, p. 43):

the approaches used included quasi-religious, Freudian, Jungian, revised psychoanalytic, gestalt, transpersonal and what I define as a socio-political contextualisation approach emanating from a structuralist perspective. (Edgar 1994, p. 1)

Edgar (1994, p. 5) gives an informative survey of “historical development of dream theory” and does not find any other instances of oneirocritical methodology apart from his own, previous, work (which he appends).²¹ His comments on the geographical limitation of anthropological interest in dreams invite postcolonial analysis:

Whilst anthropology has in the past only considered the dreams of bounded groups in the third world as of cultural significance, my thesis asserts the significance of dream and its elucidation in modern society as a vital source of understanding and information about the culturally constituted and becoming self. (Edgar 1994, p. 80)

it is perhaps somewhat novel for the study of dreaming, dream narration and dream interpretation in the western industrialised world to be the ethnographic focus, although the work of Hillman is similarly focused on the US context. (1989, pp. 117–141) (Edgar 1994, p. 20)

Maggie has been marked from early childhood as the one to inherit her mother’s altar and, along with it, the responsibility of serving the family spirits. Prescient dreams, starting when she was quite young, indicated that the spirits favoured her. Alourdes also had such dreams, beginning when she was little more than a toddler. For both of them, dreams continue to be significant life events, sometimes diagnosing current situations and sometimes foretelling important future events. (McCarthy Brown 1991, pp. 295, 296)

²¹ *Dreaming as Ethnography*; paper given at the 1989 ASA annual conference: “Anthropology and Autobiography.”

I juxtapose these quotations and wonder now at the initial urge I had to use the setting of McCarthy Brown's work (with a mostly poor, Haitian diasporian community in Brooklyn) as an instance of Edgar's "third-world" (would it not be "fourth"?) category and the setting of my own work (with a mostly *nouveau*-poor Western European neo-pastoral community up the Pyrenees) as an instance of his contrasting situation, "in the western industrialized world"!

Strange Attractors

My previous study on the master's course in critical theory had established that anthropology and especially ethnography (not to confuse them) was changing, turning towards postcolonialism. For the dissertation, I tried to follow that turn by steering clear of "Mediterranean" stereotypes while working in Spanish territory. I also celebrated the debunking of much anthropological imperialism masquerading as positivism—a celebration which would continue with my doctoral thesis on Pirsig. I was inspired by the vulnerability of many recent ethnographers and the complexity of their reporting of fieldwork and used a delicately nuanced theory of "self" to understand their work and mine. In an *excursus* I found, for the community under study, the bipolar division of gender both inexact and oppressive and that of work/nonwork inadequate. In my methodology, I displayed sensitivity to political and social concerns of the community studied and found in Freud a dream detective who (despite much needed critiques)²² remains useful today. I foregrounded my unconscious portrayals of members of the community and our relations in order to challenge a false objectivity and to be aware of my effect on the system observed. Finally, I used a holistic mode of presentation, combining dream, poem, and theory to prove the validity of oneirocritical methodology for self-aware ethnographers.

The mnemonic function of myth and dream in educational methodology is valuable precisely because it breaks down the social and intellectual patterns of value which otherwise constrain the research discourse. Schools, as one of my doctoral supervisors warned me (during my first attempt at teacher training), are "conserving places,"²³ and my own experience is that teachers are very controlling people (see discussion on ITE as rite of passage, McManus 2010, Ch. 1, Section 3: "Maiming the Father; Swallowing the Child") and that, in common with the practice of other "caring professions," this control is masked by kindness. Isabel E. P. Menzies' study of nurses, *The Functioning of Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety* (discussed in the same section of my thesis), highlights these defensive social patterns just as the argument between Llobrera and Geertz (discussed above) highlights the defensiveness of intellectual patterns of value. The attractors

²² See Crews (1995) for the social devastation wrought by the Recovered Memory Movement's (mis)use of his work.

²³ Prof. James Conroy, in conversation at St Andrews College, Glasgow, autumn term, 1996.

I suggest for educational research are indeed strange (although “dreamwork” is becoming more widespread in social science research), and their use may provoke indignation from both schools under study and study supervisors. However, the disdain towards research widespread among teachers necessitates that our academic work be (and be seen to be) useful.

That usefulness may not come from supervisors continuing to send out droves of enthusiastic young researchers into the field with forms to fill out, things to count, and boxes to tick (the way tired primary teachers send out their more lively pupils to measure the playground, again, with the trundle wheel). We may need, as academics, to rethink our intellectual categories and, as researchers, to reform our social practice. To inspire that revolution in praxis, it may help us open our eyes to the possibilities inherent in our mythologies, those old tales which always have something new to teach, and to shut our eyes and dream, in the darkness, a new educational enlightenment.

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Afterword: A Conversation

In this Handbook the editors invited contributors to reflect on research in which they have been involved, considering why they adopted the research approach they did and in particular what was the role of interpretation in the process of research. The 65 cases produced diverse responses to this task, and it would probably not be very sensible to attempt either a summary or a 'conclusion'. Nevertheless, having reviewed all these studies, we thought it appropriate that we ourselves should reflect on the material that we had been reading and on our own editorial process and purposes. This Afterword is an edited version of a conversation that took place at our last face-to-face working session on the Handbook. We are grateful to Kseniya Tyshkevych for her transcription of the conversation.

Bridges: So this is an opportunity for the four of us to have a conversation reflecting on the totality of the Handbook: about, perhaps, what you feel we have learned from it; the extent to which the resources in the handbook confirm or otherwise some of the expectations we had from the beginning; about the similarities and dissimilarities across the genres in the way which interpretation features and the role it plays in educational research. Are there aspects of the reflections on interpretation across these diverse cases which nevertheless suggest something in common?

On Interpretation and Theory

Burbules: I think one thing that has come into my mind after looking at some of the individual chapters is the relationship between theory, or theory choice, and interpretation. I have thought a lot about theory in terms of how your theory choice frames questions or how theory frames what kind of data you look at. But I have not thought as much about how your theoretical framework and assumptions guide the ways in which you interpret what

you actually find. I don't know if this is true in every case, but a number of these papers talk specifically about the role of theory as a framework or heuristic for the process of interpretation itself. Theory comes in toward the end of the research process as well as at the beginning of the process.

Bridges: Can you say a bit more about theory, because like interpretation I suspect we are looking at different kinds of theory, some of which might be high level meta-philosophical theory, some might be much more grounded.

Burbules: I think theories provide a couple of things. They provide concepts or definitions, ways of defining or framing the things you are trying to study, and they can provide structures of explanation. That will be especially relevant to the issue of interpretation. So when you find out certain things in the course of the research, the ways in which you try to make sense of them are often in terms of the theoretical categories or relationships that you study. So, if you are viewing things through a certain kind of lens – for example, through theories about gender – then as you start thinking about what you have seen, or observed, or experienced you bring in this theory. You start bringing in a lot of the framing assumptions about ‘what this means’ or ‘this is important because my theory tells me that gender operates in certain contexts, in such and such ways’.

On Interpretation and Particularity

Bridges: Paul [Smeyers], would you make the same connection between interpretation and theory? Does linking interpretation with theory actually add anything? Or is theory just another version of interpretation?

Smeyers: I don't know about that. What comes to my mind, if I go through all these chapters, is the enormous importance of *details*, of *particularity*, wherever you start. And so, in relation to theory, I would say, yes, this is where it starts from, but it gets amended and modified in a particular situation. So if you look right across the genres, what first comes to my mind is that in all these approaches, we are looking for detail, the authors are, as it were describing what has happened backwards, why they made sense of that in that particular way and so on, And those things can never be foreseen. (David, you yourself describe the role of serendipity in developing your interpretative framework). You never know in advance what will be important, what will determine a particular meaning, what you will be able to construct or re-construct or find out along the way, what it will deliver for you in terms of interpretation. So, yes, I go along with your overall stance, Nick, but at the same time I think the approaches are a little bit amended and modified by what you find out.

This comes across even in the genres which I initially would not have expected. I mean, let's say, in a quantitative approach: the zero hypothesis you formulate and the testing of the prediction of the theory, etc., etc. It is all very straightforward. But even there you will see this particularity, all the small decisions you have to make along the way, how important they are and how important is the role they play in the eventual conclusion that you offer.

Burbules: It is interesting because it is in the particularities that we often get surprised or we encounter things that don't fit our theories or that challenge our theories. So the more that we think about the specific situation, sometimes we see things that don't fit our theoretical categories and processes, and I don't really know how the situation is supposed to work. Because the actual details in the situation often don't fit, it becomes a challenge to try to interpret what it means. It is as if you say, 'this is not the way my theory would have made me predisposed to anticipate or expect'.

Bridges: I think in the framework chapter, we actually express some suspicion of getting too immersed in the meta domains. The rationale of the handbook is to look at concrete cases, individual instances and to see how interpretation, at least in the eyes of the authors, operates within these situations. So that attention to the particular and the detail is precisely what the handbook sets out to provide.

Griffiths: While Paul was talking, I was thinking about the particularities, and about how it is with hindsight that we have been concerned to make sure that we make *explicit* the context for a particular piece of research – that this piece of research was done in the Czech Republic, and that one was in the USA. That might prompt the people in that area, field or genre to re-think a bit, to say, 'Oh! That was surprising. I'll need to start re-interpreting my own findings. What I found – what happened – in my research was actually context dependent, perhaps not as universal as I'd thought.' So, the very act of reading the particularities should help change later interpretations.

Smeyers: Yes, and that is even the case for philosophical and historical approaches. How much deep contextualisation is going on there, in that particular context and what it brings with it, etc. Which is a little bit of a surprise, of course.

On the Role of Biography in Shaping Interpretation

Bridges: You can talk about the social context, or the political context, or cultural context of a piece of research, but to what extent do the cases point towards the power of individual biographies in shaping the interpretive

frameworks that people bring? Are these interpretive acts primarily explicable by reference to social context or to individual biography?

Burbules: I don't think that individual biography on its own is enough. There are a lot of things that enter into the process of interpretation. I think the important thing, if you look at the examples in the Handbook, is that there is a lot of context in the accounts of the research. Interpretation is not something that just happens, determined by the person or the situation, the framework assumptions or theoretical orientations or whatever. The work of interpretation is to try to make sense of the surprises, the things that don't fit our categories . . . Maybe this contradicts what I said earlier, but the challenge in research is to interpret something new, something that doesn't fit our theory where we thought we already knew how to make sense of them. The surprises that we encounter, cause us to ask, 'What does this mean, how do we make sense of this?'

Griffiths: Your question David, about individual biography is a really difficult one to answer for another reason. In some of these approaches, positioning yourself as a researcher is part of what the genre requires you to do. It is integral to the genre, rather than just something you might observe as an incidental feature. So, researchers in these genres are more likely to be saying, 'The fact that I have done such and such in my life. . .

Bridges: For example, in Olena Fimyar's account of the Soviet childhood that she shared with participants in the research and the difference that that made. . .

Griffiths: Exactly. Whereas if you are in some genres – like quants, obviously, but also I suggest in some of the philosophical chapters, for instance – to start by saying, 'I first position myself as. . .,' is not part of the normal way of doing that approach. Though it may in fact be just as relevant. So we only get that information in some genres which makes it very difficult to answer your question.

On Interpretation and Audience

Bridges: You emphasised the individual cases, the groundedness of the way in which interpretation is used. We chose to cluster the accounts in terms of genre. We emphasise that the genre is a collection rather than a clearly defined, clearly bounded set of approaches, but nevertheless, do you observe significant differences in the way in which interpretation is used across some of these different genres?

Griffiths: I do, I think. But that would not be saying that all of this genre does one thing and all of that genre does another. But, still, I think it is more probable that some genres pay more attention to one matter, in a way that I had not

expected. I think I had not realised before looking at all these chapters how for some people interpretation is partly about, ‘Who I am I talking to and why’. That changes how I interpret, what I should say and how I should say it. That is not an aspect I thought of before. For instance, perhaps if you have a very causal view – whether you are dealing with case studies and illumination, or whether you are dealing with large scale datasets – you may take the line, ‘Look, I am now showing you how it is; now you go and do something about it.’ But there are other researchers who pay a lot of attention to the rhetoric of the research report. So that would be a difference I think across the genres, as it may be more likely in some genres than others.

Burbules: That is an interesting point, So there are at least two functions for interpretation in what you say. One is our attempt to make sense of what we have seen in our own terms as a researcher and a scholar. But the other is the task of interpreting for a particular audience. And this raises questions about how we represent our material and portray it for the sake of an audience that we are trying to help understand the things that we are showing them. And these are not necessarily the same.

Griffiths: But they may be.

Burbules: Well, they certainly might be. But the thing is that the way these things make sense to me, may or may not be the way in which I then try to help make sense for other people. So it sounds like these are two functions of interpretation – maybe more. But is the way I make sense of something also the way I represent it?

Griffiths: But my interest is then, once you are conscious of your rhetoric, you find it is not the case that: first I have an idea and then I use the rhetoric. The very fact that I have now put it in this rhetoric changes my interpretation. So, maybe you could say you could distinguish the two analytically, but I think maybe you really could not.

Burbules: We find it all the time in our teaching, don’t we? When we are teaching some material that we think we know quite well. Someone asks a question and suddenly – it happens to all of us – we realize, ‘Oh, I have never really put it together that way before’. We see it in a different way because we have had to explain it to a different audience.

Bridges: This also highlights one of the problems that I had to face in my current research when, out of the same body of research, we are trying both to develop papers for publication in international journals, but also, out of the same body of research reporting, to the Deputy Prime-Minister and the Minister of Education in Kazakhstan. Our discussion makes me ask to what extent these two reports offer the same interpretation of the research with different rhetorical presentation or to what extent the interpretation of the research is itself transformed by the different rhetorical requirements of the different audiences.

Griffiths: I was thinking that after all, this is all *educational* research. It is not simply research *on* education but also research which educates – even,

let's say, in the case of history of education. In so far as it is educational then has to respond to the different needs of different audiences. So the rhetoric is not just important, it is essential. Educational researchers need to pay attention to more than just an academic audience.

Burbules: We talked about translation the other day. This is something I have been thinking about and writing about for the past couple of years. How do we translate something that makes sense to us, for others? And here I note that we use terms like translators or interpreters . . . And the idea that an interpretation is a kind of translation, may grow into something interesting . . .

On Reflexivity and Meta Discourse Across Different Genres

Bridges, You said earlier, when we were talking about the significance of biography in shaping interpretation, that some genres require some sort of declaration of positionality, while others might find this very inappropriate. Would it also be the case with the sort of reflexivity we have been asking all our authors to engage with? Are there some genres in which that sort of reflexivity on method and self consciousness about underlying assumptions is more part of the expectation than in other cases?

Smeyers: Outside these, there is a philosophy genre, where people are drawn to the meta-level, but then at the same time in a number of cases what they offer is first and foremost an exposition of the particular theoretical position which they embrace, say Foucault or Wittgenstein or whatever. And they actually look for examples that fit within that particular stance. And sometimes they are still surprised about what they find there. As I said earlier, sometimes a deepening of insight of that stance is offered, they deal with what the particular thing they are discussing would mean from that stance. . . . But in a number of cases they go just back to their theoretical position, how they make sense of it, detail it and explain it. There is a kind of circularity which is characteristic of all explanations. Each level is taken to account for, to derive from, or to elaborate on the other. Thus instances are explained by patterns and patterns by instance.

Bridges: But even philosophers are rarely explicit about, as it were, how they are proceeding, about the methodology, less still the method, of the philosophical approach they are employing. More typically they go straight into whatever it is they are writing about, and they bring their Aristotelian or Kantian or Foucauldian perspective with them. They do not commonly in my experience do that very self-consciously or examine the assumptions behind why they are adopting the perspective they bring. If they are doing more analytic kind of philosophy they don't locate what they are doing as 'I am here going to employ an approach which is located within the analytic tradition' or acknowledge other methodological approaches to the same set of problems.

Smeyers: Oh there is a serious problem there, of course. If you look at a particular philosophical stance and you look at presuppositions of that philosophical stance, how are you going to say that you agree or disagree with those fundamental presuppositions unless you do that from another philosophical stance, which may be completely the opposite of the one that you were studying in the first place? You could ask yourself, of course, questions about, is it correct that the concept of power has to be so central in every thing we analyse. Now the answer to that is another philosophical position. And it is a bit like Gadamer's or Taylor's horizon idea that you get conscious about the presuppositions of your own perspective but only when you confront it with a completely different position. And I would not call doing that doing methodology; that would be doing philosophy, I think.

Griffiths: I agree with that. But I think that there would also be a more biographical story to be told. As for instance Joe Dunne does in his book *Back to the Rough Ground*. How you move into an area, looking at whatever it is you were drawn to. Think of Paul Hirst, and his changing position from a focus on forms of knowledge to social practices, as he describes it in Roger Marples collection, *The Aims of Education*.¹ Or think of the early and later Wittgenstein.

But to go back to your question about reflection being more likely in some genres than others: I am wondering if we are, inevitably, talking to some degree from a philosopher's viewpoint about what reflection should be, a viewpoint which is closer to what an ethnographer might do than a statistician. Because from a stats viewpoint, it might be reflective to say, explicitly, 'When we chose the sample we chose to count people of a certain age, etc. And now I look back on that, I realise that the reasons that I did that were A or B.' Equally, as a stats person I could explain the procedures of analysis, like the choice to use a T-test rather than a Chi square. That would be a reflection on how you came to a particular interpretation. One of my computer science friends tells me, that the first thing he teaches his students is how to count. They need to know exactly what is it that they are counting, which is not simple or obvious. That is a highly reflective thing to do and would be expressed completely differently in a different genre. That is not a different kind of reflection, I think, but it is an important one. It is more likely to be brought to mind if you in the paradigm of quants and counting, than if you are in a paradigm of where you proceed by going and having a look, 'purposeful wandering' as Golden explains it in her chapter.

Bridges: It is interesting if we take history, for example. Certainly in the days when I used to study history, historians would firmly distinguish what they did

¹ Paul Hirst (1999) The nature of educational aims, in Roger Marples (ed.) *The Aims of Education*, London and New York, Routledge.

from philosophy of history or social theory. Whereas I think most of the contributors to this book are very conscious of the location of their historical work within a social theoretical or even philosophical framework. It seems to be a genre in which reflection on method and methodological assumptions has kind of surfaced, and some contributions to contemporary writing in the history of education look more philosophical or at least self consciously embedded in social theory than in a more traditional or popular view of history, which is content to tell a story without overt or self-conscious reflection on its theoretical assumptions or its methodological approach. Some ethnographers, too, put, it seems, as much effort into their reflexivity as into their fieldwork, and this becomes a very visible part of their writing.

On the National and the International

Bridges: There is another interesting feature I would like to put to you which concerns the international character of this set of accounts. We and the contributing editors self-consciously sought to draw contributions from as many parts of the world as possible. That raises the question as to what extent do you feel the chapters reflect their different national and cultural locatedness (as Morwenna suggested earlier in this conversation) or to what extent are they all written within what might be perceived as a shared 'global educational space'? In a sense we have seen a certain homogenisation of academic discourse, so that scholarly papers of this kind written by people in Japan, in India or in the United States are not going to be very different because they share a single kind of international discourse. Does this handbook provide evidence of this kind of internationalised, homogenised scholarly community or is there evidence of significant differences arising out of the diversity of national and cultural locations of the contributors?

Smeyers: I would say that national differences are visible not in the approaches but of course in the content that is prioritised. For some genres that is more the case than for others of course. For quantitative methods and for philosophy I think although the context is still important the methods are widely shared. But the kind of theme they address – that is more context dependant. The selection of the topic of inquiry says something about themes that are discussed at the society level and in the country where this scholar is from. But at the same time, the approach to the theme, the way that is it done of course reflects very much let's say the standard vocabulary, the standard argument, the standard of how we are approaching this all over the world.

Burbules: Is that the same sort of thing? I think we see that with the work in this Handbook from non-English-speaking countries, the scholars are generally

much more explicit about their situatedness. Most of the time they say, I am talking about *this* country or situation. And it is in general, the Americans and Brits who often write as if, “I am studying the relationship between families and schools” and not “The relationship between families and schools *in Missouri*, etc.”

I think one of the factors about this explicit positioning is that as in many other contexts dominant populations feel less need to position themselves because they think they are speaking the language of universality or universal terms, whereas people who are in non-dominant positions are much more aware that they are in Georgia or Ethiopia or wherever.

Griffiths: This raises a really difficult question, because this Handbook is a collection of reports by English speaking people or by people who normally write in some other language but are capable of writing in English. I think that Payet’s paper was the only one translated by someone other than the author. And anyway, the authors’ first languages are largely European languages, like French, Italian, Swedish, German. Not Swahili or Zulu, for instance, or Korean. So just at the very simplest level, there is a homogenisation of discourses through the dependency on the English language. But also we have got people educated in one place, coming from a second place, discussing a third place and examples of chapters written collaboratively by people coming from very different environments – such as the chapter by Ridley (UK) and Asgedom (Ethiopia). So the examples we have should make us cautious of over-generalisation.

However, that said, the context matters. Ethical questions as you understand them in Birmingham in the US, or Birmingham in the UK, are different from the ones that arise in Japan or in Sri Lanka, as the chapters by Okubo and Benadusi show. So that difference is a way of shaking up the dominant discourse of ethics in educational research.

Burbules: But we are talking about interpretation broadly as a process of meaning-making, that does always occur within a particular language. And so I think it is perhaps a limitation or restriction on interpretation that many of our authors are doing their work or thinking about their work or writing about it in a different language than their own. How does it affect that sense-making process in a language that incorporates a particular vocabulary, a set of definitions and terminology, that might be quite different from the language in which they might have been originally doing their work, because we are asking them to write and publish in our language?

Griffiths: As we were saying earlier today, the normal way of writing in French and Spanish or Italian is to use much longer sentences than in English and, as you said, to be more allusive. When that is translated into English it looks like bad English. So sometimes it gets chopped up into much sharper sentences, which inevitably changes what you can say or how you will say it. That may be the same, or much more so, for, say, Chinese, Japanese or Farsi: we don’t know.

- Bridges: So the language is itself a homogenising factor, both in the sense of the selection of who might participate, then in the way in the way in which they might go about it.
- Burbules: Yes, homogenising, but also potentially distorting. If I am speaking from a linguistic and cultural background in which the concept of X is really a central concept in terms of identity and describing personal relationships, and there is not an equivalent for X in English, and you are asking me to say, well how did I interpret the significance of these interactions, how do I describe that to *you*?
- Griffiths: So we require a proper humility. We can say: “Look, we have managed to be international” – and we have done that. Yes. Better than many. But all we are doing is saying we are giving the reader some different contexts and some authors from different places. But we have not done very much. Because look, it is still basically Anglophone, or if not Anglophone, it is filtered through accounts written in English.
- Burbules: There is another problem that we talked about in our very first discussions, which is whether the notion of *interpretation* itself is a particularly Western preoccupation.
- Griffiths: I’d forgotten we talked about that.
- Burbules: Do they think about it that way in China? Do they use a concept like interpretation? I don’t know. We think this is the category that defines the book, but other people may not think about it in terms of that notion of interpretation.
- Bridges: Not only this, but I think in contemporary mainly western educational discourse the tendency is to encourage *diversity* of reading, of interpretation and of perspective. But there are societies where such diversity is not valued in the same way for various reasons, perhaps some of them quite legitimate. The emphasis is rather on building consensus, on commonality of perspective and understanding or perhaps respect for the authoritative voice. So even the attention to diversity of interpretation itself is something that is socially located rather than universal.
- Griffiths: The tiny bit I know about communication in Ethiopia is that it is expected that the audience will read between the lines. That is the expectation for Ethiopians of how we speak and how we explain or describe things. And that is so different from what we are asking here. It would precisely be a distortion if the explanation has to be blunt.

On ‘Theories in the Air’

- Bridges: Can I ask you a slightly different question? We have talked about interpretation and about theory underpinning interpretation. In her chapter Inés Dussel refers to Elkins, who says that interpretive sources are chosen partly because they are ‘in the air’. And then it continues, ‘theory

dates research'. Do we have evidence of what is the theory that is 'in the air' in this document, in this handbook? Do we see theories on their way out, theories on their way in? To what extent are the kinds of theories referred to in these examples going to date in the coming years?

Smeyers: There are different ways of using the concept of theory and different ways of using the concept of interpretation. So if you start from the most basic level, it is about how we make sense of something. And that is in a very large part inherited – we have the theories and concepts that have been passed down to us – and of course someone could make in a slightly different way a sense of something according to their inheritance, and that can be made explicit. Now we might call that the basic level, which refers to our social practice: our gestures and words have a particular meaning in the social practice into which people are initiated when they are born in that particular culture or sub-culture.

Now above that there are various kinds of theory, there are various kinds of interpretation. So one kind of theory, a technical sense of theory, is the zero hypothesis testing theory, which we will find in a number of quantitative approaches (see for example the chapter by Kyriakides or the chapter by Azola and Kelly). In that sense, theory will predict and will either be refuted or not refuted and as a consequence of that it will be changed, and of course the basic concept of that theory will therefore be changed as well, because the concept will be defined in that particular technical theory.

But there is another sense of theory in a non-technical way, more like an encompassing way of bringing things into a certain framework, at an abstract general level. I don't think that there is a lot of that going on.

Most of the work in educational research won't lead to an all-encompassing theory; moreover it is questionable whether we will still find a lot of what is in that sense offered now in 20 or 40 years. I don't think that the level of abstraction is that high in many of the chapters. On the contrary, people try to develop ideas about the particular issue they are addressing, which situations have led to certain problems, which elements have solved certain problems, or give us advice to deal with those, in other words offer a particular way to understand these. But these do not lead to all-embracing theories. There is perhaps a sloppy usage of theory, a sloppy usage of broad or general. As people say, "What's your philosophy in life?" And that is ok, but it means something completely different for a philosopher. And so there is a technical sense, a very technical sense, a broad sense.

And the same goes for interpretation. I mean if I say there is a chair over there, there is not a lot of interpretation that comes in, not in the normal sense of the word. That is just how you make sense of what you perceive and how you talk about these things. Sometimes of course I go to a museum of modern design furniture and then someone says: 'Look at that chair over there'. And then I can ask him: 'Are you sure that's a

chair?’ Then there is a little bit of interpretation. But there are levels and levels and levels of interpretation. I think educational research leads to interesting insights, but it does not lead to all encompassing theories which could be used to predict and to manipulate certain things.

Now on the contrary, there is variety, all kinds of things are going on there. As Nick says you can be surprised about certain things. There are always new things that you come across, and that is exactly I think the message to readers, Master’s students, doctoral researchers, when they go through these chapters. This book is not about everything. But rather, here are a couple of points that may be interesting to think about when you set up your research.

Burbules: It also introduces something that we were discussing earlier, in terms of the last genre, what we called cultural/transgressive approaches. There are some people that may like some essays and may not like others. But part of what we are trying to do is to operate in areas where the familiar theoretical categories and definitions don’t help or they start breaking down.

Bridges: I was going to say, in response to Paul, that some chapters, like the Leitch & Conroy one but not only this, set out explicitly to challenge what is ‘in the air’ in terms of dominant theoretical framing.

Burbules: This is like technology, perhaps, where things are rapidly changing. New things are happening, new kinds of relationship and activities that really don’t fall quite so neatly into some of our theoretical assumptions. And we see people in those chapters struggling to make sense of domains that are pre-theoretical or whatever you want to say. They still try to interpret them and to make sense of them, without handy theories to draw from or in some cases using theories drawn from unconventional sources. And in that sense those chapters and some others in the collection illustrate this process of what do we do when theory breaks down? How do we make sense of things when prevailing theory or our theory breaks down, or where we don’t have a theory?

Griffiths: I think there are some approaches within particular genres that are in the air at this time. I think critical discourse analysis has now become very central to language and signification. Some other language theories are there in the background but they do not get discussed with quite such excitement. But I am sure that given another 10, 15 years, something else will take its place. I think ‘voice’ has appeared quite a lot. And that’s another one that I think has been prominent in the past few decades. After all, we were asking people to look *back*. So it’s not surprising if some things that have been around very recently do not make an appearance. For example, I am quite interested, given my general focus on social justice, that intersectionality seems to be something that is missing as a concept, even in the ethnographic sections where, as the contributing editors observed, most of the chapters could be placed in the field, ‘Equity, justice and diversity’. Similarly, Ranci ere and Agamben are

now beginning to come into favour. Yet they hardly appear at all in these papers.

So, yes, if we did this again in 10 years time, I think we would see a different set of middle-level theories and iconic big names being mentioned.

Bridges: We also got examples, even in the cultural/transgressive section, of Freud making a comeback if he ever went away. And Michael Peters kicks off his chapter with a quote from Marx. There are some enduring names: Plato features in Gary McCulloch's chapter in the history section too. Some figures are sticking around!

Griffiths: And we can't tell who it will be. It is really interesting I think when you read educational philosophy from the nineteen fifties, for instance, on social justice, pre-Rawls. You might even bring those fifties names back in again, though now they are so comprehensively forgotten. Can you talk about distributive justice, without mentioning Rawls? I doubt it. But in another 50 years?

Smeyers: Another which is perhaps of our age is that a lot of chapters talked about what research is *for*. If you look at the last three or four decades, I am not saying that it was not there or that there was no author who addressed this, but it is certainly something that now comes more and more to the foreground. This is something that has evolved, so it is therefore not surprising to find also a shift in the interpretive frameworks that are drawn upon to serve this interest. This is reflected in some of the ethnography chapters, but also in other chapters as well. For example the chapter by Hemelsoet pays attention to how irregular migrants are defined and the repercussions that has for the statistics, but also to *what needs to be done*. Again there is the question of what research is for combined with what we exactly want to know from the reality we live in. This gives us not only a sense of what is going on but points to how we may be able to change certain things or not. Even the chapter by Simons on governmentality is not just describing using a Foucauldian framework, it is not just giving a description, but through the description it is asking the reader whether she goes along with everything that is presupposed, implied etc. It is about being conscious, in as far as that is possible, of what you are doing with a view to *what might be changed*.

In some sense we had lost that emphasis on changing the world for a time. We were very much familiar with it in the late sixties and in the early seventies I think, after the things that happened in the Quartier Latin, in Berkeley, and all over the world. But in the period in between there was less focus on that. And so a lot of research adopted much more of what the historians call an objectivist approach. It is not that looking for particular outcomes and so forth was not there anymore, but there is a growing awareness that it is not enough, and that you do research not only with a particular theme in mind, but with a particular aim and not only when you are addressing policy-makers. This reflects on the

researcher, reflects on the person at the receiving end, the practitioners. Furthermore a number of chapters will explicitly argue that, obviously, practitioners themselves also have to make sense of the results, also have to interpret them, otherwise they cannot impact on practice. They surrender the authoritative interpretation of the researcher.

I find this development interesting, certainly much more than what happened in the ‘traditional’ approach where the focus was on a particular content combined with a strong effort to follow a particular methodology. A number of chapters exemplify this embracing “Don’t worry too much about the method we follow. We do all kinds of things, but generally it is within this approach or that approach”. But of course all elements get together in the particular research project. I mean there is not so much, not even for the philosophy genre, an occupation with: “Is this now correct within that genre. Am I doing what I am supposed to do. Do I follow the rules of the cookery book? Is this correct or not?”. I don’t feel that in the chapters. A lot of them explicitly say they are not doing that. But it even goes for those who don’t talk explicitly of that. I mean, there is a lot of sociology in the governmentality approach of Foucault, and there were days that a lot of authors would have not have liked that. They would have said “This is not philosophy”.

Bridges: So the very concept of genre is really pretty disrupted by the examples we have here?

Smeyers: Yes.

Burbules: Let me pick up on what you have just said. I mean you start with certain genres and categories and this is laid out in the Introduction. That was how we thought we were going to organise the book. But when you look at all this work, in the particular, you start realising that many other forms of organisation would have been at least as good or, maybe, even better. These things don’t fall out in terms of simple natural categories. It isn’t straightforward at all. Things are more interdisciplinary, there are more mixed methods. And certain work actively resists being put into particular categories, as in the transgressive section.

Bridges: Anything you would like to add?

Griffiths: I am so pleased that we asked for detailed examples. There is an awful lot of stuff available for students who are expected to learn about how to do research, but it is often at such an abstract level that it does not represent the reality of research practice. You can see many academic articles on how to do a kind of dance with the words epistemology, methodology, ontology, theoretical framework, qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, etc., etc. And then they do their research. And these two parts of the enterprise don’t really seem to meet up. And what has happened in this book is that they have met up in a whole range of complex ways. I am very pleased that we insisted on having examples. And I think it worked pretty well. . . . Didn’t it?

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defence; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress Burke, K. (1957) pp. 110–111.²

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² Burke, K. (1957) *The philosophy of literary form*. New York: Vintage. See in Bridges, D. (2014) 'Conversation—in the construction and representation of research' in P. Smeyers & M. Depaepe Eds. *Educational research: Material culture and its representation*, Dordrecht, Springer.

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international research journal *Ethnography and Education*, co-founder of *Ethnography and Education International*. This is an international and informal research group connected to the development of ethnography in educational research. Beach is also lead-convenor in the European Educational Research Association for its ethnography network and a research team leader in the Nordic Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Justice through education in the Nordic Countries (JustEd). JustEd is a multidisciplinary, cross-national research network coordinated at the University of Helsinki, Institute of Behavioural Sciences, as part of the NordForsk programme *Education for Tomorrow*. The centre's aims are to research the challenges facing Nordic educational systems in the twenty-first century and to contribute to the re-formulation of the project of democratic, inclusive education for justice in the context of the globalizing Nordic welfare states. Beach was scientific leader of the former NordForsk network on Youth and marginalisation in the Nordic countries.

Robert A. Davis is Professor of Religious and Cultural Education and Head of School of Education in the University of Glasgow. He has taught, written and broadcast nationally and internationally on philosophy and theory of education, religion, postsecularism, literature, music, folklore, education, history of education, sectarianism, childhood studies, environmental education, natural history and the development of Catholic education in Scotland and beyond. Teacher education remains central to his interests, encouraging a wider exploration of professional values and professional formation more generally. His recent publications include a monograph on the educational reformer Robert Owen and a series of interrelated articles on concepts of childhood in educational theory and practice. Robert A. Davis is Editor of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*.

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Lynn Fendler is a professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University where she teaches courses in curriculum theory, philosophy of education, and humanities-oriented research. Professor Fendler received her Ph.

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Francesca Gobbo held a position as Professor of Intercultural Education and Anthropology of Education at the University of Torino (Italy) until February 28th 2014. As of March 1st 2014 she is Associate Editor of the international journal "Intercultural Education", and continues to be part of the Nordic Center for Excellence in Education and of the "Education for Tomorrow" Programme as well as of the networks on "Social Justice and Intercultural Education" and "Ethnography" with the European Education Research Association. After graduating from the University of Padova, she studied at the University of California, Berkeley. She was Fulbright grantee (1969), Visiting Scholar at UC Berkeley (1995) and Harvard University (2001). She is on the editorial boards of international journals, has published extensively in Italian and English and participated into Comenius projects. She studies and teaches contemporary educational issues from a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective combining educational theory with cultural anthropology and anthropology of education so as to problematize and widen the discourse and research on intercultural education. She carried out ethnographic research among Italy's "internal minorities" such as the Albanian speaking minority of Calabria, the Waldensian religious minority in Piedmont, the occupational minority of travelling fairground and circus people in Veneto. She is presently researching the rituals of lunch in nursery and childhood schools of Padua and "clown interventions" in Padua hospital's pediatric ward.

Marilyn Johnston-Parsons is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has been a classroom teacher and then university professor for more than 40 years. One co-written narrative book, *Success Stories in a Failing School* (2007), narrates teachers' successful attempts to help students learn in an urban school in the midst of a district imposed scripted curriculum and testing that labeled the school "failing". In a collaborative study of an urban-focused teacher education reform initiative at The Ohio State University, she and her teacher and faculty colleagues describe their 16-year longitudinal research on this reform and its impact on graduates in a book entitled, *Dialogue and Difference in a Teacher Education*

Program (2012). The authors write narrative accounts of their experiences in this reform initiative. Marilyn Johnston Parsons' research interests have focused primarily on teacher education. She is interested in how schools and universities can collaborate to enhance the learning of future teachers and the integration of theory and practice. These interests have been influenced by the research in teacher education, particularly work by Linda Darling-Hammond and Marilyn Cochran-Smith, but also by the insights and implicit theories of the teachers with whom she worked for many years in a Professional Development School project at The Ohio State University, USA. She has also been influenced by post-structural feminist theories looking at the power, language, and gender issues in teacher education in particular and in schooling in general.

Elina Lahelma is Professor of Education (emerita) and Research Director, University of Helsinki, Finland. She has worked as the responsible leader of the Research Unit of Cultural and Feminist Studies in Education and of several research projects granted by the Academy of Finland, the most recent 'Citizenship, Agency and Difference in Upper Secondary Education'. She is senior member in a Nordic Centre of Excellence 'Justice through Education in the Nordic context' Lahelma's fields of interest are in sociology of education and gender studies in education. She has conducted ethnographic research in schools and ethnographically grounded life-historical study on young people's transitions. One of her foci of interest is in ethnographic methodology. Her publications in English include books 'Making Spaces' (Macmillan, with Gordon and Holland, 2000) and 'Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges' (Tufnell Press, edited with Beach and Gordon, 2003) and 'Fair and competitive? Critical perspectives on contemporary Nordic schooling' (Tufnell Press, edited with Arnesen, Lundahl and Öhrn, 2014) and tens of articles in Journals, the most recent (2014) in 'Gender and Education', 'Ethnography and Education' and 'Educational Research'.

Vally Lytra is Lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research interests are in the areas of multilingualism, language use, language ideologies and social identities in schools, homes and communities in cross-cultural urban contexts. She is the author of *Play Frames and Social Identities: Contact Encounters in a Greek Primary School* (John Benjamins, 2007). She has co-edited *Multilingualism and Identities across Contexts: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Turkish-speaking Youth in Europe* (with Jens Normann Jørgensen, Copenhagen Studies in Bilingualism, 2008) and *Sites of Multilingualism Complementary Schools in Britain Today* (with Peter Martin, Trentham, 2010). She has also co-edited two special issues, *Bringing the Outside In: Negotiating Knowledge and Agency in Urban Multilingual Learning Contexts* (2011, with Janus Møller, *Linguistics and Education* 22:1) and *Language, Discourse and Identities. Snapshots from the Greek Context* (2009, with Alexandra Georgakopoulou, *Pragmatics* 19:3). Her new edited book *When Greeks and Turks Meet: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Relationship since 1923* (Ashgate) will appear in May 2014.

Jane Mulderrig is a Lecturer at Sheffield University, UK, where she runs the MA in Applied Linguistics (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/english/people/mulderrig>). After several years teaching in Japan she took up doctoral research in Linguistics, developing a corpus-based critical discourse analytical approach to the political economy of education policy. More generally Jane's research and teaching combines sociological theory with linguistic analytical methods to investigate questions of identity, power and personality in a range of public discourse contexts. Several of her publications (*Discourse and Society*, *Critical Discourse Studies*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*) use this combined approach to investigate the linguistic dimensions of managerialisation, discourses of the knowledge economy in education, as well as the role of personal pronouns in 'selling' policy to the public. Her work also investigates the rise of 'soft power' in contemporary governance. While working in educational research at Edinburgh University, Jane also published in the area of disability and gender policies, and equality and human rights (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/education/rke/centres-groups/creid>). Jane's current research examines the use of 'nudge' strategies in UK public health policy as well as contemporary public discourses of ageing. For downloadable publications see: <http://sheffield.academia.edu/JaneMulderrig>.

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Michael F. Watts is an independent education consultant. Before going freelance, he spent 12 years at the Universities of East Anglia and then Cambridge where much of his research was concerned with the widening participation agenda in and beyond the UK. This work typically made use of life history research and included studies of the aspirations of young people who choose not to enter higher education, higher education opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, the pedagogies of higher education, access to higher education in India and the funding of higher education as well as several projects focusing on the progression of state-educated students to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. He is currently involved in several long-term projects in South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. His interests in the philosophy and sociology of education

have been shaped by the work of Jean Baudrillard and Pierre Bourdieu but most of his research has been informed by the capability approach (outlined in his chapter in this volume) and is therefore concerned with human well-being defined as the substantive opportunities individuals have to choose and lead lives they value and have reason to value. His previous editorial work includes the journals *English Time: a journal for Cambodian Teachers of English* (co-editor, 1993–1994) and *Power and Education* (lead editor, 2009–2011) and the forthcoming volume *Higher Education and the Capability Approach*.

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See About the Editors for Editors who are also authors or co-authors.

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Peter Bowbrick has worked as a consultant in more than 35 countries, mainly for governments, the UN, the EC and the World Bank, as well as in Cambridge University and a research institute. The work has involved working in teams which interact with teams from the host governments, and sometimes from the international organizations. The aim has been to change action and policy. He has published widely including work on the limitations of data and statistics for action and policy.

Anne-Marie Chartier born in 1944 is holder of a philosophy agrégation and a PhD in teaching didactics. She first conducted her research as an associate professor in the Department of didactics at the INRP from 1974 to 1980, where she studied the teaching of mathematics at elementary level. Still as an associate professor from 1994 to 1996 and as a teacher and researcher since 1996, she worked on reading and writing in primary schools at the SHE (history of education). Her recent publications are connected to the history of written work at school, the teaching methods of reading in France and Western Europe and to a greater extent, the history of teacher training and teaching practices.

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David Doubek graduated at the Faculty of Sociology of Charles University (Anthropology) in 1998. In 2003 he gained PhD (Faculty of Education, Charles University). From 1994 to 2003 he participated on the longitudinal project research of Prague Group of School Ethnography “*Pupil in the changing conditions of contemporary school*”. From the year of 2008 he focused on the issue of Roma education. He cooperates with Markéta Levínská and Dana Bittnerova on the research projects *Function Cultural Models in Education* (2008–2010) and 2012–2015 *Decision-making processes of helping professions in the area of intercultural relationship* (2012–2015).

Yo Dunn received her PhD from Lancaster University, UK, on a thesis titled ‘New Labour’s discourses around exclusion from school 1997–2006: disguising change and dodging critique’, supervised by Dr. Yvette Solomon and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (PTA-030-2003-00012). Although a non-linguist herself, Dr. Dunn’s approach to Critical Discourse Analysis was developed within the Linguistics department at Lancaster University and influenced by Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Andrew Sayer and members of the Language, Ideology and Power group. Broadly she is interested in Critical Realism, normativity and the application of emancipatory goals in social scientific research. Methodologically her research interests include the development of multi-method approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis incorporating corpus techniques and metaphor analysis. She chooses to focus on applying these methods to issues of inequality and the positioning of marginalised groups in society.

Inés Dussel is a researcher and professor at the *Departamento de Investigaciones Educativas del CINVESTAV*, Mexico. She received her Ph.D. at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Before moving to Mexico, she was a researcher at FLACSO/Argentina. She has done research on the relationships among knowledge, school, and politics, in a historical and sociological approach, and has published 8 books and over 120 articles and chapters in academic journals and books in 6 languages. She is currently working on a research project on the changes brought by digital artifacts in schools, looking particularly at shifts in the visual technologies of schooling and the changing hierarchies of school knowledge. She has received fellowships from the Spencer Foundation (USA), DAAD (Germany), Georg-Eckert-Institut (Germany), CAPES (Brazil), and the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina). She is a member of the National System of Researchers (SNI) in Mexico.

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Philip Gardner is Senior Lecturer in Education in the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, where he teaches history of education and research methods in education. He is a Fellow of St Edmund's College and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. His principal research interests centre upon the history of teachers and the teaching profession, and upon methodological problems in history, in both of which fields he has published extensively. He is the co-author, with Peter Cunningham, of *Becoming Teachers: Texts and Testimonies 1907–1950* (London: Woburn, 2004). His most recent book is *Hermeneutics, History and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

Deborah Golden studied social anthropology at University College London which, in the British way, combined a strong respect for the empiricist tradition together with a romantic view of fieldwork in exotic places as needing little preparation in the nitty-gritty of how to go about gathering data and making sense of them. Hence, I learned about doing ethnography – both process and product – while in the field. I since ordered that somewhat chaotic experience into a graduate course on ethnographic methods which I have been teaching, with much enjoyment, for the last two decades at the Faculty of Education, University of Haifa, where I am Senior Lecturer and currently head the program in Education, Society and Culture.

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Elias Hemelsoet received his PhD in Educational Sciences titled 'A critical appraisal of policies and practices focusing upon the right to education: The case of the Roma in Ghent' from Ghent University, Belgium. His primary areas of scholarship are politics of education, Roma people, irregular migration, human and children's rights, educational justice, philosophy of education, social integration and social policy. He is the author of the book '*Roma in het Gentse onderwijs: een verhaal apart?*' (in Dutch) and has published in various international journals. Apart from his scientific work, he is also engaged in a number of volunteer initiatives related to Roma and irregular migrants.

Gunilla Holm, PhD, is a professor of education in the Institute of Behavioural Sciences at the University of Helsinki and director of the Nordic Centre of Excellence in Education 'Justice through Education'. Her research interests are focused on photography as a data collection method as well as social justice issues in education related to race, ethnicity, class, and gender. She has published widely on cultural diversity issues in education related to youth and teacher education as well as on schooling in popular culture. She has co-edited several books, including *Contemporary Youth Research: Local Expressions and Global Connections* (2005) and *Schooling in the Light of Popular Culture* (1994).

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Jason A. Swanson currently serves as an administrator at the International Preparatory Academy (IPA) in the Champaign (Champaign, IL). The IPA is a dual language elementary that aims to foster bilingualism, biliteracy and biculturalism, as well as a space where students can critique societal norms. Built in to the daily schedule is a 30-min block of time, the Cultural Roundtable. It is a period where students share narratives about their lived experiences, reflect on other's experiences, and work to disrupt stereotypes. Prior to his work at the IPA, Swanson completed his doctoral work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests explore the intersection of leadership for social justice and dialogue. In his dissertation, Swanson used dialogue in narrative inquiry to supplement the data collected for his case study. For his work on this study, Jason was selected for the 2014 AERA LSJ Dissertation Award.

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