Disrupting Façades of Clarity in the Teaching and Learning of Qualitative Research

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Abstract

In this article we examine two methodological façades of clarity that commonly shroud critical qualitative educational inquiry. More specifically, we interrogate discussions of reflexivity and positionality and explore the ways in which methodology curricula and instructional practices perpetuate façades of clarity, or a false sense of coherence, ultimately undermining the transformative potential of critical educational research. We identify specific pedagogical opportunities, spaces, and strategies for dismantling these façades and offer ways to reconstruct methodological practices congruent with the emancipatory and empowering aims of critical scholarship.

Keywords: qualitative research, research training, critical education research

Desmoronando Fachadas de Aparente Claridad en la Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje de la Investigación Cualitativa

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Resumen

En este artículo se reflexiona sobre dos fachadas metodológicas de aparente claridad que normalmente se encuentran amortajadas en la investigación de la educación crítica de calidad. Más concretamente, se cuestionan los debates sobre reflexividad y posicionamiento. También se investiga cómo los currículos metodológicos y las prácticas docentes perpetúan esta aparente claridad, o falsa sensación de coherencia. En última instancia, se indaga en el potencial transformador de la investigación educativa crítica. Identificamos oportunidades pedagógicas específicas, espacios y estrategias para el desmantelamiento de estas fachadas y ofrecemos maneras de reconstruir las prácticas metodológicas congruentes con los objetivos de autonomía y de impulsar el pensamiento crítico.

Palabras claves: investigación cualitativa, entrenamiento en investigación, educación crítica

I nstructors of qualitative inquiry play an important role in framing methodological dialogues and cultivating research practices that advance the social justice aims of educational research (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; Nespor & Groenke, 2009; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004).   In particular, the inclusion of critical qualitative methodologies (for example, participatory action research, indigenous ethnography, counter-storytelling) in research design coursework provides an opportunity for emerging educational scholars to develop the commitments and competencies essential to conducting research that interrogates oppressive power structures and overturns discriminatory educational policies and practices (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004). Unfortunately, situated within the current era of methodological conservatism characterized by increasingly loud governmental demands for scientifically based educational research (Baez & Boyles, 2009; Cannella & Lincoln, 2004a, 2004b, 2009; Denzin & Giardina, 2006; Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012; St. Pierre, 2004), dialogues on the role and relevance of critical methodologies and academic activism remain muted and marginalized within the educational research community specifically and the academy more broadly (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Kouritzan, Piquemal, & Norman, 2008; López & Parker, 2003; Pillow, 2003). Indeed, Brown and Strega (2005) observe "despite the emergence of critical, feminist, and indigenous approaches to research, anti-oppressive and critical research methodologies still rate little more than a mention in most research methods texts" (p. 4).

   One consequence of excluding or giving limited consideration to critical qualitative inquiry in educational research methodology curricula is the lack of opportunity for instructors and students to engage in substantive dialogue on foundational critical research constructs such as power, positionality, reflexivity, praxis, and empowerment.   In the absence of a curricular forum within which to reflect on and practice critical methodological perspectives, graduate student scholars are likely to adopt and enact narrow or overly simplistic notions of critical inquiry, contributing to the creation and perpetuation of what we describe as methodological façades of clarity – false constructions of coherence in

the negotiation of complex research dynamics. Ultimately, these façades contribute to the advancement of a normative methodological paradigm used to frame critical qualitative studies that merely describe, maintain, and reproduce the status quo (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Ellsworth, 1989).

The aim of this article is to assist in the interrogation and dismantling of two specific, yet intertwined, façades of clarity – reflexivity and positionality – that commonly shroud critical methodological discussions within the educational research community. We acknowledge that these façades extend beyond critical inquiry as qualitative scholars situated within constructivist perspectives also wrestle with notions of reflexivity and positionality; however, we are particularly concerned with the ways in which the manifestations of these façades in critical qualitative scholarship undermine the transformative potential of this body of work. After shedding light on the nature of these methodological façades and discussing their role in thwarting the social change objectives of critical qualitative inquiry, we identify specific pedagogical opportunities, spaces, and strategies for dismantling the façades in the interest of reconstructing and enacting methodological practices congruent with the social justice aims of critical education scholarship.

We contend that research methodology instruction is an ideal site for intervention with regards to disrupting methodological façades of clarity given the important research socialization experiences embedded within methodology coursework and graduate research apprenticeships (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; Nespor & Groenke, 2009; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004). As Pellegrino and Goldman (2002) note,

> educational researchers are not born with their disciplinary and methodological biases…; these are acquired characteristics….How educational researchers frame problems is not solely a function of their research content and methods but also a process of modeling by their graduate mentors—how the latter frame problems and pursue their research. (p. 16)

Thus the pedagogy of qualitative research plays an important role in both the establishment and deconstruction of methodological façades of

clarity. Faculty seeking to foster educational scholars capable of and committed to conducting social justice research must begin to re-imagine and transform doctoral-level methodology socialization processes and practices, actively constructing teaching, advising, and mentoring relationships that help students make sense of and practice complex notions of positionality and reflexivity in critical qualitative inquiry (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; O'Conner & O'Neill, 2004).

Façades of Clarity in Critical Educational Research

Although it is difficult to articulate a universal definition of critical inquiry given that the "critical tradition is always changing and evolving" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 303), Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) offer a set of coherent philosophical assumptions and theoretical objectives that distinguish critical scholarship from other social inquiry frameworks. Among others, these core assumptions include the recognition that socially constructed and historically constituted power relations play an important role in mediating thought; an understanding of oppression as a multifaceted phenomenon that necessitates examining interconnections between multiple social identities (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.); and the acknowledgement that "mainstream research practices are generally, although often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race and gender oppression" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304). Building on this final assumption, critical scholars seeking to authentically enact the emancipatory and empowering objectives of critical inquiry are compelled to move away from "mainstream research practices" which serve to perpetuate inequality and instead intentionally and unapologetically develop research designs that include the objective of social transformation – real, material change in the lives of those most touched by inequitable power relations in our society (Brown & Strega, 2005; Cannella & Lincoln, 2009). As Potts and Brown (2005) elaborate, at the heart of the critical methodological perspective is the realization that "whatever the approach, the intention is that the actual process of the research becomes an intervention for change rather than

relying only on the impact of the research outcome, or product" (p. 269).

   To affect change through critical inquiry is, of course, no easy task. Examples of this difficulty can be seen across a variety of disciplines: Catherine Prendergast (1998) calls race an "absent presence" (p. 36), Yin-Kun Chang (2005) calls critical ethnography "queer blind" (p. 171), and Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant (1992) call attention to "the invisible determinations inherent in the intellectual posture" that constitute class (p. 69). As the field of education continues to grow, it remains vital that critical scholars continually investigate the absences, blind spots, and invisibilities inherent in research designed to interrogate, disrupt, and ultimately upend educational inequities.

   In an acknowledgement of the individual and social hazards embedded within unexamined efforts to foster educational transformation via critical pedagogical practices, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) argues "critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change" (p. 310). Such a stance rightly blurs the line between scholars and the environment in which they operate. The failure of critical pedagogues to self-reflexively grapple with the influence of their subjectivity on the way in which they "write" the classroom has dramatic implications:

> When educational researchers writing about critical pedagogy fail to examine the implications of the gendered, raced, and classed teacher and student for the theory of critical pedagogy, they reproduce, by default, the category of generic "critical teacher" – a specific form of the generic human that underlies classical liberal thought. (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 310).

   Ellsworth's analysis calls attention to the dangerous and disheartening consequences of engaging in unreflective critical pedagogical practices, including the preservation of "repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298). Instructors of educational inquiry would do well to take Ellsworth's point seriously. Failing to critically interrogate the relationships and cultural norms which frame our methodology classrooms and doctoral advising relationships does more than simply create silence or blindness around the issues of

gender, race, and class in educational research—it reinscribes "generic" interpretations of researchers, participants and the social positions we presume them to inhabit (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Lincoln, 1998).

The call for increased and nuanced researcher reflexivity is not new. In the past, theorists within the fields of feminist and cultural studies have rightly drawn our attention to issues of power and positionality in order to address the silencing of underrepresented groups (Christian, 2007; Deutsch, 2004; Dillard, 2006; Harding, 1991). Such work reminds us that the way in which researchers conduct themselves in the process of inquiry and represent participants as well as themselves within their studies matters. Naming and interrogating these methodological choices can have real implications for the capacity of scholarship to effect change, allowing researchers to actively confront and resist the silences around their own ideologies. Given the important socialization that takes place within graduate-level research methodology coursework (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Pellegrino & Goldman 2002), it is imperative that instructors of qualitative inquiry cultivate pedagogical spaces and practices that provide emerging scholars with opportunities to disrupt the silence that typically frames critical methodological perspectives within educational inquiry.

Beyond the danger of silence or complacency surrounding such important issues as reflexivity and positionality, there lies the additional risk of believing that such dense social issues have been adequately dispensed with or theorized, that there is a sufficient degree of clarity to how we have dealt with these methodological constructs. Indeed, the belief that complex research issues or identities are fully understood is one of the most dangerous aspects of critical qualitative methodological façades of clarity. It might reasonably be argued that façades of clarity are at least partially built through the policies, practices and institutions which mark us as players within an academic field. Feigned clarity stems the tide of potential critique, a desire for neat authority that ultimately serves to diminish the quality of our research. It is as though the silence enveloping power relations within social scenarios has produced a standard, normative discourse aimed at perpetuating such silence. What happens when we begin to believe that we fully understand and may theoretically contain questions of social reflexivity,

positionality, and social change? One ramification, perhaps, may very well be a reliance on "generic" representations of such complex and layered issues as the communication of who we are as researchers and what that means to the studies we create (e.g., the voices represented in the process as well as the products of research), a consequence that will likely undermine attempts to engage in transformational research.

   The point, we argue, is that issues of reflexivity and positionality are messy and yet we often paint them as not so; as though our research or teaching—our finely developed methodologies and pedagogies—could somehow make sense of it all. Yet there is value in eschewing clarity for ambiguity, in dwelling in the never fully accounted for, the never fully understood. In the failure to completely understand lies possibility. As critical scholars, we need to examine the ways in which we have already claimed to deal with such gaps, how we have already conformed to normative patterns of revelation and investigation—how, together, we have created a "generic" response to the thorny and complex issues of reflection, identity, and representation. As Lather (2003) argues, we need "emancipatory theory-building through the development of interactive and action-inspiring research designs" (p. 186). In order to realize the emancipatory objectives of critical education scholarship, we must work to break through the façades of clarity that potentially surround the power-laden issues we seek to address via critical methodologies.

Teaching to Dismantle Façades of Clarity

We argue that educational inquiry courses and doctoral advising relationships are potent sites for dismantling critical methodological façades of clarity as these spaces and relationships play an instrumental role in the socialization of emerging educational scholars (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; Nespor & Groenke, 2009; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004; Pasque & Kuntz, 2012; Pellegrino & Goldman, 2002). As Koro-Ljungberg (2007) notes, "curriculum is always political, and any context added to the curriculum excludes other learning opportunities" (p. 742). The tendency for educational inquiry curricula to exclude or marginalize critical methodological perspectives (Brown

& Strega, 2005; Hurworth, 2008) and advance overly simplistic treatments of complex research phenomena (for example, methodological façades of clarity concerning researcher positionality and reflexivity) are indeed political acts that serve to maintain the status quo through the cultivation of "objective" educational researchers who reinscribe class, race, and gender oppression via their research processes and products (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). In order to assist in the dismantling of methodological façades of clarity which undermine the transformative potential of educational inquiry, instructors of educational research methodology must revisit their curricular and pedagogical practices, developing classroom spaces that facilitate individual and collaborative student engagement with the complex, fluid, and layered methodological constructs of critical qualitative inquiry. In a discussion of the ethics associated with teaching qualitative research, Lincoln (1998) challenges instructors to reimagine their methodological classrooms in the interest of modeling the democratic aims and expectations of new paradigm research:

> But if changes in orientation toward inquiry, transformations in the way we view those with whom we do research, and changes in our worldview about what constitutes knowledge are the aims of the course, then a far more profound engagement between teacher and student is called for. If teachers of the new inquiry wish students to understand what it means to interact with respondents in a more democratic, open, and participatory way and to help students understand how the psychological and social safety of those with whom we conduct research is paramount, then we have to model both the openness and the psychological safety. (p. 139)

Building upon Lincoln's ethical call to action, this article explores two specific, yet intertwined, methodological façades of clarity – reflexivity and positionality – and suggests specific pedagogical strategies which may prove useful in dismantling these façades, ultimately contributing to the cultivation of educational scholars capable of and committed to conducting transformative, socially just educational research.

The Façade of Reflexivity

The practice of reflexivity asks researchers to reflect on the influence of personal biography within processes of inquiry (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Van Manen (1990) reminds us, reflection is at once both an easy and difficult proposition. Theoretically it is easy to rationalize the need for reflection in critical qualitative inquiry and understand how it informs our research. Realistically, however, reflection is a much more nuanced and complex endeavor to practice and teach. Consequently, it is in this duality of ease and difficulty where the façade of clarity related to reflexivity originates. Two central issues we have identified in the gap between what we as critical education scholars say about reflexivity and our praxis are the challenging nature of academic reflexivity and the lack of embedded mechanisms for reflection in teaching and learning about research methods.

We all see, experience, and interpret the world through lenses and tools shaped by life in a gendered, racialized, and classed society. Accordingly, a number of scholars argue that reflexivity strengthens research and is indeed a methodological imperative in qualitative inquiry (Jones, Torres, Arminio, 2006; Lather, 2003; Richardson, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Salzman, 2002) as it challenges researchers to explicitly articulate the influence of their multiple social identities, assumptions, and behaviors on research processes and relationships. Milner (2007) argues that especially in the case of research involving issues of identity, a focus of critical qualitative inquiry, "when researchers are not mindful of the enormous role of their own and others' racialized positionality and cultural ways of knowing, the results can be dangerous to communities and individuals of color" (sic – and to everyone involved) (p. 388). Unfortunately, the façade of clarity that currently surrounds reflexive processes and practices undermines the potential for deep reflection called for by Milner and others, ultimately limiting the transformative potential of critical qualitative inquiry.

A useful approach to understanding the lack of authentic scholarly reflection which often characterizes critical qualitative educational research comes from Schön (1983) who reminds us that reflection on self-practice often results in criticism, confusion, uncertainty and

change. Accordingly, authentic reflection necessitates researchers embrace the feelings of vulnerability that naturally arise as they critically examine the influence of their beliefs, assumptions, and practices on research endeavors. A simpler alternative to this difficult path is the luxury offered by the façade of clarity perpetrated by many scholars who consider themselves to be reflexive. These individuals allege to reflect on their practices, often highlighting a commitment to keeping a research journal in the methodology section of a manuscript, yet fail to provide substantive discussions of reflexive tensions encountered along the research journey. For example, researches often omit discussions of their positionality within larger social contexts or how implicit beliefs about the nature of transformational inquiry shaped their approach to writing up and disseminating research findings.

In addressing the bifurcation of theory from practice, Argyris and Schön (1974) offer the metaphor of mental maps, organizing mechanisms which guide behaviors. These maps often deviate from an individual's espoused behavior, making it possible to simultaneously believe one is reflective and refrain from engaging in reflective practices. Furthermore, Argyris (1990) explains that the gap between what is said (i.e., I have reflected on my actions) versus what is done (i.e., this reflection is limited in scale and depth) is often a product of ego-protection, a relevant observation given that, as stated previously, reflexivity opens researchers, and their work, up to increased criticism and feelings of insecurity.

Of course, the impact of research reflexivity extends beyond the individual, often questioning dominant norms and power structures. Argyris's (1985) theory of defensive routines suggests patterns, such as the lack of reflexivity, exist to protect the organizational status quo, to "protect individuals', groups', and organizations' usual way of dealing with reality" (p. 5). In the interest of maintaining constant and "legitimate" power dynamics within the field of inquiry, researchers may adopt false or limited notions of reflection that give the façade of compliance with critical inquiry norms, yet simultaneously undermine the transformative potential of their scholarship.

Similarly, Zinn and Macedo (2005) describe the phenomenon of academic dilettantism which perpetuates the academic status quo and

relates directly to the façade of reflexivity. Academic dilettantes are intellectuals and scholars who profess a commitment to progressive research intended to produce social change yet fail to actively engage with individuals, groups and communities beyond the academy. These academics are sated by their intellectual pursuits. The absence of authentic reflection on the incongruence between espoused critical inquiry principles and enacted research behaviors ultimately contributes to a hollow form of critical research implicated in the reproduction of inequality. Socialized to the norms of academic dilettantism in research training courses and mentoring relationships, new scholars perpetuate dominant research paradigms laden with the potential to harm marginalized communities and community members via arms-length research practices.

   We contend that graduate students and early career scholars are rarely challenged to consider and disrupt the façade of reflexivity that shrouds contemporary qualitative inquiry. To be sure, reflexivity does not come easily to a significant number of students (Hellawell, 2006). This begs the question, how might qualitative inquiry instructors engage with reflexivity in the classroom in ways that acknowledge the complexity of the construct and encourage students to close the gap between espoused and enacted methodological principles? By way of example, in an introduction to qualitative inquiry course one of the authors teaches includes a "who is here" exercise that asks students to explore their own diverse social identities (i.e. race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, native language, birth order, raised by one parent…). Students stand in a circle and the facilitator calls out an identity. Each person who claims that identity steps into the circle. Students look around to see who is in / out of the circle, then the people on the inside of the circle step back to the outer circle. For example, when "who identifies as a woman" is called out, all women step to the center of the circle (and often give each other a high-five or hug each other before stepping back to the outer circle). "Who identifies as a man? As transgender or gender transgressive?" "Protestant? Buddhist? Jewish? Muslim? Catholic?..." Each time a question is asked, the students who claim that identity step into the circle. Students are asked to explore how it feels to step into the circle (i.e. claim an identity) or to

remain on the outside while other students step into the circle. It is also important for the group to reflect upon what identities are not represented in the group at all. Literally hundreds of identities could be named. In terms of processing this exercise, students are asked to reflect upon the identities of which they are most aware and least aware. The group then discusses the myriad ways in which a researcher's own social identities may influence their research study, the complexities of participant's social identities, power relationships between researcher and participant, and the ways in which a researcher may sincerely "do no harm" to participants and communities. Students are also asked to reflect upon the ways in which their research efforts may perpetuate dominant and disempowering identity discourses on an individual, institutional, systems, or societal level; and the ways in which their research may be emancipatory on each of these levels.

Also underscoring the need for researchers to attend to the complex issue of reflexivity, Colyar (2006) suggests reflective writing discussions be included in qualitative methodology sections of manuscripts as a vehicle of scholarly self-discovery. This practice gives importance to the role of reflexivity in education research and simultaneously holds individual researchers accountable for their reflective practices. Colyar also explains such measures convey to readers the author's experiences and accordingly help build a framework for understanding the topic at hand. The emphasis here is on writing as a process that assists researchers in understanding the research and themselves – not on writing as a product, which is a pitfall for many researchers. Instructors of qualitative inquiry can incorporate Colyar's insights into class assignments, providing a space for students to practice reflective writing and dialogue with peers about the feeling of vulnerability and doubt that accompany authentic reflection and heightened, albeit incomplete, sense of self-awareness.

Another example of disrupting the façade of reflexivity comes from Gibbs, Costley, Armsby and Trakakis (2007) who encourage the use of a reflexive diary as a way for researchers to reflect on the complexities of their research. Additionally, we encourage methodology instructors to consider innovative approaches to researcher reflexivity such as collective/group reflective processes and field notes included in text, footnotes or as appendices.

The Façade of Positionality

Inextricably linked to the construct of reflexivity, the notion of positionality in qualitative inquiry is commonly used to frame and examine assumptions the researcher holds about the topic, the researcher's personal experiences with the topic, as well as the influential role participant and researcher social identities (e.g. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, dis/ability, age, religion) play in shaping the interpersonal dynamics enacted within a research project (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006; Milner, 2007). Beyond informing the nature of research relationships, issues of positionality also influence researcher decisions regarding the "re-presentation" of participant voices and knowledge in the process and final research product (Fine, 1994). Situated within the scholarship of critical inquiry, attention to matters of positionality necessitate that researchers explore the various layers of power enacted both intentionally and unintentionally in research relationships and matters of representation (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Indeed, Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) caution that "research may be seen as a mechanism of power without careful scrutiny about how power influences all aspects of a research design and particularly in regard to interpretation and representation" (p. 101).

Ballard (1996) also underscores the importance of examining positionality in critical inquiry, asserting, "We have critiqued the research method as if it were the foundation of our work. It is now time to look at the ghost in these research machines, that is, ourselves. This means focusing on research as an essentially human activity and as therefore embedded in personal, social, cultural, political, and historical, spiritual, and gendered bodies and contexts" (p. 103). Although he offers a compelling call for increased reflection on the human dynamics that shape the process and products of inquiry, Ballard's focus in the reflective prompt, "How shall I be toward these people I am studying?" (p. 103) is indicative of a façade of clarity that typically shrouds discussions of positionality, perpetuating a narrow framework primarily concerned with the negotiation of power issues embedded in the social identities enacted by and between researchers and research participants.

The ultimate goal of this reflective process is to cultivate authentic, respectful, and empowering research relationships that realize the transformative objectives of critical inquiry.

Although methodological conversations regarding the need to reflect on, account for, and ethically negotiate researcher and participant positionality throughout the research process do play an important role in cultivating empowering research relationships (a worthy goal indeed), essential constituencies in processes of positioning are all too often ignored. For example, narrowly framing positionality as a function of the relational dynamics enacted between researchers and participants serves to overlook the profound implications of positional power performed in relationships between critical scholars and their mentors as well as professional colleagues (e.g., research advisors, co-researchers, journal editors/reviewers, funding agents). Accordingly, we advocate for the disruption of the façade of clarity regarding positionality by reframing contemporary discussions of positionality in critical education scholarship to include an interrogation of power exercised in all research relationships (not just those forged with participants). Such a critical reframing allows scholars to recognize and investigate the multiple dimensions of positionality which shape both the process and product of critical scholarship.

To reiterate, our goal is not to diminish the importance of examining the positional power dynamics enacted between researchers and participants. Those power dynamics are real and hold significant implications for the collection, analysis, and representation of participant voices (Milner, 2007). Rather we seek to expand the positionality framework to include reflections on the position of critical researchers within the education scholarly community, a position characterized by the struggle to transform the academy, while simultaneously navigating institutional practices and professional relationships designed to perpetuate current power structures (e.g., dissertation committees, tenure, peer review of journal manuscripts). As Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1986) point out, control over what counts as knowledge leads to control over policy, systems, access to education, and other social processes. Within the context of the education research community, faculty advisors, methodology

instructors, institutional review board members, tenure committees, funding agents, journal editors and reviewers exercise a tremendous amount of control over what counts as rigorous research and quality scholarship (Benner & Sandström, 2000; Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Cheek, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Tierney, 2004; Pallas, 2001; Stanley, 2007). These imposed standards of legitimate academic activity play a significant role in constraining the transformative potential of critical scholarship given their tendency to perpetuate a research culture that devalues, and often ignores, critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive methodological principles and practices (Brown & Strega, 2005; Stanley, 2007). Moving beyond Ballard's (1996) prompt, "How shall I be toward these people I am studying?" we feel compelled to ask, "As critical methodologists, how shall we be toward ALL participants in the research process, not just those we are studying but the individuals located outside the research/field setting who influence the work via their power and authority?" "How far are we willing to follow the echoes of power relationships as they extend beyond one's relation to the participants in a study to the very social and academic environment in which the study is constructed?"

Although interrupting the façade of clarity that currently characterizes dialogues on positionality in critical inquiry is no small task, we identify research methodology courses as potential sites of interruption and transformation. In a special issue of Educational Researcher dedicated to examining new directions in the research preparation of doctoral students, Pallas (2001) offers a critique of traditional research socialization models that characterize education doctoral programs. Specifically, Pallas notes that research training programs are typically grounded in the following assumptions and practices: 1) students are perceived as passive participants in the socialization process, 2) students' personal histories, social origins, and epistemologies are assumed to be irrelevant in research preparation, and 3) education research training does not problematize whose skills and values are internalized through the socialization process. Pallas notes "the issue of which epistemologies and whose get privileged in doctoral programs is a matter of politics and power" (p. 10). However, we find that these critical political matters are rarely confronted directly by faculty

members and graduate students. For example, how does a Native American graduate student deeply committed to the principles of indigenous epistemology and methodology navigate the power dynamics embedded in her relationship with a methodology professor who requires all students design and conduct a "standard" participant-observation research project? How may this graduate student account for and represent the power wielded by the faculty member in the research process? In class discussions, does the professor acknowledge the profound role her own social identities, theoretical orientations, and research methodological principles play in privileging certain bodies of knowledge and marginalizing others?   How are such questions addressed when this student and professor meet during office hours? An inability and/or unwillingness to tackle the complex issues of positionality that shape research methodology curricula, pedagogy, and student-faculty interactions not only contributes to the intellectual isolation of graduate students (Gay, 2004), it also undermines the potential for doctoral-level research methodology courses and mentoring relationships to cultivate a new generation of critical education scholars committed to and capable of conducting socially just inquiry.

   Instructors of educational research seeking to dismantle the façade of clarity which typically veils discussions of positionality within critical inquiry must start by examining their own classrooms and pedagogical practices (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; Nespor & Groenke, 2009; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004;). O'Connor and O'Neill (2004) and Koro-Ljungberg (2007) underscore the importance of instructor reflexivity when designing and facilitating qualitative inquiry courses, challenging teachers to acknowledge the power they possess in the socialization of new researchers and the role they often play in perpetuating the hegemonic status quo by facilitating classroom environments which silence students with different theoretical and methodological commitments. Specific strategies advanced for disrupting traditional power structures within qualitative inquiry coursework include validating students' unique experiences, creating a sense of community within the classroom that contributes to open dialogue and a willingness to express differences of opinion,

encouraging students to take risks, and collaborative writing projects (Lapadat, 2009; Lincoln, 1998; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004). The common thread in these proposed strategies is a willingness on the part of methodology instructors to create pedagogical spaces and student relationships that honor, rather than silence, differences of opinion, intentionally role modeling the democratic aims of critical educational inquiry.

The façade of positionality can also be disrupted within educational research curricula through the incorporation of readings and class dialogues which examine the power dynamics embedded throughout the knowledge production process, rather than limiting this conversation to the negotiation of social identities and power by researches and participants. For example, readings and conversations that examine the ways in which the power and positionalities of Institutional Review Board members (Johnson, 2008, Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Tierney, 2004), journal editors and reviewers (Stanley, 2007), doctoral advisors and committee members (Pallas, 2001), and funding agencies (Benner & Sandström, 2000; Cheek, 2005) shape critical qualitative inquiry will help students challenge normative, overly-simplified constructions of positionality as a methodological concept primarily dealt with in the field setting and briefly mentioned in the research manuscript. Providing graduate students with opportunities to examine and interrogate a more complicated, multidimensional framework of positionality, one that fosters an understanding of how social identities and power dynamics enacted beyond the research context fundamentally shape and often constrain critical inquiry, will contribute to the socialization of educational researchers better prepared to navigate and disrupt these power dynamics in the interest of conducting transformative research.

To focus on "research as an essentially human activity and as therefore embedded in personal, social, cultural, political, and historical, spiritual, and gendered bodies and contexts" (Ballard, 1996, p. 103) necessitates that our methodological reflections and actions embrace a broader understanding of researcher positionality, one that reflects an awareness of and willingness to confront the full range of power-laden relationships inextricably connected to the decision to conduct critical research. This approach is an essential step in dismantling the existing

façade of clarity that currently shrouds most discussions of positionality within educational inquiry curricula.

Conclusion

The aims of this article were twofold. The first was to introduce and illustrate the concept of methodological façades of clarity – false constructions of coherence in the negotiation of complex research dynamics – which serve to undermine the transformative potential of critical educational inquiry. We elaborated on two specific methodological façades – reflexivity and positionality – in the interest of illustrating how the construction and perpetuation of overly simplistic frameworks for understanding the complexities of critical inquiry contributes to research that serves to reinscribe rather than disrupt oppressive power structures and discriminatory policies which characterize contemporary educational institutions and systems. The second aim was to offer insight into possible strategies for dismantling these dangerous façades within the pedagogical spaces and practices of educational research methodology coursework.

Although we focus our attention in this article on two specific façades of clarity and limit our discussion of possible sites of intervention to the pedagogy of educational inquiry, it is important to note that the social justice aims of critical qualitative educational research are commonly undermined by numerous other methodological façades (for example, overly simplified conceptions of research ethics, collaborative research, participatory research, research quality). We contend these façades can and must be challenged in a diverse array of research socialization venues (e.g., training programs for journal editorial boards and manuscript reviewers, institutional review board protocols, funding proposals). We opted to limit the scope of this article to the possibilities for disruption and change embedded within the teaching of qualitative research given the significant role graduate research training plays in the reification of knowledge production norms which often serve to perpetuate a repressive status quo (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lincoln, 1998; Nespor & Groenke, 2009; O'Connor & O'Neill, 2004; Pellegrino & Goldman, 2002). As Nespor and Groenke (2009) note, "it is during

graduate education that researchers acquire long-lasting predilections for certain kinds of frames" (p. 1004). Thus we assert it is imperative that instructors of educational inquiry foster pedagogical spaces and research mentoring relationships which work to disrupt methodological façades of clarity and prepare students to embrace, rather than eschew, the complexity and ambiguity that accompanies the decision to engage in critical qualitative educational research.

We do not assume that the pedagogical reflexivity we call for in this article will be easily or quickly achieved. The identification and disruption of methodological façades of clarity embedded within qualitative inquiry coursework is a time intensive process that necessitates faculty interrogate and potentially alter their approach to teaching research methodology. Faculty must make the time and commitment to explore their own methodological assumptions and biases and consider the ways in which their unique constellation of social identities and positionalities may contribute to classroom environments that maintain "relations of domination" (Ellsworth, 1989) via the continued marginalization of critical methodological perspectives, the perpetuation of overly simplistic notions of complex research dynamics, and/or the silencing of students seeking to express methodological commitments different from the ones emphasized in the curriculum. This reflective process may be particularly challenging for faculty who do not conduct critical educational research and therefore may feel less comfortable engaging students in conversations about the complexities that frame critical methodological perspectives. As a result of this discomfort, faculty may simply give critical methodologies shallow treatment at the end of the semester or opt to omit these perspectives from the syllabus altogether. We contend these instructional "sins of omission" (Lincoln, 1998) not only serve to unnecessarily delimit the field and future of educational research, they reify norms of knowledge production which maintain the status quo of educational inequity and reproduce "systems of class, race and gender oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304).

Instructors of qualitative educational inquiry play an important role in framing the discourse of educational research. As such it is imperative they/we take the time to reflectively examine the many ways in which

their discursive and pedagogical efforts construct the very norms they seek to deconstruct and critique. Accordingly in this article we have echoed Koro-Ljungberg's (2007) call to demystify the process of research training and have attempted to provide examples of pedagogical practices and spaces that may serve to disrupt methodological façades of clarity and facilitate the socialization of a new generation of educational scholars capable of and committed to conducting socially just research that fosters transformational change in the lives of research participants.

Notes

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