Professing Education

Theme Issue:

Educational Studies Outside of the Building

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President's Note

With this issue of *Professing Education,* the Society of Professors of Education launches a new format and direction for *Professing Education. Professing Education,* now an e-journal (no print copies), features full journal length articles and aims to stimulate and sustain dialogue among the members of the Society of the Professors of Education about teaching in education. We see and hear in ourselves and colleagues a need for a forum to discuss teaching in education—the aims, craft, histories we inherit, challenges, approaches, content. *Professing Education* aspires to provide a place for starting and continuing these conversations. Please consider submitting a manuscript.

The current editor, George Noblit, took over for a two-term providing the energy to make a transition to the new format. A new editorial team will take up the journey in January 2018. The new team includes Mary Kay Delaney, Gretchen Givens Genrett, Paula Groves Price, and Joseph Rayle.

We invite your comment and recommendations on the format and the content. Contact the editors at professingeducation@gmail.com.

Isabel Nuñez

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Educational Studies Outside of the Building: An introduction to the issue

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This issue of *Professing Education* centers on Educational Studies Outside of the Building. Inspired by the 2016 American Educational Studies Association call for proposals, and a brilliant suggestion from former AESA President, Dr. George Noblit, we called for submissions that also reflect what Jane Roland Martin has described as 'education writ large,' which exceeds school and campus boundaries to include encounters between individuals and communities with the potential to change one another for worse or for better.

This special issue is grounded upon the value-laden notion that researchers should be based in local communities to develop changes that fit the circumstances. From these collaborative community engagements, we might then synthesize innovative practices that are contextually dependent and yet, broadly applicable. Thus, this special issue explores the potential of critical educational studies as participatory, collaborative, and translational.

Pursuing critical educational studies outside of School and College of Education buildings can involve: (a) the "commitment to developing forms of community life that take seriously the struggle for democracy and social justice" (McLaren, 1995, p. 34) and (b) the revisiting of existing theory and how it is (or can be) applied to this struggle in practice. Theory has been described as akin to pottery (Noblit, 1999), and albeit precious, it eventually cracks due to the applied pressure, frequency and diversity of usage during practice, which includes an intense scrutiny or observation through different contexts of time, person, and place. The social landscape viewed through lenses focused outside of the building may be crucial as we seek to sharpen our purview on community life and democratic struggle by critiquing and advancing current theory and practice.

The following previews of articles for this issue draw from my interpretations, as well as abstracts previously crafted by the authors. It is my hope that combining my interpretive voice and theirs in this section makes for article summaries that are more useful for readers than either of our voices read in isolation.

Authors of the first article (Armstrong, Tyson, LópezLeiva, & Pauly) examine some of the traditional ways Educational Studies scholars put theories to work to advance desired ends, and propose another way to deploy theory in applied work. In "Professing Education Within and Beyond the Academy: A Theory Articulation Project," Armstrong et al. describe the key theories influencing their work, including third space and Anzaldúan theories of social change, listening theory, and theories of arts integration and place-conscious education. The authors describe how theoretical commitments and the collaborative processes might produce new ways of thinking and working inside and outside of the building.

The five articles that follow Armstrong et al. complement their piece in ways that seem to further operationalize or rather to provide additional, promising practical applications of the theories they name and actions they promote.

Bellamy & Berry's "Mentoring for a Lifetime: The Perspective of a Black Man Who Served as a Mentor" discusses mentorship as a collaborative process producing new ways of thinking about Black males and mathematics via two community organizations: (a) 100 Black Men of Central Virginia (BMOCV) and (b) local school districts. The article provides the perspectives of mentorship from the perspective

of a Black man by describing identity-affirming, identity-building, and agency as constructs for mentorship. The programming and work of the 100 BMOCV provide counter narratives to the master narratives that position Black boys negatively, academically and socially inside and outside of school.

In "Cracks and Crevices: Case Studies in Youthspace," Helfenbein, Rodriguez, Elfreich, & Robbins extend the notion of space- and place-conscious education. The article presents three separate case studies of research with youth in urban contexts to examine the ways in which youth navigate, negotiate, and resist the spaces in which they find themselves. Using contemporary critical research methods (critical ethnography, feminist decolonial methodology, and post-qualitative method), each study points to what the authors term "youthspace" as a marker of the ways youth struggle to find agency and embark on identity work in spaces formally bounded by adults. Privileging the ways in which both students and spaces are racialized, the authors point to the possibilities in taking up critical methodologies in studies centering young people both inside and outside of school.

In "Legends of Oglethorpe: Moving Toward A People's History," Kathleen deMarrais extends work in arts integration by detailing her work with a community-based living history event, *Legends of Oglethorpe,* created in a small town in Georgia. The event was a two-day living history event designed as a local economic development effort to bring visitors to Lexington, Georgia as well as to engage people in Oglethorpe County's history through portrayals of famous and not-so famous people who lived and worked in the county during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Through personal reflections, she describes her involvement in the project, community discussions and decisions around selecting diverse characters to portray, and the challenges of writing to both entertain and to educate within a community setting. *Legends* serves as a means to take education outside the building and into the community.

The final two articles offer unique complements to Armstrong et al. that become more obvious at second glance. LaGarry's "Abstract Pathways Toward Collaboration through Program Evaluation in Education," involves rethinking a common research tool: program evaluation; and she offers implications for how professors of Educational Studies might engage in a type of program evaluation that gets us working productively "outside the building." Although, a debate exists on whether program evaluation constitutes research in the traditional sense, LaGarry finds that it does offer the opportunity to ask meaningful questions of education in practice. She discusses four examples of ways that program evaluation takes her outside traditional conceptions of university education work and into professional relationships that create bridges to other education stakeholders. In each of these sections, she uses actual examples from her professional practice to ground the discussion. LaGarry also discusses the potential of unique collaborative pathways via collaborative program evaluations with local communities and their educational organizations.

In the final article, "Keeping Our Boots on the Ground: Independent Scholars Maintaining Academic Identities," Beck, Unterreiner & De Four-Babb, use their personal narratives to make sense of their academic identity as independent scholars. They examine how their independent status evolved and how they navigate their independent scholar status. Similar to Armstrong et al., the authors propose conversations through which scholars articulate and share theories about which they care, as another important pathway en route to deploying theory in applied work.

The article illustrates how independent scholars might engage productive dialogues about how to activate the theoretical orientations that influence their work. Through this article, the authors also make a contribution to understanding the concept of academic identity for those who have no university affiliation, who have no "building," and yet continue to pursue

and disseminate recognized and reputable academic projects. These projects inevitably support the reimagining of: (a) who can/should produce academic work in Educational Studies; and (b) whether to count projects completed outside the confines and comforts, "privilege and penalty" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 246) typically associated with School and College of Education buildings.

When read in isolation, each article "suggests paths or starting points for us" (Delaney, McDonnell, & Moten-Tolson, p. 3). When considered in tandem, all the articles in this issue are rendered a cohesive set of pieces by inspirational scholars. These scholars work at/with nonprofit organizations, youth, community organizers and activists to engage educational theory into practice. Similar to Delaney et al, 2017, I found "the strength and beauty of the articles is in careful accounting of how theory and practice inform…particular places and spaces" (pp. 3-4). Moreover, I "can see connections and discontinuities with [my] own work" (Delaney et al., p. 4, 2017).

In the wake of macro-level neoliberal policy and politics and micro-level vulnerabilities, these articles move beyond offering "just more tunnel" (A. Butte, personal communication, June 19, 2007) to offering readers a light at the end of each tunnel. The articles engage critically, multiple methodological approaches that involve off-campus collaborators in the research process. Ultimately, their contributions include practical on-the-ground applications of Educational Studies that epitomize the notion of taking education outside of the building.

Mannheim (1936) alludes to the need for practical on-the-ground questions in our work and how such work can be accomplished by applying it outside of the current buildings (i.e., structures) that bind us:

"Philosophers have too long concerned themselves with their own thinking. When they wrote of thought, they had in mind primarily their own history, the history of philosophy, or quite special fields of knowledge. This type of thinking is applicable only under quite special circumstances, and what can be learned by analyzing it is not directly transferable to other spheres of life. Even when it is applicable, it refers only to a specific dimension of existence which does not suffice for living human beings who are seeking to comprehend and to mould their world.

Meanwhile, acting men [and women] have, proceeded to develop a variety of methods for the experiential and intellectual penetration of the world in which they live, which have never been analyzed with the same precision. When, however, any human activity continues over a long period without being subjected to intellectual criticism it tends to get out of hand" (pp. 1-2).

This special issue responds to Mannheim (1936) and Noblit (1999) by highlighting scholars who dare to take critical educational studies outside of the building, linking philosophy and theory to community and practice. These bold scholars join me in the search for new-self knowledge, new-self experiences, new-self narratives (Anders, Bryan & Noblit, 2005), and counter-evidence to fight for equity and against dehumanization. We trod contested territory, knowing that we might begin to crack the intellectual pottery we have learned to cherish; just enough either to reveal some unanticipated utility born of necessity, or just enough to break it, signaling a need for new constructions.

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Professing Education Within and Beyond the Academy: A theory articulation project [1]

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Members of professional communities commonly transmit to apprentices the ideals and values that their own mentors once shared with them (Friedson, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991). As a consequence, professionals internalize not only technical skills, but also ways of perceiving and interpreting the world around them. The institutional environments in which professors spend their time as practitioners (before and after graduation) further influence practice and perception. These perceptions are often implicit and can magnify differences and reduce common ground shared by groups who have a (shared) stake in the educational enterprise – school principals, teachers, parents, students, politicians, corporate executives, funding agencies, and professors from various fields.

Thus, the processes that make us who we are as scholars also create liabilities that may become more salient when we move "outside the building" – or even strive to cross boundaries within the institutions where we work (Romero, Samantrai & Parker, 2010). In this paper, we strive to surface the implicit theories that inform the authors' approaches to their work and to describe how we navigated working across interdisciplinary boundaries as we "left the building" to engage in the education of pre-service teachers in the schools where they were placed. We describe a conversational process, the Theory Articulation Project, which involved reflexive examination of our respective theories. Our conversations took place within the context of a college-wide, community/school-based educational transformation project that adopted a participatory stance toward faculty work with/in local schools and communities – praxis as Freire (1972) and others (Birden, 2009; Grundy, 1987) have conceptualized it. The co-authors work in four different Departments and two Colleges within our University.

Creating a space for conversation about theories and efforts to describe the work to wider audiences by 'naming it as scholarship' led us to consider new ways of thinking about our work as professors of education. We grappled with the lack-of-fit between our work in the field and conventional ways of conceptualizing faculty workload through research, teaching, and service (MacFarlane, 2007). The messiness of practice, including the risks and benefits of working across disciplinary boundaries to bring about institutional change and the implications of interdisciplinary, community/school engagement work for professional accountability (Joseph, 2010; Petrovic & Kuntz, 2011) does not fit neatly into one category or another.

Professing Education Outside the Building

For many academics, moving beyond our respective silos to engage in collaborative work can be risky. One type of risk involves the hazards of trans-disciplinary collaboration. Leaving the buildings that house our respective departments to work with other professors means collaborating with colleagues who may, or may not, share our own assumptions about the nature and purpose of educational research,

teaching, and service. This raises prospects for miscommunication and misunderstanding leading to inefficiency at best, and at worst, interpersonal hostility (Armstrong, 2012; Carlson, 2008; Jackson, 1975). Educational researchers increasingly work with professionals from other fields, brought together by school- and community-based projects intended to improve educational outcomes (Celedón-Pattichis, LópezLeiva, Pattichis & Llamocca 2013), promote social justice (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Matias, Montoya and Nishi, 2016), and foster democratic life (Schroeder, 2017). Social Foundations scholars have much to contribute to the study of "Education writ large" (Martin, 2008, 2011).

There is an extensive literature on interdisciplinarity and social justice, participatory action research, and community engaged scholarship that (we surmise) go beyond what many educational studies scholars experienced as part of their graduate preparation (Committee on Academic Standards and Accreditation [CASA], 2013; Romero et al., 2010; Tozer, Gallegos & Henry, 2012). Fostering genuinely community-based educational interventions means working with members of local schools and communities, as well as colleagues who represent different fields and traditions of inquiry (Penuel, Allen, Coburn, & Farrell, 2015). Effective engagement in community and school settings require cultural humility and the capacity to set aside our own deeply held beliefs in order to hear what others have to say (Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Desai, & Secatero, in press). Trans-disciplinary collaborators are likely to bring a variety of perspectives to the conversation, thereby complicating the process of understanding and responding to school and community needs. It may be difficult to hear what school and community members *really* want. Bungled community engagement projects could further erode the quality of school-university relationships at a time when both institutions are under strain (Joseph, 2010; Messer-Davidow, 2010).

Working collaboratively beyond campus borders also presents opportunities. This article describes the work of four professors of education who participated in a community-oriented educational change project that called us out of our buildings in interdisciplinary teams and into local schools and communities. While much might be said about this project, the focus of this write-up is on the relevance of "theory" for our work as agents of institutional change. We crafted a space for talking about our theoretical perspectives, which we called the Theory Articulation Project (TAP). Theory became particularly apparent in our work as professors of education when we moved outside the building to work in community/school settings in collaboration with colleagues across fields of specialization. Theory provides ways to make sense of complex social phenomena. At the same time, as different theories come into conversation, they can generate disruptions and conceptual conflicts. We found that this messiness was "good to think with" (Barad, 2012; Spector, 2015). Grappling with theories-in-interaction demands that we "take the side of the messy" and "get lost" in keeping with Lather's (2009) claim that "this is a new geography where we are all lost to one degree or another, using such times to explore the philosophical and political value of not being so sure" (p. 348).

The next section describes the context for the study, followed by a description of the project as a whole and the research and writing processes we used. This section is followed by a brief description of some of the ways that educational studies scholars put theory to work in order to advance desired educational ends (Matias, Montoya & Nishi, 2016; Sanford & Starr, 2017; Schroeder, 2017; Wester-Neal, 2017) and why we felt it important to take time to "talk theory" as a way to get to know one another. We then provide concise overviews of four theoretical frameworks, which included listening theories (Hintz & Tyson, 2015), nosotr@s and third space theory (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2000; Soja, 1996), theories of arts

integration and visual culture (New London Group, 1996; Pauly, 2003), and theories of place (Gruenewald, 2003) and provide an illustration of how our theories were enacted (performed) in an after school program at Pocojardín Elementary School (pseudonym). We present a model developed to represent the interrelationships among the four theories and offer some thoughts on the results of our collaboration. Finally, we revisit our original aspirations and return to the theme of what it means for professors of education to move beyond the building, offering reflections on the professional risks and benefits of doing so.

Context

We live and work in the American Southwest, a place of vibrant cultures and long histories of colonialism, racial discrimination, and oppression (e.g., MacDonald, 2013; Martinez, 2010; Mondragon & Stapleton, 2005; Noel, 2009; Tevis, 2009). As is the case throughout higher education, our university and college are ensnared in neoliberal internal and external demands for "accountability" (e.g. Joseph, 2010; Romero et al., 2010; Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016). The challenge has been to find ways to move from theory to praxis (Freire, 1972; Grundy, 1987) while avoiding the pitfalls of dystopian educational logic (Heybach & Sheffield, 2013), colonialist research methods (e.g. Daza & Tuck, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), settler colonialism (e.g. Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016), and other pervasive academic misdeeds (Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Desai & Secatero, in press). This article argues that one step in this direction involves collaborative attention to theories as manifestations of deeply held personal beliefs that warrant articulation and reflexive conversation — the deliberate cultivation of "*conocimiento*" (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2000). *Conocimiento* is a "holistic epistemology that incorporates self-reflection, imagination, intuition, sensory experiences, rational thought, outward-directed action, and social-justice concerns" (Keating, 2006, p.10). Underlying our work are

assumptions about the nature of theory, practice, and praxis that warrant more elaboration than is possible here. Of particular relevance to this project is the notion of praxis as committed action informed by serious intellectual work.

It [praxis] is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well-being and the search for truth, and respect for others. It is the action of people who are free, who are able to act for themselves. Moreover, *praxis* is always risky (Smith, 2011, Praxis: informed, committed action).

Praxis is a continuing process of engagement with multiple issues, including thoughtful consideration of the ends we believe we are working toward and the moral implications of doing so. It involves making wise decisions about how to act in specific situations (Smith, 2011). Contemporary conceptions of praxis in education call for interaction with all those affected by a policy or intervention, and actions continually modified in response to these interactions (Birden, 2009; Freire, 1972; Grundy, 1987). An outcome of the TAP was that it created a space in which different kinds of "ends" could be identified and analyzed, rather than assumed. New ends might also have been discovered through the process, though this was not our goal.

Our individual theoretical orientations incorporate interpretive, normative and critical perspectives on education to varying degrees (CASA, 2013). Here, we find common ground: (1) We are all committed to the struggle for social justice in and through education (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015); (2) We strive to be attentive to dynamics of power and oppression in our work; (3) We identify with Luker's (2008) notion of "salsa dancing social scientists" (wary of canonical research, but able to appreciate its value). We have found that this work has helped us to develop more skill in doing the dance.

The process of writing about our TAP efforts drew us into the wider literature on interdisciplinarity and social justice (Romero et al., 2010). In addition to our growing

appreciation for the messiness of moving from theory to action (as scholars, teachers and public servants/social activists), we have begun to explore the ways in which interdisciplinary work demands new ways of thinking about how academics "account for" their work and its value (Joseph, 2010). Joseph argued that interdisciplinary scholars should expand their conceptions of professional accountability – how we "account for" and value our work. Opportunities to work "outside the building" reflect the changing conditions under which universities operate in the 21rst century. These include "…the New Public Management, a neoliberal governance technology that pushes state agencies to operate like private businesses, in fact privatizes government functions and manages through outcomes measurement rather than substantive direction" (p. 332). Educational Studies scholars are well suited to situate our work outside the building within the wider economic, historical, political, and social contexts that have given rise to academia's pursuit of community engagement in response to "external" pressure to demonstrate particular kinds of institutional productivity (Breault & Callejo-Perez, 2012; Butin, 2016; Petrovic & Kuntz, 2011).

Making Sense of the START Project

The Supporting Transformation Action in Reciprocity Together (START) project set out to "re-imagine" our College of Education (COE) and transform teacher preparation through school- and community-based collaboration. The central goal of the project as a whole was to prepare education professionals to work with the state's most vulnerable students - including "rural students, tribal students, high-poverty students, English language learners, students of color, and students with disabilities." (McRel, 2016, p.1). Among its many components, the multi-year project gave faculty a chance to explore new roles and responsibilities within local school and community sites. Faculty from across the COE worked together in TAGs

(Transformative Action Groups), each located at a different school/ community site. Faculty were given substantial latitude to develop ways to collaborate with school and community members to provide meaningful support for school sites while also working to develop better ways to prepare teacher candidates to work with (culturally, economically, linguistically, and racially) diverse students and families in local schools. TAG faculty identified critical cultural consciousness, culturally rooted pedagogy, and (recently) *body-soul rooted pedagogy* (Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Desai, & Secatero, in press) as key components of the curriculum.

One of the key aims of the project was to leverage university resources to provide meaningful assistance to several schools that served low-income students and families. Another aspiration was to bring about a transformation not only of the schools, but also of our institution in order to improve how it prepared educational professionals (McRel, 2016). Forty-four faculty members from all of the COE's five departments (about a third of the faculty) launched into their work in the Fall of 2014. Twenty to 25 faculty members continue to work in the project in 2017. In retrospect, faculty work within the TAGs did not fit neatly into traditional ways of conceptualizing (and assessing) faculty labor – research, teaching and service (MacFarlane, 2007). The first author grappled with the problem of how to convert our TAG work into academic capital (scholarship). She invited colleagues (co-authors) to begin the process of collaborative reflection-on-theories described in this article (AERA, 2016 citation of our poster). The Theory-Articulation Project (TAP) originated as a pragmatic solution to an academic problem: How to convert interdisciplinary field based work into content that might be useful as a basis for discovery and dissemination, another aim of the START project (McRel, 2016). By this, we mean that as scholars, it was important for us to translate the work into a case study (academic capital) in order to reflect on and share the TAG work with the wider

professional community. In writing this article, our aim is to articulate how this work constitutes scholarship in Educational Studies.

Method

This write-up is a narrative description of a collaborative exploration of the relevance of theory for our work as professors of education. It tells a story about how our relationships with theories have mattered to us as individuals and as a group who ventured "outside the building" while growing ever more keenly aware of the complex problems inherent in doing so (e.g., Gniadek, 2017; Heybach & Sheffield, 2013; Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016). Our research approach has emphasized discovery and we continue to work inductively, interactively, and, we hope, creatively to better understand our theories, their relevance, ourselves, each other, and the context(s) in which we continue to do the work, together and apart. We did not begin with a research question, at least in the conventional sense of the term. We set out to make an implicit process explicit, a strategy aimed at fostering growth through reflection, conversation, and critical analysis. This, in turn, helped to create a space for thinking about the intellectual, practical, political, and moral aspects of our work as professors of education.

The TAP employed a process of collaborative and individual reflection that has been a continuing aspect our work as TAG members. We met as a group to discuss our theories at the University Club, a neutral location free of distractions. Three of the authors (Carlos, Jan and Nancy) were members of the elementary school TAG; Kersti was a member of the Early Childhood TAG. In addition to our TAP discussions, we all participated in periodic meetings to plan and evaluate the START project and the work of the school-based TAGs. Each of the four authors identified and shared with one another a theory or theoretical framework that influences their scholarship. We set out to:

(1) Describe briefly key theoretical concepts,
(2) Discuss how particular theories have influenced each of our work lives as professionals and as project members,
(3) Explore how theory or intellectual tradition could be useful to the project in the future.

Although not fully described in this analysis, we developed autobiographical and autoethnographic reflections and observations (Bochner, 2001; Chang, 2009) and read classic and contemporary academic literature from the social, educational and psychological sciences. We also reviewed and analyzed supporting literature and contextual data, including descriptions of community and school sites published in newspapers and other public media venues (websites, directories). The focus of this article is on describing our experiences with the Theory Articulation Process, summarizing selected theories, exploring their interrelationships, and examining their relevance for institutional change. We next turn to a general discussion of some of the ways that theory is employed in Educational Studies. We describe selected, recent examples in order to encourage readers to (a) examine their own assumptions about how theory operates in the field, and (b) to think about what theories matter, and why.

Putting Theories to Work in Educational Studies: Selected Illustrations

Theoretical orientations can be broad (critical, developmental, existential, feminist, psychoanalytic, Indigenous, postcolonial, sociocultural) (e.g., Andreotti, 2014; Daza & Tuck, 2014; Delaney, McDonnell, & Moten-Tolson, 2016), or narrower in scope [e.g., arts integration, multiliteracies, visual culture (Eisner, 2004; New London Group, 1996; Pauly, 2003); critical consciousness; critical race theory (Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2016); listening (Bakhtin & Holmquist, 1981; Davis, 1996;

Dobson, 2014), third space (Skerrett, 2010; Soja, 1996), and place (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003: Gruenewald & Smith, 2008)]. Theory organizes perceptions of the educational phenomena that scholars set out to investigate. Just as the theories about which we choose to speak and write influence how we see the world, they also express personal commitments, values and career aspirations. In a comparison of consumer research and economic anthropology, Wilk (1998) noted that "good theories can go bad" depending in part on how academics employ them. Differing theoretical positions are implicated in at least some of the conflicts that are a part of academic life for professors of education (Armstrong, 2012; Carlson, 2008). Whereas abstract theoretical discussions are associated with high prestige in the academy, applied fields typically rely on middle-range theories that can be used to generate empirical evidence to inform policy and practice (Luker, 2008).

Educational studies scholars tend to "deploy" theories in the interest of description and argument (CASA, 2013; Provenzo, Renaud, & Provenzo, 2009; Tozer, Gallegos, & Henry, 2012). In a recent special issue of *Professing Education* on "theorizing pedagogies of teacher education," Katie Wester-Neal (2017) drew on phenomenological theory to describe pedagogical methods that can "help teacher candidates cultivate…reflective skills…rooted in local particularities" (p. 51). She used theoretical constructs – "attitude shifting" and "bridling" – to develop an innovative teacher education pedagogy and to show "how practices from phenomenology can assist in the development of reflective teachers" (ibid.). She asked, "How can phenomenological practices be used in teacher education to encourage reflection as teacher candidates work through the messy, often problematic, situations that arise in teaching?" (p. 52). Her article offers a conceptual overview of key concepts, a theoretically grounded pedagogical method, and data based illustrations from two teacher education methods courses.

In the same issue, Stephanie Schroeder (2017) drew on political theory to argue that despite the challenges presented by neoliberalism ("narrowing of curriculum, the deskilling of the teaching profession, the fragmentation of knowledge, and the focus on methods and technique rather than conceptual or philosophical underpinnings"), "…teacher education programs can play a critical role in reversing these negative trends by becoming more democratic" (p. 11). Given the current situation, she argued, it is not likely that novice teachers "understand or have experienced democratic education…It is even less likely that they enter teacher preparation programs with a sense of agency or the belief that they can make change" (p. 12). Schroeder developed an imaginative and informative philosophical framework for democratic education based on eight "descriptors" derived from the work of feminist scholars Amy Gutmann, Nel Noddings, Martha Nussbaum, and Madeleine Grumet (who all build upon and move beyond Dewey's progressivism). She proposed a model of democratic education that is transparently linked to philosophical ideas and the literature on democratic teacher education. Her model discussed practical tactics for cultivating democratic processes and cultivating democratic dispositions in teacher education programs. It "transforms the student-teacher relationship in teacher education and reimagines the roles teachers play as facilitators of learning" (p. 19). Schroeder developed a novel model for preparing teachers by integrating elements drawn from multiple theories. Thus, one way that Educational Studies scholars use theories is to develop models for teacher education that may, or may not be applied in the field.

Other scholars grapple with problems created by their aspirations to put theory to work in the curriculum. In the same issue of *Professing Education*, Kathy Sanford and Lisa Starr (2017) discussed the difficulties inherent in bridging the gap between curriculum theory and the pragmatic concerns of prospective educators and teacher educators. As teacher educators who also

consider themselves curriculum scholars, they developed a transformative teacher education program (TruVic) in "an attempt to strengthen the bridges between curriculum theory, teaching practice, and the experiences of be(come)ing in liminal spaces" (p. 36). They deployed theory to describe their program through analysis of its operating principles as these reflected their emerging understanding of theoretical ideas. What is especially noteworthy from our point of view is the way Sanford and Starr employed a collaborative and developmental stance toward their work as teacher educators, drawing on a number of theoretical constructs to describe their program [including rhizomatics, complexity theory, Indigenous and relational pedagogies, be(come)ing (Deleuze), holistic multiplicity, curriculum as currere (Pinar)]. In so doing, they situate their program within contemporary theoretical discourse in order to promote a "symbiotic relationship" between transformative teacher education and curriculum theory (2017, p. 42), thereby nudging the field as a whole toward critical self-examination and perhaps, change.

In a similar vein, Matias, Montoya, and Nishi (2016) used Black feminism, critical Whiteness studies, critical race theory (CRT) and "counterstorytelling" to challenge teacher educators to address barriers to CRT in teacher preparation programs. They argued that "theorizations of CRT simply cannot occur without enlistment to the practice of social justice, especially with respect to education…[therefore] Because of this marriage between theory and practice, CRT becomes a viable platform to critically deconstruct the endemic nature of White supremacy in education, while employing a socially just approach in the efforts to curb the spread of it" (p. 3). They drew from multiple theoretical frameworks to problematize and deconstruct White emotionality as a mechanism for preserving White supremacy at the expense of racial justice in teacher education programs, offering real life illustrations (counterstories) and

recommendations for change. These authors brought theory to bear as a device for revealing and trying to address troubling issues in the institutions that train teachers. This is yet another way that theories are deployed in Educational Studies.

Paradoxically, our work "outside the building," while it did get us out of our respective buildings and into the field, also led us to delve into some of our own taken-for-granted assumptions about academic life. In addition to interacting with colleagues and spending more time in schools and communities, we felt it important to think about theory generally, our individual relationships to particular theoretical frameworks, and how they might be enacted in the work of the TAGs. The impetus for the START project came from *outside* of our College of Education (the Provost, the Provost's Management Team and the Foundation that funded the work). As a consequence, the larger project has emphasized pragmatics over theory. Participating faculty (of which the authors constitute a very small subset) expressed diverse theoretical points of view, and continue to do so, making some progress while implicitly putting different theoretical commitments into conversation. The authors came together around a shared curiosity about the relevance of theory for our work. This curiosity was heightened and given direction by the necessity of being productive scholars in the traditional sense of the term – being accountable to the profession (Joseph, 2010). As collaborators, we identified another way to deploy theory: taking time to reflect on our theoretical commitments and to share our insights with one another through the TAP. We turn to one of the products of our conversation next: our respective articulations of the core concepts associated with each of the four theories.

Articulating the Theories About Which We Care

The following are brief overviews suggesting the range of theoretical frameworks we brought

to our collaborative TAG work in the field. Much more could be said about all this, and we invite readers to pursue further reading, reflection and dialog with us according to their interests. Our purpose here is to make salient the variety of theoretical views the four of us brought with us to our work, and shared with one another in the spirit of *conocimiento* (Keating, 2006).

A Theory of Listening as Social Practice (Kersti)

We listen in webs of interaction in social practices. When we listen, we hear, are heard, and respond to one another's participation in local contexts that are situated in structures of social practices. What we hear is informed by our ideas, beliefs, and sense making, as well as one another's identities and actions within structures of social practices (Dreier, 2008). I propose that listening is one of our human capacities that implicates us as social beings in social and local practices. Biesta (2006) suggests a "shift from the question of what the subject is to the question of where the subject, as a unique, singular being, *comes into presence*" (emphasis in original, p. 41). I propose that listening, hearing and being heard, is a place where student and teacher can come into presence if we understand listening as an interaction. Listening is not just about receiving a message, it is also about the speaker being heard and being responded to, as Frankfurt (2005) surmises, "as conscious beings, we exist only in response to other things, and we cannot know ourselves at all without knowing them" (pp. 66-67).

What one hears runs through the different structures of social practice (and triggers some more than others) to the moment when the listener responds — what I think of as the moment of interaction (Dreier, 2008). From there the question becomes whether or not the listener's response and/or the speaker's words influence either person to adjust in any way, based on what was heard and how what was heard was responded to — another word for this process is learning.

Thus, in order to better understand if and how listening matters, it needs to be examined within these webs of interaction (for each person). On the one hand, this includes recognizing the structures of social practices, local participation and local practices, identities, knowledge and beliefs, and personal activities, that shape what is said and heard in a particular interaction. On the other hand, it includes learning if and how what happens in the interaction has an impact toward affirming or interrupting participants' personal activities, identities, knowledge and beliefs, local practices and participation, and ultimately the structures of social practices.

Thus, the study of listening is dynamic and must include the experience of the one who hears as well as the one who is heard. Instead of starting with *logos*, as Descartes did — the word as it is spoken, I'm interested in *legin*, as Corradi (1990) and Ratcliff (2005) describe it, the experience of hearing and being heard and what we do with that experience. I'm interested in understanding listening as interaction that is both produced by and that (re)produces the webs of social practices in which we navigate as we learn, live, and love.

Nosotr@s and Third Space Theory (Carlos)

Societal power relations do not only exert pressure at the macro-level in our society. They also filter down into school structures such as the curriculum, assessment procedures, funding, etc. and in turn affect the micro-level at which educators, students, and parents interact with one another. Within the space of these interactions, especially in intercultural exchanges, coercive or collaborative relations are formed that either reinforce societal relations of power or promote collaborative relations (Wlazlinski & Cummins, 2013). The process of promoting more collaborative relations is founded on the basis of the participants developing greater understanding about each other, so that one can support and work with the other accordingly. On this line of thinking, James

Banks (2013) has suggested that a multicultural curriculum should go beyond the naming of heroes and holidays (e.g., Cesar Chavez, Cinco de Mayo) by simply adding readings to the curriculum that address themes on diversity. He suggested transforming the curricular structure so that students can learn about, and explore issues of diversity through the perspectives and narratives of diverse groups. It would be even better if this learning process turned into social action, so students could become active participants in the solution of the issues they have realized. Therefore, Banks asserted that our efforts to promote a multicultural transformative curriculum should be supported by the intersection of knowing, caring, and acting on societal issues in power relations. As noted, the theoretical principles that have inspired some of our TAG work draw on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and include the concepts of "third space" (Skerret, 2010; Soja, 1996), "nosotr@s", and "*conocimiento*" (Anzalúa & Keating, 2000; Keating, 2006). As scholars of Education, we have deployed theory in the interest of building solidarity and perhaps generating new ways to think about and conduct our work in schools and communities.

Pedagogical Affordances of Arts in Education (Nancy)

The arts offer crucial teaching and learning approaches that respond to the needs and propensities of diverse learners. Arts-based learning approaches afford individual students with one or more modalities through which they can learn content, interpret meanings, research their areas of interest, and communicate their understandings authentically through their performances in various media and multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). All the arts (visual arts, music, dance, drama, literary arts, and media arts) offer a rich repertoire of meaningful forms through which students can explore content and perform their understandings, emotions, cultures, and experiences in school. Rooted in the early twentieth century work of

John Dewey (1902/1990) and the Progressive Education Movement, arts integration, or interdisciplinary teaching and learning, began with interest in educating the whole child, activity-centered curriculum, and project-based learning (Parsons, 2004).

A good curriculum that integrates arts-based learning should be designed to help students connect academic learning in a variety of school subjects to personal experience and real-life issues (Parsons, 2004). Students should be actively engaged; researching and investigating enduring ideas or complex social problems with information generated from different sources. This type of integrated learning is intended to help students make sense of their place in the world and prepare them to address complex social questions as citizens in a democracy. It mirrors the need for contemporary workers to be able to work with others, respect multiple points of view, and solve problems cooperatively.

In arts-based learning, students engage in their own creative processes to create art that is relevant in their lives, which also reflects their deep understandings through metaphor. Most artworks are embodiments of metaphoric meaning in which the student artist has explored and expressed his or her personal feelings, culturally-based experiences, and aesthetic ways of knowing and communicating. Thus, the arts offer optimum modalities through which teachers can "differentiate" (Tomlinson & Eidson, 2003) instruction, addressing the needs of our academically, linguistically, and culturally diverse learners.

Metaphor and aesthetic communication are distinctive characteristics that the arts offer education. Efland (2002) stressed that metaphor is the principal object of study in the arts. Artworks embody meanings rather than literal facts. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) call metaphor "one of our most important tools for trying to understand what we cannot fully comprehend: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness" (p.193). Thus, the arts not only offer enjoyable ways to learn the

other school subjects, they contribute distinctive richness and complexity to the learning process as a whole.

About Place (Jan)

Place-conscious education honors community life as a source of learning for students and their teachers. Theories of place invite students, educators, and educational researchers to ask the question: where are we, and why does this matter? They call upon us to attend to local settings and groups that reside at the margins, and to explore the links between "place" and well-being (Sigelman, 2011). Humans create, and are also *created by* the places in which they reside. Becoming more attuned to the relevance of place "extend[s] our notions of pedagogy and accountability outward toward places" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 620). This broadens the notion of educational accountability, demanding that we become more accountable to the places that matter to people. Writing about the demise of natural history, Pyle (2001) observed "[w]e cannot learn to care about things we do not see. What we know, we may choose to care for. What we fail to recognize, we certainly won't." (p. 18). Current conditions emerged over very long periods of time and reflect multiple, complex interactions and transactions. Attention to the history of places can help us see how the past influences present situations (e.g., Purdy, 2015) to confront and address the legacy of neocolonialism.

Places are inherently linked to learning – inherently pedagogical. It is important to look beyond the school to the many other sites through which students and educators learn. The dominant discourses of school improvement tend to disregard local contexts, focusing on learning outcomes linked to future careers and college, rather than "present situations," much less the historical and environmental contexts that have given rise to them. It is noteworthy that charter schools, community schools, Indigenous schools, and small rural schools often emphasize community engagement, yet tend "to be eclipsed by the tripartite banner of educational reform: standards, testing and accountability" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 621). One way for universities to bring about genuine transformation of local schools would be to re-engage learners with the process of creating and *caring for* places in order to foster beneficial relationships between people and the world (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 624; See also, Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). This project offered an opportunity to consider the relevance of theories of place for professional communities, including professors of education and educational researchers.

Clearly, we brought diverse theoretical viewpoints to the work of the TAGs, each of them offering a different point from which to consider the nature of the work and our potential individual contributions. We turn next to an illustration of how theories were deployed to create an afterschool program that combined concepts from arts integration and nosotr@s theories, while also attending to the value of listening and place-consciousness in teacher preparation.

Theories in Action and Interaction Beyond the Building

Two of the authors (Carlos and Nancy) helped to develop a Math and Arts Club (MAC) afterschool project at the Pocojardín Elementary School TAG site. MAC activities drew on arts integration methods while focusing on the creation of spaces guided by the principles of nosotr@s. Through arts integration, teachers and students explore big ideas, essential questions, and key concepts to meet standards in all the subjects (Stewart and Walker, 2005). The central foundation of our actions resided in promoting collaborative relations that would nurture greater reflection, *conocimiento* and expression among participants. Thus, in MAC we aimed at cultivating inter-cultural sensitivities to differences and using these abilities to forge a hybrid consciousness. We worked with student teachers and children to move from a 'them'

mentality to an 'us' mentality, a *nosotr@s* position that may help us all bridge the extremes of our cultural realities (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2000). As a result, the MAC project included the intentional process of including pre-service teachers (PSTs) in the process of co-planning and designing the MAC tasks and activities, with university educators, that promoted a way into getting to know more about the 4th and 5th grade students in the project. This way, PSTs worked as facilitators in their small groups in the two initial units that they co-planned: (1) Who We Are, and (2) School Memory Mapping. In the first unit, students developed a self-portrait by mathematizing the features of their faces; then they wrote an autobiography related to the self-portrait and symbols that they included in the background. Students learned the basis of mapping and located places of different emotional meaning at the school, took pictures of themselves in those places and created collages, situating their learning experiences within the local community.

Through MAC, students, PSTs, and university educators communicated with and learned from each other. Processes which require the mobilization of the "I" and the "You," that promote a Thirdspace (Bhabha, 1994), are rare in public school classrooms (Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Desai, & Secatero, in press). The "other" places could be related to establishing a connection with another person, the person with whom one wants to develop a dialogue. However, this process could also apply to oneself knowing through an inner or self-reflective dialogue (Finkbeiner, 2006). PST's wrote reflections about what they learned from the students they worked with, and we professors learned from reading their reflections (one form of praxis). Despite these potential spaces supporting collaborative relations, some tensions arose as our co-planning time was annulled by the tight schedule of PSTs' seminar and fieldwork experience. In a way, MAC participants were willing to promote *nosotr@s* spaces through arts integration, but regrettably, the PSTs' program

involved a structure that did not nurture these personal spaces and places. TAG faculty navigated expected and unexpected hurdles in all of the TAG school sites (e.g., unexpected and sudden changes in school leadership; the slow pace of negotiating access with community and school leaders, and disagreement over how to prioritize faculty investments in the research, teaching and service demands of the work.) And yet, our commitments to contributing to the endeavor of education and finding ways to implement and test theory kept us engaged in the work.

Our four theories are diverse, yet also share important similarities. Through discussion and shared reflection in liminal spaces (Sanford and Starr, 2017; Spector, 2015), we developed a model portraying the relationships between and among the four theories and identified research questions for future investigation. Our conversation allowed us to identify some of the relationships among theoretical traditions and to gain insight into how theory has informed our varying perceptions of the problem. We shared concerns about listening in responsible and responsive ways; developing theory-informed in-school and after-school programs to see and hear what student teachers and students had to say through various modes of communication (arts), and caring for places in order to foster beneficial relationships between people and the world. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the four theories and their interrelationships that grew out of our deliberations.
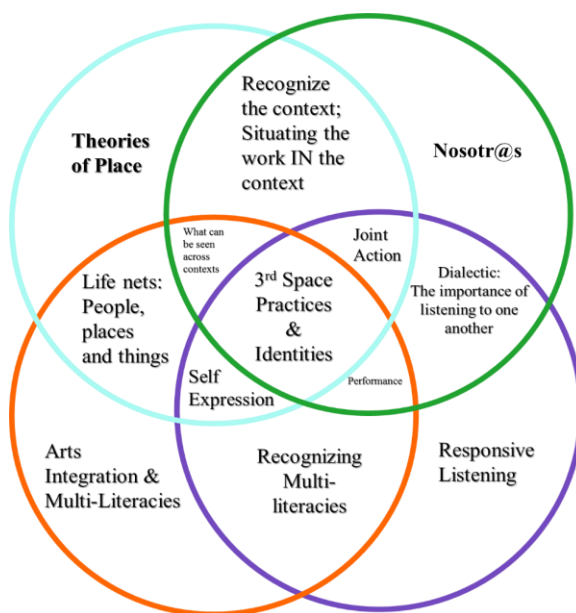
Figure 1. The four theories in interaction

What we think is important to notice about this model is where and how the different theories overlap. For example, at the center, through our conversations about praxis, we identified that third space practices and identities related to each of the theories we discussed and analyzed. The four larger spaces adjacent to the center [Arts Integration and Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Parsons, 2004), Lifenets of People Places and Things (Armstrong, 2010), Situating the Work (LópezLeiva, Torres & Khisty, 2013) and Dialectic (Hintz & Tyson, 2015)] might be thought of as "modes of interaction." The four smaller spaces near the center (Self-Expression, What Can Be Seen Across Contexts, Joint Action, and Performance) seem to suggest "modes of action." We think the places of overlap help point us to next steps in teaching and research as we engage our theories in the dance of application. They point toward new points of view from which to view our individual lines of research and scholarship. For example, Jan's lifenet view work (Armstrong, 2010) has connections to theories of place, arts integration, Anzaldúan feminist epistemology, and third space theory that have not yet been articulated. Kersti's research on listening (Hintz

& Tyson, 2015) has ties to arts integration, nosotr@s, and third space theories that may warrant additional exploration in the years ahead.

The next section offers reflections on why theory (still) matters for Educational Studies scholars, when they move outside the building to work in schools and communities. We also return to where we began the article – to the potential role of shared articulation of theories in supporting faculty collegiality and fostering professional growth.

Concluding Thoughts

Colleges of education play difficult, unique roles within universities. They prepare professionals for work in institutions that serve the public, conduct research, and provide direct services that serve multiple ends. This article began with a rationale for attending to interpersonal relationships when pursuing large scale field-based efforts to change education at the group level by getting outside the building. We noted some of the problems that can arise as a result of collaborations across interdisciplinary and other boundaries. It is pertinent, then, to our argument whether our TAP experiment led to more positive interpersonal relationships than might otherwise have been the case. We believe so, but cannot know for sure. What we can do, however, is invite others to take whatever might be useful here and "deploy" it within their own, unique situations. Then, we encourage them to share what they learn so that others can benefit from their experiences and insights.

What were the consequences of working together "beyond the building" and the Theory Articulation Project? Our original "aspirations" included:

(1) Describing key theoretical concepts,

(2) Discussing how our respective theories influenced our work as professionals and project members, and

(3) Exploring how each of our theories might be useful to the project in the future.

Having attended to one aspiration above, we will focus here on two and three. As TAG members, we found ourselves enmeshed in activities residing within the interstices between scholarship, teaching, and service. This kind of institutional liminality (Sanford & Starr, 2017) can present risks for those on the tenure track, but it also offered an opportunity to foster institutional change while broadening and deepening our understanding of each other's work in the field. The process of naming this work as scholarship and submitting our paper for peer review led to a re-articulation of our work. Professors of Education are dedicated to preparing and supporting teachers for work in public schools, but they bring an array of allegiances and disciplinary emphases to the task. This variety of ways of approaching the problem of how best to improve education and educational outcomes can be a source of conflict because theoretical positions carry moral weight, provide a sense of belonging, and are linked to tangible career rewards and penalties. As we have experienced, these commitments can also be a source of powerful new ways to creatively address social problems through education and collaboration by discovering areas of overlap and connection through conversation.

We found the interdisciplinary space created by the START project to be a hopeful space. Taking time to learn about each other's theoretical views seemed to help build solidarity while also contributing to our professional growth. Working across disciplinary lines helped us recognize that part of the work of transforming education starts with us: that educators, too, need to learn to listen across our disciplines and deep-seated beliefs so that colleagues feel heard and responded to. Thus, by recognizing listening as a social practice, transformation is born in our most immediate interactions and we are better able to see that our work begins with attending to how we listen to one another, to our students, and how their future students will be heard and responded to (Hintz and Tyson, 2015). With respect to the

work of the TAGs, applying listening theories and Anzaldúan epistemological ideas (nosotr@s) has meant attending to if and how children are heard and responded to and finding ways to invite PSTs into this work. It meant listening to our colleagues with curiosity and interest, and pursuing activities in which this could occur.

Turning to our third aspiration, how might our theories be useful to the project in the future? As we thought about the relevance of our theories for the project, we generated questions that warrant further investigation. Listening theory expands our conception of effective practice (e.g. English, 2016) as teacher educators and program developers. It raises important questions: How are PSTs heard and responded to in their program? Do they feel heard? Are they able to incorporate listening into their practice as teachers so that their future students feel heard and responded to? How can arts integration and other pedagogical changes ensure that the voices of PSTs and elementary students are heard and responded to through multiple modalities, multiliteracies, aesthetic forms, and metaphors? If we are able to tune pre-service teachers into the work of attending to whether children are heard and responded to, what might be the outcomes for students and schools?

Theories of place call for attention to how students and communities view the settings in which they live. Drawing on tourism research, we might think of ourselves as guests, and those who live in the community as hosts or residents (Smith, 1989). We might then ask: How do the residents see their community and its schools? In what ways do they care for, and care about these places? How do students see their school, its microenvironments, and its relationship to the wider community? Will students' perceptions of their schools' change during the course of this project? In what ways might our own views of schools and communities change as we learn to see them from our hosts' points of view? How might Arts Integration help to illuminate these points of view, especially for students learning English as a second language or receiving special

education services? The arts might offer other modes of communication and assessment.

Nosotr@s and third space theories generate questions about how we can change the deep structure of teacher preparation programs to better prepare future educators for their work in diverse classrooms, schools and communities. Theories of arts integration offer perspectives and pedagogical methods that can be put to work toward this end. How might creating more space for nosotr@s affect the identity development of PSTs? What are the potential benefits of offering a course dedicated to learning to teach in after-school settings? How might diverse students be energized to learn and communicate their understandings if offered artistic modalities of learning and assessment? How might faculty of education support schools and teachers to offer students more opportunities to learn in ways that are responsive to who they are and who they are becoming, grounded in students' and teachers' interactions, and informed by their senses, emotions, intelligences, and aesthetic viewpoints? By putting our theories in conversation with one another, we discovered that there are places of overlap, which not only reveal the heart of the work (third space practices and identities), but offer creative new ways to do the work – all the while blurring the boundaries of research, teaching and service.

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Mentoring for a Lifetime: The perspective of a
Black man who served as a mentor

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Introduction: Statement of Problem

There is a growing numbers of mathematics education researchers who have examined the educational experiences of Black boys and men - discussing extensively the significant academic and social challenges confronting them (Berry, 2008; Corey & Bowers, 2005; Ellington & Frederick 2010; Jett, 2011; McGee & Martin, 2011; Noble, 2011; Stinson 2013). These discussions point to a serious stifling in the educational system of Black boys and men's achievement, aspirations, and pride. These discussions are bolstered by data characterizing Black boys and men with low achievement rates, high expulsion and suspension rates, exposure to trauma, and differential access to human and material resources (Pitts-Bannister, Davis, Mutegi, Thompson, & Lewis 2017). In schools, Black boys are disproportionately represented in low ability group classes; over represented in special education, underrepresented in gifted and talented academic programs; and underrepresented in upper level mathematics, science, and computer classes (McGee & Martin, 2011). Such data interacts with the fact that Black boys are frequently the victims of negative attitudes and lowered expectations from teachers, counselors, and administrators. Educators may expect to encounter academic and social problems from Black boys and men, which often leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Lee, 1996). Being the recipients of lowered expectations from school personnel, Black boys often experience alienation and distancing in school, thus failure becomes an integral part of their educational experience.

Some researchers theorize that a change in mindsets or developing grit is necessary to address the academic and social challenges faced by Black boys in schools. Such proposal does not fully appreciate how school personnel play a significant role in the challenges faced by Black boys and a changed mindset or developing grit unfairly positions Black boys as controlling the contextual factors impacting them. Interventions focused on mindset and grit with little considerations of structural challenges underappreciates the challenges faced by Black boys (Sultan, 2015). Black men who navigate and understand the structural challenges have perspectives using similar lens as Black boys and can provide mentorship and support. Many Black men understand the exposure to the deficit narratives and trauma experienced by Black boys. Deficit narratives and trauma have a profound impact on Black boys' cognitive development, engagement in school, and academic outcomes (Howard, 2013). Schools and teachers are woefully unprepared to address the developmental needs of Black boys. An examination of the public images of Black boys arguably shows that these boys are vulnerable, hurting and in need of support. Consequently, mentoring and support by Black men can provide the necessary intervention for Black boys.

Why Black Boys?

Vaughans and Spielberg (2014) noted that there is very little research and attention focused on the developmental needs of young Black boys and men. They noted that the body of research mirrored the public media that positions young Black boys and men as hyper-masculine and that

these depictions negate the normative existence of their developmental needs as boys.

Consequently, the use of the word boy is intentional in this article because it implies a developmental perspective positioning young Black boys in need of support and mentorship. Boy imparts vulnerability and youth which calls for support and mentorships. Master narratives rarely uses boy when discussing young Black boys; consequently, Black boys are often not positioned in an appropriate developmental space. For example, Tamir Rice and Trayvon Martin were Black boys who were killed but described as being beyond their developmental space as boys. Would Tamir and Trayvon be alive if they were positioned boys? Many Black boys grow up in households where they are positioned "as the man of the house," when in fact many are developmentally boys who are not ready for such positioning. An argument can be made that when Black boys are positioned in developmentally appropriate spaces, adults engage them in ways to provide modeling, support and mentorship.

The word boy has been used historically in oppressive ways towards Black men and the word is rejected by some Black men due to its historical conflation. The intent here is to position boy as a developmental marker rather than disassociate the word boy from Black. The disassociation of boy from Black allows people to not see Black boys as developmentally evolving, vulnerable, hurting, and in need of support. Vaughans and Spielberg (2014) argued, "If in our daily language we cannot use a word that imparts vulnerability and youth, a word that calls forth support, then what can we expect to see in the worlds of young black boys?" The disassociation of boy from Black contributes to some of the trauma and narratives impacting Black boys as well as inhibits working towards finding solutions for boys who are often positioned in developmental spaces beyond their years (Vaughans & Spielberg, 2014).

Counter Narratives to Master Narratives

The deficit narratives in the literature have juxtaposed Black boys' status, achievement, and participation to create what Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, and Peters (1996) call a master narrative. A master narrative is a script that specifies and controls how some social processes are carried out (Stanley 2007). Master narratives embody and dictate expectations about how things work and how stories are framed. A quick search for headlines in the popular press and research databases depict Black boys and men with deficit images and deficit narratives about their participation in schools and the larger society. In schooling, often, the master narratives present contrasts between groups of people by advantaging dominant groups and disadvantaging members of marginal groups. There is a master narrative operating in the mathematics literature that focuses on the achievement gap by positioning Black learners, specifically Black boys, as being deficient to White and Asian learners. Master narratives have driven the discussions in mathematics education literature by focusing on using standardized achievement test scores to make comparisons of groups of learners to invoke race as a categorical variable that assumes causal relationship (Martin, 2007). The constant depictions of Black boys as deficient mathematics learners have crafted images that failure is normative (Stinson, 2013).

This article discusses a partnership between a community organization and school districts. It discusses programming that addresses working with Black boys to combat master narratives around academic achievement, specifically mathematics participation. The Math, Men, and Mission (M^3 or M-Cubed) program was initially developed through a partnership between 100 Black Men of Central Virginia (BMOCV), Albemarle County Public Schools, and the University of Virginia to increase Black boys' participation in upper-level mathematics and to provide Black boys with mentors to support their social and academic development.

The programming and work of the 100 BMOCV are intended to provide counter narratives to master narratives that negatively impact Black boys. Counter narratives are perspectives that run opposite or counter to the presumed order and control (Stanley, 2007). These narratives arise out of the experiences of individuals or groups that do not fit and are often critical of the master narratives. Counter narratives present alternatives to the dominant discourse and act to deconstruct the master narratives (Stanley 2007). They, for example, challenge the dominant discourse in mathematics literature that hold Black learners' mathematics achievement as deficient. Several researchers provide counter narratives that challenge the master narratives concerning the mathematics education experiences of Black boys (e.g. Berry, 2008; Jett, 2011; Stinson, 2013; Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Berry (2008) focused on the experiences of eight Black boys in middle school and examined how these boys gain access to upper level mathematics in an environment that is often in opposition to them being successful. One significant theme in Berry's (2008) work was that participation in out of school mathematics experiences supported the development academic, mathematical, and alternative identities. Thompson and Lewis (2005) investigated how one Black boy, concerned that he would not have a sufficient background in mathematics for his career interest, successfully lobbied his principal to have a Calculus course offered at his school. They reported that their participant wanted to be a role model for younger kids to combat negative images of Black boys and men and had goals of attending college. Jett (2011) used critical race theory in case study research to chronicle the schooling, mathematics, and racial experiences of a Black man. Stinson (2013) used discourse, person/identity, and power/agency to unpack the mathematical experiences of Black boys and men. These studies provide much needed insights into how additional out of school learning experiences shape Black boys and men identities and participation in mathematics.

Mentoring

Grantham (2008) described three types of mentoring programs: (a) educational mentoring, (b) career mentoring, and (c) personal development mentoring. Educational mentoring focuses on improving overall academic achievement. Career mentoring helps youth develop the skills needed to enter or continue on a career path. Personal development mentoring supports youth personal, psychological, or social stress and provides guidelines for decision making. Effective mentoring of Black boys encompasses components of each of these domains, with particular emphasis on the personal development, such as racial identity. Mentoring is essential for helping Black boys navigate the social, psychological, structural, and contextual nuances in their development towards becoming Black men.

100 Black Men of Central Virginia & M-Cubed

In 2008, the 100 Black Men of Central Virginia (BMOCV) was formed with two cornerstone projects focused on Black boys: The Scholars Recognition Program and the Math, Men, and Mission (M^3 or M-Cubed) program. The Scholars Recognition Program provides counter images to the negative images about Black boys' academic achievement by celebrating yearly high schools Black male scholars for their academic achievements. The Scholars Recognition Program recognized the positive achievements of Black boys and men inside and outside the classroom. The M-Cubed Program consists of two components: mentorship with members of the 100 BMOCV serving as mentors and a summer experience focused on mathematics. The summer component was designed to provide Black boys in the Central Virginia area with the opportunity to learn different ways of understanding algebraic concepts and how to incorporate them into the

concepts they are presented with in their schools. Black boys represent about six percent of the overall student population (13,700) of about in Albemarle County (VA) Public Schools (ACPS) but are underrepresented in upper-level mathematics. In fact, at the inception of the M-Cubed program only two Black boys were enrolled in Algebra I or geometry in middle school. Given the small population of Black boys the 100 BMOCV saw the potential impact that M-Cubed can have on community engagement and support of Black boys. The M-Cubed program is the first single-gender and single-race program to be piloted by ACPS, and now expanded the program to include Charlottesville City Schools' students. The goals of the M-Cubed program were to:

- o broaden the pool of students for entry into rigorous upper level mathematics course in middle and high school
- o help 5th and 7th grade students understand mathematics in a thorough and deep way;
- o expose parents to multiple academic options such as mathematics and science academies, summer enrichment programs, gifted programs and other additional learning opportunities.

The M-Cubed summer academy is a two-week experience designed to provide a model of excellence. The labeling of academy is intentional rather than camp because the experiences is intended to provide more than enrichment in mathematics but also provide rites of passage, tools needed to impact the lives of Black boys. Algebra, geometry, and robotics are embedded in the summer academy to support the continued development of mathematical reasoning. Identity-affirming and identity-building are part of the daily activities used to counter deficit narratives. The boys' identities are affirmed because they are positioned as having the mathematical knowledge and abilities to well in school mathematics. The men and teachers in M-Cube model identity-affirming behaviors through unpacking mathematical ideas through open-

ended questioning and broadening what it means to "do" mathematics. Mathematics is not positioned as finding the correct answer to problems; rather mathematics is positioned as engagement, preserving, problem-posing, and problem-solving. Positioning mathematics in this manner allows the boys to "see" mathematics as having social expectations requiring participation. These identity-affirming expectations influence the ways in which the boys participated in mathematics and how they saw themselves as doers of mathematics. Jamal's, a rising fifth grader, is representative of the scholar positioning of mathematics:

> What I like about math is it's kind of complicated, and I like, I want my work to be complicated so I can actually do better… It's like when it's hard, like when we were doing an engineering project, we worked together and I feel like I finished something really good, like I did a really good job with it.

The boys are referred to as scholars because the 100 BMOCV believe they are the best of the best and providing daily messages of excellence targeting Black boys and men. For example, when the scholars are asked how they are doing, the expected response is "Truly wonderful and getting better." This response provides the mentor an entry point to discuss with the scholar what makes them truly wonderful and their goals for getting better. By asking the boys what makes them wonderful, they are receiving positive identity affirmation and then asking their goals of getting better exposes opportunities for identity-building. All of the men of the 100 are positioned as identity builders for the scholars. Throughout the two weeks there are several events for the parents to participate in including workshops, trainings, and homework assignments so that parents have a level of commitment to the program. All scholars read at least two books written by Black authors focused on the plight of

Black boys and men. For example, the scholars read, *The Autobiography of Malcolm* X.

Every morning, for the first hour of academy, the scholars are engaged in the "Circle of Brotherhood," a powerful group discussion and mentoring opportunity to engage in issues in the public space, the book, and honoring scholars who have "gone the extra mile." For members of the 100 BMOCV, the stories and experiences are powerful and some mentors show emotions through tears. For examples, some of scholars describe racism in their schools, some are trying to navigate why they are treated differently by teachers, some are looking for guidance about why they are ridiculed by family members for being smart, and others are grappling with why they often are portrayed negatively even when they do nothing wrong. One goal in the "Circle of Brotherhood" is to show scholars that the issues they engaged are not isolated, but are experienced by others. Additionally, it provided scholars with tools to overcome these obstacles. These tools help scholars develop a sense of agency. Agency is not a position from an individual perspective rather the scholars are encouraged to lean on their brothers in the academy to form the brotherhood that is needed to deal with issues as they arise. Being your brothers' keeper is more than a cliché, as each scholar is responsible for setting an example for his fellow brother. The discussion below between Damitri and Keeshawn describes an interesting negotiation between perceptions of race and "smartness:"

> **Damitri:** Some of the teachers. Like sometimes teachers give other kids more attention than other kids. Well it feels that way.
> **Keeshawn:** Yeah.
> **Damitri:** Like different races of kids…yeah they favor kids…well in my math class, my math teacher favored a couple of kids over me and a couple of my friends…Well, when I'd like raise my hand when she's working with some student and then she'd

say, "I'll come to you in a minute." And so she'd be like, "I'll come to you after this student."And then she'd look at me and then walk to a different student and then go over and help them and then help me.
> **Keeshawn:** Yeah, it's happened to me but not with race. It's not about like your skin color or anything. It's about like the people who usually get more questions right.
> **Damitri:** The smarter students or the ones they think are smarter.

Through the "Circle of Brotherhood" the boys are able to unpack, discuss, and engage with men and each other to know whether situation described above is a function of race, smartness, or both race and smartness. The "Circle of Brotherhood" provides the space to affirm to the scholar that they are not alone in their perceptions of these incidences and situations. Further, it affirms that is appropriate to "lean" on your brother to help make sense of situations and ideas.

During the academy, Black professional boys and men visit to discuss their experiences, jobs, and stories provide examples of what the scholars can look to become and the journeys traveled by professional Black men. Additionally, three lunch outings are scheduled at restaurants throughout the area for the young men to practice the dining and etiquette skills learned during the academy. In addition to the lunch outings, the scholars participate in at least one enrichment trip to a museum or a heritage park.

The mentoring component of M-Cubed may be the most important aspect of the entire program. Each M-Cubed scholar is matched with a mentor from the 100 BMOCV. All mentors are trained as mentors from the 100 Black Men of America organization national program, "Mentoring the 100 Way Across a Lifetime." "Mentoring across a lifetime" implies that mentors and mentee create a bond that is long lasting and fruitful. The mentoring program designed to be sustained mentor relationships of at least a school year and often over multiple

years. A cornerstone of the national organization is grounded in the motto "What They See Is What They'll Be." Mentors are required to visit the scholar's school, attend some school functions, have individual mentor/scholar time, and play an active role in the overall development of the young men.

Wes Bellamy's Voice

A Mentor's Perspective

I was elected to Charlottesville City Council and appointed as the Vice-Mayor of the city in January 2016. I am 100% positive that this would not have happened if not for the 100 BMOCV, and the scholars in our program. It was because of them that I saw the need for us all to do more in our community. I will never forget the day during a Circle of Brotherhood session that the young men asked me "Why don't we have more people who look like us in government or politics?" My answer was simple, we can't say why don't we have, but we must be the ones who change the landscape and create the change. Setting policy specifics to fit the needs of a population of people to create balance and equity has been important. However, I think just as important as it is for me to set policy, is for me to set a real life and tangible example. When they see me on television, I am not a figure who is unreachable or in a position that is unattainable. They know me. They know that if I can do it so can they. They also know that the very things that we talk about on a daily basis are not just words; they are chess pieces in the game of life. In order to be the king, you have to be strategic.

I initially joined the 100 BMOCV in 2011, and I was a 24 years old young man who thought that he knew everything about everything. I would constantly get into verbal disagreements with the chapter's leadership about the young men who we were serving. I believed that we should work with more kids who fit the traditional "at risk" description. What I have learned in the years after this initial rift is that, unfortunately, all of our young Black men are at risk in some capacity. A scholar could have a

perfect score on his standardized tests, have perfect attendance, and have never received a discipline referral, but still feel isolated in classes, still be subjected to societal injustice because of how he looks, and still have trouble finding his way. I took on my first mentee in 2011, a young man who scored off the charts on the math portion of his standardized test in the fifth grade, but was also filled with so much anger and rage that he told his teacher he was going to bring an AK-47 to his elementary school and shoot someone.

This young man had a father who was absent, a mother who was committed to him, did all that she could, but something was missing. He needed more than a mentor, or an academic advisor, he needed an intervention. I cannot take all of the credit and say that I singlehandedly turned this young man's life around, but I can say that I was there for him. He was, and still is, my responsibility. When it was time to pick out his classes for the upcoming school year, we did it together. When he had a basketball game, we were there together. When he was feeling as if he wasn't being treated fairly in school, we addressed the situation together. The road has been rocky at times, but I am very proud to say that this young man is now a junior at our local high school, is hovering around a 3.0 GPA, belongs to several clubs at his high school, has yet to have a discipline referral this school year, and is on track to attend college. Last summer, as a high school scholar, he came to the M-Cubed academy to assist with our middle school scholars.

Just as much as he has learned from me, I have learned from him. This young man and I, essentially, grew up together. While he was watching everything that I do, and my rise in the political landscape of our community, I knew that I had someone else that I was accountable for, and to whom I had to set an example for. As Vice Mayor, I have had the opportunity to meet many political dignitaries such as President Bill Clinton and the Governor of Virginia Terry McAuliffe. If I was meeting a political dignitary, my scholar

was with me. If I had a speech or a program, he was there with me; now we have another scholar tagging along. A particular visit to his middle school while he was in 7th grade stands out to me; it was customary for us to have lunch together once a month, but this visit was different. When I walked in the cafeteria, one of his friends asked "Is Wes Bellamy your dad? He always comes here, he always comes to our class, and he's always talking to you about doing right. That's what dads do." My scholar laughed and said he's not my dad, but he's like a dad. I was 26 at the time. I didn't realize the impact that this program was having on this young man, and other young men who were not in our program. My second mentee, who was younger, eventually started to see the impact of words on people, and ran for and won the class presidency of his middle school class, and is now the class president of his freshman high school class.

Local School Systems and the 100

When the 100 BMOCV was initially founded, it was under the auspice of Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS). The first chapter president and co-founder, Dr. L. Bernard Hairston, was the Executive Director for Community Engagement for ACPS, had access to all of the necessary data, and the support of the school division's superintendent, Dr. Pam Moran. The initial goal of M-Cubed mirrored the goal of the ACPS of addressing the achievement gap in mathematics by focusing on Black boys. ACPS was the primary partner in the beginning but after two years new partnerships were developed with Charlottesville City Schools (CCS). Parents, community stakeholders, and educators alike were beginning to question why we not working with CCS? Our main issue was capacity. While we were called the 100 BMOCV, there were only roughly 30 Brothers to work with all of the young men. We did not have the manpower to take on more students in the beginning. However, after internally discussing this issue, and ensuring that we had the proper systems in place to take on more students; we developed a partnership with CCS. Collaborating

with both school districts simultaneously had both benefits and challenges for a variety of reasons.

There is something amazing that happens when a little Black boy, regardless of where they are from, how much money their parents make, or what their interest are, sees an older Black man that they aspire to be like. This was one of our goals from the start, so figuring out how we make this happen for as many young Black boys and men in the area as possible was something that we knew we had to figure out. While doing so, we ran into a few challenges with the school districts. As aforementioned, we initially were a partner with ACPS, so we had access to all of the young men in the division district. As we began to expand and bring students from CCS into the program, we did not have someone internally working with CCS, it became a challenge to get the necessary data and information for the young men that we were working with. It is also to be noted, that although both ACPS and CCS are friendly, there is still an element of friendly competition between both districts. Since M-Cubed was initially seen as an ACPS program, there would sometimes be tension that led to some people feeling left out for certain opportunities, and on more than one occasion, the CCS students, staff, and administration questioning our commitment to the young men in their district. Simultaneously, in the first five years of M-Cubed, while creating and often fine-tuning M-Cubed, we were dealing with living in an area where professional Black men were transient. We often had brothers join the organization, make connections with students, and, because of culture of the Greater Charlottesville area, leave to move somewhere else where they felt more welcomed and in tune with the community. This presented another challenge, because we already didn't have a lot of brothers, and when two or three leave, you have to find new men who can step in and create connections with the young Black boys who desperately need us. While it may seem as if Black men openly and willingly want to mentor

Black boys, this is not always the case. For some men, it is difficult to mentor, make the commitment to travel to different schools to check on students, and/or make the necessary time commitment to provide the extra push that these students need. Lastly, the men in our organization are all volunteers. This creates a new challenge, because in order for one to commit, they have to do so because they truly want to. In some cases, that challenge is more than some can handle. Sometimes brothers fall short and others have to pick up the slack. This leads to some members of the organization having up to ten mentees throughout both CCS and ACPS. While this is not ideal, this is what we have to do because we are committed, and under no circumstance are we going to let a young man down. These are factors that often ACPS, CCS, and the community as a whole fail to realize. Yes, we were, and still are, providing incredible results, but the demand is also extremely high, and the workers are few. These challenges can sometimes feel overwhelming, but the benefits outweigh the challenges tenfold, so we continue to push.

The demand is high, the expectations are higher, and the community and school divisions don't quite understand what all it takes for us to work with the young men. However, even with all of the challenges, the benefits and rewards far exceed the trouble. Being that the 100 BMOCV now has its own 501(c)(3) non-profit status, the fact that I am now the Vice Mayor of the City of Charlottesville, and now one of our members is the CCS School Board Chair, the lines of communication between the 100 Black Men and CCS has greatly improved. We have also been able to show over time, that we are committed to the young men we work with in CCS. Now that our working relationship has improved, and we are not simply seen as an ACPS program, our impact in both school divisions has increased. One of the most powerful parts of M-Cubed, is the fact that we allow for Black boys from a variety of schools meet each other, connect and build with each other, and most importantly,

vow to be their brothers' keeper. They will be accountable for their brother, they will support their brother, they will encourage their brother, and they will be there for their brother. These Black boys have been described as the "Chocolate Chip" in their class cookie; often feel isolated, detached, and discouraged. In some cases, they begin to think that they are the only young man who looks like them that is "smart", or likes math. We create an environment in which we dispel this myth. We show the boys that you are not the only one, and more often than not, in a healthy way, this gets their competitive juices flowing. We see the self-esteem of these young men grow, we see their confidence rise, and we see them willing to try new and different things because they are comfortable. Having CCS and ACPS students together creates a dynamic unlike any other. Both rural, suburban, and urban Black boys all together learning math, pushing each other, and seeing older role models who they aspire to be like is akin to a Greater Charlottesville Utopia. Every year during the summer academy we bring back former M-Cubed students, now known as Scholars, and allow for them to discuss what they are currently doing, what impact M-Cubed had on them, and offer words of encouragement. Last year, we had eight young men come back to discuss how because of M-Cubed, they began to take Honors level math classes, and eventually went on to college. The look on the faces of our current M-Cubed students' faces was priceless. Every year we have seen more Black boys enter into high-level math classes in both ACPS and CCS. No, we are not anywhere close to where we want to be, but we do know that our program is working. And if for no other reason, this makes every headache, challenge, or difficult circumstance worth it. This benefit is the one that matters the most.

Discussion

It is clear that Wes engages in identity-affirming and identity-building engagements with his mentees. Wes affirms his mentees academic,

racial, and social identities by being highly involved in academics (picking out classes), unpacking situations of unfairness at school, and providing opportunities to engage in the community. We can imagine that a mentor like Wes might be part of his mentees' consciousness as they negotiate among issues of being cool, being smart, participation and non-participation in school, and race. As a cultural broker, Wes helps his mentee navigate crossing borders between the cultures of their community and the school. The cultures of school and community are not congruent for many Black boys. Consequently, the support of a mentor who is a cultural broker provides mentees with socially safe spaces to negotiate and unpack these spaces. From the mentees' perspectives, Wes demonstrates caring not only as an affect but as a means for shaping disposition, molding interwoven identities, and developing agency by helping them develop the behaviors and skills to negotiate the world.

Wes, a young man himself, is being mentored by men in the community. This provides a model for mentees that mentorship is life long and that men can be both mentors and mentees. As with the "Circle of Brotherhood," the mentees see peer influence as a vital aspect of social capital. That is, Wes' peers offer support, show encouragement, and display concerns for his well-being. The support, encouragement, and displays model for mentees one-way Black men support one another. These qualities of warmth and care are often missing in the narratives about Black men and boys. While Wes' narrative does not overtly use warmth and caring, we see the qualities of warmth and caring throughout the narratives.

Conclusion

Like many school and community partnerships, the 100 BMOCV and local school districts started with a common goal focused on academic achievement, specifically mathematics. However, programming of this partnership goes beyond a targeted focus on academic achievement to include a more holistic approach, infusing mentoring, rites of passage, college readiness, and identity development. School and community partnerships can contribute in important ways to increasing educational achievement, social, and emotional development among Black boys. The involvement of community organizations, such as 100 BMOCV, is essential in providing Black boys with mentoring and support for the development of social competencies and broadens their awareness of various college and career options. Such mentoring and support benefits communities because it translates into stronger and diversified community agents. Mentors, like Wes Bellamy, serve as cultural brokers and liaisons for Black boys and their families. That is, mentors can use their skills and capacities as sources of social capital to work with Black boys and their families so that they can negotiate social and educational conditions.

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Being and Becoming: Teacher Education, Praxis, and/in the Liberal Arts

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Introduction

A persistent analytical problem in educational research lies in the tendency to think of schools as bounded systems—systems that begin and end with the four walls of a school building. Schools, in fact, are very complex social systems that are all bound up in a "tangled web of practices" (Nespor, 1997). Schools, and other places dedicated to learning, connect to government (local, state, and federal), community, historical context, economic structure and shift, as well as the fluid formations of culture and identity. An attempt to understand educative practices—whether inside or outside the school proper—necessarily requires multiple levels of analysis. A critical notion of place and inquiry into the complex geographies of power and community are essential tools for coming to know how institutions like schools work (or don't). Such an approach combines social theory with qualitative methods in the hopes of new understandings of "the place where we hear the call of teaching" (Pinar, 2007, p. 42).

This article, however, joins those in this special issue in explicitly turning attention to those places outside (and yet, still connected to) the traditional school building. Coming from three separate research projects, the case studies here focus on youth and the ways in which they cultivate and reconfigure racialized spaces of power (Blaisdell, 2015, Rodriguez, 2017b). The cases highlight how immigrant girls make sense of autobiographical trauma in relation to their US schooling, how activist youth critique both structural inequalities and systemic racism, and how students re-negotiate their participation in a research project to explore, expand, and understand school and non-school spaces. Pulling these case studies together here represents a critical approach to understanding those "educative spaces" in a way that has both depth and a deep respect for the participants that live their lives within these "tangled web of practices."

Review of the Literature

Within much of educational research, youth cultures and scholarly treatment of them has held something of a marginal place; this is perhaps surprising given the resurgence of youth activism across the country in the last decade as neoliberal policies of privatization and its detrimental effects on communities of color persistently occur across the U.S (Ares, 2010; Kirshner, 2009, 2015; Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011; Poon & Cohen, 2012; Rodriguez, 2017a, 2017b). Tangled up in notions of delinquency, violence, and expansive consumer potential, *youth* hold a liminal position—"ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood" and the normative conceptions of children and youth that surround such categories (Rodriguez, 2016; Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998)—that changes and evolves in response to the social, cultural, and economic shifts taking place all around it. Aligned with the critique of positioning youth as delinquents in need of fixing, Fine and Weiss (1998) note how young working-class adults are often characterized and employed by political and cultural forces in search of scapegoats:

> [T]hey are displayed and dissected in the media as the cause of national problems. They are depicted as the *reason* for the rise in urban crime, as embodying the *necessity* for welfare reform, and of sitting at the *heart* of moral decay (p.1, *author's emphasis*).

Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998) refer to the increasing importance of the study of youth in the culture of late capitalism and characterize its fluid nature as the "dilemma of the postmodern childhood." Studies of the geographies of youth culture indicate that public space remains defined as adult space. Youth then struggle to create *youthspace* out of adult spaces and negotiation and resistance are common characteristics of these interactions. The ways in which youth strive for a sense of place, identity, and expression are varied and occur with varying levels of success (Breitbart, 1998).

Within the context of citizenship and participatory democracy, Kelly, Tuck & Wang (2014) suggest that instead of preparing youth for active citizenship, students need to interrogate how citizenship and democracy are culturally defined. Exploring contemporary youth movements where young people lead organizations provides educational opportunities that might begin in the classroom, but seek educational spaces outside school walls that re-envisions inequity in society. Patel (2013) draws upon Freire's (1970) work in a critically conscious internship project that encourages immigrant students to "systematically investigate and articulate their worlds in order to be able to act on them instead of being acted upon" (p. 106). Here, the students interrogate relationships between ability and intelligence in professional work settings, thus creating new constructions of how intelligence may be instructed and performed beyond school buildings. In addition, Valenzuela (1999) suggests American public schools racialize and alienate immigrant students and 'subtract' from their identity making and cultural resources. As Latino worldviews are often devalued in formal schooling, Latino immigrant youth find other means of borderland knowledge (see Elenas, 2006) and cultural wealth. Youth push beyond school boundaries and actively rethink how educational success and achievement is perceived through "bridging worlds" (Villenas, 2014, p. 222) for their parents and their communities by translating and advocating for educational rights, healthcare, and immigration.

The work of Greg Dimitriadis offers useful insight into the implications of attending to the ways youth interact with spatializing forces both in and out of school for educational research. In one example, *Friendship, Cliques, and Gangs: Young Black Men Coming of Age in America*, he notes the importance of multiple sites of interaction, informal educative spaces, and their inter-relations in the project of urban educational research. He states,

> Education, I found, was an emergent phenomenon for these youth, unfolding across numerous sites and settings with and in between multiple texts—all of which worked with each other in complex ways, difficult to predict a priori. Schools, I found, were only one part of this complex nexus—and perhaps a minor one at that. Most of the work most relevant in their lives took place in the cracks and crevices between such official organizations, in places discussed throughout, such as the community center. (Dimitriadis, 2003, p.102)

These "cracks and crevices" are what we will call *youthspace*. As such, we illustrate the tensions that youth endure as they resist and negotiate, as discussed above, adult-defined spaces that seek to reify them(selves?) as non-agentic. Instead, our cases demonstrate the powerful manner in which *youthspace* is generated through social interactions and a larger struggle for equity and justice. Each case in this article grapples with how minoritized youth claim spaces and resist places that deny full access to learning opportunities. Given that minoritized youth are often excluded from formal educational and policy conversations (Kirshner, 2009; 2015), we focus on the voices and lived experiences of youth to assert that young people are legitimate stakeholders in educational policy and practice, cultivating their own *youthspaces* of learning. We are interested in the ways in which racially

marginalized young people engage in youth learning places and create *youthspaces*. We define *youthspaces* as the material and social realities which shape educational experiences as well as the ways these forces are negotiated, reconfigured, and resisted. This includes context, school communities, demographics, and policies which inform *hidden*, subtextual messages; *null*, what is not explicitly taught; and the *official* curriculum and teaching and learning objectives named by institutions (Eisner, 1985). We define *youthspaces* as the learning spaces where youth are the driving force behind educational opportunities and reimaging the norms of what gets defined as teaching, learning, and school.

Notes on Method

Methodologically, the three cases presented here draw from diverse critical methodologies including critical ethnography (Carspeckan, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo 2004), feminist decolonial methodology (Anzaldua, 1987; Perez, 1999; Velinas, 2000, 2015; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008), and post-qualitative methods (Lather, 2013; Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013) to engage with youth about their educational experiences as a means for reimagining equity. We agree with Ares (2010) and Frink, Ares, Mukhodpadhyay, and Tsoumani (2009) who assert that youth are active agents in creating cultural practices and social spaces. Therefore, each 'case' expands images of how youth reclaim, reconfigure, and reimagine spaces that meet their educational needs and objectives in ways that help us as educators and educational researchers to reconceptualize meanings of educational opportunity.

To this end, each case addresses how young people engage in, reconfigure, and negotiate educative spaces on their own in the face of barriers and the current complex racialized traumas which take shape both inside and outside of schools (Alexander, 2010; Hill, 2016; King & Swartz, 2015; Skerrett, 2015; Strauss, 2016). We assert that this work requires re-imagining a future that places youths' needs and realities at the center of decision-making processes—a process rooted in a grammar of hope, open to possibilities and the resilience of young people (Gutiérrez, 2016). The key question explored through these cases is the following:

> In what ways can we learn from youth about creating equitable spaces inside and outside of schools?

Case One: Pressure to Achieve: Latina Adolescent Trauma Reinforced Through Schooling Practices

Case one is grounded in feminist decolonizing methodologies (Anzaldua, 1987; Canella & Manuelito, 2008 ; Parameswaran, R., 2008; Villenas, 2014) that acknowledge opportunities to explore the many contradictory positions (Elenes, 2006) of Latinas that further empowerment, transformation, and healing, and potentialities for new ways of knowing and theorizing spaces (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). Furthermore, this case examines emergent *youthspaces* of resistance shaped by the intricacies of Latina adolescent lives (Villenas, 2014) through their challenging of stereotypes and misconceptions reinforced within the confines of schools. Four undocumented, sixteen-year old Mexican girls participated in this study. We met for four hours over five consecutive Saturdays. Approximately ninety minutes each meeting was audio-recorded. The rest of the time were informal conversations pertaining to whatever they deemed important to talk about, which helped to build trust and rapport among the girls. The discussion topics for the audio-recorded part of our meetings included the girls' gendered experiences in schools and their communities, navigating both Latino and American culture, their experiences in the American educational system, and conceptualizations of mental health and feelings of depression. The girls also talked at length about the consistent and pervasive traumatization they experience as a result of their border-crossing journeys and living in the US undocumented.

This case examines the gendered experiences of Mexican, undocumented immigrant girls, trauma, and mental health in schools. The girls asked to participate in this study had self-identified symptoms of depression and were previously enrolled in a one-week camp sponsored by the local Latino Community Health Organization and the university. The camp focused on coping techniques for acculturative stress and building resiliency. Four girls were able to participate and we met at a research center located at the university. This study first and foremost focused on building trust, mutual support, and a sense of safety that was unattainable in the girls' school. This was particularly important because the girls had the opportunity to talk about issues they could never talk about at school. Schools were described by each of the girls as a place in which they had to hide a large part of who they were and had to prove their worth—"do our best," "prove them [teachers] wrong," and present an image of themselves that aligned with "what they want us to be." In contrast, by building authentic relationships with one another, they created a *youthspace* to express their vulnerabilities while recognizing their own strengths and resistance to colonizing educational practices.

Additionally, current research suggests that one influence of colonizing practices in schools is that is can render them as spaces which eliminate cultural heterogeneity and prioritize White, dominant cultural values and norms (Valenzuela, 2000). Historically, Mexican immigrants, in particular, are portrayed as "outsiders, aliens, enemies, or outlaws." Stereotypes arise and students are depicted as "at risk," "slow learners,"

and "illegal" (Urrieta Jr., 2014, p. 115). Undocumented immigrants are especially vulnerable in educational settings and feel pressure to conform to American values of success and achievement. Yet, they soon learn that despite their hard work and academic success, they are "barred from the opportunity to integrate legally, educationally, and economically in US society" (p. 327). Thus, undocumented youth who enter the country as young children[2] are socially inscribed into US society, are "educated in our schools, speak English (often with more ease than Spanish), envision their futures here, and powerfully internalize US values and expectations of merit" (p. 332). These colonizing educational practices have a long-lasting and persistent impact on undocumented Latina well-being, devaluing identity and wreaking havoc on confidence and well-being (Zayas and Pilat, 2008).

Consequently, the girls' experiences of crossing the border from Mexico into Texas and remaining undocumented in the United States are silenced within schools. As the girls hide among the "shadows,"[3] they leave out a large piece of themselves:

> They [teachers] don't understand how somebody can go through these things at such a young age. It takes a lot of bravery to even go through the pain that someone has to go through . . . So just to know that [if] you even manage to get all of your family together . . . it is the greatest memories you will ever have . . . no matter how hurtful they are . . . I think coming over here [what] we're still dealing with is we are still not legal.

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[2](2009) Gonzalez draws upon Rumnaut (2004) who uses the '1.5 generation' to describe immigrants who were born in Mexico and came to America as children (12 years old and younger). These young children are raised to believe they would find more opportunities than their parents and an American education would lead to more careers choices and better pay. However, as the 1.5 generation remains undocumented, expectations of success become feelings of

failure as they are a part of a "group that is culturally integrated but legally excluded (Gonzales, 2015, p. 6).

[3]One of the girls described the experience of being undocumented as "living in shadows." She described it as keeping a part of who she is from the rest of the world and literally hiding within the Latino community from fear of being arrested and/or deported.

For the first time in their lives, the girls talked about their border-crossing journeys outside of their immediate families. The girls embraced their vulnerabilities in which they openly acknowledged emotions of fear and anxiety, separation from loved ones, and verbal and sexual abuse. Freedom in sharing their stories did not just remain within the confines of our meetings. The girls attended the same high school but never interacted with one another. They described how the experience of sharing their stories bonded and connected them because they shared with one another "a piece of themselves" they could not share with other young people. One girl stated, "it changed us . . . we are stronger now than ever . . . We've all struggled to survive in a way that people in American just don't understand." Sharing their border-crossing experiences began outside of school walls, however the impact of this moment reconfigured their relationships within the school as a source of safety, transparency, support, and healing.

Additionally, while sharing their journeys, the girls described their experiences of being undocumented and negotiating contradictory identities as young Latinas (or, "as a young Latina" within the American educational system. They all expressed how they were unable to fully share themselves with other people, or let people "get too close," because they did not want anyone to know they were undocumented. One girl described keeping so much of her life hidden led to feelings of sadness and depression:

> I used to self-harm . . . Our scars that we have . . . It got me so depressed because I was treated differently . . . Because depression is something you don't know . . . it's after you're over it, and you think, oh my god, I really needed help at that time.

Further, feelings of depression are compounded not only by the silence of remaining undocumented, but the girls also talked about their difficulties in navigating multiple cultures, peer pressure, and high expectations for academic success that result in coping mechanisms that deflect feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem:

> I think it's really hard right now for young people because there are so many stress[es] at school and with friends. They push them to do or to act in different ways than they act at home, because they dress different, or they decide to have a religion, or they just decide not to be tolerant. Some [youth] may be bullied. And they don't realize it's a part of our culture, and our values.

Indeed, what may often be considered achievement in the American educational system can actually hinder Latina youth. Teachers, counselors, and other adults may see these girls as successful in assimilating to society because they do well in school. Yet, the girls keep virtually every aspect of who they are hidden from school and mental health concerns are often overlooked. For example, the girls initially described their relationships to education and schooling as:

> [Coming to the US] has given us a reason to work harder, to finish high school and go to college . . . to do better and reach my dreams . . . my parents suffered for us to have all that we have right now . . . the best I could give them is to do good in school.

It also became apparent that the desire (and pressure) to get good grades were firmly rooted within the sacrifices made by their families in coming to the US, attempting to dismantle stereotypes about the Latino community, and a contributing factor to mental health illnesses. One girl explained, "she came to study." In Mexico, "most kids quit school" and getting her education kept her away from the Mexican drug cartel that "will literally take young girls and put them into prostitution." This was her sole purpose since she arrived in the US. Focusing on academics, for her, was a way of ignoring

situations that were hard to think about or deal with.

Nonetheless, the girls found spaces to circumvent the pressure of school, both academically and socially, in our meetings, within their community, and their church. The girls all suggested these conversations could not happen within school walls, yet they carved out small moments of resistance and challenged misconceptions of Latinas within the school itself. As they negotiated and re-defined their identities with each other, the girls reiterated many times how important it was to have a safe space for talking about issues that are often silenced as a result of trauma, oppression, and stereotyping of the Latino community. Our meetings carved out "spaces of possibility" (Helfenbein, 2010) for growth and exploration that were not defined or categorized into pressured expectations of what they felt they should be sharing or achieving. Instead, what became most powerful were the relationships the girls developed in our meetings and further maintained before school, at lunch, and in the hallways. They described sharing their stories as "healthy," they are "stronger than what anybody else would believe," and "courageous." Yet, these young Latinas continually "fight to have the freedom offered here" while educational policies and procedures repeatedly marginalize and stigmatize immigrant youth, their families, and the community. Realistically, schools should be places that foster safety and build relationships for all of its students. However, feelings of fear, inferiority, and mistrust hinder any opportunity for Latina adolescents to explore and negotiate the ambiguous nature of their lives within the context of education and schooling. In contrast, this relational *youthspace* built upon trust collectively honors the courage, strength, fight, and resistance of the girls in the face of trauma and colonizing practices in education.

Case Two: "Our voices are here; we count"[4]

Using data from a two-year critical ethnography this case examines how minoritized youth activists fight for access to quality education and racial balance in selective enrollment schools in a southern context. The top school in the district (read: highest status and a multitude of resources) contained 16 African American students out of its 644 students, and minoritized youth activists in the city are concerned about this inequity given the lack of resources across the "regular" public schools. This youth-identified inequity led them to found an activist group and develop a plan for action to tackle the lack of diversity in the district's "best schools." They reflected upon current board policies related to the lack of diversity, planned events, and wrote op-ed articles for their respective high school newspapers—generating a *youthspace* that brought together youth from multiple high schools in the community.

The context for how youth learned of the racial imbalance at Brownview Magnet (pseudonym) occurred in January 2015 when a local news source published a "diversity chart" that showed that Brownview Magnet had less than one percent African American students, despite 46% of students in the district were African American. These numbers, along with the fact that the district does not actively recruit racial minorities or help them navigate admissions processes, convey that "choice" is an "educational delusion" (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013). These inequities compelled local youth to form an advocacy group and push for dialogue on the racial disparities and issues of "diversity" in Brownview (Rodriguez, 2017).

The larger study (Rodriguez, 2017b) utilized Omi and Winant's (2014) *racial formation*

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[4]This comment was uttered by a minoritized youth activist in Sophia's/author's study as he grabbed the microphone at local school board to plead for racial balance in the local selective enrollment schools and

to exploit the inequities and injustices that communities of color face in his district.

theory and specifically the notion *of racial projects* to explore how young people made sense of structural, symbolic racism in a historically segregated community in the south. The data from this critical ethnography revealed youth reflections on the lack of diversity in selective enrollment schools and the development of critical consciousness about racial imbalance. What was unique here was the ways in which youth did not feel it was sufficient to fight their principals or work within the confines of their school. Instead, youth formed their own group off school campus—named Youth Advocating for Diversity (Y.A.D.), built coalitions with other high school students, and came together monthly to reflect on the "diversity issues."

Two themes emerged in the production of the Y.A.D. space: (a) perceptions of the diversity climate in Brownview and (b) systemic inequality. Across the data, youth described acts of racial violence that contextualized the negative racial climate at selective enrollment schools in the district. During a Y.A.D. meeting youth described an incident where a "White student called a gay black student a gay N word." Another youth described an incident where the racial slur "Bindi" was directed at a student of Indian cultural background who "fell asleep and had a red blotch on his head from sleeping hard." When incidents like the ones described above happen, the schools are negligent to respond or address the issue, as one youth explained, "Usually nothing happens." Furthermore, when consequences for racial violence do occur, students feel they are at best inconsistent: "I know what teachers will say something instantly and which ones won't."

Youth believe the lack of diversity present at selective enrollment schools is to blame for the negative racial climate and acts of racial violence that are occurring. Youth urged the board to increase diversity at selective enrollment schools to foster respect for different cultures and in turn reduce instances of racial violence. As one youth responded, "If you are not exposed, or if you are convinced of your racial superiority, or if you

have no peers to shake that, then stuff like this happens." In this sense diversity becomes a sort of check and balance for racial prejudice. Improving the racial climate would be a step in the right direction for increasing diversity at selective enrollment schools by sending the message to marginalized youth that diversity is appreciated in the community and school. For example, during a Y.A.D.-organized diversity panel at Brownview Magnet, youth expressed that "a lot of people want to see some sort of teacher diversity training. We still have some teachers at my school, and at a lot of schools across the district, who need to really learn how to work with students of color."

Despite arguments from youth to increase diversity, the district fails to address racial disparity. Instead issues related to diversity and racial violence persist. Moreover, parents and youth indicated that a negative racial climate sends the message that diversity is not valued at selective enrollment schools. The data also highlights the ways in which minoritized youth are often deterred from even applying to selective enrollment schools and explains why minority students choose not to apply to selective enrollment schools. And if they do manage to enter a selective enrollment school, they are "forced out" through social isolation and a lack of belonging to the school, as one student noted:

> *"These systems are so big that they take on a life of their own."*

This quote connects to the second theme that emerged from the *youthspace* of Y.A.D. - the lack of diversity at selective enrollment schools can be explained by structural, systemic, and institutional racism. Youth expose how the admission process is a barrier for racial minorities. As one youth activist pointedly remarked, the admission process is "Jim Crow-esque." Youth described the admission process, and the curious arrangement of selective enrollment schools, as a system that designates educational winners and losers. In reference to

the competitive arrangement of the school system one youth made it clear that, "Here everybody wants a piece of the pie." Another said, echoing the same sentiment stated, "The adults who have arranged the pie to look like this are not helping you." Here, Y.A.D. members connect the imbalance of power embedded in the social arrangements of the school system and the ways in which the admission process continues to reproduce inequality.

Youth also identified systemic issues such as transportation, access to information, quality of schools, and tracking that make the admissions process of selective enrollment schools a mechanism for racial stratification. During a meeting, they reflected, "These issues need to be addressed because it's not that black children are not getting smarter." Speaking to additional structural barriers, youth illustrated the burden of transportation and the lack of access to information about the enrollment process as mechanisms that make it difficult for racial minorities to apply, be accepted into, and attend selective enrollment schools. For example, in BCSD, many selective enrollment or magnet schools are outside of the attendance zone where youth live. Thus, if a parent is unable to provide transportation for their child because of their financial situation enrollment in select schools is not an option.

In addition to lack of transportation, the nebulous admissions process is a factor that excludes racial minorities from attending selective enrollment schools. During the aforementioned diversity panel, it was asked how the admissions process was communicated to parents of color. One youth bluntly indicated, "It's not communicated," while another added, "I sorta applied to this school. I don't know how the admissions process worked." Another youth described that information about selective enrollment schools is only accessible to students who attend selective elementary schools—a "pipeline is created," according to Y.A.D. activists.

Along with transportation issues and accessing information, the data also indicated that BCSD is not providing an equal opportunity for all students to attend selective enrollment schools—lack of resources and preparedness at the "regular" public schools. Youth learned that children across the district lack access to quality schools that prepare them to attend selective enrollment schools, and that the district fails to invest in all schools equally. One youth explained that it's like "feeding communities that are full and starving the ones that are not." This comment speaks to how youth understand that the most resources are poured into selective schools while non-selective schools are not invested in as much by the district.

The *youthspace* of Y.A.D. emerged after a long period of racial violence and inequity in Brownview. Despite the district's attempt to perpetuate a colorblind discourse of diversity and "choice," Y.A.D. members fought to force a conversation about the systemic racism and inequity that a choice discourse enables. Uniquely positioning themselves in adult-governed, affluent, white spaces of power such as the board meetings and offices of the district, Y.A.D. members reconfigured these spaces by agitating almost weekly for the 2015-2016 school year—cultivating a sustained dialogue that had not been present in Brownview prior to Y.A.D.

Case Three: Blurring Boundaries: Negotiating Access to Off-Limits Spaces

This work contends, along with some other scholars (e.g., Butler, 1999; Barad, 2003), that subjectivity is performative. It is this understanding that informs this third case, which focuses on the messages that schools send to students about their gender identities and how to enact them. As part of thinking through a material, feminist onto-epistemology, a post-qualitative framework was used (e.g., Lather, 2013; Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013) in an attempt to understand the material school entanglement and the ways it influences the students' subjectivities.

A post-qualitative framework dictates an emergent design, so the work begins with the method of native photography, understanding that it might change over time depending on the direction that participants wanted to take. In native photography, participants take photographs in their environment around a given topic (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996). In this case, participants were asked to take pictures of the messages that the school sends them about who to be and how to act. The meetings with the participants took place after school, when the school was almost empty, and the students had the freedom to roam throughout the building with their cameras. Participants included five boys and four girls in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades at a K-12 charter school in a Midwestern city.

The initial research plan involved giving students cameras and then providing multiple sessions in which the students could take photographs and select photographs for printing. This was followed with discussion sessions in which the participants would examine and talk about the photos they had taken. What emerged as the study progressed was unexpected. The students took fewer and fewer photographs as the sessions went on, and instead they were using the cameras as access keys to get into different parts of the building. At the start of every picture taking session, students were asked what they were planning on taking pictures of that day that they hadn't taken pictures of yet. It took a number of similar conversations before I began to understand the pattern what was happening. I had a number of exchanges in the same vein as this:

Me: What do you want to get a picture of that you haven't gotten yet?
6th grader: I want to get a photo of the art room
Me: Is art your favorite class?
6th grader: No. We don't take art in 6th grade.
Me: Oh. Was it your favorite class last year?
6th grader: No.

I was initially confused by this exchange. Why would a room that a student didn't go in be important to their understanding of themselves in the school entanglement? Then, the 5th graders expressed an interest in taking pictures of the music room, which is a class that they don't have. The fourth graders said that they wanted to take pictures of the "black top" where the older students have recess, while the older students wanted to go to the playground, which they don't have access to. All of the students wanted to get over to the high school side of the building to take pictures there (special permission from the administration was needed for this, as even the cameras were not sufficient keys for gaining access to that side of the building). Additionally, everyone reported that they wanted to go take pictures in both the Starbucks and Walmart that can be seen from inside the school but which they never go to (none of the participants in my study live close to the school).

When I pulled their pictures up on computers, I expected to see photos of them in these forbidden spaces. However, they did not take many pictures in the spaces. They just wanted to be in the spaces that they did not normally have access to, and the cameras gave them the opportunity to do so. A couple of things became clear from this. The first is that students don't all have universal access to all of the spaces within a school building. The participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have "freedom" to move around the school and access spaces that are normally denied to them. During the school day, the movements of their bodies are closely regulated and disciplined. These restrictions, however, do not change the boundaries of the school entanglement for these students.

Additionally, those forbidden spaces, both the ones inside and outside of the school, are a part of what it means to be a student at that school, at least for my participants. The school entanglement of their lived experiences is not limited to the spaces they are allowed to inhabit on a daily basis. So, spaces that are in school and

those that might be considered "non-educative spaces" exist together for the students within their entanglement, even if they don't inhabit those spaces.

In understanding the school entanglement this way, thinking about non-educative spaces becomes blurrier, as the entanglement that the students endure are a part of them all the time, even when they are away from school spaces. This point is not to say that there are not benefits to meeting with students in new and different spaces, only that the notion of out of school spaces may be more complex than it is often thought to be.

Concluding Thoughts:

These three cases point to the ways in which *youthspaces* are complex sites of negotiation, meaning-making, and identity work. Whether creating a space for Latina students to explore their own autobiographies and connections to their sense of self, creating an activist space outside of school in order for students to critique the structures of their schooling experience, or students negotiating their participation in a research project to explore their entanglement with forbidden or out of reach school spaces, the youth here provide an opportunity for inquiry into the complex ways that youth are both constrained by spatial constructions and the ways in which they negotiate, reconfigure, and resist those same constraints. As an attempt to put these three separate research projects in conversation with each other, our hope in this article is to consider a broader set of themes that thread through this collection of work. The value of looking at out of school spaces or being open to the efforts of youth pushing back on the ways in which those spaces are bounded lies in exploring the complexity of youth and their agentic potential. We urge here that youth-led and cultivated spaces, such as those uncovered through critical, post-qualitative analyses here, provide powerful antidotes to hegemonic, colorblind school spaces that fail to account for youth agency and meaning-making around issues of social inequality. In thinking of *youthspace* together, we present a set of examples that both take the nuanced nature of youth and their negotiation of space and place seriously. Indeed, it was within the "cracks and crevices" of *youthspace*, we see entanglement, agency, and trauma; we see how "spaces speak," "spaces leak," and also the potential in (for?) "spaces of possibility" (Helfenbein, 2010).

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Legends of Oglethorpe: Moving toward *A People's History*[5]

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Introduction

Legends of Oglethorpe: Moving Toward A People's History

Legends of Oglethorpe is a two-day living history event designed as a local economic development effort to bring visitors to Lexington, Georgia, as well as to engage people in Oglethorpe County's history through entertaining portrayals of famous and not-so famous people who lived and worked in the county during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. The idea for *Legends of Oglethorpe* started with Matt (a pseudonym), one of the owners of a garden center/landscape business known regionally for quality native plants. Resembling a finely designed botanical garden rather than what one might imagine a garden center to be, the business had recently been designated an AgriTourism site. Matt's intent was to bring together interested community members to develop an annual event that would integrate the rich history of the city and county with revitalization and economic development efforts as a way to increase tourism.

In this paper, I reflect on my own involvement in an activity where historical accounts moved outside the formal, traditional social studies curriculum into an entertaining, educational community event. I describe my role in the event as well as the successes and challenges of this work. My writing here reflects my views and experiences in working within this particular community effort rather than those of others in the group, although I have tried to fairly represent the process and results of the event.

With roots in a white working class community in the northeast, after numerous career and educational moves across the United States, my first experience of living in the south began in 1999. When I accepted a position at the University of Georgia in 1999, I moved with my partner to Lexington, where I became immersed in Southern life in a rural, small town. By way of context, Lexington, Georgia is a small town, population 224, that serves as the county seat for Oglethorpe County, a large, agricultural county in northeast Georgia. The town is 75% white and 23.7% African American, .9% reporting two or more races, and .4% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (City-Data.com, 2014). The estimated median household incoming for 2015 was $32,273.

Established in 1793 just five years after Georgia was granted statehood, Lexington was a thriving center of government and commerce and expected to become the capital of Georgia. Due to a variety of reasons including the development of Milledgeville to the south which became the first capital (later moved to Atlanta), and with the University of Georgia in Athens just eighteen miles away, Lexington has stayed much the same as it was in the early 1800s. Numerous state governors, legislators, judges, and national political leaders were born, raised, and educated in Lexington. Meson Academy, a celebrated school for boys, and later girls, prepared citizens for influential political and professional careers. The town has long celebrated its famous men including Joseph Henry Lumpkin, first chief justice of Georgia's Supreme Court; Georgia's

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[5]Title adapted from Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980). NY: Harper Collins.

34th governor, George Gilmer; and William Harris Crawford, US Secretary of War, Secretary of Treasury, ambassador to France, and candidate for U.S. president in 1824. In 1977, through the efforts of a group of people dedicated to celebrate and preserve the beautiful 18th and 19th century homes and historic courthouse, the town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Unlike those early beginnings, Lexington is no longer a bustling commercial center. The downtown three-block long business sector surrounds a newly renovated 19th century brick county courthouse. With the exception of a few struggling antique stores, many of the storefronts are empty, in need of repair, and owned by absentee landlords. Like many other southern towns, the history of race and gender relations is clearly evident today. Lexington remains largely segregated with a small African Americans community in tact where earlier generations of their families lived and worked for the town's business and professional class. Since its inception in 1793, the governance and leadership of the town has been maintained by white men. Only in the past few years have white women and gay community members been appointed or elected to key roles in the city council, the downtown development authority, and other leadership roles in the community and surrounding county.

Becoming Involved in Legends of Oglethorpe

For the first ten or so years we lived in Lexington, my partner and I focused on our work at the university, restoring our historic home, establishing our garden, and enjoying our pets. We were acquainted with neighbors, but not involved in the community. Like other rural towns today, Lexington residents have a renewed interest in rebuilding a thriving downtown. In 2011, to support this effort, a group with the approval of the city council, established a downtown development authority. I served on this board and through other board members heard about Matt's *Legends of Oglethorpe* project. Interested, I tagged along to see what it was

about. I was not an invited member of the initial group, but as Matt saw my willingness to help out with research and writing, quickly became part of the steering committee. During this same timeframe, I had become involved in writing fiction, had attended numerous fiction writing workshops, and was part of a weekly fiction writers' group. I thought working with the *Legends of Oglethorpe* group might be an interesting way to engage my research skills, interest in history, and fledging fiction writing efforts. In addition, as a social foundations educator, I hoped to be able to work in collaboration with others toward building relationships across diverse communities. In the following sections, I detail the preparation for *Legends of Oglethorpe*, describing the event itself. Next, I provide a description of the steering committee process in the selection of characters across three years moving from a focus on "famous white men" to a broader, more diverse selection of individuals who contributed to the history of the area—those with little or no written histories. In these sections I include examples of scripts to give readers a sense of both the characters and how we portrayed them to our audiences. I conclude with reflections on my involvement with Legends as well as our community's next steps.

Preparations for Legends of Oglethorpe

In January 2013, Matt called together a steering committee of community leaders from the county Chamber of Commerce, city Council, the county historic society, and the downtown development authority as well as other interested community members. The committee included eight men and six women, all white and, with the exception of two individuals, college educated. While four had roots in the county, the rest moved to the county at some point in their lives from other communities, many outside the south. All steering committee members were in their 50s and 60s. Political views among the group ranged from far right to far left. As a predominantly Republican county, most members were Republican. I was one of the few

left-leaning Democrats. While not explicitly addressed in conversations, this diversity of political perspectives was reflected in the different ways people viewed history and whose history was to be portrayed in *Legends of Oglethorpe*.

Preparations were ongoing throughout that spring for the event scheduled for the fourth weekend in October. With much to be accomplished to create and launch *Legends*, the steering committee held weekly and biweekly meetings to coordinate all aspects from organizing the overall structure and schedule, establishing a system for selling tickets, marketing materials and strategies, organizing community volunteers, as well as conducting the research and creative aspects of the event including scriptwriting, costuming, working with actors, and creating sets. The group operated on a consensus basis with everyone agreeing on key decisions and strategies. My primary role involved the historical research and scriptwriting for each of the selected characters as well as assisting with securing actors and working with the rehearsals for the event. The actual event consisted of five shows –- three on Saturday and two on Sunday. Volunteer docents, local high school students, lead each group of 12-15 visitors to the nine featured characters in full costume placed strategically around the garden in sets appropriate to the particular character. At the ringing of a bell, actors presented their characters in a well-honed, well- rehearsed six-minute script, then repeated their stories again and again for nine times as each group of visitors moved from one character to the next. The proceeds from the event were donated to support local historical building preservation projects.

Selecting the Characters

One of the early decisions of the steering committee was to identify which of many local historical characters to feature at the first year of *Legends*. The initial effort was to highlight the famous people—the celebrated governors and other politicians known on a state and national

level whose stories were well known to the local community. The actual section of characters for *Legend*s was a source of debate and discussions in 2013 among the steering committee with the final selection being primarily the famous white men of Oglethorpe County (see Table 1 below).

Table 1.1: Legends of Oglethorpe Characters, 2013, 2014, and 2015

2013 Characters	Time Period	Description
Major Ferdinand Phinizy	~1761-1818	Italian immigrant, fought in American Revolution, successful merchant, landowner
Meriwether Lewis	1774-1809	Explorer, writer
William Henry Crawford	1772-1834	Lawyer, politician, judge, ambassador to France, US Secretary of War and Secretary of Treasury
George Rockingham Gilmer	1858-1859	Georgia Governor, US Congressman
James Monroe Smith	1839-1915	Confederate solder, wealthy landowner, farmer
Francis Meson	1761-1806	Irish teachers and successful merchant
Thomas Goulding	1786-1848	Revered, Beth-Salem Presbyterian Church, Lexington
Patsy Mulligan	~1720-early 1800s	Cherokee woman who showed county commissioners best site to build courthouse
Susie Platt	1851-1897	Daughter of wealthy merchant
2014 Characters		
George Matthews	1739-1812	Continental Army officer; Georgia governor
Joseph Henry Lumpkin	1799-1867	Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia
Stephen Upson	1783-1824	Lawyer, Georgia General Assembly (1821-233), farmer
Lindsey Durham	1789-1859	Physician known for herbal remedies
Thomas B. Moss	1823- 1898	Educator and mapmaker, Meson Academy, Lexington
Pearl Aycock	1884-1977	Farmer, laborer known for building wire bridge across Oconee River
Washington W. King	1843 - ~ 1880	Well known covered bridge builder, son of freed slave
Augusta (Gussie) Reese	1888-1975	Mistress, White Oak Plantation
Esther Caldwell Finley	1722-1817	Principal of girls' school, Cherokee Corner; wife of Rev. Doctor Robert Finley, 1817 president of Franklin College (UGA)
2015 Characters:		
William Bartram	1739-1823	Naturalist, explorer
Karenhappuch "Happy" Hendon Olive	1760-1849	Frontier woman, founding member of Cloud's Creek Church
James Hay	1770s -1805	First surveyor, Lexington, GA
Jack Bell	1799 -1883	Slave; representative to GA Constitutional Convention, 1868
Lewis Jared Dupree	1829 -	Wealthy investor, merchant
Peter Bisson	1839-1909	Granite worker
Parrolee Crowe Arnold		Sergeant, Women's Army Corps, WWII
James Grady Johnson AKA Crazy Luke Graham	1940-2006	Professional wrestler

I was joined by several others, primarily the women in the group, who pushed for a more diverse, inclusive set of characters to show the lives of ordinary people, including women and people of color. In these conversations, the focus was on existing written histories available so that we could "accurately" portray selected characters. Long-time residents – those born and raised in Lexington and the surrounding county—learned this history in their own schooling and could help with the research for those famous men. At the end of the process, the selection that first year

consisted primarily of famous Lexington men along with two women: Susie Platt, the daughter of a wealthy merchant who told the story of sending Confederate soldiers off to war with a flag sewn by the women of the town and Patsy Mulligan, a Cherokee Indian woman mentioned briefly in Lena Wise's *The Story of Oglethorpe* as the individual responsible for pointing the first county commissioners toward the best site to construct the public square and courthouse in 1797. This latter selection of Patsy Mulligan was met with challenges of a lack of historical evidence, that the Cherokees did not live as far south as Lexington (they did), and some questioned her last name as not being Cherokee. Several of us saw the potential for creating Patsy Mulligan's character. Determined to use the one sentence in Lena Wise's book along with secondary sources including Mooney's (1891/1992) *History, myths, and sacred formulas of the Cherokees* to show the extent of the Cherokee nation living in Lexington in the 18th century, we were able to craft a plausible story. It took research, pressure, and persistence to gain consensus on including Patsy as a character. My partner whose grandmother was described as a "full blooded Cherokee" made a most convincing Patsy Mulligan. Since that time, Patsy has become an accepted part of the local lore around the founding of Lexington in 1793. What follows is a partial script set in 1810 featuring Patsy Mulligan:

Osiyo. Hello. My name is Patsy Mulligan, born of the Lower Cherokees. We were farmers and hunters who traveled down from the northern mountains when all these lands belonged to Indian peoples. The Cherokee lived on lands the settlers called South Carolina, north to Kentucky and Tennessee. They lived south of Lexington, then westward across Georgia all the way to Alabama. These beautiful lands were our home. Our hunting grounds --full of deer, fox, beaver, and bear. The rich soil grew much food for our families. We kept a fine garden with sunflowers, corn, beans, squash, gourds, and a bit of tobacco. I collected grapes, blackberries, persimmons, chestnuts, hickory nuts, and smilax roots in these woods.

Back then, people travelled easily from place to place under the tall trees. My grandmother told me of the times long ago when people came to trade. She told of the strange and beautiful headpieces Seminoles from the south brought for trading. When I was a young girl growing up, white trappers came for the plentiful game.

More and more settlers moved into Georgia. By 1790 there were so many settlers in Wilkes County, it became too much for one County to handle, so they split off land for Elbert and Oglethorpe counties in 1793. Those settlers decided they needed a courthouse to sort out all their disputes. There always seems to be a lot of disputes that need settling. So many fusses and fights in these parts.

Why, I remember the great argument about where to put the courthouse. The people in the east part of the county wanted to have the courthouse near where they lived. The people in the west side of the county wanted it near them. Goodness, the sites were only two mile apart! Still, the five county commissioners couldn't decide what to do. Not much different from today in 1810 if you ask me.

Nobody could agree and in the meantime, the judges held court over yonder at the Howard's house. When it was court day, people came from miles around and without a proper courthouse, the judges couldn't tell the people involved in the cases from the jury and the jury from the crowd. The jury had to go out to the woods to make up their minds in all kind of weather. Rainy weather wasn't nearly as bad as being abused by people on either side of the dispute. People on the jury complained to the judge. Well, after three years of arguing about where to put the courthouse, old Judge Talliaferro got mad. He told those county commissioners to choose a place close to the center of the county with a good building site and water supply.

That's how I got involved. Well those commissioners came on down to Troublesome Creek to see me about where to find the best spring in the middle of the county, so I showed them my little spring. One took a drink, then another and another until they all decided this was the sweetest spring around. On the spot, they decided that was where they were going to build the new courthouse. Once the courthouse got started, they began surveying all the land and laying

*out lots for people to buy and named the town
Lexington.*

   *I've seen a lot of change in my lifetime. Now I
near the end of my journey. I've walked in the world of
the Cherokee and the world of the white settlers. I've
seen times of conflict between the Cherokee and settlers
and times of peace. My eyes have grown dim, but my
inner vision becomes stronger. I pray for peace among
all people in this my beautiful, beloved homeland. Do-
da-da-go-hv. Until we meet again.*

   The portrayal of Patsy Mulligan in this
script cannot be considered radical, but engaged
people in thinking about the region before white
settlers pushed indigenous peoples off their lands
and succeeded in gently poking fun at the ways
settlers approached individual land ownership and
governance.

   The 2013 *Legends* brought hundreds of local
and regional visitors to Lexington and received
positive reviews from those who attended the
show. When planning began for the 2014 *Legends*,
conversations within the steering committee
focused on the lack of participation, both in the
audience and volunteers, of Lexington's African
American community. We discussed ways to
include more diverse characters rather than
relying on the famous, historically well
documented individuals. Several steering
committee members did additional research and
brought forth possibilities for other characters
including Washington W. King, son of a freed
slave who was educated as an architect in Ohio
and known for his skills in building covered
bridges all over the southeast, including one in
our county. We agreed on another bridge
builder, Pearl Aycock, a local man known for his
skills in growing vegetables and for figuring out
how to single handedly build a wire bridge across
the Oconee River. Two other lesser known
individuals, Thomas Moss, a local respected
educator and mapmaker, and Dr. Lindsey
Durham, an early physician who experimented
with herbal *receipts* or remedies, were added as
characters. Two women were included Augusta
(Gussie) Reese and Esther Caldwell Finley, both
of whom challenged traditional women's roles

and led unconventional lives for their times. For
the second year, along with these six lesser-
known and more diverse characters, we featured
three white male leaders (George Matthews,
Joseph Lumpkin, and Stephen Upson).

   As a result of this diversity of 2014
characters, *Legends* attracted the attention of the
local African American community which
resulted in a much more diverse group of
volunteers as well as visitors for the event. When
planning for 2015 *Legends of Oglethorpe* began, the
conversation within the steering committee had
changed considerably with most everyone
expressing the desire to feature characters who
were women, African Americans, and ordinary
workers (or, "with most everyone expressing the
desire to feature women, African Americans, and
ordinary workers as characters."). In that year,
only one of the characters, Lewis Dupree, was a
wealthy merchant/investor. Others included
William Bartram, a naturalist and explorer who
documented the early landscape in Georgia in the
18th century. Three other men—Peter Bisson,
James Hay, and Crazy Luke Graham were all
working class men whose history lived in a few
short lines in local newspapers or court records.
In addition, we featured two women, again with
little recorded history, Karenhappuch (Happy)
Hendon Olive, a frontier woman who lived in the
18th century, and Parrolee Crowe Arnold, one of
the first women to serve in the World War II
Women's Army Corps who later demanded her
rightful place in the local then men's only
organization of veterans. The final character was
one who engendered much discussion and
debate. Local folklore passed down the story of
Jack Bell, a freed slave, said to be buried in the
white section of the Presbyterian Church
Cemetery due to his unlikely role as a spy for the
Confederacy in the Civil War, (sometimes still
referred to as the War of Northern Aggression
among some Southern circles). Relying solely on
a brief obituary in the local weekly newspaper
from 1883, we constructed a more nuanced
narrative playing with and offering a

contradictory, and humorous version of the folktale.

To give readers a sense of these characters and their scripts, what follows is a 2014 partial script of Washington W. King (1843 – 1880s), a free African American bridge builder who grew up and lived his life in Georgia and Alabama:

My daddy was born in South Carolina in 1807, a slave of mixed race: African, European, and Catawba Indian. He looked more Indian that anything else. Early on, he was taught to read, write, as well as the skills of carpentry and mechanics. In 1924, he worked on the construction of a bridge over the Pee Dee River in South Carolina.

When his master died in 1830, he was sold to Mr. John Godwin, a contractor who also worked on the Pee Dee Bridge and who specialized in building houses and covered bridges. My daddy worked right alongside Mr. Godwin and learned the building trade. Mr. Godwin saw Daddy's talents and in the 1830s sent him to up to Oberlin College in Ohio to study architecture, the first college in the U.S. to open its doors to African Americans. When he came back, he and Mr. Godwin built major bridges all over the south. They also built forty cotton warehouses in Apalachicola, Florida in 1834, then built courthouses in Georgia and Alabama.

By that time, Horace had met France Gould Thomas, a free woman of color in Alabama. I believe Mr. Godwin probably didn't much believe in slavery since he allowed Horace and Frances to be married and because she was free, any children they had would be born free. I was born in 1843, the first of five children – four of us boys, and my little sister, Annie Elizabeth.

In 1846, John Godwin faced financial trouble. He was a good builder, but maybe not as good with finances. Men offered him as much as $6000 to buy my daddy, the talented builder. Instead, my daddy, who had been earning money all along from his trade, used his earnings to buy his freedom. John Godwin petitioned the Alabama legislature to free Horace King and sure enough that body passed a special law in 1846 that not only gave him his freedom but exempted him from a law requiring freed slaves to leave the state within a year. Even after he was freed, daddy and John Godwin worked on building projects and remained close friends.

Shortly after that, the Alabama State Capitol burned and Daddy was hired to construct the framework of the new building and to design and build double spiral entry staircases. He used his bridge building techniques to cantilever the stairs' support beams so that they appeared to float without any central support. He was proud of that grand staircase.

In 1855, Daddy partnered with two other men to build Moore's Bridge over the Chattahoochee near Carrolton, Georgia. Instead of pay, he took a one-third interest in the bridge and moved his family to land near the end of the bridge where they farmed and made a steady income collecting bridge tolls.

Daddy trained all of four of his sons to build bridges and when we were old enough we started the King Brothers Bridge Company. As oldest, I was the head of the company. That was right about the time of the Civil War and as you all know, the Union Army came down here and destroyed the bridges and railroad lines in the South. Many of my daddy's bridges were destroyed by that army, but after the war, all that destruction turned out to help the new King Brothers Bridge Company. Our bridges were known far and wide to be the best. In fact, one bridge we built over the Chattahoochee River north of West Point stood until the 1980s. When the department of transportation wanted to replace the bridge, they tried to demolish it but failed! Finally, they had to burn that bridge down.

In 1885, I received a contract to build a bridge across the South fork of the Broad river near the border of Madison and Oglethorpe counties. This bridge, known as Watson Mill Bridge, was built so workers could cross over to the Watson grist mill. It sits above rocky shoals that form a fall and has the longest span of any existing wooden bridge in Georgia, at 228 feet. I used the same design my daddy used in his bridges called a called a town lattice truss system. It has a lot of small close diagonal elements that form a lattice, all held tight together with wooden pins. That bridge stands strong to this day.

It took quite a while to find an actor willing to play Washington W. King, but working with the African American community, we invited a pastor of one of the local Baptist churches to participate. When he read Washington W. King's

script portraying a talented, educated free man born before the Civil War, he readily agreed to take on this role and has continued working with us on subsequent *Legends* productions.

Writing the Characters

The actual writing of the characters changed over the course of the three years of the event. In the planning process for the 2013 *Legends*, the steering committee asked members of the county historical society to help with the research. Once the steering committee agreed on the cast of characters, individuals within that group volunteered to research one character each and shared that research at a subsequent meeting of that group. Describing the lives and accomplishments of each of these characters, the members enjoyed sharing what they had found, then gave whatever historical documents they found to the script writers. I asked several members of my fiction writing group to take on the task of writing the scripts for the nine chosen characters. The research provided by the members of the historical society was a good start, but we quickly found we needed more information so went off to find other reliable sources in the UGA Special Collections Libraries, local county court records and old newspaper accounts. As a writer, new to this genre, I found the structure both challenging and exciting. For those characters with extensive histories --our famous men-- the challenge was to select a few interesting narratives, avoiding long accounts of dates and accomplishments, and to present these men as real people with complex lives. For those with little or no written histories, as was the case with Patsy Mulligan, we relied on secondary sources focused on the context of the place during that particular time period and what could have occurred. For Patsy Mulligan, we began with that one sentence in a county history written for high school students, and expanded that into a larger narrative using court records from the inferior court in the 1790s. The real challenge for each of these scripts was to present brief coherent narratives to engage our audience in both the

history of Lexington and Oglethorpe County while entertaining them with interesting, memorable stories. For me and others in the group, an additional challenge was to include characters often absence from more traditional history they had learned in school—a people's history.

As the drafts were finished, I took them to steering committee meetings to be read aloud for feedback, suggestions, and in most cases shortening. Each script had to be exactly six minutes to fit the structure of the event and keep everything moving smoothly. On the first read of each script steering committee members gave (painfully) honest feedback about what worked and didn't work, what to cut, and asked many questions about the accuracy of details within the scripts. I found it challenging to have our scripts critiqued in this public way, but I came to learn how scriptwriting is a collaborative, iterative process with authors working with audiences and actors to refine and develop the scripts. In subsequent years, at the request of the historic society's chair, the steering committee moved away from inviting members of that group to initiate research for the characters, although they played key roles in providing feedback on the written scripts as they progressed. I learned to try out scripts earlier to see what stories worked and didn't before getting them to a more polished form. After each script was critiqued, rewritten, and critiqued again, it was ready to share with actors for them to learn. Through our work with actors, the way they interpreted the character shaped the final script, with revisions ongoing well into September before the October event. After three years in script writing, I now have a good sense of how to take historical documents, secondary sources, and creative insights to develop narratives reflecting the record as well as educating and entertaining a wide range of visitors to our *Legends of Oglethorpe*.

Conclusions

As I reflect back on our experiences in creating the Legends of Oglethorpe, I am struck

by our community's ability to work together across many levels of difference – educational and social class backgrounds, political beliefs and values, age, gender, race, and ethnicity – to build a successful event that drew hundreds of visitors to our small town for three years. What began as a celebration of famous white men became more inclusive of "a people's history" as it highlighted the stories of everyday people –women, working class people, and people of color in both its historic characters, in the committee and volunteers who helped to create the event, and in the visitors who came to see *Legends*. The overall goal of *Legends* was to bring people to our community for local economic development and to entertain a broad audience. As a result, stress was placed on avoiding controversial aspects of local history and emphasizing the entertainment value. However, through our choice of characters and through showing their complexities and abilities to confront social norms within each one's sociocultural and political context, we are moving closer toward a people's history within the context of our small community. The level of participation in planning the event grew as its success grew. The African American community became involved as they saw African American community members involved in the production of the show. From no participation of the African American community in 2013 to many people participating as both visitors and volunteers in 2016, we witnessed this change.

Legends became a well-known event for our community drawing visitors from further away each year. We certainly faced challenges in taking on such a big event with a small steering committee, but with a commitment to produce a high-quality event, we managed to disperse the work and accomplish all necessary tasks to pull it off. After the first year, we had a good structure in place, enthusiastic, community-based actors committed to the show, talented people who could design authentic period costumes, and creative set designers able to develop beautiful garden-based backgrounds for each character's story to be told. In 2016, we paused to take a break from *Legends*, as members of the steering committee took on key leadership roles as the city's mayor, city council members, and downtown development members. Plans are in place to produce the show again in 2017 moving it under the auspices of the downtown development authority and setting it in our downtown historic district. The goal is to continue to share the stories of men and women from different centuries, backgrounds, and walks of life and to involve our local community as well as visitors from around the region. Lexington, and the surrounding county, have a rich and varied history to further explore. Through the Legends of Oglethorpe, we can educate outside of the building, sharing the histories and contributions of individuals as a way to reflect on our own histories, lives, and contributions today.

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Pathways toward Collaboration through Program Evaluation in Education

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Program evaluation can present unique opportunities for university professors in education to engage "outside" the traditional boundaries of academia. This work can encourage collaborative partnerships with communities and organizations and can also help professors to ground theory in practice. The term "collaboration" is not used in a colloquial sense here – rather, it refers to a particular stance toward and framework for working with others beyond the walls of one's own university building.

Collaboration – particularly in regard to program evaluation in education – refers to the working and listening relationship taken up by program stakeholders and evaluators. Within this relationship exists the assumption that the distribution of knowledge, power, and agency is shared. This will be discussed in further detail below, but all parties involved in the program must feel that the evaluator is trusted enough to *tell their story*. To pursue collaboration at all is a situated stance, where involved parties are open to listening, and to considering multiple perspectives. In building trusting collaborative relationships, there must always be room for dialogue and deliberation; there is rarely a singular interpretation of program data, and particular effort must be made to understand findings through multiple lenses. Thus, the work of collaborative program evaluation in education involves keen methodological knowledge, alongside the ability to build and nurture meaningful relationships. In this paper, I use my own evaluation experience to further illustrate this stance on collaboration in program evaluation. Relationships are not only important between university-based program stakeholders, but also with larger organizational entities, and with other professors who take up evaluation studies. Further, it is necessary to model this collaborative stance toward evaluation for novice researchers.

As a Ph.D. student in education, I was apprenticed into the work of program evaluation by my advisor, through participation on a number of program evaluation studies. Practically speaking, this apprenticeship model allowed me to learn and practice qualitative data collection and analysis – particularly in regard to ethnographic observations, structured and semi-structured interviewing (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011), and participant observation (Spradley, 1980). In subsequent evaluations, I was also given the opportunity to practice participant recruitment, evaluation design, data management, and team analysis. Most importantly, however, my mentorship into evaluation involved deep and nuanced discussion on what it means to listen deeply, and consider my own identity and position in relation to the program and program stakeholders. I was also encouraged to consider multiple interpretations, and to conduct member checks with stakeholders to see whether my interpretations rang true from their perspectives. Thus, my methodological skills were honed as inseparable from relational skills aimed toward meaningful, authentic, and humble collaboration.

Collaborative Program Evaluation in Education

As researchers, we are used to approaching participants and ask them to take part in studies that we've designed and conceptualized, often on our own. Program evaluation can take the

opposite direction, wherein researchers are solicited and hired by programs, communities, and organizations (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015). While evaluators are hired for their expertise in the field, they are positioned uniquely as *consultants* who can assist in identifying and analyzing program logic, preferred outcomes, and viable data sources. Evaluation design specifically demands that program and stakeholder input inform research choices (Fitzpatrick, Christie, & Mark, 2009). Particular approaches to program evaluation, such as culturally responsive evaluation (Hood, Hopson, & Kirkhart, 2015), place emphasis on engagement with culture as a particularly important lens for analysis and interpretation – positioning understanding of program stakeholders' culture as a matter of validity and trustworthiness. In reviewing initial logic model drafts, for example, key stakeholders are often given the opportunity to correct or revise the evaluator's understanding of program logic (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2015). Additionally, key stakeholders help evaluators to understand the primary intended uses of the evaluation, many of which will be of direct benefit to the organization. While Institutional Review Boards commonly ask researchers to explicitly state "How will this research benefit the participant?" – primary intended users in evaluations often get to determine this for themselves. That said, there is no denying the fact that there are a number of power dynamics at play in program evaluation that can limit or skew the amount of agency afforded to organization stakeholders.

One current complication in pursuing a collaborative design effort is that program evaluation is costly. Programs may have evaluation needs, but little money to hire external evaluators. This is particularly the case for many arts education programs with whom I have partnered, who already have significant concerns regarding limited funding. Available grant opportunities often place restrictive demands on evaluation design that can shift emphasis away from user needs. One specific example of this is the requirement that grant applications including evaluation components must meet the standards for the *What Works Clearinghouse* (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/). A particularly problematic requirement is that organizations prioritize studies that are designed as randomized control trials (RCT). Please note that I am not decrying the usefulness of RCT, but I do wish to acknowledge that this requirement is not a good fit for *all* program evaluations, especially in the field of education. Demanding a particular evaluation design displaces organizational agency from the key stakeholders, giving them less of a say in design, and thus, in the primary intended use of the evaluation results.

Another factor affecting the level of possible collaboration and shared responsibility in program evaluation in education is the ever-growing culture of performance measurement, accountability, and high-stakes assessment. As a result of this culture of measurement, programs may be required or feel significant pressure to engage consultants in program evaluation in order to 'follow the rules.' In these cases, it is much more difficult to build a meaningful collaborative relationship – especially when stakeholders may feel skeptical about the usefulness of the evaluation in the first place. Here, the significant cultural narrative of high-stakes performance measurement asserts power over the organization, again shifting agency and power away from the stakeholders and key users.

All of this to say that collaboration *via* program evaluation – as described above – is an opportunity for meaningful engagement outside the academy, and one that professors must work toward with humility and a desire to counter-balance existing power dynamics. An evaluator must be trusted as a partner in helping programs to achieve their selected outcomes, under their own terms. As professors of education, we are often used to being the ones to shape and direct our research. Many of us are former P-12 classroom teachers, who are used to a certain amount of authority or autonomy. While we

state that collaboration is important and meaningful, many professors of education (including myself) are still honing our collaboration skill. This is not to say that program evaluators must deliver only positive feedback. In fact, some of the most meaningful use of evaluation is that of assisting a program with continued improvement. This involves trusting that an evaluator will honor the original mission of the program, while also appreciating that their suggestions for improvement aim toward bolstering outcomes associated with that mission, even when program activities may change.

In the pages that follow, I explain four ways in which I have pursued program evaluation outside traditional conceptions of university education work and have delved into collaborative professional relationships that create bridges with other education stakeholders. We can share priorities for research and understanding that both serve organizations, and also contribute to the larger field of research in education. The first example I share is connecting with communities, in which I provide examples of prioritizing work that emphasizes engagement in local communities. Second, program evaluation allows me to engage graduate students as apprentices who also learn the priorities and methodologies of program evaluation centered on meaningful collaboration. Third, I discuss engaging larger organizations including state and federal education agencies. Finally, I describe how my work in program evaluation presented opportunities for collaboration with members of my PhD cohort, even as we dispersed to take on positions as professors at universities across the country. In each of these discussions, I use actual examples from my professional practice to ground the discussion. I note here that I have used the actual names of organizations in cases where evaluation reports that I have authored are published and viewable by the public. For evaluations that have not elected to publish reports, or have not yet done so, I have assigned pseudonyms or left out identifying information.

Each of these collaborations has shaped my own personal worldview, and also my work inside the school of education where I serve.

Connecting with Communities

Aside from school-based evaluation partnerships in education, there are many community-based programs and initiatives that are interested in partnering with evaluators. In some cases, these are nascent or growing programs that leverage resources to address a particular educational or social challenge. These are organizations with creative problem-solvers or visionaries at the helm, who are focused on innovative and affirming ways to improve both social and academic outcomes for community members – particularly those who have traditionally been marginalized. My experience with such organizations, is that there a strong sense of urgency to produce intended outcomes, which is occasionally limited by access to funding sources. A primary intended use of evaluation in such situations is to document current promising outcomes, with an eye toward financial sustainability (Newcomer et al., 2015). In these cases, organizations seek to provide current and future funders with this evidence, documentation that the program is worth their investment. Further, growing programs may enlist evaluators to produce analyses that provide constructive suggestions for improvement, thus helping them to generate more positive outcomes that will be impressive to granting agencies or other funders.

One recent evaluation brought me into partnership with a 501(c)(3) non-profit music education organization. For the program founder, the need for connecting children with their marginalized musical heritage represented an opportunity to not only increase musical proficiency, but also to create intentional instructional spaces where their identities and contributions are consistently affirmed. Through conversation with the founder, we agreed that the primary use of evaluation data would be to generate evidence that she could use in future grant applications. She noted that grantors were

increasingly looking for documentation that the organization was satisfying the proposed outcomes as part of the application process. Future grants are necessary for this organization to continue their instructional operation, thus we arranged a unique partnership for evaluation such that they would not have to pay for services.

As a professor of education, a portion of my teaching load involves introducing students to the basic methodologies associated with program evaluation. Thus, upon consultation with the program founder, we opted to embed evaluation tasks within my master's level course, *Program Evaluation in Education,* as practical field experience. Along with a teaching assistant who has significant experience in program evaluation, students enrolled in the class were able to participate meaningfully, practicing and demonstrating skills in fieldwork, data collection, analysis, and stakeholder collaboration.[6] This structure set up opportunity for mutual benefit between the university and organization in several ways.

First, our team was able to provide a necessary service for a community organization at little to no cost. Second, the students in the course were able to engage with the larger community, also (is the "also" necessary?) engaging in work "outside the building." This type of modeling for university students is vital in helping them to understand the priorities of communities, and the importance of relational engagement. As a professor, it allowed for a practical illustration of the connection between theory and practice that would not have been possible if we had remained in the classroom. In effect, this process presents university students with the opportunity to experience the importance and urgency of careful collaborative practice in the community where they live and attend school. Finally, this process allows for

apprenticeship of new practitioners into the area of program evaluation in education.

Apprenticing New Program Evaluation Practitioners

Moving beyond methodology courses, there is opportunity for engaging and apprenticing doctoral students into collaborative evaluation work. Again, a primary benefit of this is scaffolding the idea of collaborative work. This demonstrates that the work of professors in education is vitally connected to practitioners outside of the academy, and that there are particular relational practices that are desirable when seeking to maintain stakeholder agency in the evaluative process. Doctoral students selected for such projects already have basic training in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This particular type of apprenticeship reflects the manner in which I was introduced to evaluation work, and thus, I've had the opportunity to experience a gradual release of responsibility wherein I could further develop my capacity for stakeholder interaction and data analysis.

With graduate students, I assign them series of tasks to complete independently such as online document analysis, phone interviews, in-person interviews, and survey analysis. Additionally, I involve them heavily in the administrative tasks of evaluation, including participation in proposal writing, stakeholder communication, early drafting of interview and site-protocols, securing permission for site visits, etc. These so-called administrative tasks require direct interaction with agencies and school sites outside of the academy, and emphasize the skills in co-construction that lead one toward the skills and dispositions necessary for such work. Furthermore, these are tasks that are necessary for successful execution and implementation of program evaluations that will be necessary skills

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[6]The final program evaluation report was written by myself and the teaching assistant from analytic memos created by all members of the evaluation

team (professor, teaching assistant, and enrolled students).

for those graduate students who would like to continue in the field.

In one recent program evaluation, I was able to engage three graduate student researchers to help with data collection and analysis. In working with the A+ Schools Program through the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, we collected data at three participating school sites. The A+ Schools Program is a whole-school reform model that centers on the arts. According to the website "A+ Schools combine interdisciplinary teaching and daily arts instruction, offering children opportunities to develop creative, innovative ways of thinking, learning and showing what they know" (http://www.aplus-schools.ncdcr.gov/about). We began the evaluation process by meeting as a group and exploring the contexts of each of the participating schools, and analyzing publicly available achievement data. Between the four of us, we were able to observe the classrooms of nearly all teachers each of the three schools, and interviewed a large percentage of them as well.

The site visit process required each of our team members, including myself, to practice entering educational spaces in a respectful and non-invasive manner. Our aim was never to be invisible, we acknowledged that this is not a possibility in ethnographic field research. Further, we all aimed for reflexivity over judgement in this fieldwork. In other words, we sought to reflect on our own personal experiences as former teachers and administrators rather than overlay theoretical judgement unique to the academy on what we observed (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). This intentional approach is one that requires specific dispositions including humility, and sensitivity to the work and perspectives of others. These dispositions must be practiced in authentic settings, outside of university classrooms. Additionally, they take time to develop and must be practiced regularly to maintain. The academy demands particular behaviors and modes of interaction that are sometimes at odds with

practitioners' work in schools and communities. The more opportunities that professors and graduate students have to interact outside of the university walls, the more apt they are to understand the true concerns of school stakeholders.

Engaging with Organizations

While many academicians partner with federal and state organizations for funding purposes, program evaluators may also engage in partnerships that are more collaborative and mutually beneficial in nature. These often include larger-scale programs implemented at both state and national levels, administered by organizations interested in understanding how their program works across multiple sites and in varying contexts. Projects in conjunction with such organizations allow evaluators the opportunity to engage in significant fieldwork and communication with agency stakeholders. Managing projects with state and federal organizations also offers an opportunity to learn about and practice in different bureaucratic and organizational structures. In most cases, the evaluator must be comfortable communicating findings to a variety of non-academic audiences, including government officials, advisory boards, constituents, and donors. Thus, working with organizations require that university-based evaluators be adept at translating their work to reflect the targeted interests (scope) and language of such audiences in a way that is meaningful, insightful, and ultimately useful to the key stakeholders.

One example of collaboration with a national agency is the work that I have done with Turnaround Arts: Minnesota. This program is a state-based deployment of a national initiative with the aim of bringing "arts education resources into priority and focus schools as a strategic tool for targeting larger school challenges and opportunities" http://turnaroundarts.pcah.gov. Turnaround Arts began during the Obama administration - initially administered by the President's Council for Arts and Humanities.

Recently, administration of the program moved to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. For this program contract, I worked with two seasoned colleagues who were instrumental in my own apprenticeship into program evaluation. They have extensive experience in evaluating whole school reform initiatives, and have recently welcomed me as a co-equal member of their team.

Through my work with Turnaround Arts: Minnesota, I have had the opportunity to see how this national initiative is implemented in locally eight schools throughout the state. I have been able to grow a relationship with Turnaround Arts: Minnesota administrators as they translate the national model to fit all eight diverse settings. Although this relationship and experience has been valuable in itself, I have also been able to engage with national program administrators as well as other local evaluation teams across the country. Through conference calls, I have been able to inform evaluation practices of teams in other states, and their findings and approaches have informed ours. We also work in collaboration with a national evaluation team, and rely on their survey process to supplement our own evaluation. Collaborating on this multi-level evaluation process helps me be a part of larger evaluations that involve broad and complex networks of stakeholders and administrators.

Collaborating with Colleagues

Yet another way that evaluation helps me venture outside the walls of my own university, is that it allows for an additional avenue to collaborate with colleagues at other universities around the country. Not all universities are alike; different combinations of expertise and personalities produce unique communities of practice that generate a wide variety of theories and ideas. Thus, engaging with scholars at different universities can allow for freshness of analytic ideas in program evaluation. Team analysis across state lines can help researchers see outside their own analytic confines and consider new contexts and new approaches to program

evaluation data. In my case, this has also helped me maintain a multi-site community of practice that began during my time as PhD student.

Currently, I am in the midst of a four-year program evaluation contract with the Perpich Arts Integration Network of Teachers, located throughout the state of Minnesota. This is one of several initiatives put forth by the Perpich Foundation - a state-sponsored organization tasked with expanding arts education and professional development opportunities in Minnesota. When the Request for Proposals for this contract was released in 2015, three of my PhD colleagues and I were just realizing that our job searches would take us to various locations throughout the country. We had collaborated on a number of projects to that point, and wanted to maintain this spirit of collaboration. I convinced these three future professors to collaborate with me on the proposal, figuring that if it was awarded to our team we could continue to our work together, despite our varied locations.

Now, after two full years of engagement with this project, we note that our own unique university contexts allow us to consider our findings through the lens of the many things we are learning as early career professors. For example, we are bringing to bear ideas, or advice, from our faculty mentors and other significant voices at our universities. We are viewing our impressions of this study in conjunction with other research studies being completed in our own contexts. Perhaps most importantly, we are quickly gaining more experience as young professors and are able to apply that collective growth to our program evaluation projects. This growth manifests both in terms of practical and logistical knowledge for conducting research, interacting with colleagues and stakeholders, as well as theoretical and analytical application. Finally, this allows us to continue our valuable professional relationships across the geographic distances, leveraging our separate contexts as a benefit and boon for maintaining a connection. While we are all located within "the academy" – this collaboration

pushes us to engage beyond each of our own university affiliates.

Implications for Program Evaluation in Education as a Collaborative Pathway

The term "program evaluation" can bring forth visions of researchers and academicians that are primarily committed to overlaying their academic knowledge onto existing program missions and goals. It's true, of course, that program evaluators are regularly enlisted because of their expertise in research design and methodology. This fact, however, does not have to preclude the idea that program evaluators must also be committed to prioritizing understanding through collaboration and trust-building. Recently, I was in a preliminary meeting to discuss the potential of an evaluation with two program directors. They seemed increasingly tense as they explained the mission of their program to us in the room. It was clear they felt great purpose and urgency in the mission of their program. Recognizing the instrumental particularities of their program was not difficult. However, it wasn't until we acknowledged their fear that we might misinterpret their personal investment in the mission that we saw them relax. We re-voiced the urgency we heard, and took a moment to explain how we understood their mission and associated outcomes. One of the meeting participants audibly breathed a sigh of relief and stated, "I'm so glad you understand." This shifted both the tone and direction of the conversation toward collaboration.

Thus, collaborative approaches to program evaluation must prioritize relational pathways. Otherwise, engagement with stakeholders will only serve to re-inscribe the priorities of academia – keeping professors *within* academic structures even as they do work outside its physical walls. Evaluators must be sensitive to the needs of stakeholders, and prioritize stakeholders' voices in evaluation design and reporting. This is not to say that evaluators should compromise rigorous methodological practice or research design – just the opposite. Evaluators should have an in-depth knowledge of a wide array of appropriate methodologies and designs that align with potential intended uses for the evaluation. In fact, evaluators who are recognized as highly-skilled in project design, management, and methodology are more likely to be considered as trusted partners who are worthy of telling the story of an organization. Additionally, they often must meet externally defined qualifications in order to successfully attain formal evaluation contracts and grants.

In my personal experience, my work as a classroom teacher helped me develop skills and capacities for building relationships with partners outside the university. As a K-12 teacher, one must work with students, parents, staff, administrators, and community organizations. Considering the priorities of each stakeholder provides a broad vision of educational processes, and learning the dispositions necessary for this type of work has helped me become a better evaluator. Additionally, I am able to understand the successes and institutional challenges faced by the practitioners that I work with in program evaluations. They are often wary of outside judgement, but become less concerned when I tell them that I have spent significant time as a classroom teacher.

Working in program evaluation outside the walls of academia offers a number of pathways for building relationships. For this paper, I have conceptualized "outside the wall" of the school of education both literally and metaphorically. Work in academia is often referred to as "siloed" – each of us attending to our own specific research interests. However, program evaluation can offer a pathway for envisioning academic work as explicitly collaborative. In other words, it can help professors gain an understanding of stakeholders, communities, and organizations through the careful and meaningful growing of relationships. These connections can also consist of professional relationships that are technically within the world of academia, but push us to consider other lines of analysis and theory. Further, we cannot expect the next generation of

academic professionals to venture outside the walls of the university if we do not model these practices in our own work. Inviting students to join us in program evaluation centered on collaborative and relational understanding is vital in scaffolding the necessary processes and perspectives.

Summary

While it is certainly not the only pathway, collaborative program evaluation represents one opportunity to take my work as a professor "outside the building." At the heart of this opportunity is the desire to work in a broad, collaborative context where my work can find authentic and meaningful application and I can build relationships that both extend and ground my work. Evaluation has also offered me the opportunity to build connections with my own mentors, colleagues, and students – creating an extended community that can sometimes be elusive in the isolation of academia. This vision of program evaluation as inherently collaborative is not, perhaps, common – though current scholarship in program evaluation works to center such a perspective (Newcomer et al., 2015). More often, the practice – indeed, the words *evaluation* and *assessment* - may be viewed as judgmental and theory-centered. However, in approaching evaluation through this lens, I have extended both my practice and my community, venturing outside the walls of my own office and university.

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Keeping Our Boots on the Ground:
Independent scholars maintaining academic identities

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Introduction

The "challenge of non-university researchers" has still to be met. Nevertheless, research beyond traditional university structures is here to stay: indeed, in subjects where overheads are low and cutbacks are high, such as the humanities and social sciences, we could be on the verge of a new age of independent scholarship. While the academy is "rethinking," independent scholars are busy doing (Cole, 2012, para. 12).

Background and Purpose

In the last two decades, global economic trends have impacted higher education at international, national, and state levels. Reduced investment in higher education has resulted in faculty layoffs, employment of short term and intermittent faculty and a contraction of the traditional trajectory of tenured faculty pathways (Bowden & Gonzalez, 2012). In the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, these changes resulted in increased numbers of part-time and adjunct academics who are peripheral to academic institutions (Basten, 2012; Bowden & Gonzalez, 2012). Tenure track positions are redesigned to meet specific 21st century market demands and educational innovations decentering the role of faculty in their own governance (Flaherty, 2016). Greater numbers of online degree offerings and packaged online courses designed for teaching greater numbers of students, refocuses teaching to the moderation of course analytics. As Herstein (2016, para.1) explained, in this model of the "Corporate University," students are "customers," education is a sellable commodity, and the professoriate is replaced by disposable teaching staff with neither wages, nor benefits, nor job security (in other words, easily intimidated lackeys), whose only option is to cave and cavil to their corporate directors, or face the abyss of being independent.

As one sector of the "diversifying workforce" (Whitchurch, 2010, p. 245) in higher education, there is a need to embrace what it means to be positioned, valued, and legitimized as independent scholars. Researchers have explored the tensions, challenges, frustrations, and realities of being an academic experiencing the volatile shifts of the 21st century enterprise of higher education (Clegg, 2008; Churchman & King, 2009; Evans & Nixon, 2015; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010, Henkel, 2010, Sutton, 2015). There is also increasing research that examines the careers, academic development and challenges faced by non-tenure-track instructors and research associates (Anderson, 2007; Basten, 2012; Feldman & Turnley, 2004; Goldman & Schmalz, 2012). What has been left under-examined, are the perspectives and experiences of those who attempt to maintain academic research work outside institutions (Knight, Baume, Tait & Yorke, 2007; Orlans, 2002) as independent scholars.

The phenomena of academics working outside the walls of institutions and making significant academic contributions is not new (Gross, 1993). In fact, PhD's have been independent scholars as early as the 20th century (Pomata, 2013). Cole (2012) and Pomata (2013) identified that in the US, independent scholars became even more widespread as universities disgorged ever-increasing numbers of PhD

graduates onto a stagnant job market. In response, many highly trained researchers, who may have hoped for academic positions, become by choice or necessity freelance researchers. They work within non-academic organizations (Whitchurch, 2013) or "under their own steam to produce scholarly articles, books and discussion papers, without university administrators breathing down their necks or any chance of tenure" (Cole, 2012, para. 5). They continue to work because they have created a life as a scholar that they were later reluctant to change (National Coalition of Independent Scholars, 2016). Consequently, less boundary-laden forms of academic identity are emerging in the field of higher education (Whitchurch, 2009).

We address the "abyss of being independent" through a lens on academic identities as independent scholars in unique career trajectories. In this work, we represent the nuances and lived experiences of transferability in terms of the academic identity. We also frame and substantiate a new lens for independent scholars regardless of discipline who conduct ethical and meaningful research. Thus, our purpose is not to juxtapose our experiences to other academic disciplines, but rather share our journeys as independent scholars.

In 2010, Joyanne and Makini met at an American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting. At that time, J was an assistant professor in the field of teacher education at a Caribbean university and M was a newly minted PhD in the field of education. They were intrigued by each other's work on teacher development and vowed to work together to get some work completed for the 2011 AERA meeting. In 2011, by happenstance, Anne was present in a meeting at AERA 2011 that Joyanne attended. That meeting was the starting point of an experimental collaboration among women 14+ women who were early career academics, some of whom were on the tenure track. Makini was invited by J to join the group. The members of the newly formed group interrogated their experiences of informal peer mentoring for

career advancement as a focus of research between 2011 and 2016. The result was that the large group had several successful research and presentations at successive professional conferences based on peer-mentoring within the global network Adams et al., 2016; Agosto et al., 2016; Bristol, Adams & Johannessen, 2014; De Four-Babb, Pegg & Beck, 2015; Esnard et al., 2015; Thorsos, Johannessen, Beck & Nganga., 2016; Unterreiner, De Four-Babb, Kern, & Wu-Norman, 2015, Wu, Thorsos & Kern, 2016)

In time, each of our academic positions changed. In 2012, Joyanne resigned from her assistant professor position and has not worked full-time since. Anne resigned from a tenure track position, relocated as a research associate then educational consultant and since 2015, has been a learning specialist. Makini worked at a four-year institution as a Research Associate. In these new contexts, we remained engaged the research work within our global network. This collaborative experience continues to play an important role in helping us to maintain our academic identities.

In this paper, we explore how we, all former faculty, have navigated, negotiated and maintained our academic identity as independent scholars engaged in academic research. Through autoethnography and narrative inquiry we articulate our selfhood as educators and academics to shed light on the ambivalence often assigned to the work of academics unaffiliated with traditional institutions. Our work contributes to the emerging body of literature on academic identity and provides insight into workforce shifts in higher education. Through our research work in the field of peer mentoring, we have managed to keep doing and growing as academics. We have managed to 'keep our boots on the ground,' and keep marching on as researchers, and in so doing keep our dreams of being academics alive. If we had not done so, we would have nothing left of our academic lives, a part of ourselves that we had invested so much in. Boots on the ground is not just about traditional notions of combat, but with regards to

our scholarly work, it is about marching forward to continue vitality as researchers due to the marginalized status assigned to an academic outside the institution.

Theoretical Underpinnings

As independent scholars, we grapple with the questions, what does it mean to be an academic? Who can "rightfully" claim the legitimized title of independent scholar? How are academic identities cultivated and sustained outside of the traditional brick and mortar structures of the academy? Our academic identities and trajectories are fluid and complex, shaped by our socio-cultural circles, the institutions we were educated in, and the professional paths we chose with our advanced degrees. Yet, we often find ourselves battling monolithic constructs of who is considered and legitimated as a scholar, particularly given our changing academic climate. In this section, we problematize these traditional ideologies and offer a more inclusive framework that advances independent scholars as academics.

Independent Scholars

The term 'independent scholar' was coined in the USA in the 1970s and 1980s, and used as an alternative to other constructs such as 'private scholars,' 'freelance scholars,' 'non-affiliated scholars,' or 'self-reliant academics' (Pomata, 2013, p. 198). Orlans (2002) suggested that in practice, an independent scholar is "anyone who believes he or she is one, and whom a professional association, granting agency, or library accepts as one" (p. 12). Others define independent scholars as people who do "serious intellectual work outside academe" (Gross, 1982, p. x). While they actively pursue knowledge in various disciplines, carry out research, present and publish scholarly work, they are not associated, supported, or financed by an academic institution (Allan, 2011; 2012; National Coalition of Independent Scholars, 2016; Orlans, 2002).

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS), formed in the USA in 1989, also noted that some people become independent scholars after retiring from professorships or leaving tenured positions to devote more time to research. NCIS extends its membership to scholars who are not associated with academic institutions, adjunct faculty, people tangentially associated with academic institutions but who do not receive financial and/or research support for their scholarly activities, and unique individuals whose scholarly work proceeds successfully despite the lack of advanced degrees, or of any academic degree at all (National Coalition of Independent Scholars, 2016). The NCIS explained that an independent scholar status depends on a person's peer-reviewed scholarly production, a criterion similar to that of a traditional tenure track scholar. Independent scholars are recognized internationally by the Canadian Academy of Independent Scholars, the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, and the Ronin Institute based in the United Kingdom.

A series of incidents may lead one to become an independent scholar. As Busse (2011) humorously suggested:

> …one merely needs to defend one's dissertation without a secure job prospect in sight. The next step, as affiliation privileges cease to exist, is to contend with university firewalls and forms where one suddenly has to define one's identity beyond the clearly demarcated hierarchies of grad student, assistant, and associate professor. Continuing one's job search into year two or three while teaching as adjunct instructor is generally accepted as merely a stepping stone (Busse 2011, para. 1, 2).

Independent scholars, at any phase of their professional status, are "free of institutional shackles" such as work agendas and publication deadlines. They pursue original work, based on their personal interests and are not constrained

by institutional requirements and pigeon-holes. Scholarly research then is in the direction of the pursuit of one's interests, love for learning and continued passion for knowledge (Gross, 1993; Orlans, 2002; Pomata, 2013, The History Woman, 2015). In so doing they "perform a service to scholarship and, at times, to society" (Orlans, 2002, p. 22). But that does not mean that for them this is leisurely, idle pursuits to fill time. As Busse (2011, para. 3) clarified, "I research instead of watching TV or reading a book; I write instead of meeting with friends or going shopping; I edit and do professional activities at the cost of my family time." Independent scholars thus advance knowledge and understanding of the issues they research, and continue to make contributions to their disciplines.

Still, misconceptions about independent scholars abound. Allan (2012) identified five misconceptions held about independent scholars: (i) the title independent scholar is a placeholder title for unemployed PhDs; (ii) independent scholars are crackpots; (iii) independent scholars are retired professors; (iv) academic publications are not open to independent scholars; and (v) that independent scholars are wannabe professors or failed academics. She countered these misconceptions by stating that most independent scholars are actively involved in research and/or may be otherwise employed and many integrate their scholarly work into their daily life. Additionally, published work for independent scholars is often peer reviewed and presented in various forums including international conferences.

Many independent scholars face major challenges including: (i) access to library facilities (Bivens-Tatum, 2014); (ii) access to funding for research, especially research that requires institutional affiliation to access grants; and (iii) feelings or perceptions of failure prompted by misperceptions by others, including university affiliated academics, of independent scholars as "unemployed," "amateur," "goofy," "crackpot," "unhireable" (Allan, 2012; De Four-Babb et al.,

2015; Orlans, 2002; Pomata, 2013). Orlans (2002) characterized this misperception as being "less informed about new intellectual trends and funding agency interests, less experienced at writing proposals, less able to discuss them with informed colleagues, less likely to have prominent references" (Orlans, 2002, p. 22).

Both Pomata (2013) and Busse (2011) hint at the financial emotional dilemmas faced by independent researchers. Pomata (2013) researched the experiences of independent scholars among eminent, women historians. She concluded that: these women do not seem to have perceived their condition of outsiders, vis-`a-vis academia only or mostly as a source of depreciation of their work and intellectual identity. They saw it as the means of preserving an autonomy and range of interests that an academic affiliation would not allow. Though the condition of the independent scholar was a cause of insecurity and frustration in their lives, it was also a powerful inner source of intellectual courage and freedom (Pomata, 2013, pp. 209–210).

Busse (2011, para. 2) affirmed that "staying an independent scholar is actually quite hard: it requires the continuing desire to do research without the non-monetary but nevertheless quite real remunerations university positions afford."

There is much research needed to be done on independent scholars. For example, how many independent scholars exist, what are their professional needs, and what policies best serve their interests (Orlans, 2002). Gender inequity is also a critical issue as it relates to the academy and in the spaces of independent research and scholarship activities, however, this is not a focus of our analysis. Although, these issues are critical to understanding the totality of the experience of the independent scholar, they are beyond the scope of this paper and are recommended for future research. However, through this paper, we propose to give insight into how independent scholars negotiate their academic identity.

Academic Identity

There is a growing literature focusing on the identities and experiences of academics in higher education institutions (Evans & Nixon, 2015; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). For example, Billot (2010) suggested that the question that is being asked more frequently as the roles and responsibilities of tertiary academic staff are disrupted and reframed, is "what makes an academic today and how does the academic perceive their working identity?" Traditional conceptions highlighted the 'academic holy trinity' of teaching, scholarship, and research (Nixon, 2015). Feather (2016) argued that "these activities can be viewed as 'badges of office' or symbols an academic may have that aid in constructing and proclaiming their identity" (Feather, 2016, p. 112). However, Feather's (2010) definition belies the complexity of the term academic because it's based on what academics do, rather than who they see themselves to be.

Individuals identify themselves as academics, in relation to an organization and as a member of the academic profession (Billot, 2010). In other words, academic identity is closely aligned to one's professional identity. According to Billot (2010, p. 713), professional identity is underpinned by three concepts: (i) professional values (what I profess); (ii) professional location (the profession to which I belong); and professional role (my role within the institution). Furthermore, the nexus between teaching, scholarship and research will play an important part in the formation of academic identity (Feather, 2016). Academic identity is therefore intrinsically bound up with the values, beliefs and practices held in common with others of that affiliation (Billot, 2010).

Fitzmaurice (2013) argued that academics engage in an ongoing emotional and intellectual process of identity construction and deconstruction as they negotiate their professional identity in regard to their various roles. Through his research, Feather (2016) found that participants experienced difficulty in defining the term academic identity because they struggled with the roots of where their identity lay. Consequently, academic identity is always under construction, dismantled, re-formed and so heterogeneous that people can no longer define the term. On the one hand, when viewed broadly, academic identity may be a function of community membership that is grounded in interactions between the individual and two key communities: first, the discipline and second, higher education as an institution (Henkel, 2005; Quigley, 2011). On the other hand, a narrower view of academic identity may be related to authenticity and success (Quigley, 2011).

To summarize, academic identity cannot be regarded as discrete subcategory; it is a "constitutive element of whatever it means to be a whole person engaged in academic work" (Nixon, 2015, p. 14). Academic identities are both personal and intimate, as well as public and institutional (Nixon, 2015). Academic identity is tied up with what you are committed to, what you value and what you strive for (Fitzmaurice, 2013). Thus, we agree that with Nixon's (2015) statement that "academic identity is a bricolage, provisional and unfinished.

Academic Trajectory

Guzmán-Valenzuela & Cortés, (2013) defined an academic trajectory as "the space that academics can create and stretch to pursue their own academic projects" (p.3) and involves academics' own hopes, concerns and practices. For most academics, their academic trajectory exists within the university (Strike, 2010). However, the transformation of higher education and its institutions within the last two decades, have made them more complex and differentiated spaces (Clegg, 2008; Whitchurch, 2013). Universities are "complex and disparate organizations where different constructions of 'academic' coexist" (Fitzmaurice, 2013, p. 613). Consequently, the nature and context of academic identity is undergoing change, and there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of the local context in developing an

understanding of the position of academic identities (Clegg, 2008).

Further, academic identities can be developed formally and informally inside the institution, and informally within mentoring networks (De Four-Babb, Pegg & Beck, 2015). For the independent scholar, the notion of academic identity evolves in a self-created professional pathway as opposed to the institutional or traditional pathway or already established norm. The trajectory of the independent scholars who work outside or at the margins of academia, pursuing their research interests independently, is quite different, for a variety of reasons, including choice (Pomata, 2013). We sometimes negotiate our trajectory within the third space as our place.

In this paper, we begin to interrogate the notion of what it means to be an academic as an independent scholar beyond 'place' or location in an educational system (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004) and suggest the notion of an independent scholar as an added way of thinking about being an academic. While independent scholars are situated within the changing landscape of higher education, their identity is being constructed outside of traditional institutional affiliations. Given these conditions, we seek to provide deeper understandings and insights into being a professional independent scholar. In the next section, we describe our methodology and describe the data collection and analysis methods used in this study.

Methodology

In conducting our research, we employed a blend of autoethnography (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner's, 2010; Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012), collaborative dialogue (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013), and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McMullen & Braithwaite, 2013). These methods support our understanding "that multiple realities exist and that data reflect the researcher's and the participant's mutual constructions, concerns, (and).... situated experiential realities" (McMullen & Braithwaite,

2013, p. 95). Our blended approach reflected our position in that at any one time, we were both researcher and participant in this study. Our aim of this research is to make sense of the independent scholar, through the lenses of our experiences (Chang, 2013).

Ellis, et. al. (2010) described autoethnographic research as a method of "process and product" (2010, para. 9) in which the processes for the examination of autobiographical phenomena and experiences are the source of study. We used our personal experiences as independent scholars as primary material (Chang, 2013) and examined them within the cultural context of the academy. We foregrounded our points of view, and drew upon personal narratives to bear witness to our insider experiences as independent scholars (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013).

The use of narrative inquiry complemented our capacity to reflect on the complexities and ambiguities of our knowledge and personal stories. Our narratives enabled us to focus our attention on the "social, institutional and cultural practices" that shaped our narratives and the construction of personal and organizational identity (McMullen & Braithwaite, 2013, p. 93–94). We used our narratives to engage in a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining, and observing and reflecting on the meanings gathered from our experiences (Wamsted, 2012). We engaged in collaborative dialogue: writing, then probing, reflection, sharing with meaning making. This process is referred to by Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez (2013) as collaborative autoethnography, which "focuses on self-interrogation but does so collectively and cooperatively within a team of researchers" (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 21).

The use of autoethnography, narrative inquiry and collaborative dialogue helped us to uncover the meanings in our stories as independent scholars within the social and cultural contexts that inform them (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013). Through these

methods we were able to "take an active, scientific and systematic view of personal experience in relation to cultural groups identified by the researcher as similar to the 'self' [i.e., independent scholars] or as others [i.e., traditional academics affiliated with institutions] who differ from the self" (p. 209). In so doing, we could make sense of our 'lived experiences' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and in writing our stories include the complexities of these experiences as sources of data.

Data Collection

We scheduled and conducted five Skype meetings for our collaborative dialogues and inquiry process. Before each of the five meetings, we each drafted an initial narrative that was prompted by the reflective questions listed in Table 1 below. Each set of questions, except the first, was generated from themes that arose during our previous collaborative dialogue. We uploaded our written narratives into an electronic folder in Google Drive. In this 'cloud space' we captured written thinking on academic identities and lived experiences as independent scholars that became our data. We then each took turns reading our journal entries in our voices aloud on Skype. Simultaneously, the other two used the comments tools on Google Docs to document questions and reflective responses. These memo notes using Google docs comments function offered an additional tool for 'real time' commentary and to document our collective insights. This allowed us to follow the processes set forth in Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang (2010) to allow one of our narratives to stir another's memory, offer questions and unsettle assumptions. Through these participant researcher processes we documented our collaborative dialogue and thinking to extend meaning across narratives and progressively develop shared understandings of lived experiences navigating our professional lives.

Table 1 Reflective Questions and Discussion Topics of Each Meeting

Collaborative Dialogue 1	What does it mean to be an academic operating outside of an institution? What benefits/challenges to being in this position? Where are we now, where would we like to be? Why do we call ourselves 'independent scholars'?
Collaborative Dialogue 2	How does branding a career and our professional progression to now shape how we see ourselves as independent scholars?
Collaborative Dialogue 3	What are our stories around a sense of power, failure and privilege? Why with all this privilege of we recognize with being an 'outsider' do we find ourselves experiencing a sense of grief?
Collaborative Dialogue 4	How can we heal the woundedness of loss (that we may at time feel) and creating new stories? How can we tap into the core of what we do that aligns with who we are?
Collaborative Dialogue 5	How do we sustain our resilience through our membership with CYF as a source of intellectual, social and emotional capital?

Making Sense of Our Stories as Independent Scholars

In the following sections, we present our findings by first offering short excerpts of our narratives generated through our collaborative dialogues followed by a discussion of our themes. Our stories reveal that our identities are dynamic and emerge from our personal and geopolitical contexts, constructed over time (Billot, 2010). They also align with what Clegg (2008, p, 329) explained about identity as being "part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being part of the academic." In this light, our stories share our ways of being in the world as independent scholars.

Joyanne's Story

Joyanne completed her doctorate in 2004 and worked as an assistant professor for almost four years on contract at a new university in the Caribbean. She taught in the Bachelor of Education program and was responsible for setting up the practicum requirements for undergraduate teacher education students. She left this position when her husband's job was relocated to North Africa. While there, she worked as an adjunct professor at an American university teaching in the Masters of Education and Post-Graduate Professional Educator

programs. Civil unrest in the country caused her family to be relocated to the United Kingdom. While in the UK, she completed a full-time MBA at a regional university. She described her journey to independent scholar status as follows:

> *When I was six, I knew that I wanted to teach and work at a university. At 17, I decided I would be a secondary teacher and teach Geography. At 22, I realized that dream, and worked for 6 years before getting married and leaving the job and the professional life that I knew behind. I used the time to gain a Master of Education degree in the hope that I would become a vice principal and then principal— a dream that I later had to relinquish when I again left teaching and moved to England. By then I was at the end of my doctoral degree and recognized that teacher education could be my new professional career.*

> *When I went back [home], I returned to high school teaching but worked on developing my teacher educator capabilities. When the opportunity came to move into teacher education, I readily made the jump. I became an assistant professor working in the field of teacher education. Then after 3.5 years, that career came to a screeching halt when I moved to [the north African country] as an expat. "Expat wife" was my new title, one that I was in no way comfortable with… I accepted the post of adjunct assistant professor and that worked well until we were evacuated and then I became a retired assistant professor. "Retired? But you look so young!" people would say. I would smile and coyly reply, "Thanks, but I am of the age to be retired." Then I took on the title of full-time MBA student. And now, I adopt educational consultant, independent scholar and retired assistant professor.*

Anne's Story

Anne completed her doctorate degree followed by academic positions in teacher education at a private university and a regional state university in the deep south. The achievement gained by obtaining a research associate position at an ivy league research center resulted in a move west. A year later, she relocated to the southwest working remote on two consulting projects. One was writing a policy paper with state stakeholders and the other PD curriculum development for an urban school district to be digitally delivered. These opportunities offered new ways of understanding how a depth and breadth of knowledge could be transferrable in new ways. The desire to continue to work with college students prevailed. This led to a new variation of a career and a position as a learning specialist in a large athletic department with student athletes. It was here that a re-vitalization of spirit and new ideas on education and scholarship took place. Each of these transitions entailed learning new cultural and political norms, extensive research activity and sense of loss that was bittersweet inside the transitions. She wrote in her journal:

> *There is both a relief, a woundedness and a liberation outside of my former institutional positions …. I long for a sense of belonging, ritual (graduation, project completion, creative autonomy in teaching planning and practices, engagement with students) … Who was I and what was my identity if not defined by a faculty title? I was a researcher, published scholar and highly knowledgeable of education policies, systems and politics. Is this a 'place' I want to be? Where was meaning in the achievements of status if my joy was being siphoned? A new way of practicing my knowledge … At the heart of my professional passions was teaching and college age students. I sought new thinking, new ways of viewing my abilities and uncertainties and found a new position veering from a traditional route yet affiliated with a university setting. It's odd to experience and be near but not in the academic side per se …. In a very different space of athletics and sport, among celebrity personas and highly paid (beyond academic positions) coaching talents was a contrast. This is theatre mixed with education supports and a decreased intensity of pressures. So much of my thinking tied to a traditional*

academic role… my curiosities and continued desire for more learning is leading me to lengthen my research agenda. I found a niche … and yet working with students I continue to be a voice for and advocate for a consciousness about students' sociocultural contexts and their educational experiences. But I continue to ask: What is my professional identity and my personal association to being an academic?

Makini's Story

Makini graduated from a prestigious research-intensive institution in education. While in graduate school, she got married and made the decision to stay in the city where her husband works as a tenured professor. This decision has led her to sacrifice career pursuits outside of her geographical area. Her area in social foundations of education has particularly been affected by the shrinking and highly competitive job market. As a result, she held various one-year appointments and adjunct positions at varying colleges. She now works as a Research Associate and Education Consultant, and is involved in various community task force agendas related to education, equity, and race in her city. Makini narrated:

> *I am an Afro-Caribbean first generation scholar.   I was the first in my family to obtain a Masters and PhD.   I went straight through school.   I completed BA at 21, a MS at 22, and the Ph.D. at 30.   My family saw me as a career student.   Higher education became a part of my identity.   I spent many years navigating the culture at predominantly white institutions, and dedicated my non-dissertation work to helping undergraduate students of color navigate and successfully graduate college. Although I was fortunate to have completed my schooling at a young age, I had very few years of experience as a classroom teacher. After leaving graduate school, I was a theorist and educational researcher, ready to take on the task of assistant professor. After all, for eight years, I was groomed to conduct research, present, write, and engage in scholarly activity by some of the most*

accomplished scholars. When my expectations did not become a fruition, I felt I had lost since my identity since much of who I am was intertwined with higher education. Research and scholarly work was what I knew well. To leave academia and my work as an educator seemed like a foreign body…unnatural, but in order to survive and earn a living, I had to think outside the box, be creative, and learn how to leverage my skillsets outside of academic spaces.

Through our stories and reflections on the theoretical frame of our research, we are able to make sense of what it means to be an independent scholar. Our sense making is a juxtaposition of theory and the constructs of independent scholars, academic identity and academic trajectory as a lens for the insights we gained through our narrative research. The themes of affirming our professional identities as independent scholars and maintaining our academic identity further illustrate how we negotiate being independent scholars and how academic identities can be thought of more holistically with regard to the world of academia.

Affirming our Professional Identities as Independent Scholars

In analysing our narratives, collaborative dialogues and memo notes of our discussions, we were guided by and sought to answer the following questions: How did we come to characterize ourselves as independent scholars? How does this compare to the research on independent scholars? How does our experience refute the misconceptions about independent scholars?

In terms of our academic trajectories, each of us attained a doctoral degree and pursued full-time academic positions in a school of education. Coupled with life challenges, including keeping a family intact and migration shifted us from maintaining these positions. No longer did we fit into the defined hierarchy of grad student,

assistant or associate professor, and at that point, our university "affiliation privileges ceased to exist" (Busse, 2011). We chose to continue our scholarly work outside of the academy (De Four-Babb et al., 2015) by identifying ourselves as independent scholars as a way to maintain our academic identity.

We are independent scholars because we maintain an active, collaborative research agenda, publish our research in peer-reviewed journals, participate in community service, and lead professional development sessions to teachers. In academia, these commitments are considered the 'holy trinity' of the academic landscape, where faculty are expected to teach, conduct scholarship, and provide service to the university. Thus, the term independent scholar legitimizes our place at the academic table as it identifies our continued level of productivity and engagement as educators in the academic arena although we not affiliated with a university or on an academic tenure track. However, our realities are such that we must straddle two worlds, having one foot on the margins of academia (through active research and scholarship), while having the other in the broader community (through our engagements as education consultants).

Misconceptions about independent scholars discussed earlier, revolve around perceptions of who independent scholars are, what they should be called, and the validity of what they do. We acknowledge the challenges that independent scholars face, but counter the misconceptions based on our lived experiences. As the academy continues to grow and produce new scholars, more academics have met increasing challenges finding positions in traditional academic institutions. Many of these scholars, like ourselves, have continued to produce research despite not holding a traditional research or tenure track position. We make the case, acknowledge, and affirm independent scholars as viable professional academics. Through our research and in our presentation discussions, it is clear that *naming* ourselves as independent scholars is critical to dispelling any

misconceptions about the professional credibility and intellectual contributions that are made through our work. It is in this naming that we also empower ourselves. Our work reflects the rigor and integrity in our continued research, publications, and presentations at national and international peer reviewed conferences.

As independent scholars, we have the freedom to step into various spaces with social and cultural competency and with the language / literacy of the academic institution. We can wear multiple hats that can be multi-faceted. This gives us the freedom to activate the dynamics of our identity and shine in any new space that we occupy. For example, our collaborative dialogue on personal branding led Joyanne to consider how to take her brand to a new level. After our meeting, she journaled:

> *So, I got myself some business cards. They have my name, qualifications and the words Educational Consultant and Coach to describe what I do. I know my brand: hardworking, social and keen to help others develop. I certainly hope that my brand shines through all I do.*

This same discussion inspired Makini to develop a website, create a representative logo, and crystalize her personal brand as researcher, diversity education consultant, and public speaker. She also focused on revamping her curriculum vita and LinkedIn profile. Anne also re-branded her LinkedIn profile. The intentional branding of our multifaceted talents developed *within* academia was aimed at the transferability of skills for new ways of marketing ourselves to the broader education community.

Although independent scholars are often siloed (isolated), there are networks that offer ways of connecting and interconnecting, but independent scholars can be integrated into other traditional groups. For us, our global network of academics has decreased our intellectual poverty (De Four-Babb et al., 2015) and reduced our isolation. One aspect of our mentoring

experience that has helped to reduce the isolation is our opportunity to work with a variety of other women in the group, including new academics on the tenure track, tenured academics, and those near retirement. Our work is driven by the synergy and care (Thorsos, Johannessen, Beck, & Nganga, 2016) of the group that reflects the African proverb "together we go further." Our affiliation with Curve-Y-FRiENDS (C-Y-F), a global network of women scholars, provides social capital (Esnard et al., 2015), because it enables us to maintain our independent identity through collaboration with other academics across the globe.

This global network is comprised of two key pre-existing peer-mentoring groups and a third peer group of individuals who were previously unaffiliated: (a) the Caribbean Educators Research Initiative (CURVE), (b) the Female Researchers in Education, Networking and Dialogue (FRiENDs) and (c) the "Y," representing the Spanish word for *and*, as well as a set of individual members who were neither CURVE nor FRiENDS members (Thorsos, Johannessen, Beck & Nganga, 2016, p. 58). It is through this combined C-Y-F network that we continue to invest in our intellectual growth through our research and engagement with other professionals in the academy.

We keep our boots on the ground as independent scholars by maintaining an active academic agenda, which includes active scholarship pursuits and service in the broader community as education consultants. We research and write because we enjoy these activities and value our contribution to various bodies of research. This involvement requires internal self-discipline, ongoing research, invigoration of new ideas and being intentional in our curiosity to continue to learn and contribute to knowledge bases.

Maintaining our Academic Identity

In this section, we explain how our unique trajectories, including our involvement in C-Y-F, influenced our academic identity and helped us to build resilience. There are varying levels of resilience that we employ as independent scholars. Our positions are complex, carrying with it highs and lows as we tread new waters as participants in a fast-evolving landscape. On the one hand, we feel privileged to join the ranks those who identify as independent scholars (Pomata, 2013). There is freedom in being an independent scholar, particularly for J who is supported financially by her spouse. The absence of tenure track or job pressure is at times empowering and liberating because it allows us to focus on the research work we enjoy without university restraints. Joyanne writes,

> *How can I not see my current position as powerful? I control my time, the research I do, the things I want to get involved with. I am not limited, restricted or dancing to the drum of any institutional requirements. When I go on conferences, I pay my own way, do my own thing. In that, I have power.*

For Anne, while performing consulting work, the freedom to engage in freelance scholarship (Pomata, 2013) was liberating because there were no academic department pressures, teaching schedule, or tenure time clock with which to adhere. She explained: "*There is both a relief, a liberation and a bittersweetness outside of my former institutional positions (tenure and research center) in a consultant role.*"

While there is power and liberation in our work outside the academy, we also sometimes grieve the loss of participating in the academic cadre of the university. We sometimes miss engaging in intellectual spaces of teaching and learning from the rich critical exchange of dialogue with our students. We sometimes enter an emotional slippery slope of feeling a sense of loss and failure, despite our accomplishments. M addresses this point by writing,

> *I read somewhere that Ph.D.'s feel a sense of failure when they don't do what the academy groomed them to do. We were groomed in*

research institutions to publish, conduct research, write well, teach. So when we don't do these things after graduation, we feel like we are failures for not attaining said positions, or accomplishing these tasks.

Although it is not uncommon for scholars to feel a sense of failure, we pushed each other to interrogate these internal battles and challenge the origins of self-defeating and deficit thoughts. Through our discussions and journal reflections, we learned that navigating social spaces and defining (which often feels like defending) what we do can be emotionally charging. For instance, while sharing our stories in a SKYPE call, we all nodded our heads in agreement, laughed, and said "Yes!" to the common experience of attending an international conference on research in education as an independent scholar. Often within the first few minutes of meeting someone, the inevitable question gets asked, "so what do you do?" In these spaces, stating our position as an independent scholar is rarely validated or recognized causing us to lament the days of our tenure at the university. Joyanne wrote,

> *I sometimes mourn the loss of the sense of belonging that I had as a full-time employee with an academic institution. This becomes more acute when I am asked where do I work. There is little privilege in saying that I do not work. I never use the term unemployed, although I am.*

Anne similarly stated this narrative in her journal:
> *Dovetailing into a sense of failure occurs when I find myself focused on having worked so hard to obtain a degree, the invested time, and sweat equity into the demands and professional growth/development …. multiple moves … and the perceptions of others who interpret the meaning of those moves. As a former faculty career mentor, this feeling emerges when colleagues with whom I have been affiliated with prior to my current professional position asks the question of 'so*

what do you do?' or 'why are you in this current position'?

It is sometimes difficult to attend social or networking events knowing that the question will arise. Although we have a prepared 15-30 second 'elevator speeches' ready to respond to the "what do you do" question, we can't help but notice the difference in responses when we say, 'independent scholar.' For those unfamiliar with the term, the response is often a nod followed by a puzzled look. Some inquirers will ask a follow up question like, "…so you maintain research without monetary compensation or credit towards tenure?" while those outside of academia would liken our position to that of a "career" or "glorified" student (both of which M has been called).

On the other hand, we receive a different response when we can attach our work to an established institution. In these latter instances, many are easily able to make sense of what we do through a quick cognitive process of sorting and classifying. Their responses, in these cases, are often a head nod, smile, and the simple "oh, okay. Nice". These responses demonstrate recognition, understanding, and a subconscious approval of the work we do. We can only postulate the reasons for these varied responses. While some are uncertain on the meaning of the term, we believe many inherently subscribe to the structural hierarchy within the academy that holds a high regard for those in established tenured positions. When we encounter individuals with these inherent and unconscious biases, we can't help but feel the sting and psychosocial jab towards our professional identities. It is also in these instances where we miss the days of attaching our work and affiliation to an academic post in the institution.

In those moments of self-questioning and self-doubt, we used dialogue to encourage each other to appreciate our status as independent scholars. As C-Y-F members, we see mentoring as rooted in the reasons for sustaining who we are as academic women, and intentionally created a

welcoming space of self-healing and acceptance. We encouraged each other to enjoy these daily moments by tapping into the things we love, appreciating the work we do, and giving back to the communities in which we live. While taking these self-preservation teachings into account, Joyanne wrote,

> *It is in these times that I remind myself that these quiet periods are preparation for what is to come. That I should enjoy my free time! So many others would like to be in this position.*

Makini similarly wrote,

> *There is a spiritual quote that says, "in your darkest times, you think you are buried, but instead, you might be rooted for greater things." What an awesome perspective on recognizing our importance, to bloom where we are planted and to stop and smell the roses.*

We recognize there is benefit of being an independent scholar, but at times can share the experiences of loss of the invested time building careers on tenure tracks that is not immediately recognized in academic spaces and new career pathways. In these instances, our SKYPE discussions became mentoring sessions of healing and resiliency. We reminded each other to stay resilient, keep current, and innovative in the work we do. We shared insights on emotional resilience that is needed to sustain the sometimes career psycho-social emotional balance as an independent scholar.

For Anne, C-Y-F provided an academic community of support that aided her transition on a career path away from tenure track, to research associate, to her current position as a learning specialist in an athletic department. Anne wrote:

> *I had the recognition that an identity as an academic/independent scholar has to come from an internalized identity of my construction. My C-Y-F community offers me greater insights into this identity. I am*

known in this community of support. Here, I can interrogate my professional identity in a space with women whom I have the sacred echoes of history in being known … being grounded and offers a source of vitality to be who I am with value and status.

Also, our involvement with the C-Y-F mentoring network allows us to maintain our academic identities through an active publication record (Adams et al., 2016; Agosto et al., 2016; Bristol et al., 2014; De Four-Babb et al., 2015; Esnard et al., 2015; Thorsos et al., 2016; Unterreiner et al. & Wu-Norman, 2015, Wu et al., 2016). In J's words, "*the C-Y-F network has been like a drip-feed [lifeline] to academia.*" In this vein, the network has allowed us to maintain our involvement of research and scholarship through collaborative writing projects.

Although engaging in scholarship through C-Y-F has allowed us to build intellectual and social capital (Esnard et al., 2015) by obtaining scholarly status quo achievements, we also recognize the importance of an established network (Unterreiner et al., 2015). We mentored each other on professional branding, and articulated the knowledge and competencies we bring to our work as consultants on research projects and policy papers, and facilitators in educator professional development, curriculum, and teacher training. Throughout, we supported each other to align our identities and highlight skillsets that were both valuable in academe and that are now applicable in our individual professional roles and communities.

Conclusion

We have renewed our knowledge in this work that identities are neither static or time specific, but continually changing as we continue to make meaning of the 'academic self' (Billot, 2010; p. 711-712) within and outside of the academic arena. These narrative experiences of independent scholars offer hope to others and how they might also launch a pathway for their own work in the face of greater changes ahead in

academic institutions. At this time, traditional routes for academic careers were once clearly laid out now are more nuanced and complex as the enterprise of academia re-invents itself. As a result of the shifting trends in the higher education landscape, it is possible that independent scholars will make up a larger part of the workforce as more degree holders find fewer academic or tenure-track positions available. This economic and professional conundrum will lead many to seek opportunities outside of the academy. Yet, the narratives of this growing body of academics in non-traditional spaces have been largely ignored in the research literature (Anderson, 2007). In an attempt to create a more comprehensive view of the experiences and scholarly practices of these academics, our study provides important insights into the professional experiences and the psychosocial journeys of three independent scholars who are not affiliated with or in an academic role at a university. We provide insight into the ambivalent and sometimes invalidated spaces we occupy.

Independent scholars bring a wealth of intellectual and knowledge capital, and come with competitive skill sets as researchers. They cultivate an acute understanding of how to problem solve using evidenced based approaches. We assert that there is great potential for innovation and transformation as independent scholars make key contributions within, alongside, and independent of traditional contexts. The inclusion of their experiences and contributions shifts the knowledge base into new directions and away from academic settings as the source of knowledge capital.

In this paper, we framed possibilities, ways to conduct inquiry and extend the work that keeps our academic identities as independent scholars flourishing. Future work in this area can address the nuanced influences of race, class, and gender on independent scholar identity. This area of research will continue to inform our understanding of how other independent scholars keep their boots on the ground.

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