

Postcritical Ethnography: An Introduction

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Critical ethnography is at a crossroads. The crossroads is a product of its multiple origins. The origins were a complex and shifting synthesis. Marxist ideas had been shifting away from the deterministic scientific positivism of the "late" Marx, and toward the "early" humanistic Marx who wrote of alienation as a product of capitalism. This was exemplified in the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School. Critical theory, however, was largely philosophical and lacked a methodology to allow it to expand into the social sciences. At the same time, interpretive ethnography was expanding beyond anthropology and symbolic interactionist sociology, revitalized by the sociology of knowledge, especially Berger and Luckmann's synthesis of Schutz and Mannheim and the work of Geertz (1973, 1983, 1988). Interpretive ethnography, was beleaguered by charges of relativism, and largely relegated to the status of a "micro" theory. It was seen by many as useful at the level of social interaction, but lacking a theoretical base to also be a "macro" institutional and sociocultural approach. What both perspectives shared was a leftist orientation, albeit of rather different kinds, and a need for what the other could offer. The wedding was first seen as creating a "new" sociology of education, which gave way to a critical ethnography as educational anthropology expanded in numbers of scholars and significance of their studies. The marriage has been extremely productive, but has also

revealed that marriages do not always redress the problems that each partner had prior to the union.

In this volume, we articulate what seems to be ahead in critical ethnography. The marriage of critical theory and interpretative ethnography is troubled. Critique is increasingly understood as giving interpretive and political powers to the critic. As the critique of women and people of color have repeatedly demonstrated, critique usurps and appropriates the rights of representation even as it seeks to emancipate. Ethnography has been reconceptualized as well. Ethnography was construed in the context of colonialism, and realization has reoriented who and what is being represented and whose interests are being served. The outside ethnographer model is in many places giving way to "native ethnographers" (Benard & Pedruza, 1989; Jennings, 1999). Yet, native ethnography has its own problems, as Villenas (1996) so aptly demonstrated in her account of her work as an expression of the "colonizer/colonized" dilemma.

This book is one of the products of the "postcritical working group." We literally, have spent years reading, thinking, discussing, and writing about "where we are" in critical ethnography. We admittedly began approaching the project theoretically, and then as members of the group did their own studies we began to see that some of the possibilities are what might be called a *postcritical ethnography*. For us, postcritical ethnography is not one single thing, rather it is many. It is less about unity and more about difference. The emphasis on critique remains and is in fact expanded as it addresses objectification (McCadden, Dempsey, & Adkins, 1999), representation (Givens, 1999), and positionality (Murillo, 1999a).

We are also not claiming that we are in fact doing something absolutely new here. Rather, we see it as our efforts to think through in different ways, the concerns we had trying to work in the current context of changing ideas about critique and ethnography. We are learning a lot from both the new experiments with ethnography, as well as the efforts of critical theorists who are trying to push similar ground, but in different ways.

Postcritical ethnography also signals our recognition that critical ethnography is being challenged by ideas of postmodernists and post-structuralists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). The "post" then signals not a new "stage," but rather its absence. Things are changing, but we are not sure they are moving toward a new idea. Indeed, this book expresses the working group's commitment to not promote an idea. Rather we are promoting the broader possibilities and dimensions offered by multiple ideas.

We also think that it is necessary for us to account for how we got to here. We do this in a few ways. First, we present how the marriage has gone since the wedding, offering a historical narrative of the ideas, as now we see them. Second, we describe the process that the working group went through to get to these writings. Yet we want to be clear. There were as many stories as participants in the process. We emphasize this by presenting a story in this introduction, albeit a multivoiced analysis, and not a generalized account. Third,

we each situate our work in our texts. We discuss the contributions that follow as a way of introducing the reader to our work and collective project. Yet for us, the focus should be less on where we came from, but where we are, and what we are struggling with after critical ethnography.

We embark with an understanding that postcritical ethnography is neither a rejection of critique nor of ethnography. Rather, the many different postcritical ethnographies are reinscriptions of critique in ethnography. They are products of the marriage of critical theory and interpretive ethnography, as well as a reflection of the struggle and work of women and people of color to be heard in this family.

In this introduction, we examine how the marriage has gone since the wedding. It is a story of mutual benefit and of heady and provocative accomplishments, all built on a difference that, although repeatedly spoken, could not be directly addressed without dissolving the union. The difference is critical theory's claims to "objective reality and its determinate representation" (Hollinger, 1994, p. 81) and interpretive ethnography's claim that all knowledge, including critical theory, is socially constructed. The former accepted the latter's view to the extent that it embraced "situated knowledge" (Mirón, 1996); the latter accepted the former's view to the extent that it accepted the centrality of power and ideology in social constructions.

There is a larger point to this chapter, however, that anyone interested in research methodology, whether quantitative or qualitative, should consider. Research methods and theory are all too often taught separately and implicitly portrayed as having different natures. Theory is taught as attempts to understand the world they have a history and thus are tentative, historically specific, and ultimately subject to the results of continued research. It is this latter step that helps to frame how research methods are to be understood. Research methods are often characterized as the arbiters of theory. As such, students are often left with the understanding that methods are different from theory. When research is taught as a series of techniques, students learn that there are right and wrong ways to do whatever methodology being taught. The implicit and often explicit lesson is that research methods are not like ideas. When taught as arbiters of ideas, methods have a higher status than theory and have an explicit aesthetic that separates good from bad ways to know. Students are smart. They learn this message.

Unfortunately, qualitative researchers are often as guilty as quantitative researchers in this, but the point of this chapter is that methods are ideas and theories in themselves. They have histories, are best understood as tentative, and are not separate from the theories they are used to test or explore. We argue that method and theory are linked by people in concrete historical and ideational contexts. When ideas are joined in paradigmatically new ways, they produce an exciting program of "normal science" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 10), that over time reveals the problematic assumptions of the paradigm. This is the case with critical ethnography, as we posit. Yet we do not want readers to interpret this point

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fatalistically. We are at a crossroads, and this gives us new possibilities. We should not approach the crossroads thinking we are forced to choose one of the existing roads. We should not choose between critical theory and ethnography. Instead, we see that researchers are cutting new paths to reinscribing critique in ethnography.

Our approach, put too simply, is to turn the tools of ideology critique on critical ethnography itself, and to suggest a new future for critical ethnography. We call this future (and its present manifestations) *postcritical ethnography*.

CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Critical ethnography has a history of some 30 years. It emerged following what was seen as a crisis in social science (Gouldner, 1970) when discipline boundaries were fraying (Geertz, 1973), and when many Western democracies were being challenged by emancipatory social movements. Marxism was instrumental in challenging dominant social theories, but was in transition itself to a neo-Marxism (and now post-Marxism) that was less deterministic and less associated with the Soviet Union. Hall (1986) characterized it as "Marxism without guarantees." As it has developed, critical ethnography has spanned disciplines and nations. Clearly, it does not have a unitary history but rather a set of histories (some of which we discuss later) demarcated by the lives of individual scholars and sets of scholars and how these lives interpenetrated the many ideas that we now describe as critical ethnography.

One of the central ideas guiding critical ethnography is that social life is constructed in contexts of power. Thus, the histories we offer here must be understood as our social construction. We encourage readers to seek other views, other inscriptions.

There are many different definitions of critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996). In part, this is because critical ethnography is embedded in the expansion of qualitative research methods and because its origins were multiple. Indeed, Quantz (1992) argued that "no answer is likely to satisfy critical ethnographers themselves, because to define the term is to assume an epistemological stance in which the social world can be precisely defined—a position that is not very critical" (p. 448). Nonetheless, many authors have struggled through this multiplicity of definitions with the goal of conceptual clarity. Thomas (1993) offered a distinction between conventional ethnography and critical ethnography: "Conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be" (p. 4). That is, "critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose." As he explained, critical ethnographers are "raising their voice to speak *to* an audience *on behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects' voice" (p. 4).

Carspecken (1996) elaborated the definition by specifying that critical researchers have both a value orientation and a critical epistemology that characterizes their work. To paraphrase (and quote), the value orientation of critical ethnography includes the following:

1. Research is to be used in cultural and social criticism.
2. Researchers are opposed to inequality in all its forms.
3. Research should be used to reveal oppression and to challenge and change it.
4. "All forms of oppression should be studied."
5. Mainstream research contributes to oppression and thus critical epistemology should presuppose equal power relations. (pp. 6-7)

Carspecken then elaborated central points of critical epistemology. Again paraphrasing (and quoting), he listed the following:

1. Critical epistemology must be extremely precise about the relationship of power to research claims, validity claims, culture, and thought.
2. "Critical epistemology must make the fact/value distinction very clear and must have a precise understanding of how the two interact."
3. Critical epistemology must include a theory of how symbols are used to represent reality, how this changes, and how power is implicated in symbolic representation and changes in symbolic representation. (p. 9)

Taken together, then, Carspecken highlighted the centrality of working against power and oppression as key elements of critical ethnography, and for him this acts on two levels. First, the critical ethnographer works against oppression by revealing and critiquing it. Equally important, however, is that critical ethnographers understand that knowledge itself is a social practice interpenetrated with power. To that end, critical ethnographers must explicitly consider how their own acts of studying and representing people and situations are acts of domination even as critical ethnographers reveal the same in what they study. In this, Carspecken asked that critical ethnography turn its value orientation and epistemological understandings back on itself.

These definitional attempts help us understand what may be involved in doing critical ethnography, but this must come with a caution. As Quantz (1992) argued, critical ethnography is not so much a thing in itself as a project within a wider discourse:

Critical ethnography is one form of an empirical project associated with critical discourse, a form in which a researcher utilizing field methods that

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place the researcher on-site attempts to re-present the "culture," the "consciousness," or the "lived experiences" of people living in asymmetrical power relations. As a "project," critical ethnography is recognized as having conscious political intentions that are oriented toward emancipatory and democratic goals. What is key to this approach is that for ethnography to be considered "critical" it should participate in a larger "critical" dialogue rather than follow any particular set of methods or research techniques. (pp. 448-449)

Quantz recognized that this type of definition favors the critical side over the ethnographic side, but viewed this as appropriate because critical ethnographers refuse to separate theory from method. As we return to later, this also privileges only one of the theories that were part of the origins of critical ethnography. Yet Quantz was quite correct in arguing that to understand critical ethnography, one must place it in both a wider discourse and in the history of that discourse.

Anderson (1989) offered the following account of the origins of critical ethnography in education:

Critical ethnography in the field of education is the result of the following dialectic: On one hand, critical ethnography has grown out of the dissatisfaction with social accounts of "structures" like class, patriarchy, and racism in which real actors never appear. On the other hand, it has grown out of dissatisfaction with cultural accounts of human actors in which broad structural constraints like class, patriarchy, and racism never appear. Critical theorists in education have tended to view ethnographers as too atheoretical and neutral in their approach to research. Ethnographers have tended to view critical theorists as too theory driven and biased in their research. (p. 249)

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing challenge to the dominant positivistic paradigm for educational and social research. The functionalist theory (with its focus on the social functions and systems of social arrangements that contribute to equilibrium) that undergirds positivism was being challenged by Marxist theory that emphasized instead class struggle and conflict as the basis of social arrangements. At the same time, positivistic science was increasingly seen as inappropriately applied to social and cultural life. Although positivism posited a social and cultural life that was objective and deterministic, it was increasingly argued that social life was in many ways subjective and socially constituted. Thus, accounts of real life required a research methodology that could capture the actual nature of social arrangements and cultural beliefs. The challenge itself was situated in a history of positivists using their notions of science and theory to critique other notions of science and theory. Neo-Marxism and ethnography were both under attack by positivists. As neo-Marxists rejected an overly deterministic Marxism in favor of ideology critique, positivists charged that they were idealists and had no methodology for empirical research.

Ethnographers influenced by both interpretivism and the sociology of knowledge were leaving behind functionalism, when positivists then charged that ethnography had no theory and was relativistic. Faced with the dominant paradigm's critiques, and with a shared interest in the less powerful, the union of critical theory and interpretive ethnography proved to be productive.

However, this account is both somewhat ahistorical and acontextual. To understand the progress and predicaments of critical ethnography, it is necessary to historicize critical ethnography and to place it in at least three intellectual contexts. First, we review Quantz's (1992) history of critical ethnography. Second, we want to place critical ethnography in the context of the other developments with ethnography and qualitative research in education. Third, Wexler (1987) provided a more contextual and critical history that reframes critical ethnography, and explicated some of the problems experienced by critical ethnography. All these, in turn, help us tether to a reconsideration of the post-modern challenges to critical ethnography and ultimately to the broader possibilities and dimensions of a postcritical ethnography.

Quantz (1992) viewed the discourse of critical ethnography as being primarily based both in Great Britain and the United States. In the United States, deviance studies, most notably the qualitative, symbolic interactionist studies of Becker (1963, 1964) in sociology were a call to take the side of the underdog and to do so by using the perspectives of the underdogs to challenge conventional worldviews. Becker's (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961) study made it clear that even medical students could be understood similarly to be victims of schools and that educational research should be directed away from improving educational efficiency and toward legitimating student perspectives.

Similarly, a symbolic interactionist, social anthropology was developing through a series of case studies of British schools (cf. Hargreaves, 1967). Studies of this type were critiqued as a relativistic romanticism that makes the deviant an exotic and a victim rather than unpacking and attacking the ideology and power that limits the emancipation of the subject. As the British symbolic interactionist studies continued, they became more influenced by continental critical thought which "attempted to get beneath the social consciousness to the material basis for that consciousness" (Quantz, 1992, p. 455). At the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, ethnographic methods were adopted as the methodology of choice for critical studies. There, culture was conceived as having a material base, but was also highly complex and not reducible only to material relations. Quantz discussed the many ethnographies that resulted, including the now classic *Learning to Labor* (Willis, 1977) and *Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity* (McRobbie, 1978). These ethnographies inscribed resistance theory and defined a central problematic of resistance theory; resistance as a form of agency that reproduces dominance and ideology (Giroux, 1983).

In the United States, ethnography and field research in education had a long history but remained a minor tradition. In the 1960s, interactionist, phe-

nomenological, and sociolinguistic studies were emerging even as educational anthropology remained rather functionalist and traditional. By the 1970s, ethnography in education was becoming a worthy challenger to the positivist traditions. With the importation of the British critical studies and theoretical work of Michael Apple and Henry Giroux, an American critical ethnography was emerging. Everhart's (1983) *Reading, Writing and Resistance* and the works of Simon and Dippo (1986), and McLaren (1986) from Canada were stimulating and challenging to the more functionalist, interactionist, and linguistic educational ethnographies. The result according to Quantz was that: "the discursive traditions of critical theory have been strengthened by a method to incorporate experience, and the experiential methods of educational ethnography have been deepened by critical discourse" (p. 461).

As Quantz (1992) acknowledged, there is another account of critical ethnography that focuses on the ethnography side of critical ethnography in education. Ethnography in education was written against positivism and has had at least three "moves": importation of method, legitimation of method, and the crisis of representation and objectification.

Ethnography is historically based in anthropology and the study of culture. Although there were qualitative traditions in sociology and other disciplines that contributed to the importation of qualitative research into education, anthropological ethnography was claimed to be the most thorough and rigorous qualitative approach. Other approaches such as case studies and intensive interview studies were seen as valid but only an approximation of ethnography. These claims were part of what was imported with the ethnographic method from anthropology but took on special salience in education because of the dominance of positivism in education. Ethnography was being brought into education as a challenge to this dominance, and the battles were heated and continue to even today (Cizek, 1995). The "imported" ethnography in education was being fashioned as a weapon that was reshaped in reaction to outcomes of the battles. Early qualitative articles and books in education (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) directly accosted positivist claims about knowledge, and studies often took the form of taking a generalization derived from quantitative research and demonstrating how it did not account for what was revealed in an ethnographic study. Ethnography in education soon looked different from the ethnographies of education done by anthropologists, and there were complaints from the anthropologists about the changes being made (Jacob, 1987; Spindler, 1982).

In part, the complaints may have been about anthropology losing control over the method, but there was more to it. Anthropologists worked with ethnography in a context that largely defined ethnography the accepted method, while educational ethnographers were fighting for the acceptance of their methodology. In the latter context, ethnography's form was altered to meet the strategic needs of seeking legitimacy. Yet in the legitimation struggle, it was assumed that ethnography was a superior method. Unfortunately this ignored

ethnography's origins in colonialism. Rosaldo (1989) characterized the ethnography that was to be imported into education: the "Lone Ethnographer" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 30) left his advanced civilization and traveled in search of a primitive native guided by beliefs in objectivism, monumentalism (accounts that render culture as a museum-like display), timelessness (primitives did not change), and a complicity with imperialism (Geertz, 1988). At the origins of critical ethnography then, neither critique nor ethnography themselves were critiqued.

The legitimacy struggle of ethnography in education took place on many fronts. This required adaptations of the methodology and a broadening of the methodology into a more generalized qualitative research, in which ethnography was but one variant. While the legitimacy struggle took place widely across the fields within education (curriculum studies, social foundations, educational administration, and so on, and is still engaged in areas such as special education), we focus here on two of the major fronts in which the struggle took different forms: educational evaluation and educational research.

One of the key sites of the legitimacy struggle was in educational evaluation where the press of producing useful knowledge was revealing the limits of quantitative methods. Positivism was unable to respond to the "political inherency" (Greene, 1994) of program evaluation, and was increasingly critiqued as arrogant in the demands for positivistic rigor and irrelevant because it could not situate itself in the real world of decision making (Greene, 1994). The alternatives to positivism were being argued in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Scriven's (1967) argument that evaluation was best understood as a process of valuing, and his argument for a goal-free approach to evaluation (Scriven, 1973) undercut the claims of scientific evaluators that programs should be goal-based. House (1977) made his classic distinction between merit and worth in evaluation, arguing against positivism as he argued for evaluation being based on assessments of worth of various stakeholders. Cronbach (1980), Guba and Lincoln (1981), and many others also contributed to the movement and by the 1980s, the struggle for legitimacy had eased into *détente*.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) did not, however, limit themselves only to evaluation, and thus were key participants in the legitimacy struggle on other fronts as well. They and others (e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) began to articulate qualitative methods as legitimate in educational research in general. Educational research had been not only positivistic, but largely psychological as well. Qualitative researchers in education countered with appeals to their disciplinary bases in sociology and anthropology. This claim to legitimacy, of course, is somewhat different than the basis wrought in educational evaluation just discussed. Here, the legitimation strategy went beyond the claims that positivism was unable to capture the complexity of education, and in doing so, inadvertently undercut the claim that education could be a discipline of its own. Ironically, the claims to disciplinary basis was being accomplished as the sanctity of disciplines themselves was giving way to "blurred genres" (Geertz, 1973). Although qualitative researchers in education

were also ultimately successful in achieving a form of détente in educational research, they did so by reinforcing positivistic assumptions that methods were to be justified by claims to disciplines outside of education. This also meant that the grounds for legitimation within education were to be essentially methodological.

The result has had a reinscription of positivism's methodological fetish and reproducing it in qualitative methods as well. Scholars worked on analogies for quantitative validity and reliability (Kirk & Miller, 1986; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), criteria for trustworthiness (Guba, 1981), improved techniques (Krueger, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mishler, 1986), synthesizing multiple studies (Noblit & Hare, 1988), and paradigm and epistemological justifications (Guba, 1990). This methodological fetish resulted in a burgeoning industry of texts and handbooks, including this one. Much of this work is interesting and provocative to read, but the point is that much of this work has been driven externally by concerns for legitimacy.

Legitimizing qualitative research proceeded on other grounds as well. Qualitative research was rhetorically constructed as representing the interests of oppressed peoples. The focus on multiple perspectives did in fact allow qualitative research to represent the interests of those who were not being heard in the wider educational discourse. This alignment led to qualitative research in education being about giving "voice" (Fine, 1994a) to the oppressed. Yet as Fine noted, voice all too easily gave way into ventriloquy, especially as the methodology struggled for legitimacy. The colonialist origins of ethnography, even with all the changes in qualitative methods, were still dominant.

As ethnography and qualitative research were seeking legitimacy in educational research, in part by appealing to discipline heritage, it was being argued that the interpretivist perspective was spreading across the humanities and social sciences, undercutting discipline claims and boundaries. The "blurred genres" (Geertz, 1973) posited that ethnographic accounts were interpretations of interpretations. In many ways, Geertz did not anticipate that this move would both promote qualitative researchers exploring the "linguistic turn" (Toews, 1987, p. 879), semiotics, and poststructuralism, and ultimately contribute to a crisis of representation (Marcus & Fischer, 1986) within ethnography.

The crisis of representation meant that qualitative researchers could no longer make a strong claim to realism in their writing. That is, because ethnographers were constructing ethnographies as products of their own culture instead of producing accounts of others' culture, reflexivity, positionality (race, class, gender, actual orientation, and ideology of the researcher) and representation were issues to be addressed in both research and writing. McCadden et al. (1999) argued that representation is actually a derivative of a more substantial crisis of objectification. For them, the real issue is that poststructuralism and postmodernism problematize the idea that social life can be understood and rendered objectively. If objective accounts are impossible, then all accounts, including critical ethnographies, are productive of subjectivity. Without a basis

to claim objectivity then, both empiricism and realism are problematic claims for ethnography.

The crisis, however conceived, has led to considerable experimentation in educational ethnography. Narrative (Vaz, 1997), literary (Noblit, 1999; Richardson & Lockridge, 1998), poetic (Glesne, 1997), impressionistic (Van Maanen, 1988), autoethnographic (Ellis & Bochner, 1996) and other approaches are all being elaborated. Similarly, many authors have experimented with how to display their positionality and reflexivity (Fine, 1994b; Noblit, 1993; Weis & Fine, 1993). In this experimentation, the realist ethnography that was married to critical theory is left behind, and in doing so, questions the critical approach itself.

Wexler (1987) contextualized these historical accounts differently when he focuses on the leftist "new sociology of education." Although Wexler included many of the same authors that Quantz reviewed, it must be remembered that they are not fully comparable accounts. Wexler focused more on the United States and critical sociological studies. Yet Wexler's account allows a rather different reading of the history of critical ethnography. Although Quantz achieved his goal of describing the development of critical ethnography, Wexler was seeking an explanation and critique. Wexler argued that the accounts of development and critical ethnography fail to place it in broader historical and political contexts, including that accounts are created within academic norms that hide other meanings of such accounts. He wrote: "The illusion of autonomy is integral to, and protective of, the academic norm which codes conceptual change only as a theoretical advance, rather than as also rationalization of change" (p. 5). Wexler's point is that accounts of critical ethnography do not turn the tools of critique upon themselves.

Wexler's history of the field also gave new meaning to the contestation in critical ethnography. Indeed, he argued that critical ethnography in education worked to block both the transformation of the field and our understanding of education's centrality in wider social transformations. The problem was that critical ethnography constructed its work as negation and critique that although having productive moments, "recoups and repeats the logic and concepts of an earlier time, the time of its origin in opposition" (p. 6). Turning the concepts of critical ethnography on itself, the opposition and resistance critical ethnography turned out to be reproductive.

For Wexler, the old sociology of education began in Progressivism and the newly developing power of the professional middle class. He argued that there was a "conceptual consensus" (p. 27) to the field before the 1960s due to its relations to the larger Progressive movement. Yet this consensus masked a "central historic conflict, between the educationists and sociologists" (p. 27). In this conflict, educationists held a lower status, "a role later replayed in the new sociology of education" (p. 28). In the early years of this century, the educationists were more active contributors to the discipline. They submitted more articles, trained more leaders in the field, and held politically impor-

tant positions in professional associations. Yet they were unable to compete with the positivistic science project in sociology at large, and by the 1960s, argued Wexler, "The split between scientific sociology of education and a 'reformist' and interdisciplinary social foundations of education was already institutionally well established" (p. 29).

The old sociology of education reflected the "social regulative interests and ideology of the Progressive movement" (p. 29). It had established as a central research theme how external factors, such as social class and school resources, interfered with individual competition in a meritocratic educational system. Wexler noted that this definition of inequality within the old sociology of education fueled the development of cultural deprivation explanations of minority group performance in schools. The educational policies based on this tradition, including equal funding and compensatory education, failed, as had its central hypothesis, when empirical research repeated "no difference" findings. Wexler argued these failures were insufficient to stop the science project of sociology from becoming the dominant paradigm of the field. By 1970, status attainment research with its "competitive individualist images of inequality" (p. 31) dominated with its study of mobility. A second area of research in the old sociology of education emphasized Progressive values of efficiency, cooperation, and professionalism in education. Organizational variables were correlated with individual outcomes in a systems analysis that ignored both everyday life in schools and wider social movements and beliefs—what Wexler termed "decontextualized organizational models of professionally managed efficiency" (p. 31). Both views of the old sociology of education employed a view of knowledge as appropriately stratifying and producing social consensus, a view that was contested by the new sociology of education as it became critical ethnography.

Critical ethnography, according to Wexler, also emerged within a context similar to that of the old sociology of education. For the new sociology of education, the context was one of expanding universities and a growing professional middle class. It should be noted, however, that the new sociology of education (a) was not a direct successor to the old sociology and (b) had a minimal effect on the old sociology of education. Wexler argued that the rise of the new sociology was based in its social analysis of education: critique. It had a particular form and content (academic and radical) that also allowed it to contain a contradiction between continuing the goals of the movement while accepting political defeat. In the early 1970s, the new sociology of education was predominantly British and incorporated a sociology of knowledge perspective. As Wexler wrote: "This theoretical centering on the knowledge question brought together the sociology of knowledge tradition and the more classroom-based, pedagogical interest of the curricularists in both classroom interaction and school knowledge" (p. 35). Neo-Marxism entered the new sociology in the late 1970s when an explicit attempt was made to reformulate the new sociology into a Marxist framework, and thus join in the wider movement of critical theory occurring in a range of disciplines.

The new sociology was a counterpoint to the old sociology of education. Whereas the old sociology of education saw schooling as consensual and integrative, the new sociology saw in it opposition, resistance, and conflict. The new sociology first explored ideology critique, whereby debunking established knowledge. This was followed by the redefinition of the field as the study of cultural reproduction, while retaining the assumptions of ideology critique. The reproduction discourse was elaborated in the late 1970s, but ideology critique remained the central logic. Radical scholarship was also divided between structural and cultural theories of reproduction (Giroux, 1983). Structural theories argued ideology was more than ideas; rather, it was a material practice. Cultural theories argued that dominant social class culture was taught as universal knowledge in schools, stratifying knowledge and students, reproducing a class society.

By the early 1980s, however, social and cultural reproduction theory was in disrepute, even among its earlier proponents. Wexler argued that the shift was of central concepts: Totality was replaced by relative institutional autonomy, structural integration shifted to describing internal contradictions, and reproduction of domination became mitigated by the study of conflict, whereas the explanations of social change became structural contradictions of capitalism and the autonomy and resistance of the working class. Critical ethnography replicated the Left's critique of liberalism and its romantic individualism, Wexler argued. As a result, critical ethnography through opposition, confirmed individualism as an ideology. Also, the critical ethnography critique of liberalism was self-defeating in that it justified the New Right's attack on liberalism. Wexler argued that the discourse of the New Left became disoriented. Furthermore, the university expansion that spawned the new sociology of education and ultimately critical ethnography was replaced with a concern for retrenchment. Academic unemployment and the dismissals of radical academics further demonstrated how university expansion had fed critical ethnography. Wexler postulated that this change left critical ethnographers disarmed to deal with a newly powerful Right. Both disoriented and disarmed, critical ethnographers began to articulate education in terms of social movements. Ideology was redefined to be but a moment in an involved process of collective action rather than being simply reproductive. Yet the increasing proletarianization of university faculty in the 1980s pressed critical ethnographers to focus more on the technical issues of their studies and less on asserting their values. Wexler viewed this internally exiled speech as an ironic legacy from those who first engaged in ideology critique as part of gaining institutional inclusion and legitimization.

Wexler summarized the changes in the critical discourse from the 1960s to the late 1980s: "The new sociology of education discourse follows, though in an abstract, rationalized language, the social path of its producers: from ideology-critique to awareness of systemic reproduction through the accumulation of cultural capital; and then from idealized and socially displaced individual cultural resistance to the dissonant bifurcation between an idealized

social mobilization and an unconscious politics of internally exiled speech" (p. 45). For Wexler, this final contradiction is sufficient to push critical ethnography out of the Progressive liberal paradigm to which it was attached in negation, and out of the abstract Marxist theory, to what he termed *social analysis*.

Wexler's social analysis involved being historically reflexive about one's own theory and research. It required a "new contextualism" in which knowing is understood as an historical cultural practice, and saw research methods as tools for producing knowledge. He noted the role of oral and life history methods in constituting the present and the past. As people discussed their lives, they both related the past and constructed a present with the interviewer. Thus, oral history allowed a hermeneutic conversation to take place, interrupting dominant discourses. He also saw in French feminists a similar struggle against silence or misrepresentation as they "struggle to write the moving and multiple feminine subject against the stereotyped 'woman'" (p. 96). Wexler based his social analysis of education both in the study of the social organization of meaning production and in textualism that focused on how symbolic processes constituted the subject as well as knowledge and meaning. Wexler shifted from social theory to literary theory and to an "historically relevant theory of social practice" (p. 127). Textualism was critical because it had an ambivalent attitude to new social arrangements and because it was an "anti-reifying practice" (p. 132). For Wexler, the dereification of discourse became "*the historically, critical practice*" (p. 133), and poststructuralism, with its denial of a final signified, enabled a social practice for social analysis. This social practice revealed that the meanings people give to situations were socially constructed and not determined. Importantly, this realization meant that less powerful people could appropriate the social construction of meaning to advance their own interest. Postmodernism, Wexler argued, allowed the dereification of scientific discourse itself, undercutting the claims of both positivism and critical ethnography.

Wexler's account, then, shows critical ethnography to be in many ways a failed project in that it reproduces its opposition and in doing so blocks social transformation. Wexler is also unlike many other criticalists in his understanding of postmodernity. Although we discuss this in detail later, it is important to see how Wexler both reached into the past for one of the original theoretical contributions to critical ethnography, the sociology of knowledge, in his efforts to "loosen the grip of historically reified knowledge" (p. 4) and then linked this to poststructuralism and postmodernism. He understood the threat this move portends to critical ethnography: "I know that such an alternative can send a chill of anti-scientific relativism to the heart of orthodox and liberal alike" (p. 10).

It is important also that we place Wexler's account against the other contexts we discussed. First, critical ethnography in the United States lost the sociology of knowledge base that it had in its origins in the United Kingdom, and replaced it with a neo-marxism that reified structure, materialism, realism, and rationalism. Although the sociology of knowledge project was put aside within critical ethnography, it did not disappear from education. Rather the

antifoundational perspective it presented was elaborated in the struggle to develop and legitimate ethnographic and qualitative methods, accepting the methodological fetish of educational research. The sociology of knowledge also continued as a minor act in social theory, and as we are doing here, is being reinscribed in postmodernism and poststructuralism (Dant, 1991; Ladwig, 1996; McCarthy, 1996; Popkewitz, 1998). Antifoundationalism was also at the base of the criticisms of critical theory and ethnography. As Bennett and LeCompte (1990) explained:

In the middle and late 1980's, critical theory came under its own attack by social theorists such as post-structuralists, feminists (Delamont, 1989; Lather, 1986b; Ellsworth, 1988) and anti-rationalists (Ellsworth, 1988). While these approaches differ in their emphases and are as varied as the researchers who espouse them, they all draw on the analytic constructs of earlier functionalist and conflict approaches, as well as the post-positivists' attack on "hard science." They also utilize the perspective of interpretivist theorists, accepting the premise that reality is constructed of the sum of the realities of individuals interacting in any given setting. These approaches place great importance on the presentation of "multiple voices" (Geertz, 1973, 1988) of all participants—especially less powerful participants such as women, members of minority groups, and students—in social interaction. (p. 29)

These critics argued that critical theory and ethnography was in itself a form of hegemony—patriarchal, Eurocentric, individualistic, and white. Wexler helps us understand why this became the case. Critical ethnography reproduced positivist and functionalist theories by negation, reinscribing individualism, and the Right's critique of liberalism. Critical theorists responded to these challenges with attempts to legitimate critical ethnography itself. Thus, when the dominance of class-based analyses were challenged, the result was to declare a "parallel" (Morrow & Torres, 1998) position in which critical theory was argued to be applicable to the study of gender domination much in the same way it was to have worked with social class. The challenge of race led to a further elaboration into a "nonsynchronous parallel" position (McCarthy & Apple, 1988). In each of these moves, however, critical ethnographers and theorists refused to engage the fundamental challenge of relational knowledge and antifoundationalism. The result was "a theory which could never be wrong" (Ladwig, 1996, p. 40), revealing critical theory's ideological base. As Wexler (1987) explains: "A critical analysis which hides uncertainty and disjuncture in a coherent story is also ideological" (p. 104). This reduction of critical theory's claim to rational knowledge leaves critical ethnography, ironically, to be a form of ideological practice. It becomes an ideology like all ideologies, and although it may claim to be a valued perspective, it is only one form of "openly ideological research" (Lather, 1986a, p. 63). Critical theory also externalized the antifoundational cri-

tique, first through an exploration of the poststructuralism and postmodernism as "new" paradigms that when critiqued could be in part subsumed into critical theory (Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Torres & Mitchell, 1998). In this, we replicated the origins of critical ethnography in which critical ethnographers accepted Habermas' (1971) characterization of interpretive research as serving only practical interests, reserving emancipatory interests to critical theory. Nonetheless, it has become increasingly clear that Habermas was incorrect in this. Instead of interpretive theories being practical, they offer a more radical critique than critical theory was able to deliver (Lather, 1992). As Sarris (1993) concluded:

Understanding and not control is the goal of critical discourse, and this understanding is dynamic, dialogical in nature. A more clearly stated purpose for critical thinking might be to foster a process or attitude which enables the individual to, as Gramsci says, "know thyself" as a product of historical process to date," which can only come about when that history and assumptions about it are challenged. Knowing thyself and knowing the other, then, are interdependent. (p. 153)

THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE?

Critical theorists and critical ethnographers are not the only ones concerned about the implications of postmodernity. There are many opposed to the ideas that people are calling *postmodernism*. Pearl and Knight (1999) are pursuing a "general theory" of democratic education, and are decidedly not critical theorists. In fact, they argued that critical theorists have avoided specifying their ideas in practice and do not emphasize the importance of the balanced treatment of ideas. Pearl and Knight argued critical theorists "do not meet our definition of democratic education" (p. 54). They are even more concerned with the inadequacies of postmodernism, and argued that "postmodernism is the logical consequence of hostility toward not only all grand narratives but to democracy, specifically" (p. 27).

Critical theorists, for their part, share Pearl and Knight's basic concerns about postmodernism. Torres and Mitchell (1998) also viewed postmodernism as a threat to democracy as well as to the possibility of addressing race, class, and gender differences. They acknowledged critical theory's origins in modernism by arguing that what postmodernity is missing is an emphasis on "critical modernism" (p. 7). Ebert (1991) argued that "the postmodern is increasingly seen as the end of transformative politics" and called "into question emancipation itself as a political agenda" (p. 291). She then proceeded "to write the political back into the postmodern" (p. 291) via a "resistance postmod-

ernism" (p. 293) that she distinguished from the "ludic postmodernism" of Derrida (1978), Lyotard (1984), and Baudrillard (1988) that denies a transcendental metanarrative. She clearly viewed the challenge of "ludic" postmodernism to the critical agenda. For her, Lyotard's (1984) cultural policy of playful, experimental, and transgressive subversions of the "rules" of grand narratives to prevent the easy circulation of meaning in culture denies the possibility of the critical project. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) used Ebert's "ludic" characterization to rethink the linkage between critical theory and qualitative research. In their effort, they argue ludic postmodernism "is decidedly limited in its ability to transform social and political regimes of power" (p. 143) and "tends to reinscribe the status quo" (p. 144). They viewed resistance postmodernism or critical postmodernism as an extension and appropriation of ludic postmodernism that "brings to ludic postmodernism a form of materialist intervention" (p. 144). In their formulation, postmodernism is a condition to be explained away by critical analysis. They see the fragmentation and discontinuity of postmodernity as a consequence of class struggle, institutionalized power, and the contestation of historical accounts.

Postmodernists and poststructuralists would arguably agree with this last point. Some postmodernists and poststructuralists argue that it is better to think of postmodernity as a historically specific condition rather than a theory. Lemert (1991) explained:

Postmodernism, if it means anything at all, means to say that since the mid-century the world has broken into its political and cultural parts. The very idea of the world revolving on a true axis has proven finite. The axial principles of the twentieth-century world—European culture, British administration, American capitalism, Soviet politics—have come apart as a matter of fact, not of theory. The multiple identities and local politics . . . are not just another way; they are what is left.

Murillo (1999a, 1999b) went further, arguing that postmodernity has a racial face. People of color have had to live postmodernity for some time, but only recently has it come to privileged Whites and intellectuals. Although postmodernity and poststructuralism are not to be equated, they co-exist and complement one another. Defining these terms is decidedly difficult because both question objectification of ideas, but is well worth the articulation.

Postmodernity is marked by the end of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) that determine the play of human history. In this sense, then, critical theory and ethnography are both essentially modernist projects deploying notions of objectivity and definitive representation. Poststructuralism is linked to postmodernity, but has its roots in the linguistic structuralism of de Saussure. For de Saussure (1959), there was a "final signified" behind language. That is, there was the possibility of an objective reality. Poststructuralists reject the notion of a final signified, arguing that reality is constructed in contexts of power rela-

tions and claims to final signifieds in theory or research are instead claims to power. As both postmodernism and poststructuralism are antifoundational, they represent a familiar challenge to critical ethnography. They revisit the struggle between interpretivism (the sociology of knowledge) and critical theory at the origins of critical ethnography (Dant, 1991; Popkewitz, 1998). Popkewitz (1995) reframed the critical ethnography critique of postmodernism and poststructuralism as being itself relativistic: "the concern of relativism is an attempt of critics to privilege their perspectives whose absence is defined as relativist and thereby worthless and not competent" (p. xvi). That is, a critique of relativism is a strategic move to remain dominant. Mannheim (1952) was aware of this phenomena when he was writing in German in the 1920s and 1930s, and argued the appropriate characterization was not relativism but relationalism:

Relationalism signifies merely that all the elements of meaning in a given situation have reference to one another and derive their significance from this reciprocal interrelationship in a given frame of thought. Such a system of meanings is possible and valid only in a given type of historical existence, to which, for a time, it furnishes appropriate expression. (p. 76)

Mannheim was concerned with ideology and power as well, and these are even more evident in understandings of postmodernism and poststructuralism. Foucault (1980), of course, as a poststructuralist had an explicit focus on power/knowledge. As Popkewitz (1998) explained:

Foucault provides methodological strategies for interpreting how the constitution of the "self" and "individuality" are the effects of power: he joins that issue to a consideration of the social sciences as practices that deploy power. (p. 48)

In summary, the postmodern challenge does not reject critique, instead it rejects a claim to objective knowledge; and objective knowledge was precisely what critical theory was to bring to its marriage with ethnography. The challenges to critical ethnography are both multiple and postcritical (Lather, 1992; in the sense that they critique themselves): feminist critical (Fine, 1994a, 1994b; Marshall, 1997; Weis, 1995), critical race (Scheurich & Young, 1997), *mojado* (Murillo, 1999a, 1999b), queer theory (Hennessy, 1995; Seidman, 1995), postmodern (Scheurich, 1997), poststructural (Lather, 1991), postcolonial (Murillo, 1999a), critical sociology of knowledge (Wexler, 1987), native ethnography (Benard & Pedruza, 1989; Jennings, 1999), and so on. Postcritical ethnographies directly challenge the epistemology of critical ethnography and can be argued to constitute an alternative. Adkins and Gunzenhauser (1999) wrote:

claims are not justified in the same sense that claims are justified in post-positivist research. Knowledge ceases to exist in the conventional sense of knowledge as justified true belief. Knowledge instead is understood as the product of a moment of mutual construction that at once converges divergent perspectives and preserves the divergence. Because knowledge and the process of knowledge justification are redefined, this is the beginning of what may be considered an alternative epistemology. In this way, we may begin to imagine an alternative epistemology with which to inform a post-critical ethnography. (p. 71)

Although there are clear differences in poststructuralism and postmodernism, it is clear that postmodernity is not the elimination of the political, as characterized by critical ethnographers (Lather, 1992). As Noddings (1995) summarized:

Postmodernists believe that the search for an all encompassing description of knowledge is hopeless. Instead they emphasize how knowledge and power are connected, how domains of expertise evolve, who profits from and who is hurt by various claims to knowledge, and what sort of language develops in communities of knowers. (p. 72)

Rather than negating politics, postcritical ethnographies require the interrogation of the power and politics of the critic himself/herself as well as in the social scene studied. As hooks (1990) explained:

Committed cultural critics—whether white or black, scholars or artists—can produce work that opposes structures of domination, that presents possibilities for a transformed future by willingly interrogating their own work on aesthetic and political grounds. This interrogation itself becomes an act of critical intervention, fostering a fundamental attitude of vigilance rather than denial. (p. 53)

Clearly, some critical ethnographers are disturbed by the implications of postmodernism for their practice (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). But it is important to understand this in a broader context. If we look only at the conflicts between postmodernism and critical theory, we may think this is a special case in the history of critical ethnography. But it is not the case. As mentioned earlier, Bennett and LeCompte (1990) showed that critical ethnography has had a history of controversy about its exclusiveness, patriarchy, Eurocentrality, and its oversimplified view of asymmetric power relations, that seemingly expects consensus to result from transformative efforts. As Popkewitz (1995) explained, it is better to view critical ethnography as a social field in which scholars struggle to define which views of critical research are to be authoritative. In this field, there is a recognizable form to the struggle. The postcritical challengers argue that critical ethnographers have not and are not taking into account chang-

ing social conditions and the unique forms of power that are employed to control different oppressed peoples. The Old Left issues the critique, that postcritical challengers are threatening relativism and/or nihilism, and authoritarianism (Popkewitz, 1995) and then proceed to analyze the challengers' positions for points of similarity, and argue for a synthesis that privileges the Old Left position. Consequently, they end up working to advance critical ethnography's own agenda. The postmodern challenge is being played out similarly. As Popkewitz (1995) put it, critical ethnographer called to reject postmodernism are strong rhetorically, but ultimately contradictory. The structural categories central to critical ethnography "are historically constructed within power relations" (Popkewitz, 1995, p. xix), and critical ethnography's refusal to problematize their intellectual and conceptual categories produces a form of authoritarianism.

The supposed challenge of postmodernism to critical ethnography, then, is not new. It revisits, in new terms, the origins of critical ethnography and signals the end of critical ethnography as it was initially constituted. As Lather (1992) explained:

In translating critical theory into a pedagogical agenda, (post)critical foregrounds movement beyond the sedimented discursive configurations of essentialized, romanticized subjects with authentic needs and real identities, who require generalized emancipation from generalized social oppression via the mediations of liberatory pedagogues capable of exposing the "real" to those caught up in the distorting meaning systems of late capitalism. (p. 131)

LeCompte (1995) summarized postmodernism as a rejection of authors "who give *voice* to the authoritative canon," and moreover, as a conceptual (or nonconceptual) frame "has incorporated the methods of social constructionism and symbolic interactionism" (p. 101)

Postmodernism and poststructuralism move beyond the antifoundationalism of the sociology of knowledge and interpretivism. According to Scheurich (1997), antifoundationalism functioned as half of a foundationalism-relativism binary in which each reproduced the other in their opposition. Postcritical ethnography works as part of a "postfoundationalism" that moves beyond the binary (Scheurich, 1997) with the more explicit focus on power than present in interpretivism and the sociology of knowledge. This offers the possibility of reinscribing critique as well. As Ellsworth (1988), Lather (1986b), Wexler (1987), Ladwig, (1996), Murillo (1999a), Givens (1999), Jennings (1999), McCadden et al. (1999); and Adkins and Gunzenhauser (1999), among others exemplify, this critique undermines the objectivity and definitive representation claims (Hollinger, 1994) of critical ethnography. Instead of grand narratives giving meaning to our research, postmodernism leaves us in the decidedly difficult position that we are responsible for creating the world we have and are responsible for what is coming.

Furthermore, postmodernism understands that social life is never simply rational, and thus acting responsibly is filled with unanticipated consequences (Giddens, 1979), irony, discontinuity, and contradiction. Under these conditions, postmodernists see reflexivity and playfulness as reasonable ways of acting responsibly. These in many ways offer possibilities for postcritical ethnographies, as this volume attests.

POSSIBILITIES FOR POSTCRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Postcritical approaches are many and diverse. Although postcritical ethnographies are not any one single thing, it is possible to consider some issues that the many approaches address. What is important to remember is that each approach not only varies in what else is important beyond these issues, but also in the relative importance of these issues to the overall approach. We think it is mistaken to argue that postfoundationalism is more important than the status of women in feminist critical ethnographies, race to critical race ethnographies, sexual orientation to queer theory, and so on. To understand the nature of the different postcritical ethnographies and to execute such studies, we argue that readers should become versed in the specific approach, and then consider how the following issues (and others) are deployed in each. Of course, the portrayal of these issues and the statement just made should be critically examined in the process. The issues that need to be considered in conducting postcritical ethnographies include but are not necessarily limited to; positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation. These issues bleed into one another and are not to be understood as a criteria for a "good" postcritical ethnography. Rather, they are ways people have tried to think about what they are doing, and are working through.

Positionality involves being explicit about the groups and interests the postcritical ethnographer wishes to serve as well as his or her biography. One's race, gender, class, ideas, and commitments are subject to exploration as part of the ethnography. Indeed, position may be so important that it can be seen as an epistemological claim as in Collins' (1991) standpoint epistemology. Her point is that position and identity may be the basis of a theory of knowledge that then is explicated via research. Positionality also involves "studying up" in the sense that the focus of the ethnography may well be institutional arrangements and social movements (Murillo, 1999b; Wexler, 1987) or the more powerful as with whiteness studies (Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chanault, 1998; Warren, 1999).

Reflexivity is about "redesigning the observed" (Marcus, 1995, p. 111) and about "redesigning the observer" (p. 114). The former involves accepting that identity of those studied is dispersed and mobile. In different contexts, identity itself, the focus of identity, and the ways in which they change are different. Moreover, time and history are lived and constituted rather than exist as

a context to identity. Redesigning the observed also involves consideration of voice, polyphony, and montage. Redesigning the observer involves working toward dialogic and bifocal (emic and etic) exegesis that elaborates the alternative possibilities, identities, juxtapositions, and outcomes in any scene studied ethnographically.

Objectivity is usually eschewed in postcritical ethnographies but is never fully escaped whenever ethnographic interpretations are inscribed. The act of writing inscribes a critical interpretation that exists beyond the intentions of the author to de-objectify, dereify, or demystify what is studied. McCadden et al. (1999) argued that reconsidering objectivity goes beyond writing: "Theorizing postcritical ethnography of education should be represented in the same tone as its writing—balancing tentativeness and surety and evoking a sense of temporality" (p. 33). Postcritical ethnographies worry the issue of objectivity. Cultures are not objects in any simple sense. They are ephemeral and multiple while our interpretations are always partial and positional. We create cultures as much as we interpret them (Wagner, 1980). Postcritical ethnographies work through this dilemma of objectivity.

Representation is about the issues involved in inscribing a postcritical ethnography. Representation may involve the genre (Glesne, 1997; Van Maanen, 1988), tropes (Geertz, 1988), metaphors, literary devices (Noblit, 1999), and/or imagery involved in an ethnographic text. Yet, postcritical ethnographies may also be represented as performances, videos, and montages, among other ways (Diaspora Productions, 1997). Representation involves acknowledging the "uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality" (Marcus & Fisher, 1986, p. 8) and working through the myriad of decisions critically. Willinsky (1998) reminded us that the guiding ideas of ethnographic thought included the will to know in ways that demonstrated difference, the will to display an exotic other, and the right to educate. The first pushes us to problematize why we wish to study and represent; the second to problematize the desire to, and ways of, creating a portrayal; the third to worry the idea that our accounts or representations are to edify others.

It is the working through of issues of positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation in the context of the substantive and political interests and commitments of various postcritical ethnographies, rather than any specific resolution of the issues that reinscribes critique as postfoundational. However, there still exists the issue of critique itself. Clearly, postcritical ethnographies still regard critique to be about power and ideology. However, postcritical ethnographies see the standard form of critical ethnography as one possible choice given specific historical and political contexts. As Cherryholmes (1988) explained:

Our choices and actions, in their totality, are pragmatic responses to the situations in which we and others find ourselves. They are based upon visions of what is beautiful, good, and true instead of fixed, structured, moral, or objective certainties. (p. 151)

This also means that it is inappropriate to think about precise methods and to imply that postcritical ethnographies should have similar forms or strategies. Rather it is better to consider the question: "How might we think through postfoundational critiques?" Stone (1995) offered one way of thinking about reinscribing critique as postcritical in her attempt to think through an "agreement to work together . . . in spite of theoretical disagreement" (p. 155) within a feminist critical praxis. Although we would expect that different postcritical ethnographers would want to consider this differently, Stone's effort is sufficiently comprehensive to stimulate the thinking of anyone working to reinscribe critique in nonfoundational ways in postcritical ways.

Stone offered eight elements of critical sufficiency when giving up modernist certainty. *Epochal tension* involves acknowledging that today's conditions are different from those in the past and that there is the "tension of changing senses of the world" (p. 155). The play of critical and postcritical ethnographies, modernity and postmodernity, structuralism and poststructuralism (race, gender, sexual orientation, and class), and so on are implicitly and explicitly part of critical reinscriptions. *Historical non-necessity* replaces history with historicity or even posthistoricity. History is understood as lived, constructed, particular, and contingent, in opposition to grand narratives as explanations or as the singular context to that studied. Giving up notions of "totality, singularity, sameness, or oneness" and "objectivity and foundationalism" (p. 155) is part of *antiessentialism*. At a minimum, structures, cultural beliefs, and functions are conceived as changing and multiple. *Contextualism* involves considering language as socially constructed and materiality as "theoretically non-essential" (p. 156). The meaning of context itself will vary from strong to weak and from creating possibility to limiting possibility, given specific social, cultural, and political conditions. *Theory-ladenness* recognizes that "language is thought; thought is never neutral" (p. 156). In one sense, perception is culturally constructed and theory-laden. In another sense, theories themselves are laden with other ideas and theories that emerge in specific social, cultural, and political contexts. Experience is partial, time specific, and located in conditions and contexts, meaning that *identities* are seen as partial and multiple for the postcritical ethnographer and for those studied. The privileging of the critic and rationality gives way to understanding the positionalities of the critic and others. In the absence of a foundational truth, researchers and the researched move to *ethicality*. Postcritical ethnographies require moral commitments because we and all people are responsible for the social construction of everyday life. Finally, Stone argued that critical sufficiency requires *reconceptualizations of power* as "antipower":

First as temporality—that is, as momentariness, ambiguity, dispersion, fluidity; second as plurality—that is as multiplicity, multivocality, multiculturalism; third as recreation—that is as reconstruction, recursion, reconstitution; and fourth as otherness—that is as difference, playfulness, irony, and contradiction itself. (p. 156)

Power escapes the containment of critical ethnography and establishes itself anywhere and everywhere critically analyzed.

Postcritical ethnographies obviously lack the certain form and substance of critical ethnographies. They instead require considerable theoretical and methodological thought. They involve working through positionality, reflexivity, objectification, representation, and critical sufficiency. Postcritical ethnographies in an important sense are not designed but enacted or produced as moral activity. Postcritical ethnographers then must assume they exist within a critical discourse that in part makes them responsible for the world they are producing when they interpret and critique.

WORKING THROUGH—HONORING THE DIFFICULT

*We have to learn how to appreciate difficulty,
too, as a stage in intellectual development.* (hooks, 1994, p. 154)

Can we begin then to honor the difficult, to recognize the tension, accepting the process of transformation with all of its messiness and loose ends so that we can push the conversation forward, making way for the masses of previously excluded voices experiences, ways of knowing and being, and dreaming? The confessional narrative, or the insertion of the autobiographical in ethnography, is not a risk-free enterprise. Behar (1996) maintained that scholars "stretching the limits of objectivity" run the risk of exposing themselves in an academy that continues to feel ambivalent about observers who forsake the mantle of omniscience" (p. 12). There are but a handful of personal accounts in academe documenting the human process of transformation or of these moments of liminality (Behar, 1996; De Marrais, 1998; Grant, 1999; Heshusius & Ballard, 1996; Rosaldo, 1989; and Torres, 1998). Elsewhere, Pratt (1986) wrote that in anthropology what counts is the formal ethnography . . . these make up the "professional capital" and serve as "authoritative representation" (p. 31). So, within the discursive space of ethnography where does the confessional, personal narrative fit? Pratt answered this question by recounting how personal narratives are often deemed "self-indulgent" and "trivial." Fine (1994b) invited qualitative researchers to reflectively work the hyphens, or as she put it, to unpack "the notions of scientific neutrality, universal truths, and researcher dispassion . . . to imagine how we can braid critical and contextual struggle back into our texts" (p. 70).

Positionality is crucial to this subversion. No one is a blank slate, especially researchers. Rosaldo (1989) postulated that the "analyst should be as explicit as possible about partisanship, interests, and feelings" (p. 221). It is in this spirit that the many members of our postcritical working group had begun to research and write. Furthermore, Fine (1994b) added that as "researchers, we

need to position ourselves as no longer transparent, but as classed, gendered, raced, and sexual subjects who construct our own locations, narrate these locations, and negotiate stances with relations of domination" (p. 76). For some of our working members, as native ethnographers, we do not share the burden of the ethnographers' "colonialist baggage," rather we approach the research from a distinctly strategic standpoint. Collins' (1991) notion of standpoint epistemology developed from those of us with a peculiar marginality; those of us who have traditionally been kept out, outsiders, making entries into the academy. This marginality invites us to resist discourses that continue to Other those left on the outside; to work those hyphens.

Writing this section to our collective work is a real struggle. We keep hoping for inspiration that does not come. We keep hoping we'll be struck by some brilliant insight that will explain everything and help illuminate for the reader the process of our group. We want people, readers, and researchers who were not present, who were not witnesses to understand what we went through. On the one hand, some members feel anger toward individuals for what may be considered at the time "selective nonengagement" in issues (i.e., epistemological issues with real-world implications for marginalized and disenfranchised peoples) that many continue to consider of utmost importance although perhaps not as tangible. On the other hand, we appreciate that all of us are in process and that for many this forum was their first experience with the contested terrain of talking across differences and relating that to theories of learning and knowledge production.

It is important to address who we are? Yet, although there were professors in the group, namely one of us (George) who had long experimented with qualitative research methods, and ethnography in particular, and those well versed in social theory, there was also a dozen or so graduate students. What we think is crucial here is that working members were effectively both "socializing" and being "socialized" not only into qualitative research methods but into something that was much more radical; socializing and being socialized into collaborative ways of theorizing, into the contested, constructed, and negotiated nature of knowledge production, and experimental and alternative ways to think about our research and writing. Whether this was deliberate and pedagogically thought out by the professors/facilitators/members or not, it was a powerful introduction into thinking about inquiry for many of those present. For some, this mode of socialization quelled fears that they did not belong in the academy and the pervasive fear that they would soon be found out or exposed as "frauds." Members must be commended for this spirit of collaboration and the important lessons and friendships that grew out of this group.

However, the process was neither smooth nor devoid of conflict. It is this portion that makes us uneasy, fills us with caution and fear. The fear related to how much can we or should we reveal about our "dirty laundry." Although our group was collaborative, it was clear that our understandings of the nature of research and our goals as researchers were divergent. It became clear that we

eventually fell into at least two main camps, those for whom examining educational research and our place within it was largely an epistemological issue, and those for whom educational research had real-world, social, historical, and political implications, beyond the epistemological. The power of hindsight makes this distinction clear; this distinction was difficult to articulate in such a clear and cohesive statement.

It is also important to note that we have all grown as human beings and as educational researchers and scholars. Many of the connections that some of us were unable, willing, or unwilling, to make between theory and practice, are continually pursued. The group has ceased meeting but the conversations the group engendered continue within ourselves and across these differences. To recount "our" story, we asked members of the postcritical group to write about their experiences; others we also interviewed. Nevertheless, the story told here is but one story, one narrative construction of the events. Clearly, each of us has a different and equally important story to tell of how we as a group were transformed. The question for us is how to critique, without stifling this ongoing conversation, without silencing or Othering. If this narrative is to "work" then it must begin with us.

One of us (Susana) is at the time of this writing, finishing her dissertation. For her, going to graduate school was strategic. Witnessing the pervasive underachievement of minorities in public schools has kept her strong and committed to the struggle of improving educational services provided to minority populations. She came to graduate school with an anger born of frustration and the direct experience of working in an inner-city middle school in south Central Los Angeles. The injustice was too fresh in her mind when she started. She came to graduate school armed and ready to learn, ready to strategize. She armed herself with books, immersed herself in theory, and was eager to unpack it all in this forum, the postcritical working group. On her first day, she was met with a deflating disappointment that the group did not seem to take issues as a "matter of life or death," of social, cultural, political, and economic survival. The conversations languished in comfortable, disinvested levels of detachment. The very real conversations we were "meant to have" were detached, articulate, polite, neat, civil, disembodied.

"How could this be?" she wondered. The group was failing to think and analyze the world outside of this epistemological frame of orthodox history, where certain experience and ways of experiencing and interpreting the world, different ways of knowing the world were not considered valid or worthy of recognition. One participant expressed that this detached theoretical talk was one of power and that she felt that the conversations were exclusionary. The lofty discourse excluded her, yet she continued to participate, likening her experience to that of "a secretary in a board meeting of powerful CEOs. You don't have much power but you want to be there to see how it all works, you take notes, trying to understand what takes place, how do they get to speak, how do they get that power." She hoped to see how "a new ideology was put out there . . . under-

stand how new thought came to be a part of the public discourse, or at least a part of the academic discourse.”

It is useful to think about inquiry and the postcritical working group's collective process of theorizing in narrative terms. More important than the stories themselves about the group is the directions and possibility revealed in the stories. Moments of pain or quiet detachment and translated now through the retelling of them and are larger than themselves. Because the events are situated in a fixed temporal moment, although they span several years, narrative inquiry frees them up from this and one can reinterpret these events as processual in nature. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994):

Difficult as it may be to tell a story, the more difficult but important task in narrative is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change. We imagine, therefore, that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story. (p. 418)

One of the tasks the postcritical working group set about was to critique the colonialist project and origins in ethnography. Specifically, how could educational ethnography break from this oppressive tradition and recast itself as on the side of liberatory praxis? In the previous section, we provided a review of critical theory and interpretive ethnography, their marriage, growing apart, and reconciliation. In this section, we describe the process of trying to understand them, both as individual researchers, and as a collective circle. The group was eventually organized as a graduate seminar with participation by graduate students and various professors. The postcritical working group met weekly in a conference room. The journey was fraught with intellectual passion and individual pain. As Giroux (cited in hooks, 1994) said, the “notion of experience has to be situated within a theory of learning” (p. 88). There were moments of linear progression, followed by more circuitous commitment to reinscribing critique, which in turn vacillated between self-critique and critique of the disciplines. Those of us participating in the working group learned to appreciate the difficulty expressed by Clandinin and Connelly.

Burnett and Ewald (cited in Johnson Hafernick, Messerschmitt, & Vandrick, 1997) remind that “substantive conflict during collaboration is not only normal, but can be productive, in large part because it gives collaborators more time to generate and critically examine alternatives and to voice disagreements” (p. 34) on their way to making decisions, or to imagine new methodologies in research. Yet it was these moments of liminality and re-examination, these very difficult moments, that catapulted us to the next stage in our personal and collective intellectual development, a place where through our work we could be reflexive and reflective. Working collaboratively allowed us to take risks that we might not otherwise have taken as individuals. Collaboration allowed us to explore privilege and marginalization from different perspectives

and positionalities. As Johnson Hafernick et al. (1997) argued "by extending the circle of researchers, we broaden the perspectives and add voices to the field" (p. 31).

Following Clandinin and Connelly (1994), we can articulate the experiences of the postcritical working group in four directional foci: inward and outward, backward and forward. Inward entails "the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions," an outward focus is existential or environmental. Backward and forward have to do with temporality. The postcritical working group experienced events in these four directions that have implications for how we conduct research and live our lives as researchers, how we conceive of our research and our research participants, and where we strategically position our alliances. One interesting note is that during the working sessions of the group, some of us performed "neutral observer" positions, whereas others performed their roles as "action researchers."

Those no longer or not directly involved in the weekly working group session engaged in other ways no less powerful. Dempsey, McCadden, and Adkins (1999) attempted to understand the role of objectification and subjectivity in ethnography through an electronic dialogical interplay. Additionally, a group of "native" ethnographers engaged in a powerful conversation about the alienation they experienced working within an elite white institution that resulted in a process video and article (Diaspora Productions, 1997; Dowdy, Givens, Murillo, Shenoy, & Villenas, 2000). Another group coalesced around de-centering whiteness in educational research and actively participated in discussing, researching, and writing about precisely this (Patterson and Becker, chap. 14; Rayle, chap. 15; Hytten, chap. 5, this volume). Villenas (1996) examined the role of the "native" researcher as colonized and colonizer, and of her own co-optation in the field. Givens (1999) examined the process of conducting research within one's own community, the effect on the researcher, and the process of mentoring that developed within that researcher-participant relationship. Villenas, Givens, Dowdy et al., Jennings, and Murillo weave their lives and experiences with this language of critique while exploring new directions for themselves as university-sanctioned researchers. For "native" ethnographers, identity politics emerges out of the struggles of the oppressed or exploited groups to have a standpoint from which to critique dominant structures, a position that gives purpose and meaning to struggle. Critical pedagogies of liberation respond to these concerns and necessarily embrace experience, confessions, and testimony as relevant ways of knowing, as important vital dimensions of any learning process (hooks, 1994).

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) argued that "When experience becomes more central to the theorizing and to understanding practice, it is often criticized as providing inappropriate data. . . . Experience is, therefore, the starting point and key terms for all social science inquiry" (p. 412). We agree with Clandinin and Connelly that experience is temporal. But it is also storied. Author-researchers have talked about events being lodged simultaneously in the past

and the future, or retention and protention, respectively. Others, too, suggest that the future of educational research will require this two-way vision. For example, a critique of our group is that in many ways we were exploring already chartered waters. We were asking questions about the nature of anthropological methods that others have previously asked for decades, albeit in new unprecedented contexts in a "post" age.

For us, the active members of the postcritical working group, the beginning was a conversation in a graduate seminar on the sociology of knowledge. The questions were: Do we read the "masters," the canon of "old dudes," and see what they were trying to do? Or do we read the more contemporary critiques, with the assumption that we don't need to start from "the old dudes?" Some walked away from this controversy with a sense of frustration. Indeed, this frustration led to an examination of different knowledge traditions. The more critical students in the class were generally dissatisfied with what people were calling *critical* ethnography. Some were raising the questions: What is critical about this piece of work? For the scholars of color, this view of critique was very limited. This challenge raised the question: What are the limitations of representation?

ENGINEERING THE DISCOURSE

To amuse themselves, or to challenge others, two of the women of color "conspired" to engineer the discourse. They opted at times to not speak at all to see what direction the conversations would take. They figured, *naively* (their emphasis), that if they did not speak that maybe others would speak up and voice their concerns or thoughts. They would glance at each other with a "knowing" look of "let's see what happens when we don't speak!" Time after time, they were disappointed at where the conversations, the inquiry, went. Inevitably the conversations took on a detached, disembodied stance. What they articulated at the time was a dissatisfaction and disappointment at our colleagues. What was yet to understand was that these Cartesian mind-body splits were a direct result of the scientific revolution. Even as we claimed to be qualitative researchers functioning from a distinctly different paradigm from science, we were still mired in these disabling splits (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996).

Y'ALL ARE NOT MY FRIENDS

Another dramatic incident occurred when on one occasion, one of us (Enrique) who had taken part in *Noises in the Attic: Conversations with Ourselves*, a process video (Diaspora Productions, 1997) recording the experiences of gradu-

ate students of color at a prestigious university, shared the video with the working group. In Dowdy et al. (2000), the succeeding article to this video, they wrote:

we sometimes discussed the way in which students of color in the various programs served the growth of White students on issues of diversity. At one time we doubted we could create a space in which students of color could create a space in which students of color could develop their agendas as researchers with particular perspectives in spite of the Eurocentric environment . . . and I [Joanne] was telling D. about how emotional I was in describing to this group of people that when I open this book that talks about other, other, other, the colonizer's gaze, I'm talking about myself. It's a collection of people's thoughts about people like me. (p. 431)

At the end of the video, a pregnant silence ensued, and then a dignified voice ruptured the silence with the words (directed at all of the participants in the working group) "y'all are not my friends!" A usually quiet and graceful African-American and southern woman asked how in all her years of schooling, not one single White person had ever come forward with the recognition that they were descendants of White slave owners. She knew she herself was a descendant of African slaves and could not understand why she had never met an admitted descendant of slave owners. Why should she, she asked, "open herself up for more pain by being autobiographical and confessional when no one else was willing to take the same risk by acknowledging their slave owning ancestry and legacy?" Her declaration had reverberations for all of us. The previously "quiet" and "respectful" woman had come to voice to remind us that indeed we were not "friends." She would never invite any of us to her home, her safe and sacred space. A painful truth was revealed that day: Our relationships, however friendly, were indeed mediated by the institution to which we had gained access. It was the institution, the academy, that dictated the types of interactions we were to have. Conversations and collaboration among participants were limited to spaces of ritualized civility and detached scholarship because we were not "friends" who cared about each other's personal and political struggles. We were there to advance our professional lives, and our relationships were vehicles for the attainment of those goals. The words stung, hung in the air, piercing our hearts and minds. She was right and everyone in the room knew she was right.

Slowly, a hand was quietly, unassumingly raised in recognition that, yes, perhaps they were descendants of slave-owning families. Then another hand made the same gesture. Patterson and Rayle recall that day:

Our postritical ethnography work group's session began as it always did, with a diverse, but polite, group. . . . The video's effect on us was powerful and the ensuing uncomfortable silence was palpable. Sheryl, a 20-some-

thing African-American woman, broke the silence with an indictment of the White academy that left us speechless. She just could not fathom that not a single White person, whose southern roots were often as deep as hers, was not historically implicated in the institution of slavery. Just once, she wished that someone would own up to that possibility. In a tiny gesture of acknowledgment, we raised our hands. Sheryl thanked us for honesty and as a group we were forever transformed. . . . That session prompted us to begin a search for those connections in our personal histories, our genealogies . . . our journey into the past will enable us to interrogate whiteness in the present. By naming our roles in creating structures that oppress and marginalize others, we expose our vulnerabilities and strip away the self-protection that being a member of white society has afforded us.

NEW STORIES—NEW SPACES

Lives were forever changed because of the space the group created where we could begin to talk across differences. Where, rather than engage in the critical literature, detached from our lives, some were beginning to see the connection between theory and lived reality. For some of the critical researchers of color, it was a vindication because epistemologically some of us understand theory in the flesh. Theory is embodied. We live, read, and filter the world through our bodies, through our experiences as marginalized members of society.

Delgado-Bernal (1988) intimated that "personal experience is partially shaped by collective experience and community memory" (p. 564). Villenas (1996) recalled a discussion in a graduate seminar where the conversation developed into logical, rational, intellectual, and detached exercise for most participants. However, for her, detachment was not possible:

Everyone else was speaking as if they were detached and removed from the topic, rationalizing the logic of their arguments, but it was different for me. The topic was personal and deeply embedded in my experiences. In this conversation, I was not the subject anymore but the object, the "other" . . . in the rational, logical arguments in that seminar, no space existed for my deeply passionate personal experience and voice. (p. 717)

The articulate, professional voices "sounded legitimate" against her internal "noisy dialect of the Other" (Fine, 1994b). Moraga (1981) reminded that:

The danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression. The danger lies in attempting to deal with oppression purely from a theoretical base. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the sources of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place. (p. 29)

Some working group members could not deal with issues of oppression from a purely theoretical base, for that would be to deny who they—we are and what they—we hope to become as individuals and as part of a larger collective. To reiterate, the postcritical group was divided into two camps: those who understood this project as strictly epistemological and those for whom “the stakes of educational research are social and political as well as epistemological” (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 18). For the latter group, the revelation that many researchers read the world detached from themselves and their experiences, and not as witnesses, came as somewhat of a shock. They—we were asking of ourselves and other groups to engage in testimonial reading of the world and the word. This type of reading the word and the world “requires rethinking one’s assumptions, bearing responsibility, and ultimately acting. It requires recognizing power relations . . . it calls for witnesses to testify, it multiplies perspectives, and requires us to participate in the unending construction of truth” (Garrison, 1999, p. 33). Members Sheryl and Amy recounted that the most powerful moments for them were when theory was connected to personal experiences and individuals engaged in testimonial reading and participation:

the striking aspect of these experiences was the way that conversations became the vehicle for methodological critiques. . . . Discussions relied on an external set of ideas—often disconnected from the individual who thought of them. . . . The discourse became comfortably academic, responding either to a text or to each other as if we ourselves had been text-ed. But inevitably there came a moment (and that moment always did come) when the discussion shifted into a conversation—a series of exchanges in which ideas were not completely formulated, where exchanges gave way to tears where we were all left with the humbling awareness of the partiality of our own understandings both of each other and of ourselves.

This was made clear during one of the working group sessions in which we were to discuss how assumptions of whiteness shape the construction of knowledge as it is produced and resisted in the classroom; and some of the White researchers in the group could not see how this was about themselves. One of the White working members (Cindy) recounted the process of interrogating her privilege, despite the fact that she, as a working-class woman or White trash (her term), was from a marginalized group herself:

A disjuncture in my thinking occurred when my colleagues of color challenged the “Whites” in the group to move beyond our comfort zones and confront how racism may have framed our worldview as researchers and future academics and provided us with certain privileges . . . I came to realize, through these interactions, that I had understood racism at a theoretical level. I had not moved towards a praxis-based conception of racism, but remained mired in a theoretical understanding divorced from the daily realities of my non-white colleagues. . . . The working group provided me with

an in between space in which I could explore my own complicity in how power is culturally located and reified. . . . Our working group provided a much needed third space in which we could dialogue about the racialized nature of the academy and research methodologies.

For those willing to engage critically and to participate in testimonial reading, the postcritical working group afforded us the opportunity to understand that "contradictions are only threatening for the timid. For those who embrace multitudes, paradox, irony, and reversal are simply part of letting pluralistic democratic conversations put us in our place" (Garrison, 1999, p. 34). Kanpol (1998) suggested that we engage in both personal and institutional confession by "owning up to how one is structurally implicated in reproducing race, class, and gender" and in our involvement and "personal investment in oppressive ideological structures" (p. 68). Confessionals and testimonial reading imply the primacy of experience, local contexts, relational orientation (entailing both empathy and sympathy), re-examination and challenging oppression at different levels, and the break down of the alienation that we as researchers feel. However, there is the danger that this type of dialogical inquiry results in the false expectation that this will necessarily lead to liberatory praxis. Macedo (1994) warned that the "sharing of experiences must always be understood within a social praxis that entails both reflection and political action . . . it must always involve a political project with the objective of dismantling oppressive structures and mechanisms" (p. xv).

The reciprocal nature of theory and practice can lead ethnographers to conduct emancipatory ethnographies in our communities. The colonizer/colonized dilemmas are conflated when conflicting identities are negotiated and utilized strategically for the betterment of our own communities and for the larger community, however imagined. Behar (1996) wrote that "new stories are rushing to be told in languages we've never used before, stories that tell truths we once hid, truths we didn't dare acknowledge, truths that shamed us." There is a burgeoning resistance to the dominant culture and a re-examination of power structures. This is producing "impassioned, oblique challenges to the once sovereign ethnographer" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 147). Rosaldo added that including the "Other" in the discourse of power structures and domination "provides an opportunity to learn and productively change 'our' forms of social analysis, it should broaden, complicate, and perhaps, revise, but in no way inhibit, 'our' own ethical, political, and analytical insights" (p. 148). Rosaldo called for a wider spectrum of analytical possibilities that includes insights garnered from failures and feelings as well as the masculinized scientific approach. The insight garnered is contingent on the position of the analyst with respect to the interplay of culture and power.

Rosaldo added that in the hierarchy of power, those with the least visible culture are the most powerful and those with the most culture are the most marginalized in society. These culturally invisible ethnographers are writing

interpretive accounts of those culturally visible, thereby reifying power relations within this hierarchy. Rosaldo, as social analyst and critic, demanded that we move away from passionate detachment and instead inform ourselves by social justice, human dignity and equality—to reshape our universalized vision to a more localized vision. “The truth of objectivism—absolute, universal, and timeless—has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more equal terms, with the truth of case studies, that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and colored by local perceptions” (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 21).

We all stand to gain from looking at ourselves as inscribing inside as well as outside of the discursive traditions that usher us; inside as well as outside the histories of contact on which they pattern. Theory is interpretation by a subjective, positioned, political, ideological, historicized, emotional, situational, relational being. Postcritical ethnographers acknowledge that our autobiographies, cultures, and historical contexts, matter; these determine what we see and don't see, understand and not understand, our ability to analyze and not analyze, to disseminate knowledge adequately or not. When one moves beyond the status quo, one always goes beyond oneself.

THIS BOOK

Although every edited book probably entails a struggle with multiplicity, the material just presented should make it clear that the struggles that led to this book were exceptional. We had studied, worked, argued, hurt and cried together for several years before we started writing. Our first product was a special issue of *Educational Foundations* (Winter 1999) that collected the first works and set the stage for those that are included in this volume. Although we have included only one article from this issue in this volume, we think anyone seriously interested in postcritical ethnography will find the special issue to be useful and add to what is here. In many ways, the works that follow speak to and build upon what we see as our first written product. Furthermore, we want to be clear that our long period of collaboration and contestation means that the authors are speaking to the wide range of issues that were raised. The works are not easily categorized as about one thing or another. Although we have arranged the book into three sections, these are in many ways arbitrary. The authors are speaking to each other and to critical ethnography in multiple and complex ways. Almost every chapter could belong in any of the sections. Nevertheless, we think there is some reasoning behind the three sections, if only in the relative emphases that they share.

The three sections are Constructing Possibilities, Theorizing Position, and Knowing Constructions. The contributions to Part I: Constructing Possibilities all share an emphasis on what might be possible. They look to the past to envision futures for postcritical ethnography. The authors clearly do not

agree on many points, but to our way of thinking postcritical ethnography should not be about one single idea, but about many and possibly many contradictory futures. In Part II: Theorizing Position, we have collected a set of works that share an emphasis on how the author's perspectives, roles and practices are central to what is to be understood. These authors share the view that there is no objective stance, only a place that allows us a perspective, even as it blinds us to other perspectives. This is not a weakness for postcritical ethnography, rather it is its strength. The contributing authors in Part III: Knowing Constructions share an emphasis on what a postcritical ethnography produces. The constructions in this section, as in the other sections, are multiple: poetry, storytelling, critical narratives, and critiques of critical ethnography. Yet they provide us with opportunities to see what may be done with postcritical ethnography. Although placed at the end, they do not represent a conclusion, but perhaps the best way for our group to end—with impassioned works that invite readers to rethink her and his place in critical ethnography.

Constructing Possibilities

This first section is intended to help the reader understand what we have to work with in the space of postcritical ethnography. It looks to the past and to alternative views of the future. We contend that both are always carried with us in our intellectual work. In chapter 2, Cynthia Carla Hernandez Leyva plays this out for real life.

Her poem is an example of a creative production and representation of data that transgresses "academic" standards. With feeling emotion, she textualizes about Centennial School, once a separate school practicing segregation. Her act of poetry, as an archeology of knowledge and history or sense-making, albeit sometimes painful, is mindful of struggle and that we honor those who have struggled.

Bill J. Johnston (chap. 3) writes that during the past few years there have surfaced an abundance of studies in which the language and discourse if not always the conceptual understandings of postpositivism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism are borrowed in framing the object of study. He believes that this is more than academic faddishness. At the very least, he contends that we are living in an era of trepidation and structural uncertainty. Moreover, we are experiencing a crisis of legitimacy in which the institutional forms and practices of interpreting institutional relationships is being called into question. Thus, in his attempt to examine the possibilities, characteristics and contribution of a postcritical ethnography of education, his general assertion is that the viability of this practice is socially and historically contingent, representing the junction of several previous intellectual movements and respond to conditions that embody the institutional and ideological crisis of postindustrial capitalism.

Johnston develops his thesis by tracing the genealogy of postcritical ethnography, marking some limitations of these previous forms, and then offering recommendations for the development of this research practice. He argues that although critical theory has made unique contributions, it has tended to be underdeveloped in the area of strategic social action. Thus, we must figure out who is the "collective" if schooling is to contribute to the "collective" good, and how we may overcome the differences of the categorical "other" if we are to facilitate social action. He envisions in the advent of postcritical ethnography an opportunity to redirect social inquiry in more fruitful directions. He advocates that this practice must be socially engaged to be relevant and must push the boundaries of narrative analysis.

Michael G. Gunzenhauser (chap. 4) writes that as a research practice, critical ethnography is linked more by its aims than by methodological specificity, by striving to examine the experiences of the oppressed and uncover the underlying social practices that contribute to their oppression. He defines this research practice as entailing four "promises"—giving voice, uncovering power, identifying agency, and connecting analysis to cultural critique. He contends that these promises customarily come into friction with each other, resulting in a conflicted and unstable research practice that overpowers the critical ethnographer's ethical commitment to the oppressed.

For the imagining of a postcritical practice, he proposes that researchers better the existing promises of critical ethnography, and employ self-reflexivity and nonexploitation as additional promises. Gunzenhauser argues that much of the potency of critical ethnography precisely hinges on how the researcher balances these promises. He cites that a major challenge is to reconceptualize a practice that focuses epistemologically on the ethical obligation to research participants, to temper the original four promises and preserve a tenable commitment. He writes that researchers need to take responsibility for their actions without reinscribing power domination and need not self-righteously celebrate their own emancipatory agenda.

Kathy Hytten posits that despite the issues and challenges around the association between supposedly emancipatory social theory and ethnographic research practice, there is something inestimable to hold onto in critical ethnography. A critical approach elucidated how theory has informed lived experience, as well as how the broader social structures can bridle the development of transformative social practice. She writes that the cardinal motif of postcritical ethnography is the need to attentively interrogate the assumptions and structures that critical researchers bring to the research process. That is, critical researchers must combat the internal hegemonies they have learned to place on research participants by not genuinely problematizing their own understanding of the social world, in arguing that the oppressed replace their "false" consciousness with the researcher's "critical" one. Thus, the first step must be to surrender the implied assumption that researchers know how the world operates, and the researched don't.

Hytten's intent in her chapter is to envision the reflexive elements that can better accomplish the aim of transformation of the lived world. She describes the location and orienting ideas of critical ethnography to provide context, as she moves to recount the subsequent pitfalls and challenges. She offers aim and vision for doing postcritical ethnography by drawing on peripheral traditions connected to critical ethnography, that together promote a practice that is critical, reflective, dialogic, and collaborative. Ultimately, her vision is that this practice be pedagogical in nature, that is, where the researcher and the researched both learn during the process and cultivate the tools for building positive social changes.

Concerned with disciplinary limitations and the need to explore new topics and approaches, Susan Talburt, in chapter 6, argues for an "improper" ethnography that does not construct proper subjects. Her chapter encourages ethnography to become extreme. She questions how the relations between ethnographic processes and products can be rethought to imagine "improper" ethnography as an interesting subject. She focuses specifically on the imagined boundaries of the subjects of ethnographic study as they relate to the imagined boundaries of interpretation.

Talburt writes that ethnography frequently creates proper subjects as it follows disciplinary norms of representation and explanation through coherence and holism. Rather than producing an ethnographic subject, she argues that the complications of constitution (of identity, subjectivity, place, and space) should be the subject of ethnography. As a pedagogical project itself, ethnography must take as its project the complication of time and space—the creation of "improper" subjects—in order to leave open spaces for implication, relation, and identification. It must cede its authority by admitting into its textualizations speculations about the indeterminate wanderings of other times and place.

Lynda Stone (chap. 7) primarily borrows insights from the French poststructuralist/deconstructionist Jacques Derrida about writing, to inform a contemporary practice of critical ethnography. To comprehend the script and structure of her work, it requires a new kind of "reading," an understanding that all writing has a rhetorical structure. One must view, read, and "decipher" in a nonlinear fashion to make some sense, with scripts that are both simultaneous and successive. The purpose mirrors that of Derrida of deconstructing Western metaphysics in its own deconstructive effort, turning writing onto itself. Thus, the textual form is presented as the juxtaposition of one authorial tradition with another nontradition, implicating a reform of the contemporary research practice of critical ethnography.

Three scripts are arranged forepart and rear, and scattered by others as kinds of "notes." The first scripts comparatively lay out the theoretical grounds and (dis)associations of critical ethnography and deconstructionism. The second set hinge on the first ones, both scripts comparing the inquiries of Marx from Cornel West and Derrida. The third differs from the previous, by taking the text on representation and utilizing it as an exemplar for deconstruction.

Stone's "scripting" is an experiential and performance text that speaks directly to the concern on how to present lives, that is, represent the real lives of persons studied.

Chapter 8 by Enrique G. Murillo, Jr. is all written in the voice of what he has named as the "mojado" ethnographer. Murillo provides the key methodological issues he had chosen to engage during his qualitative inquiry and journey into (post)critical ethnography in education. Beginning with an autobiographical statement of his positionalities, he writes a discussion of the inherent role of values from an interpretive view of the nature of reality, with the researcher serving as bodily instrument, text-maker, and inventor of cultures. Next is an exploration of the culture, politics, and alliances created from the new occupiable spaces and possibilities, where other bodies of work have been drawn on, due to the increased sensitivity to, and tension in the politics of ethnography. Furthermore, the alternative scholarship, "Other" discourses and the problematique of Chicano/Mexicano/Latino scholars are brought into the discussion, as a view of "mojado" is explained as that of native diasporic and the inequality of mobility and movement across borders. The author concludes with a statement of the global and epic forces moving to "close the borders." Although Murillo argues that for himself his journey had not become a "love affair" with ethnographic inquiry, he offers instead an explanation of the current advantages of a marginal positionality such as his own.

Theorizing Position

This second section engages in powerful critiques of self and reflexivity. The authors problematize their role as researchers first by reflecting on their positionality of privilege that the academy affords them, second by the examining power relations inherently involved in data representation, and third in questioning of the wider societal implications, or lack therefore, of educational research. Two poems are first offered back to back. Paula R. Groves (chapt. 9) wrote her poem for a class performance as a response to Joanna Frueh's book *Erotic Faculties*. It was the way she critiqued and questioned the consequences of being an "erotic scholar," as Frueh recommends. Among the many questions she asks, a few that she posits are: "Would making love to my words, and engaging in 'mental masturbation' free me from the constraints of patriarchal western definitions of scholarship and make me a better feminist?" "Would the use of sexual imagery and sexually explicit words make theorizing a less disembodied experience?" "Would my racialized body allow me the same freedom to engage in erotic scholarship and still be taken seriously as an intellectual?"

As a mixed-race, African-American and Japanese woman, critical issues in postcritical ethnography such as representation, research methods, and understanding culture are key components of her research agenda. Groves believes that there are dangers associated with any attempt to engage in erotic

scholarship by women of color, and that they have very much to do with the politics of representation. She contends that her racialized body places her not in the academic circle of the erotic scholar, but rather, in social categories that label her pathological, oversexed, a trollop, a whore. Because of her struggle with issues of representation, be it teaching, ethnographic research, or her interactions with others, she finds herself continually asking "Who do I represent?"

Along similar lines, Susana Y. Flores (chap. 10) too offers a poem that also speaks to critical issues in postcritical ethnography such as representation, research methods, and understanding culture. Her observations seek to turn the table on traditional researchers, by shifting her gaze toward the "observer." In a sense, it strives to "study up" to the "powerful" researcher, and use the same tools of the discipline against itself.

She points out how what in fact she observes may be of a surprise, and not that which she was trained and socialized for. Fear is a theme she observes. The fear of dealing with poor, working-class, minority children, for example. This is all the while the dominating discourse is that of "multiculturalism." But in practice, she observes the educational anthropologists too often reverting back to colonial patterns of "Othering."

Amy Bauman (chap. 11) cites how over the past decade a handful of researchers across the disciplines have worked to gain a more complete understanding of what it means to be White (and privileged) in U.S. society. Coining the term *whiteness*, academics have approached this question both theoretically and through more concrete examples embedded in qualitative research. It has been, and continues to be, a work that requires a tenuous balance between attempting to dislodge a kind of hegemonic centrality of whiteness while simultaneously not wanting to reinscribe that position based on the subject matter itself. Textual approaches have varied (including adopting explicit subjectivity through extended personal narratives or methodologies that themselves have roots in either feminism or postcolonialism) and have taken the this process of understanding into less traditionally familiar territories.

"Cracks in the Armor" attempts to move this research in to relatively uncharted waters, particularly as the focus is now on children rather than adults. Using the sociology of childhood as a theoretical grounding, and guided in the largest part by the complex ethnographic research relationships forged in the field, her contribution challenges the deterministic lenses that have become an understandable byproduct of a decade of scholarship. She makes the argument that finding confirmation of White people's lack of social critique or a sense of their own racial invisibility is not terribly difficult now. The challenge remains to understand the different ways that white people both live and experience their whiteness. It is through ongoing research relationships that she begins to see contradictions between discourse (the way lives are talked about) and experiences (the actual acts of moving through the day). And she is invited in, by the children themselves, to understand these breaks, to engage in levels of social critique and reflection that seemed implausible, but that end up being remarkably possible.

Sheryl Conrad Cozart (chap. 12) goes back to the school where she was once a teacher and participates along with veteran Black teachers in a book discussion of Michele Foster's *Black Teachers on Teaching* (1997). The book talk format provided the teachers with an opportunity to critique themselves and their profession while in the spirit of reciprocity gave Cozart an opportunity to share some of the knowledge and experiences garnered in the academy about the literature on African Americans.

Cozart engages in a key element of postcritical ethnography, "the critique of self." Her native ethnographer status is problematized as she belongs to a generation of teachers that came after segregation in the south. The veteran teachers embrace her nonetheless and school her in their opinions of education. For example, one of the teachers broaches the uncomfortable zone and declares, "they've lost all of that togetherness because of integration." Some of the themes collectively analyzed and critiqued by the book talk include integration, segregation, "the Promised Land," "race discourse, the importance education," families, young teachers, veteran teachers, and high expectations. The narrative format of data presentation allows the reader to feel a degree of intimacy with the participants, but more importantly it leaves the reader with the considerable responsibility of interpreting the text.

Cozart and Bauman (chap. 13) engage in a dialogic examination of their shifting roles and identities as "teachers" and "researchers" and what each identity contributes to the "ongoing production of a postcritical ethnographic sensibility." Their inquiry is conversational and is geared toward a more nuanced understanding of how researchers develop and critically interrogate their methodological lenses. The authors ground their analysis in the primacy of experience reflecting back upon their love of students and teaching, or "the drama and experiential knowledge that seems to transcend language," and the incredibly seductive power of a research-driven academy. It was the desire to understand the social and historical contexts of education that led them to pursue doctorates and their own research agendas. However, once there the logic that had once driven their work was transformed and they found their identities hesitantly, reluctantly shifting to that of university sanctioned researchers. They wistfully and critically remark about how "slowly but surely you take yourself from a part of your identity that you really valued."

Their narrative format allows the reader to experience the pain of trying to hold on to the passions of young teachers and a romantic view of education while constructing new identities that are imbued with different but related passions in meaningful and connected ways. Bauman describes that "navigating the balance between looking at self and looking at other, and engaging in research driven relationships" and in finding places within the academy to explore these complexities is what drives their construction of identities as researchers.

Elizabeth Becker (chap. 14) described the surprise of finding herself texted in somebody else's research and in a subsequent re-examination of her

performance as deceptive and partial, despite the rigor of the researcher. She muses about the "dissonance between Van's portrayal of me and the image I had of myself at that time." Her self-critique is enabled by her emergent scholarly, theoretical voice as a doctoral student. She examines the textual representation of her practice as a teacher and wonders how much of the true story is made available to the researcher because of the hierarchy vis-à-vis the principal and herself, the students and herself, and finally, university-sanctioned researcher and her, the first year teacher.

Becker, in a poignant moment, asks why she portrayed herself as overly optimistic when in reality she was masking depression, disgust, and anger. She critically examines her positionality of a White, middle-class woman working with behaviorally and educably handicapped, mostly working class, African-American males and the power struggles that ensued as she imposed her value system on them even as they resisted. She describes the pain and self-doubt, so often missing in ethnographic research with teachers, at having groups of "expert" researchers with "the power to judge" her. We are indebted to Becker for providing us with a confessional narrative that allows the reader to understand that researchers expert status is not real rather, researchers should view themselves as mere participants in the ongoing process of ethnographic research.

In chapter 15, Jean A. Patterson and Joseph M. Rayle capture a powerful moment in the process of collective theorizing that implicated them in a system of unequal power relations and resource allocation. That moment serves as a catalyst for a search for their own personal genealogies and to engage a Foucauldian analysis of genealogy to explore how their "heritages and White privilege implicated in the domination and oppression of others; and locating traces of the past in the present rather than reconstructing the past." These authors trace their southern heritage and find confounding evidence of their family's slaveholding past.

With this as a starting point, the authors set about in interrogating whiteness and its institutions of power. They deconstruct the assumption that slavery is something that happened long ago and that to disavow themselves from that peculiar institution is a necessary step in achieving a multicultural society. These authors embark on a journey of uncovering the past, through document analysis, in order to understand their present. They offer their own candid personal narratives of race, allowing glimpses of critical moments in the development of their race consciousness and their racialized identities as Whites. Their historiographic work successfully interrogates whiteness in order to de-center and allow for a multiplicity of narratives and genuine dialogue to commence.

Dwight Rogers, Mary Kay Delaney, and Leslie Babinski (chap. 16) recount what happened in their hearts and in their heads when they "presented" their actual research findings to their new teacher group participants. These new teacher groups stemmed from a profound respect for the teachers and a desire to work through those difficult first years teaching with the help of their peers.

Rogers, Delaney, and Babinski play with the form of the presentation: beginning with a traditional review of the research project, then switching to a "play" format with the different scenes. These include a description of the play, the staging of the play for the teachers, and the teachers' own reactions. Finally, in the epilogue, the authors assume their own personal voices to explore the uncomfortable and daunting process of presenting research findings back to the researched.

The authors ask if it is right "to make people relive their pain." The authors do not assume to be the only ones with knowledge, rather they are humbled by their research participants and attempt to construct new ways of constructing, along with the teachers, knowledge about the professional lives and identities of teachers. They are not caught unaware by the band-aid, or triage, nature of their work with the new teacher groups but pose the following question that merits much reflection and action for teacher educators. With the structure of schooling, does participation in the new teacher group actually facilitate the continuance of the status quo by providing teachers with an occasional momentary respite while not offering anything that would truly encourage genuine structural change?

We end this second section with a contribution from Phil Smith (chap. 17). He became interested in looking at ways to change systems of services to create opportunities for increased self-determination for self-advocates—people labeled as having developmental disabilities. This particular poem, a sample from his larger collection, is based on transcriptions from interviews with these self-advocates, parents of persons with developmental disabilities, as well as professional service providers, to try to understand some of the ways that they construct choice, control, and power, as they work to create supports and services for people. Smith's poems are almost directly the words of self-advocates, and this one comes from an interview with a professional who sees the importance of changing the system, but also sees many roadblocks and barriers.

Knowing Constructions

The works in this third part each have important contributions to give to the larger focus on how we create, represent, and make postcritical ethnographic understanding. This section begins with one of the Corinne Glesne (chap. 18) "tourist poems," as she puts it. Glesne, who wrote what we consider to be the classic work on poetic inscription of field research (Glesne, 1997), here gives us a poetic representation of the juxtapositions of "exotics" colonized first by plantations and second by tourism. Yet tourists tread and see differently. Glesne's camera stays on her shoulder as she realizes her connections to both the colonized and the wealthy tourist colonizers. The picture not taken is as stark as the power of wealthy tourists.

Glesne knows and sees how the power of the West allows it to see the exotic while not seeing how the exotic is constructed for them or how the women refuse the contact that degrades. She also reveals that not all westerners are the same. Some, even ethnographers, are not about exploitation but suffer dilemmas anyway.

Our second offering is also in poetic form—this time a more direct representation of qualitative research. Jennifer Treeger Peters (chap. 19) has studied a Shakespeare program conducted by an African-American dramatist for urban adolescents. Here she represents her own regard for his efforts by borrowing a poetic form used by Shakespeare sonnets. This she writes in a way that connects to the focus of the actor–teacher and adolescents. Moreover, sonnets also are a form used to convey love, which Jennie felt and wanted to express. Her inscription then is full of connection, or regard and of affection even as she worries about the future of her beloved.

Peters also understands that regardless of her understanding, others may ask of the program different evaluative questions. The program is not easily evaluated traditional goal and objective driven ways that has been common in evaluation research. In this way, it is vulnerable and her love is inadequate. Postcritical ethnography is not a position of power and this may be a critique that is most worrisome in the politicized world of education.

Robert B. Everhart (chap. 20) recently wrote an ethnographic novel, *Flirting on the Margins* (1998). Here he reflects on how he constructs his understanding of that endeavor, and how postcritical ethnography may be conceived to engage social practice. Everhart shares the popular interest in education with narrative, but for him the challenge is to construct a critical narrative—a way of knowing that speaks beyond the cadre of critical ethnographers to educators and citizens. He refuses to accept any “dumbing down” of theoretical insight, challenging postcritical ethnographers to expand our understanding of constructing texts. He discusses the unity of narrative in the social sciences, the key elements of a compelling narrative, and the necessity of linking depictions of every day life with a critical analysis—explaining how power, class, gender, race/ethnicity, and stratification are structure.

Everhart ends with examining the challenges ahead for a critical social narrative. Critical narratives “must turn on itself in order to be understood” and this is not easily accomplished because it must both be a narrative about something and told by someone who has a point of view. The tension between objectivity and position must be engaged for narrative to fulfill its promise for connectiveness with the reader.

George W. Noblit (chap. 21) shares Everhart’s agenda, and pushes ethnography out of text and into storytelling. The text presented here thus is contradictory. Writing the story so that we think about it as postcritical ethnography transforms it from a primary speech genre into a secondary speech genre. Yet we cannot be with him when the story was told, and must imagine how storytelling is a representational production beyond the text here. Storytelling itself

is an art that escapes codification even as it generates social experiences. It amplifies postcritical ethnographic representation by inviting the listeners interpretation, transferring the critique (of state politics in this case) to the listener and to the retelling of the story.

The story told here critiques the political demise of the program he studied, but is also about agency. The critique alone would have constructed the powerlessness of the participants. The story is mostly about how women and others concerned about children have pushed politics and how the demise of the program leaves women as powerful as they always have been.

Michelle Fine and Lois Weis (chap. 22) have repeatedly pushed critical ethnography's bounds. They early understood its promise, while pushing it beyond the White males who championed critique in qualitative research. In this chapter, Fine and Weis show how feminism and motherhood represents bases of connection, disconnection, and critique. They consciously reveal the moves they made in constructing both the ethnography and the critique. They use their mothering as a way to recognize mothering in poverty even as their class position insulates them from the experiences of the mothers they came to know. They demonstrate how poor women under surveillance by the state negotiate their way with their children. These women counter the hopelessness of their communities by working against the state and preparing their children to resist and accommodate.

The joys of motherhood are bittersweet in that the central struggle for their children is constituted as, in part, refusing to trust the agencies that are supposed to serve, but instead subjugate them. These mothers refuse to see the children as a problem. Instead the children are the source of hope: hope for a different life and for the possibilities the children represent in themselves. In laughter and love, these mothers keep going with and for the children. We wonder if the same can be said of rich mothers as Fine and Weis say of poor mothers.

Monica B. McKinney (chap. 23) goes after a central trope of critical ethnography—the hidden curriculum. Her argument is that critical theory has been all too focused on the social dynamics of classrooms. Ideology and power are figures that are recognizable only when the ground of space is left uninterrogated. Here we see the theoretical blinders of critical ethnography. Although critical ethnography may wish to reveal the deep structures of power, it does so in a limited manner. It does not even see classroom space as a source of contestation. Critical ethnography then is insufficiently critical in that it ignores space and how space is transformed into place. Critical ethnography accepts familiar definitions of place and misses fundamental acts of power and negotiation. A postcritical ethnography would recognize that place is constructed by power and negotiation.

McKinney's work gives us a new arena for postcritical ethnography to interpret and critique. Placemaking is a hidden curriculum behind the hidden curriculum of critical ethnographers. Indeed, the hidden curriculum of critical ethnographers can be said to be written on top of the hidden curriculum of

placemaking. Postcritical ethnography then must examine what critical ethnography does not see. Critical ethnography is in itself all too ideological and as such does not understand neither the dominance of the teacher nor the agency of the student.

In chapter 24, Stacy Otto helps us return to a distinction many contributors have been drawing in this book—postcritical from critical—by adding to an understanding that criticism itself is static and its prominence has undermined creativity. She thus asks how things might be done otherwise. Elaborating on Gregory Ulmer's CATTt, she offers readers a way to think about a postcritical ethnography methodology. Not surprisingly, she writes, it is a discipline other than education that may prove to lend postcritical ethnography its methodology. Ulmer, a protégé of Derrida and a critical theorist with roots in comparative literature, entertains a theory of method, a structured series of prompts informed by historic commonalities that calls for invention.

It is just such a theory that potentially lends the infant postcritical ethnography movement its methodology as well as its dogma: a [re]valuing of creative over critical, a careful, informed step to the side that offers an unobstructed view of what's next. For Otto, the postcritical ethnography project's power lies not simply in owning the responsibilities of being a researcher, but in reveling in the magical coincidences of lived lives as they cross paths with one another, at once a complicated mix of fear and pleasure.

The contributions to this volume end with a chapter by Cindy Gerstl-Pepin. She writes that although postcritical ethnography has been defined in a number of ways in this book, the approaches share a common concern with reflexively examining the role of the researcher and the purpose of research. She challenges the reader to think about the possibility of extending our research projects to include action, and particularly suggests that researchers work together strategically and collectively toward social justice; that we move beyond the local level to become advocates in a wider public arena and in the centers of decision making.

As researchers, she posits that we have become very good at critique but rather limited in our ability to imagine, or uncover, alternative possibilities. She suggests that as researchers we take multiple journeys to in-between spaces in order to understand how to battle dominant public assumptions grounded in racist, sexist, classist, heterosexual assumptions, and other marginalizing tactics. Her contribution is not a conclusion but perhaps the best way for our group to end—with an impassioned critique that invites readers to rethink her and his place in critical ethnography.