CRITICAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION: NOTES FROM THE FIELD

By

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ABSTRACT

The state of the notion *critical* in theory and research is open to a yawning discussion. The political challenges that critical scholars have taken up are usually accompanied by methodological frameworks that have been appropriated to fit the nature of their critical enterprise. The “critical” of the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s, particularly in educational research and theory has allowed distinct heavens for educational scholars in line with their different socio-political positionalities, usually in tangent with social theory and epistemology. This dissertation project problematizes contemporary portrayals of the “critical” in regards to the question of referentiality and bordering and the associations between critique and critical, while examining constructions of the critical in the field of educational research through working its various aspects such as mechanisms and functions of critical, alignments of critical, epistemic vs. empirical criticals, and homologic productions of difference within the critical scholarship. This has been done through analysis of research data conducted through systematic content analysis of education and educational research journals, as well as data from interviews with “critical” scholars at various US universities.

Content analysis and interview data indicate that the problematic of defining the “critical” contemporarily have to do with the same feature that set the critical initiative into motion at the hands of the Frankfurt School members in the first place. That the members of Frankfurt School envisioned a rupture with the past (the Enlightenment) as well as with the future (the finality of the liberal bourgeois order) suggests a domain that thought itself as oppositional, hence political,
to the existing order and its relations of power. Therefore, the critical as one of the building blocks of critical research theory and practice is employed for specific tasks relatively independent from each other, suggesting that attachments/attributions to the notion of critical such as normative claims, political commitments, and value orientations carried the discussion over the realm of the identity problematic within the academy. Drawing on Bourdieu’s field theory, as well as on patterns abstracted from content analysis throughout this dissertation, I also argued that the critical enterprise is not a static theoretical construct that is applicable across different research studies. Nor is it limited to the realm of the theoretical; for its usage in empirical studies and the contextual and conceptual variations that its instances, from German idealism to French structuralism, etc., underline the need to adopt both theoretical and empirical tools in order to explore the current manifestations of the critical enterprise. Moreover, the political dimension of research construction and practice is inherent to the various aspects of the social, academic, and personal and is re-enforced through power relations within the field.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The notion *critical* is one of the most frequent and yet contested qualifiers of empirical studies in education. A tremendous body of research has been conducted under the banner of the *critical* all with differing attributions to the term and the nature of the study in general. This dissertation seeks to understand the constructions of “criticality” and the strategies of positive social transformation sought in critical qualitative research in education. It also problematizes contemporary portrayals of the “critical” in regards to the question of referentiality and bordering and the associations between critique and critical, while examining architecture of the critical in the field of educational research. Towards this end, it sets out to map theoretical and practical variations across critical researches in an attempt to reconstruct the implications that such variations may have for the field of education. More specifically, this dissertation asserts that constructions of critical research and scholarship can be understood in relation to other research practices and scholarships.

Although differences exist within the critical enterprise, critical qualitative research is generally located at the nexus of power and oppression. According to Therborn (2007), for example, for critical research, “[a] major reason for studying the present is to understand the power that it exercises, and critiques of it are largely, if not absolutely, dependent on the hope of a possible different world (p.65).” Therefore, studies that have been informed by this juxtaposition predominantly focus on revealing how power operates (Carspecken, 1996; McLaren & Kincheloe, 1994; Anderson, 1989), and how it consequently perpetuates social
inequalities. Simon and Dippo (1986) propose the major characteristics of critical work as follows:

For ethnographic work to warrant the label "critical" requires that it meets three fundamental conditions: (1) the work must employ an organizing problematic that defines one's data and analytical procedures in a way consistent with its project; (2) the work must be situated, in part, within a public sphere that allows it to become the starting point for the critique and transformation of the conditions of oppressive and inequitable moral and social regulation; and (3) the work must address the limits of its own claims by a consideration of how, as a form of social practice, it too is constituted and regulated through historical relations of power and existing material conditions (p.197).

Such distinction of critical work from other types of research and scholarship is only one example. Similarly, Morrow and Brown (1994) offer another set of distinctions, this time concerning the theoretical level. They argue:

The term critical itself, in the context of ‘critical theory’ has a range of meanings not apparent in common sense where critique implies negative evaluations. This is, to be sure, one sense of critique in critical theory, given its concern with unveiling ideological mystifications in social relations; but another even more fundamental connotation is methodological, given a concern with critique as involving establishing the presuppositions of approaches to the nature of reality, knowledge, and explanation; yet another dimension of critique is associated with the self-reflexivity of the investigator and the linguistic basis of representation (p.7).
There are many approaches with regard to what warrants a research study to be identified as critical. But in a general and loose sense, critical research is described as significantly different from other research studies by its epistemological principles and philosophical assumptions (Anderson, 1989). Carspecken (1996), for example, notes that “criticalists” share a value orientation as a common ground: they are all “concerned about social inequalities and direct their work toward positive social change” (p.3). However, this political and methodological stance, according to Michael Apple (2000), sometimes fails to come to terms with the needed material, social and political transformations in society, and becomes instead a “romantic possibilitarian” rhetoric, “in which the language of possibility substitutes for a consistent tactical analysis of what the balance of forces actually is and what is necessary to change it” (p.225). In this sense, positive social transformation, one of the most important qualifiers of critical research, is sometimes constructed rhetorically.

Historical roots of critical research in education, in terms of practice, date back to the late 1960s, at least with reference to the development of the (critical) mindset aligned with the Civil Rights movements in the USA that set out to challenge the deterministic frameworks of positivism. By breaking away from the prevalence of the structural-functionalist legacy (the adage “schools are neutral places”) educational research took a historical turn during the 1960s by bracketing and de-provincializing matters of history, social class, race, and gender within the intimate and essential links of these to the schooling processes (Karabel and Halsey, 1977 Blackledge & Hunt, 1985; Majoribank, 1985). Under the blueprint of the Coleman’s Report, published in 1966, research on social asymmetries associated with and enforced through education, therefore, began to occupy a prestigious position in the field with particular attention
to the subjects who had been traditionally located at the periphery of social life, such as women, minorities, racial and ethnic groups, and children (Aries, 1966; Collins, 1965). This interest in the periphery led to the development of a class of researchers who were giving particular attention to the transformative function of educational research towards social justice and the impact this would have on approaching the relation with the subjects of research and engagement with methodology. These researchers have come to occupy a central position in the field and its aspects of theory and practice (Weis & Fine, 2004). One has to underline, however, that these early attempts did not put forth a solid critical agenda for educational researchers.

The process of schooling as social engagement – both for those involved in it and those who are investigating its specifics for the sake of research and knowledge production – has increasingly gained momentum as the field of education in the US in general, and that of sociology of education in particular, has come to pay a greater attention to the issue of inequality. Academic attempts to redress some of the conditions of inequality through research, have eventually impacted the emergence of a line of critical researchers whose identity/stance is expressed through their research practices (Ladwig, 1996). Such clustering may echo Hiller’s claim on intellectuals: “intellectuals to be understood not as ‘members of certain profession’ but as ‘representatives of a certain characterological type’” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 226). The idea that (the outcomes of) qualitative research could be used for the purposes of social transformation, social justice, or emancipation was not equally welcomed by everybody as it would be expected. This “new stance” (or researcher identity) towards research epistemology, methodology and practice became a target of critiques, and rekindled new discussions on the role of the researcher, particularly in qualitative studies. At many times, criticism came in the disguise of certain
problematics assigned to the nature of qualitative research, such as “objectivity,” “generalizability,” and “validity,” or to the other political tenets of “practicing science with attitudes/values” (Hammersley, 2000, Wexler, 1987).

Therefore, grounding its major knots within the discussion of these issues in the literature, this dissertation project problematizes issues of constructing criticality, framing critical research, and the transformation strategies that are sought in critical research. Such agenda required that this study incorporate four major bodies of literature: studies focusing on historical and conceptual roots of critique and critical research; critical qualitative researches conducted on education and schooling; studies concerning the role of research on positive social transformation; and reviews, theoretical, and philosophical works on the different aspects of “critical enterprise.”

**Significance of the study:**

Many scholars (Anderson, 1989, Carspecken, 1999, Foley, 2002, Surber, 1998) underline that the notion of the critical does not refer to only one academic, social, or theoretical position, but to various attitudes, approaches, and practices. This is the case since, according to Kincheloe & McLaren (2000) “there are many critical theories, not just one; b) the critical tradition is always changing and evolving; c) critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity, as there is room for disagreement among critical theorists” (p.281). On the other hand, literature shows that one of the main common tenets of contemporary critical research is its focus on disadvantaged groups with emancipatory and transformative interests. Although there are many
excellent studies providing historical and conceptual trajectory for critical research, they tend to remain in the realm of either idiosyncratic explorations on the one hand (e.g., how the researcher understands critical and how s/he reflects on his/her work), or the normative formulations of conducting critical research, on the other (e.g., how critical research should be conducted; what are the appropriate methods, analyses, etc.).

This dissertation project sets out to explore both constructions of such variations and strategies of transformations that are sought through critical qualitative research in education. This is achieved through analyzing both articles published in educational research journals, and interviews conducted with scholars whose works are loosely defined as critical. To the best of my knowledge, there is no systematic study that explores the grounds and bases of such variations across critical researchers.

This study aspires to help advance both theoretical and practical conversations circumscribing critical qualitative research in education, giving a brief but an important glance to the current portraiture of critical qualitative research in education. Individual interpretations of the critical can serve to understand the ramifications that the notion has undergone in educational research, as this study focuses on architecture rather than content.

The results of this study could be used to construct an initial theoretical framework for the research that undertakes critical qualitative research with some commitment to positive social transformation. The study also hopes to make a contribution to methodological theory with regard to how to understand critical qualitative research. Most importantly, insights of the critical scholars I interviewed for this dissertation provide invaluable contributions to existing literature.
The scope and the limitations of the study:

This dissertation project has two major focuses: 1) How critical qualitative research in education is constructed, and 2) What strategies of transformation are sought in critical qualitative research in education. Through these focuses, the present project ambitions to provide a vivid picture of the critical qualitative research in education with data derived from journal articles and interviews.

As stated earlier, critical qualitative research (and simply the notion critical) is one of the most contested areas in research theory and practice. In this sense, many critical researchers and/or critical theorists may not subscribe to the ideas and claims I present throughout this dissertation. In one of his book chapters on critical ethnography, Carspecken (1999) argues that there is no such thing as critical ethnography, acknowledging that:

This chapter will introduce readers to one version of critical ethnography that is distinguished by a fairly explicit, though continuously developing methodological theory. Illustrations will be provided that focus mainly on educational research. Readers must bear in mind the fact that this is a version of critical ethnography, not what critical ethnography is. In fact, some researchers who identify themselves as critical ethnographers will not be readily attracted by the research methods and principals I advocate (p.29).
Following Carspecken’s disclaimer-like informative paragraph, my research should be appraised in a similar manner. Just like many scholars who draw on other contested terrains and concepts of social sciences (e.g., social class, ethnicity, reflexivity, queer theory, etc.), I provide as many examples as possible to clarify my points and attributions to the concepts throughout the study. This is because my own readings and theoretical assumptions came into play in many parts of the data analysis. In some parts, especially where I discuss what the critical means in critical qualitative research in education, the theory and my own interpretations of it may have more visibly colored the data analysis, more so than other aspects of this dissertation.

The scholars whom I have interviewed do not constitute a homogenous group. This was reflected on the data analysis in the form of a preference to stay in the realm of open-endedness vis-à-vis highlighting “robust conclusions” and demarcations, which many scholars consider as one of the fuses of balanced qualitative research. I did not treat my data as such.

In order to overcome such limitations, I followed a rigorous methodology, described in chapter three. This, however, does not mean that the study is totally immune to unforeseen external and internal threats.

And lastly, in relation to the nature of qualitative inquiry, this research study cannot be generalized to other contexts without deploying context-specific translations and without engaging in further investigation. However, I believe that it is possible to reach “intellectual generalizations” from the outcomes and data presented below by means of formulating empirical and theoretical questions.
Organization of the chapters

This dissertation project is planned and organized in three major sections. The first section consists of three chapters: *Introduction, Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*, and *Method*. After discussing and explaining the research in the introductory chapter, discussions of the conceptual and theoretical framework, as well as the review of the relevant literature, serve the aim of opening up a new theoretical and empirical space for the study. *Conceptual Framework* begins with a historical overview of critical research and critical theory. It continues with portraying the applications of “critical frameworks” in educational research. Later in the same chapter, the theoretical framework that is used to analyze research data is constructed and its significance for the research discussed. The *Method* chapter is divided into two segments: *Content Analysis* and *Interviews*.

The second section consists of only one chapter in which the data conducted from content analysis of education and educational research journals are presented. *Construction of Critical Research and Transformation Strategies* from the journal articles reviewed are then analyzed and discussed respectively. This section includes both qualitative and quantitative data presented through charts and quotations.

The third and the last section of the study, in which interview data are presented and discussed, consists of four chapters. The first chapter of this section, entitled *Towards a New Paradigm* explores the delineations of the “critical”. Then the chapter “*Personal is political*”: 
Normativity and Reflexivity examines the ways through which personal comes into contact with the constructions of critical qualitative research. The transformations and their grounds sought in critical qualitative research are discussed in the Transformations chapter. This section concludes with the final chapter Conclusions and Implications.

In the following chapter, I will talk about conceptual and theoretical framework of the current study. Fist, I will begin with the historical trajectory of the notion critical in social and political theory.
CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A Brief History of Critique in Social Theory

Social critique is as old as human history\(^1\) (Walzer, 2002) and is one of the major building blocks of contemporary social theory. Given this intimacy with life itself, it is not a small task to attempt a mapping out of all the foundations that have given breath to the engagement with this social critique in the first place, or at least such an effort requires a dissertation entirely dedicated to this end. For a similar undertaking would aspire to present the genealogy of criticism, its historical origination and its contemporary manifestations, no less. And clearly, this is out of the purview of this project. However, both the past and the present of the critical are to be found throughout these pages, if not for purposes of lineage, at least definitely out of necessity to analyze the questions and themes at hand. Necessity is what mandated an itinerary guided by the relevant body of research reviewed and analyzed as well as the purposes of the study at large. It is this coupling that set the operation of this work, rather than a notion of legitimation that dwells unto how much history and how many names need to be covered for a study of this nature to become representative. Having said this, I should emphasize that I am very well aware that my review will leave very important figures, historical moments,

\(^{1}\) Walzer (2002) argues that “...criticism is most properly the work of “insiders,” men and women mindful of and committed to the society whose policies and practices they call into question –who care about what happens to it.(p.xi)”
and many other related issues unexplored. However, current literature indicates that the figures below and critical moments are commonly utilized by North American researchers.

In following the trajectory of the critical, one would have to begin with the modern era when the phenomenon known as the *Enlightenment* emerged in continental Europe. This is because “rationality,” as a way of interpreting the world and other cosmological and ontological categories of the human condition, evolved through the critique of religion and other metaphysical doctrines by putting forward the “science” as the primary anchoring point of thought and understanding the world. It is this duality of thought and world, as well as the reconstruction of both rationally, that gave birth to critique that could be said to take on some systematic nature.

Thus, the *Enlightenment*, which started around the end of the 18th century, marks the beginning of history’s modern era. The French Revolution of 1789 played an important role in the emergence of the phenomenon in Europe. The Enlightenment is a historical benchmark in that it has become synonymous with modernity itself by virtue of the shifts that it triggered, from the standpoint of the sacred, the mystic, and the doctrinal to the territory of the rational and the paradigmatically scientific. It particularly contested religion and other belief systems that devalorized rationality and science (Surber, 1998). The shift that the phenomenon set in operation will have enduring implications with reference to critiquing the social and self because,

> [p]erhaps the single most important feature of the Enlightenment was its self-consciously critical stance. If the thinkers of the Enlightenment agreed on any single point, it was that all received beliefs, whether religious, ethical, philosophical,
historical, or commonsensical, must be subjected without exception to the most thoroughgoing critique (ibid, p.8).

Many philosophers had attempted ways through which such a critical stance could be realized. But it was only with Kant that the issue gained significant elaboration that would enable a more round understanding of critique altogether. In his 1784 article, Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? (Answering to the question: What is Enlightenment?), Kant laid out his thoughts about the problems that had permeated societies of the previous ages, sometimes called as the “Dark Ages”. For him, the problem of human suffering and oppression had nothing to do with a human being’s intellect or inability to think about himself/herself; rather, suffering was due to a lack of courage on the part of this human being to take rational steps in their mind.

Kant argued that the only possible way for human beings to acquire objective and valid knowledge of the world was through constructing, all by themselves, an “objectively knowable world.” By the very act of construction, this being, previously a creature that was true to his position in the world as part of Nature, suddenly became a part of something else, Society; and he himself no longer remained a thing of the laws of Nature, but had also taken on a different character altogether, that of the Subject as the center of the world, with the latter still viewed as separate and objective entity, which explains why Kant’s was called a “Copernicus Revolution” (Cannon, 2001). An objective knowledge of the world was only achievable by the subject acting to produce it:

Thus, while agreeing with David Hume that the universal and necessary structure of causality use ‘something that exists in the mind, not in objects’ (Hume, 1978, p.165), Kant rejects Hume’s contention that structure of the mind is the repository of rational
categories which comprise the transcendental conditions for the possibility of objectively valid knowledge (Ibid, p.11).

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, productive imagination is the source for self activity and thus becomes the propelling agent in constructing the objective world, Kant argues. In this sense, he places rationality at the center of the world, a force that works in conformity with Newtonian laws. Human understanding thus becomes the determining factor with regards to the laws of Nature themselves. This could be seen as a reconciliation of the Newtonian universe with human autonomy. In this view, he claims that although one can acquire an objective knowledge of the world, this is only possible if “pure reason” is informed by “sensuous intuition” (*ibid*). Critique thus transforms into a tool to investigate the limitations of concepts and doctrines in an attempt to extract a condition freedom from them, even when they are, by themselves, void of such freedom constitutively. Freedom will bring about Truth, which, according to Kant, “shall set you free”. This notion of Freedom-Truth proved to be a powerful instrument that may be used for critique.

In the decades to follow, from within the followers of German Idealism of the 19th century, there arose a philosophical figure that will have a tremendous impact, not only during his lifetime, but also way after up to the present time. This was of course Hegel. Hegel was, in some ways, influenced by Kant, particularly in the areas of spirituality and morality (Pinkard, 2001). This, however, does not diminish the significant breaks that this “kid of the Enlightenment” will make with many of its dominant principles:

Hegel too was very critical of the Enlightenment, subjecting it to almost scornful treatment in one notable chapter of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Yet there were aspects
of the Enlightenment legacy that he never abandoned, and which he grew to appreciate the more they were imperiled. Chief among these was the Enlightenment faith in the authority of reason (Beiser, 2005, p.22).

Starting from a logical understanding of ontological problems, he developed a teleological perspective of history. Although Hegel was known as the first philosopher to introduce *historicism* into philosophical discussions, he refused many of its major tenets at the same time. Similar to the notion of the critical, historicism does not have one single definition. In its simplest sense, it forges the links between history and current forms of subject matters by claiming that phenomena, social or otherwise, need to be understood in relation to their specific history. Hegel also reformulated the notion of *dialectic(s)*. Dialectics, according to him, follows three main stages: thesis, (which creates) anti-thesis, and (their combination through resolution leads to) synthesis. It should be noted that Hegel never used this terminology, and that was forcefully against any schematization of concepts, which explains how this hierarchical schematization had to wait for many years after he died to be formulated at the hands of some of his followers. This formulation was particularly applied to history by scholars who tried to understand the peculiar trajectories that history follows. The other Hegelian intervention in terms of dialectics is the proposition that dialectics is self-referential and/or self-organizational and does not emerge a priori to the *concept*. Hegelian dialectics and its emphasis on critical philosophy considerably influenced Karl Marx. In the afterword to the Second German Edition of *Capital (Vol. I)*, Marx compares his dialectic method to Hegel’s:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which,
under the name of “the Idea,” he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of “the Idea.” With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought (p.3).

In other words, unlike Hegel who subscribes to the very romantic notion that “reason shapes the universe and thus material reality,” and that subjects create knowledge through creating it, Marx, on the other hand, switched direction altogether by claiming that “the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind.” Therefore, in Spirkin’s (1983) words, the “mental phenomena [are] primarily reflective and their idealness is derivative.” He elaborates on the Marxist view of the dilemma between the material and the ideal:

The surgeon sees the brain not as a spiritual flame but as grey matter. He is confronted with morphological structures and physiological processes. The mental tends to disappear from his field of vision, just as a word seems to disappear when we ignore its meaning. This is not to say, however, that consciousness is bodiless, incorporeal, ideal: it is something that exists not in objective reality but only in perception, in representation, in imagination and thought. The ideal is fundamentally different from the material. In fact, it may even be regarded as its opposite. If we only think or imagine something, it does not mean that it is already a reality (ch.3, online source: marx.org).
Marx’s emphasis on materiality as prior to knowledge radicalized ways that sought to understand social life. While Marx contested Hegel’s proposition that social reality is the reflection of ideas, he nevertheless adopted the Hegelian approach to history, depicted as the collection of artifacts that gives shape to the present reality.

[Marx] stresses the need for concrete historical analysis and suggests that transhistorical or philosophical abstractions are of limited value. With respect to the role of ideas, the Marx of *The German Ideology* argues that consciousness is a reflection of material life, while in the *Theses on Feuerbach* the argument is amended to allow ‘sensuous’ and ‘practical-critical’ activity to play a role in building material reality (Wood, 2005, p.13).

Unlike Kant and Hegel who are in favor of constitutional states, Marx suggested that it is not possible to reach political emancipation without an economic emancipation (Collier, 2005). “Marx sets out to discover the transhistorical conditions for the possibility of production in general” (Cannon, 2001, p.xi). While attempting to historicize the production of value through labor process, he prefers to dissolve labor into capital. In other words, “value is the product of capital’s self-valorizing value (p.xi).” To this end, his strategy of critique is shaped around the claim that labor is the source, the subject and the material of the capitalist society (ibid). In one sense, his critical strategy puts him into a different league from his contemporaries and/or predecessors, particularly in regards to freedom and truth. He used the critique of political economy to attack foundations of power relations established through the division of labor in society. Critique with Marx became a tool directed towards material conditions. The matters of...
class consciousness, struggle for power, democracy, aristocracy etc., according to Marx, could, thus, be empirically verifiable and were all bound to material premises (Wood, 2005).

A distinct voice of German idealism of 19th century, Dilthey followed the footsteps of Schleiermacher who established the roots of hermeneutic or interpretive inquiry. He was an empiricist. Dilthey thought that science is dominating over life (Hamilton, 1996). “In a late lecture reviewing the current state of culture and philosophy, he pointed out their inefficacy and emptiness, and claimed these deficiencies were not unconnected with the unprecedented scientific progress enjoyed by Western civilization since the 17th century (ibid. p.69)” Unlike Kant’s critique of pure reason which suggests that one must acquire a scientific consciousness for knowledge to be possible, Dilthey asserts that “our experience is more than can be described by the rules of cognition. For a fully philosophical picture of human life we must consider ourselves under a purposive aspect of which science is not conscious (ibid. p.71). Scheiermacher with what Dilthey calls “hermeneutic circles” provided a road map “to find a language for this free creativity, in which human beings escape from the causal determinism rationalizing scientific procedure to gain a sense of their own intrinsic vocation” (p.71). Dilthey suggests extending hermeneutics to much broader contexts than social texts such as codes of law and literary texts. For him, it could help to interpret the life itself. He believes that

[W]e can treat gestures, actions and so forth as if they were texts being interpreted. This allows us to use shared conventions as a bridge to unfamiliar conventions. In this we lay bare both the conventions binding the subject of our study and our own conventions and move towards greater reflectiveness and understanding of others. Dilthey is thus
insistent that understanding others entails self-understanding. And understanding others, in turn, deepens self-understanding (Hughes-Warrington, 2008, p.71).

Another German scholar, Max Weber who is also regarded as one of the founding fathers of sociology as an academic discipline, scrutinized the origins of capitalism in the first decades of the 20th century. In his best known essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber ties the rise of capitalism in Western societies, particularly in Europe, to the Protestant faith. He asserts that Protestant faith (especially Calvinist) provides necessary preconditions for capitalism to thrive such as motivation for hard work, an outcome of “salvation panic” in relation to the belief in predestined lives that proposes one’s actions in lifetime would not change the outcome. Religion is not, of course, the only factor to incorporate into social analysis; Weber’s aim is to emphasize the significance of socio-cultural artifacts shaping the social reality other than economic systems. In fact, economic systems might be the outcomes rather than the causes and are not sufficient to explain social transformations. He influenced Adorno, arguably one of the most prominent scholars of the Frankfurt Critical Theory, particularly through his approach to rational domination as a way of suppressing individual freedom, which is an outcome of complex bureaucratic operations of modern states (Edgar & Sedgwick 2002).

Heavily influenced by Marx and Weber, Critical Theory as an institutionalized perspective emerged in Germany during the 1920s, with the foundation of the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*) in Frankfurt. The Institute and its waves of thought came to be primarily seen as a Marxist critique of the capitalist society, the main elements that underscore capitalism, traditions of modernity, as well as the Enlightenment. At the beginning, under the directorship of Carl Grunberg, the Institute engaged with the problems of the European
working class movements, something that made its outlook and ideas more empirical and historical. The Institute members published empirical research and other studies in their journals, *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, and *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Geuss, 1981).

The term “critical theory” was coined by Max Horkheimer, who became the director of the Institute in 1930, in order to define the theoretical agenda of the Frankfurt School. The most distinguishing feature of the research program that would guide the School was the exploration of new methodological tools for empirical social research. This exploration would bear on the great questions of classical social philosophy:

It was hoped that such a strategy might yield results of mutual benefit to these traditionally separate endeavors. Problems of social philosophy could be posed in more precise terms and, at the same time, specialized inquiries would be invested with greater philosophical significance (Bailey, 1994, p.5).

However, while recognizing the historical contribution of the Frankfurt School, one should be aware of the broader tradition of critical philosophy “stretching back to Kant and Hegel, and in sociology to Weber, and also the ways in which the term has recently been appropriated to apply to aspects of contemporary thought…structuralism, semiotics, and poststructuralism (Peters, 2003, p.5).” This should not overshadow the significant role the critical aims of the Institute, articulated by Horkheimer, as relevant to developing a “theory of contemporary society as a whole aiming at the entirety of the social process [,] presupposing that beneath the chaotic surface of events one can grasp and conceptualize a structure of the effective powers” (Kellner, 1990, p. 16).
In the early years, though the main driving theoretical force was Marxism, the Institute’s members developed a supradisciplinary materialist theory that was introduced as a “response to both the inadequacies of classical Marxism and … the dominant forms of bourgeois science and philosophy” (ibid, p.16). The Institute’s early critical theorists, in this sense, adopted the metatheoretical form of Marxism while rejecting its particular theoretical content; that is, “they accepted that social theory should uncover ideologically-perpetuated oppressions that can be changed by enlightened action on the part of the victims, but rejected Marxism’s materialism and class analysis” (Dryzek, 1992, p.398). Critical theory offered them a multidisciplinary approach that brought together different perspectives drawn from political economy, sociology, cultural theory, philosophy, anthropology and history. According to Kellner (1990), this approach enabled the members to overcome the “fragmentation endemic to established academic disciplines in order to address issues of broader interests” (p.12).

Gramsci, the leader of workers’ movement in 1917 and head of Italian Communist Party in 1922, carried Marxist critique onto a different plane. Even his biggest enemy Mussolini describes him as “a Sardinian hunch-back with a ‘brain of undeniable power’ (Scott, 2007, p.56). Gramsci asserts that political strategy needs to be rooted in the everyday life conditions of man and woman. For him the critical theory cannot be elitist: “Every person was a theorist and it was important to bring out the political relevance of everyday ideas” (ibid. p.56). The fundamental part of his thought is to create intellectuals from the working class. He referred to the concept “hegemony” in an attempt to define the need to foreground “a new and radical common sense”. This is because hegemonic projects, Gramsci believes, are legitimized and sustained through “common sense”. In Gramsci’s analysis, the school system, for example, is just one part of the
system of ideological hegemony in which individuals are socialized into maintaining the status quo. “It was right to struggle against the old school, but reforming it was not so simple as it seemed. The problem was not one model curricula [sic] but of men, and not just of the men who are actually teachers themselves but of the entire social complex which they express” (Gramsci, 2003, p.36). As opposed to Leninist emphasis on political oppression, Gramsci’s concept “hegemony” attracted more Marxist intellectuals, even today, because unlike classical Marxist state which is, in one sense, a form of dictatorship of the proletariat, Gramsci forged a link between reformism and revolution (Scott, 2007).

During the 1960s, many critical theoretical and methodological paradigms evolved, and presented various challenges to the prevailing quantitative, empiricist, and positivist conceptions of social theory and social research. The main reason for the emergence of these new paradigms, according to Kellner (1990), was due to dissatisfaction with the mainstream, apolitical theorizations of society and their fatigued dominant research methodologies. Critical theories with different paradigms and research methodologies under the banner of phenomenology, ethno-methodology, structuralism, Marxism, feminism, etc. offered new conceptions “which claimed to be more adequate in characterizing contemporary society and in providing inspiration and guidance for transforming it” (p.11).

One of the most significant intellectuals of the 1960s was Louis Althusser. Althusser appeared on the stage of critical social theory with two extremely influential books: *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*. In these books, Althusser critiqued readings of Marx under the Stalinist Orthodoxy. He contended that Marxism cannot be reducible to determinism of economic productive forces and therefore, is simply a theory of *economism*. Western Marxists also,
according to Althusser, read Marx from the Hegelian perspective, and therefore they do not see Marx’ break off from Hegel in the second stage of his intellectual life. For Althusser, readings of Marx need to be divided into two major categories, young and ideological Marx; and mature and scientific Marx. While ideological Marx was under the influence of Hegelian notions to some extent, scientific Marx refused Hegelian and humanistic understandings of social complexity (Scott, 2007).

Althusser’s symptomatic reading of Marx identified a problematic that broke with humanism and Hegelianism. Humanism, the belief that it is individuals as such who make history, was incompatible with the theoretical anti-humanism of the scientific investigation of social relations found in the later Marx. Associated with Hegelianism was historicism, or the notion that history is the realization of a human essence such as creativity or love of freedom. Historicism presents history as a linear process towards a goal. It is a teleology in which an ‘essence’ is thought to determine all facets of social life, in what Althusser called an ‘expressive totality’. He claimed that ‘such and such an element (economic, political, legal, literary, religious, etc., in Hegel) = the inner essence of the whole’ (Ibid, p.4).

Althusser became a central figure for many who are looking for the ways in which they could appropriate Marx into their studies in non-deterministic ways. Through his concept “break”, he also extended the empirical possibilities under the guidance of Marxist readings of society. Besides, in his famous article Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, Althusser (1971) challenges the notion that the social whole is but fragmented into segments, some of which are immune from the influence of ideology. For him, education, as well as other aspects of
the socio-cultural whole, is but an integral part of the practice of ideology and its primary disseminator, i.e., the State. Education is not a domain of neutrality where outcomes and inputs happen due to the course of nature, not a function of natural immanence, so to speak, but the field of operation for the transcendence of the State and the exertion of its multiple ideological apparatuses. Through this external practice of influence, education, Althusser continues to argue, becomes but one of the many venues where the power of the State Apparatuses come to confront those to whom it is disseminated in the form of the reproduction of its very relations.

While critical theory is generally associated with the German idealist tradition and the Frankfurt School, it, at the same time, “refers to the tendency of modernity to subject its own grounding assumptions to an ongoing evaluation. To this extent, postmodernism comprises a branch of critical theory in so far as it problematizes modernity’s founding presuppositions” (Cannon, 2001, p, xi). Therefore, later critics such as Foucault and Derrida, according to some, could be counted within the critical tradition. But this is not a consensus and is subject to a great debate, and is similarly misleading to identifying “Frankfurt School Critical Theory” and its research agenda as unified and stable. This is because the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory did not establish strict borders to delimit the methodological territory of the critical enterprise. For example, Horkheimer, who used the term critical for the first time, stated that “[m]en of good will want to draw conclusions for political action from the critical theory. Yet there is no fixed method for doing this; the only universal presumption is that one must have insight into one’s own responsibility” (quoted in O’Neill, 1976, p.1). On the other hand, some distinguish post-modern/post-structuralist critique from the vernacular critical tradition by emphasizing the different tools used for critique by each (Lather, 1992).
In the early years of post-modern thought entering into the domain of socio-cultural critique, the most prominent figure was Foucault\textsuperscript{2}. Foucault’s ideas “have generated considerable controversy, as they both involve a rejection of a political project that aspires to emancipation and undermine a phenomenological philosophy that privileges the autonomous subject” (Scott, 2007, p. 81). He constructed the themes and categories to re-read history, which according to him, create subjects from human beings.

Therefore, in one sense, his ideas meant a clear break from Marxism, as the human beings are not at the center of social analysis (Scott, 2007). Famous academic exchanges happened between Foucault and many other prominent Marxist or structuralist scholars during the 70s. Nonetheless Foucault’s attempt to destabilize the effects of power in constructing historical subjects attracted a great audience in both sides of the Atlantic.

One of those big debates was between Foucault and Habermas. Jurgen Habermas is a well known member of the second generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists. He is a student of Max Horkheimer and is influenced by him. The arrival of Habermas onto the stage of critical theory as a prominent scholar of the Frankfurt School changed the direction of the discussion, and to some extent the nature of empirical analysis itself. The philosophy of consciousness, which had represented a dominant paradigm since the first generation of the Frankfurt School, began to slide more towards a rather communicative paradigm. This shift affected the understandings of history, subjectivity, and other key issues that became staples of

\textsuperscript{2} Bourdieu is another important figure of French Structuralism, particularly for sociology of education. And he should be included into any type of social theory review of this century. However, as in the following section and throughout this dissertation, I talk about Bourdieu’s theories and approaches extensively, I did not include him in this section.
the Frankfurt tradition. This paradigm shift, one that was only natural, required the appropriation of new theoretical frameworks to compensate for the growing realization that old approaches did not fit the practical and emancipatory framework of the Habermasian version of critical theory, a version that was still said to have a Marxian component to it (Alway, 1995). Ramifying the paradigm came hand in hand with another reformulation, this time in relation to the Enlightenment: the problem with the Enlightenment, Habermas stipulated, was that it remained an unfinished project. “[Habermas] wants to reconstruct Critical Theory so that it might successfully pursue its original goal of synthesizing philosophy and science in a manner that would provide a critical understanding of modernity –its achievements, its deformities, and its unrealized potentials” (p.101). He states:

I want to maintain that the program of early critical theory foundered not on this or that contingent circumstance, but from the exhaustion of the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness. I shall argue that a change in paradigm to the theory of communication makes it possible to return to the undertaking that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason; and this will permit us to take up once again the since-neglected tasks of a critical theory of society (Ibid, p.99).

By assigning to communication a central position, Habermas sees individuals, not as objects of the processes of labor, a la classical Marxist paradigm, but as actors who are related to each other through communication and deliberation. According to him, the quintessential human activity is language use, and that is why intersubjective relations are formed linguistically.

On the other hand, Bronner (1994) does not find Habermas’ distance from particularist criticism of reason and science. Although he did not completely break ties with some of the
original tenets of critical theory, such as reflexivity, the critique of reification and emancipation, Habermas’s position and theory are considered to fall more within the camp of democratic liberalism. This explains the criticism that he received from both Leftists (Marxists) and conservatives alike.

Carspecken (1996; 1999) argues that communicative action as a theory of consensus can be used to validate critical qualitative research. Meaningful act is particularly of importance here. Carspecken contends that three major validity claims could be drawn from a meaningful act in which human beings may engage: objective validity claims, subjective validity claims, and normative-evaluative validity claims. He expands the idea of the meaningful act to data analysis, and claims that “the theory of communicative action, when supplemented in various ways, provides a sort of ‘bottom line’ conceptual framework for meaning reconstruction. This analytic bottom line distinguishes critical ethnography from other forms of qualitative research.” (Carspecken, 1999, p.43).

Foley (2002) argues that the task of characterizing the philosophical foundations of critical ethnography is impossible. This is because critical researchers with different social and political motivations ground their works within a variety of philosophical perspectives. Nevertheless, they still simultaneously subscribe to traditional methods of empirical study, such as participant observation, key informants and interviewing. These empirical investigations, Foley adds, are often established along the following general ontological and epistemological assumptions:

(1) All cultural groups produce an inter-subjective reality which is both “inherited” and continually constructed and reconstructed as it is lived or practiced. This shared cultural
reality is external in the sense that Bourdieu defines “habitas”[sic] (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); (2) a well-trained, reflexive investigator can know that historical, socially constructed reality in a partial, provisional sense through an intensive, experiential encounter with people who live by these cultural constructions of reality; and (3) a reflexive investigator, who has experienced this unfamiliar cultural space and has dialogued with its practitioners, can portray this cultural space and its people in a provisionally accurate manner (p.472).

In this short overview, I have given particular attention to the “vernacular” Critical Tradition from Kant to Habermas, so to speak. However, there are other numerous names and key moments that may be equally relevant to the history of the critical enterprise. But again, it would be beyond the scope of this project to exhaust the contributions these may have made. As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the focus of this dissertation is not to define what “critique” or “critical” might be; rather the main concern is to evaluate how they are architected within the domain of qualitative educational research. In the following section, I will explore the reflections of the critical enterprise on educational research in the United States.

**Critical Qualitative Research in Education**

Although the major works of Critical Theory by the members of the Frankfurt School were not translated into English until the 1970s (Bronner, 1994), the field of education was not immune from the waves that swept social theory in the 1960s, primarily triggered by the anti-
establishment spirit of social movements and emerging emancipatory philosophical approaches in many parts of the world. The timeline of this newness within the particular domain of U.S. education could be traced to the initial orientation in “Marxist conflict” theories that applied the notion of the class warfare, which is Marxism’s propelling force behind historical progress and elimination of all kinds of alienation. Thus a group of scholars began to challenge the liberal theorizations of the then-dominant structural-functionalist approach in education. The focus, however, soon shifted to one evaluative of how education reproduced the material conditions of alienation that existed in society at large. It further evolved into focus on what came to be known as resistance theories as assessment of the micro levels and manifestations of inequality and the kinds of responses these triggered within education (Karabel & Halsey, 1977). This evolutionary trajectory specific to the U.S. sheds some light on how emancipatory approaches in social theory, in the form of various Marxist theories\(^3\), blended with American Pragmatism to produce the kind

\(^3\) Burawoy (1982) divides Marxism in the United States into four different strands. The first strand was the gathering around the journal *Monthly Review*, which served as a vehicle for developing Marxist theory independent from the Communist Party. *Monthly Review* played a key role in intellectually responding to the red witch-hunt of the “McCarthy era,” and also produced major contributions to Marxist analyses of the Third World and the imperialist policies of the United States. *The Political Economy of Growth*, Paul Baran’s path-breaking publication, came out in 1957; and according to Burawoy, this landmark work “imported the Frankfurt School pessimism into analysis of the dynamics and interdependence of advanced and backward economies (p.5).”\(^3\) Second stream of thought was developed by Marxist historians concerning the exceptional character of US society. This second strand also associated with the journal *Studies on the Left*. “With the history department of the University of Wisconsin, William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, James Weinstein, and others mounted an assault in American liberalism as the ideology of an “enlightened” ruling class preempting popular struggles at home while imposing domination abroad” (p.6). Third strand of Marxism inspired from the “Frankfurt School and Hegelian Marxism, in particular the writings of Georg Lukacs, Karl Korch, Antonio Gramsci, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and, above all, Herbert Marcuse” (p.6) Main characteristic of this strand was about its approach to society. Inspiring from the legacy of Frankfurt school in the work of Jurgen Habermas, these people refused to treat society as an “object” to be examined, rather they insist on “subjectivity” to human endeavors. This movement was also strongly affiliated with the journal *Telos*. A fourth strand of Marxism was hinging on mostly French structuralist thought, “sought to revitalize historical materialism as a social science”. “French Structuralist Marxism” was constructed and, for Burawoy, “locked in battle with existentialism and Marxist humanism” predominantly by Lois Alhtuser, Nicos Poulantzas, Maurice Godeliner, Etienne Ballibar (p.7). Emphasizing on the conditions for the reproduction of capitalism, this strand exhibited similarities with structural functionalism. “It led to concrete studies of the state, class structures, the labor process, and urban political economy.” (p.8) These four strands of Marxism-*Monthly Review* School, the corporate liberal school, critical theory, and Marxist structuralism have all been influenced, although in different degrees, by European Marxism
of critical approach that came to be prominent in education. The appropriation of the “critical perspectives” into the field of education came about in the 1970s at the hands of a group of intellectuals whose roots can be traced to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and to Marxist and neo-Marxist theories (Pinar and Bowers, 1992). Although the critical had been applied methodologically, critical ethnography (or critical qualitative research) as a distinct epistemological genre did not come about until the early 1980s.

When the sociological and educational “critique” of schooling in/and society emerged as a systematic initiative of new assessment of the conditions of alienation and inequality, it was antithetical to the well- and long-established liberal tradition of functionally defining individuals in society as acting in conformity with tautological social systems that were constructed by means of political economy. Thus the first round of struggle for this antithetical approach in education targeted the deterministic legacy of the Structural Functionalism of Talcott Parsons. The structural functionalist approach under Parsons espoused the egalitarian democratic rhetoric that schools were neutral agencies which provided, particularly the underprivileged, necessary tools for individual development and upward mobility (Parsons, 1961). The school for Parsons was thus a neutral place organized to provide students with necessary and needed skills and knowledge for one to be able to function efficiently in the wider society. It also served as a venue that paved the way to equal opportunity that would eventually facilitate the promotion of students’ standing in the social hierarchy (Giroux, 1983). The equal opportunity that was said to be inherent to schooling, however, did not mean a total leveling out in terms of individual attainment. Structural functionalists attempted to explain this condition of differential achievement, not in terms of the social exteriority, but rather as caused by ability, family
orientations, individual motivations and the overall level of interest in education. Differences that were unavoidable by dint of the dissimilar cultural and material backgrounds of students were seen as the domain into which education was able to intervene in order to enable an equalization that would supersede the material, i.e., those who did well in school would be eventually rewarded by an upward mobility that could overcome differentiation (Parsons, 1961). Through this mechanism of rewarding the hardworking, the school, a “common culture” for every and each society, was considered to be an instrument of dissemination of equal opportunity to all members of society, a “reality” that was said not to be unsettled by the “natural” outcomes of schooling that could still see aspects of uneven achievement (Blackledge & Hunt, 1985). The structuralist functionalist approach to education in particular and society in general should be placed within the context of the challenges the US came to face in the post-WWII era, with the beginning of the Cold War and the fierce rivalry with the communist USSR. At the level of education, Parsons and his followers were trying to contend with what was required of the young generations in terms of education and training to be able to meet the needs of outperforming the Soviet Union in the international race of domination.

Against this background of functionally understanding the role of schooling, the critical intervention tried to turn the table by engaging instead with the political economy of schooling and education by using correspondence and conflict theories. However, scholars who were committed to such scrutiny were often dismissed as being irrelevant to the particular focus of education, or as being mere “ideologues,” as Foley (2002) argues:

When I became an ethnographer in the 1960s, very few American anthropologists actually thought of themselves as critical ethnographers. Various apolitical types of
cultural analysis dominated cultural anthropology at Stanford and elsewhere. Those graduate students who were Students for Democratic Society (SDS) and antiwar activists chafed under this regime. We wanted to do cultural studies that exposed exploitation and inequality. In that era, the only critical anthropologists were Marxist, and they generally studied the so-called undeveloped “periphery” countries’ relations with the developed “core” capitalist societies. Radical anthropologists concentrated mainly on the political economies of tribal societies (Godelier, 1977) and the impact of colonialism on agricultural economies (Wolfe, 1982). Traditional anthropologists dismissively labeled the study of colonialism and imperialism ‘political science.’ They worried that such studies abandoned the basic ideals and objective methodologies of a scientific social science, thus the historic mission of ethnology to find the universals of human language and culture. In the 1960s graduate students championing Marxist anthropology were thought of as little more than ideologues. (p.469)

On the other side of the Atlantic, a group of British educational researchers, during the 1970s, proposed that the relationship among social structures, power, and schooling practices should be central to the work of sociology of education. The earliest manifestation of this understanding appeared in Michael F.D. Young’s’ edited book Knowledge and Control (Karabel & Halsey, 1977). The argument that was put forward was that “what counts as educational knowledge” was never seriously questioned by educational sociologists (Ladwig, 1996, p.16). Consequently, the structural-functionalist view of education was critiqued, and the need for a “phenomenological” agenda was highlighted, something which later came to be known as the “interpretivist” view in sociology of education (Karabel and Halsey, 1977; Ladwig, 1996; Davies, 1995). Young’s edited collection became essential to the new sociology of education that
was to appear in the US by the contribution of figures such as Jean Anyon, Michael Apple and Henry Giroux. The work of Young and his colleagues would come to define the following decades, which can be seen in how it oriented critical analysis in education, which could be summed up in three main issues, according to Apple (1986): “[Firstly], the debate over functionalism and economic reductionism or over what is called the base/superstructure issue; secondly closely related arguments between structuralists and culturalists in education; finally class reductionism” (p.75). However, the impact that this criticalist turn, so to speak, had was not limited to the realm of the conceptual-theoretical, but did also spill over into the area of fieldwork. Fieldwork, under the influence of critical theories, became engaged with mapping injustices in education, tracing those injustices to their sources, as well as with seeking and proposing remedies to those injustices. The first step for this different kind of fieldwork was, expectedly, the attempt to define inequalities in education. And the category that occupied and continues to occupy a center-stage position under this different emphasis was that of students from working class and/or minority backgrounds, for the obvious reason of underprivilege, and the consequential condition of underperformance relative to the achievement of their white middle or upper class peers (Gibson, 1986).

Another layer of the critique of the liberal formulation of education and society built on the work of the French structuralists. Drawing on the contributions of Althusser, reproduction or correspondence theories, developed and presented by the work of Bowles & Gintis (1976)
Schooling in Capitalist America for example, “emphasized the macro and structural dimensions of educational institutions” within society (Sultana, 1989, p.287). They argued that in modern societies, the major link between social structures and education was the economy. Therefore, schools needed to respond to economic changes by “carrying out the functions of selection and training of manpower,” (Meighan, 1981, p.214) as well as stimulating economic change through research. Departing from Marx’s definition of class (class as a group of people who find share the same socio-political and economic conditions), Bowles and Gintis (1976) claimed that schools were training young people for their future economic and occupational positions in accordance with their current social class background. Students of working-class origin were trained to take orders and to be obedient, and were subject to more disciplinary action, whereas children of professionals were trained using more progressive methods that contrarily highlighted internal discipline and self-presentation skills. In other words, schools were argued to reproduce the conditions of alienation that existed within the broader society. This meant that people, in the light of the mechanisms of this reproduced alienation, had little or no choice in the face what had already been determined by relative economic structures. An example of this is the work of Jean Anyon. For her (1981), schools serving working class communities and affluent professional communities produce and reproduce the respective social and cultural norms of those communities through a corresponding differential distribution of knowledge to maintain an unchangeable class affiliation to ensure that the inequalities of the status quo continue unchallenged. Reproduction theories have been criticized by several scholars (Apple, 1981, Wexler, 1987, Giroux, 1983). Yet, they continue to provide an interpretive tool, quite useful, when assessing social inequalities enforced through schooling, as well as when evaluating the production and distribution of knowledge (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Weis, 1990; Macleod, 2004).
With the seminal study of Paul Willis (1977), *Learning to Labor*, the concept of resistance quickly came to displace the critiqued reproductionist position, especially with relation to explaining tensions existing between students and schooling processes. Resistance studies mainly focus on oppositional behaviors that may consequently lead students to academic failure (Apple, 1981; Giroux, 1983). These studies became also interested in students showing certain rebellious tendencies, which was interpreted in a manner radically different from how such manifestations had previously been looked upon – passive reactions to oppressive educational practices.

Resistance as a political stance (Giroux, 1983), emanates from the perception of schooling as a reproduction process rather than as one of equalization. But theories that take up this resistance stance go beyond the structural aspects of the reproduction of inequality to highlight the non-passive role that human agency plays in the process. And this new focus on agents rather than structures led to novel understandings of how students maneuver their way through schooling, and this eventually impacts their life after the end of their formal education. In this regard the example of Willis’s study is rather revealing: his work showed how working class students somehow contributed to a large extent in condemning themselves to working class futures because of the oppositional cultural responses that they had developed against the process of schooling – the irony being that contestation would somewhat lead to further subordination and reproduction of the same conditions of alienation against which the students seemed to resist in the first place (Willis, 1977). This insight would not have been possible, many argue, were human agency eclipsed by emphasis on the structures of alienation alone. Similar studies have been conducted in the US, where the name Henry Giroux (1983) became influential for this
theoretical set of interventions that developed resistance theories in many ways. And the last twenty years have witnessed a generation of ethnographic studies that, through the utilization of this neo-Marxist framework of analysis, have explored the process of schooling in qualitative field methods. Since its bold initiation into the field of educational research, resistance theory has received voluminous theorizations, discussions, modifications and critiques and has informed numerous empirical studies of classrooms and youth.

With relation to the issue of the development critical ethnography in education in particular, Studies at the Birmingham School’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, where Paul Willis evolved intellectually, played a crucial role. Carspecken (1999) explains how the early works produced at the Centre took up the challenge of devising novel ways to deal with the many theoretical problems that the shift from an anchoring in Marxism to neo-Marxist leanings was eventually to take hold. Expectedly, the most intensely debated issue was the problematic of structure versus agency in reflection of the shift, which did not bring a situation that was totally free from residual influences of classical Marxism. The general ideological orientation of the Centre leaned more towards a culturalist position that emphasized the significant role of the subject in constructing social reality even when he/she had little control over the powerful material structures of this reality. Thus, instead of an almost exclusive attention to the socioeconomic, the Center underlined the relevancy of culture for researching education and the social conditions of inequality, a Marxist-culturalist approach which Carspecken (1999) credits for becoming an inspiration as well as a “research template” for researchers in the US in particular. And although the different studies produced at the Center shared little methodological or epistemological unification, they mostly strongly subscribed to the ultimate goal of making
society more just. Later studies came to use the initial Birmingham School research templates as points of departure that have come to inform different outcomes and foci, something that Foley (2002) reflects upon when addressing the journey of critical ethnography:

[During the 1970s], we turned to a rich tradition of dissent within Marxism and read German Frankfort critical theorists, and French neo-Marxists, especially Pierre Bourdieu. We also began exploring the work of a very eclectic group of British “new left” cultural theorists at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (Forgaces, 1989). CCCS scholars were interrogating the seminal work of Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, French Marxist structuralist Luis Althusser, and British Marxist E.P. Thompson. The anthropologists in our group found the work of CCCS scholars Paul Willis (1976, 1981) and Stuart Hall (Morely & Chen, 1996) particularly important for renovating anthropological concepts of culture (p. 471).

Foley (2002) explains the shift towards a cultural Marxist approach in terms of reacting to the classical, orthodox Marxist focus of the critical race theorists and feminists of the preceding decade of the 1960s. The kind of critique that this latter group exercised was largely structuralist. This change required “a multiple system of dominance/resistance perspectives that no longer privileged economic explanations of exploitation” (p.471). By the same token, Anderson (1989) suggests that critical ethnography in the field of education emerged out of a

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5 It should be noted that the term critical ethnography is used interchangeably with critical qualitative research. In many cases, ethnography is preferred over qualitative research. One can see this as a problematic if he or she has a strict definition for ethnography. Therefore, the trajectory of critical ethnography is indistinguishable from that of the critical qualitative research. This is because scholars do not define or demarcate what they mean by these terms, or the extent to which these terms apply in terms of methodologies, when they write either on critical ethnography or critical qualitative research.
dissatisfaction at a perceived inadequacy of the earlier approach at explaining the social and the cultural. In other words, the debate was between a structuralist account and a culturalist one with relation to understanding and analyzing social reality:

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

On the same account of dissatisfaction the sociocultural inadequacy of structuralist approaches, several critical researchers have adopted the “revolutionary pedagogy” of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire as a means to better frame their critique within arguments that incorporate human agency critically into the picture of the social and schooling phenomena. In his germinal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire articulates the aim of pedagogy as one that seeks to achieve and promote social justice, a project that would enable the liberation of the oppressed consequently. The way this formula works if through pedagogy, which has the capacity to raise critical consciousness, which is in turn an indispensable instrument for realizing the ethical project of social justice. Towards this end, pedagogy would have to be constructed in ways amenable to initiating the needed drastic structural changes in society for it to become just. “Education must be an instrument of transforming action, a political praxis at the service of
permanent human liberation” (Freire 1993, p. 140). There is little wonder, then, why the ideas of this advocate of liberation and justice were enthusiastically adopted and used by many North American educational scholars, particularly Marxist and Neo-Marxist, such as Donaldo Macedo, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, bell Hooks, and Alberto Torres.

Critical inquiry has taken on various paths in response to emerging political and social challenges. One such critical response was on creating innovative devices for conducting research in ways that could enable new insights that may have been eclipsed altogether by traditional qualitative research methods. These innovative methodological tools could make it possible to conduct fieldwork at sites that might have been previously neglected or overlooked in educational research. This has also meant that issues that had maintained constant presence on the research scene, such as race, class, gender and ethnicity, were now open to new fieldwork and site applications, as well as to novel ways of interpretation and analysis. For example, although the race problematic has always been one of most central issues in educational research, many scholars like Dimitriadis approach race differently, which has in many ways to do with their own interdisciplinary educational backgrounds. Dimitriadis (2005), for instance, by examining “hip-hop recordings as ‘texts’, as a modern-day poetics (p.297),” was able to suggest new manifestations of race that were different from earlier representations. He states: “Suddenly music, which had always been there for me, seemed more serious and important” (ibid, p. 297). Through historicizing popular culture in general and hip-hop music in particular, Dimitriadis and others carved out their own niche out of and away from conventional research conducting techniques, and research sources. In other words, the transformations observed in genres, dressing styles, lyrics etc. in hip-hop music and similar pop culture artifacts and productions,
which had not been taken into account as important social and cultural texts before, were now theorized and explored as both the natural history of communities under study, on the one hand, and as important pedagogical texts to employ in education, on the other. They were considered important pedagogical texts because researchers saw in them primary connections between the social, economic and cultural backgrounds of the students, on the one hand, and expectations of formal schooling, on the other. These links function, in one sense, as *modus Vivendi* between educational success and meaning construction (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004; Daspit & Weaver, 1996).

At the same time, by attempting to break the oppressive dialectical ties between “high culture” and “low culture” by underscoring the complexity and sophistication of these popular cultural products, a new group of critical intellectuals was born as a distinct genre in the field of cultural criticism whose main focus was nevertheless pedagogical. Such contributions to educational research and theory represented a rupture from the traditional notions of critiquing, particularly structuralist approaches and how they saw the social whole determined and shaped. The break, it is now well known, resulted from the new understanding that the positions, perceptions, and attitudes of research subjects were no longer considered as directly and mutely produced by economic, social, and institutional structures. Rather, they were seen instead as active and diverse artifacts produced and consumed, non-linearly, within and outside the sociocultural environment. This new research agenda also required multi-modal techniques of

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6 According to Weis (2004), this new genre, conceived as “culturalist,” emerged as educational scholarship following the seminal studies of cultural criticism. In *Class Reunion*, she suggests that “[t]he impetus for such studies stems largely from what was thought to be an incorrect assumption that one could easily ‘read’ culture off existing social structures (p.179).” This new genre “served to challenge earlier structuralist interpretations and, at the same time, to open up space for positive change within school (ibid)”
investigation that could transcend the conventional research architecture (Barab et al, 2004). What makes this “new genre” distinct from the cultural criticism of the 1970s, e.g., Paul Willis, is the new focus on how the fictional, linguistic, and material elements of social reality were (re)produced by research subjects\(^7\), in comparison with the earlier emphasis on structures.

There are many other examples of new critical outlooks that derive from various and versatile data sources, a condition that, I think, gives critique new and different tones, although inequality, power relations, and oppression are still major themes and motivations for critical research practices. Discovery of new “data sources” that I mentioned above, not only provides lenses to look at the socio-cultural reality more thickly, so to speak, but also allow for the social theory to undergo deeper rectifications. For instance, it would not be possible to talk about the achievement gap today without taking into account factors at operation in the background, such as personal, social and cultural elements that are transformed and reproduced through various mechanisms like the technological divide, globalization, etc. (Kritt & Winegar, 2008).

Another shift that critical inquiry in education has undergone was due to postmodern and post-structuralist\(^8\) incorporations and interventions during the 1980s. This new arrival had

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\(^7\) See Dimitriadis (2001), for example, for an examination of such implications.

\(^8\) Although, many people would classify post-structuralism as a post-modernist approach, I think post-structuralism advocate understandings and epistemological principles that are distinct from postmodernism – even though it remains true that similarities between the two outnumber their difference. On the other hand, scholars such as Foucault whose work is considered within post-structuralism have never identified or classified their work under that banner. Post-modernist approaches were denounced mostly by scholars whose work leaned more towards structuralism. Bourdieu & Wacquant (1988) write: “Far from leading to a nihilistic attack on science, like certain so-called ‘postmodern’ analyses, which do no more than add flavor of the month dressed with a soupcon of ‘French radical chic’ to the age-old irrationalist rejection of science, and more especially of social science, under the aegis of a denunciation of applied to sociological study itself aims to demonstrate that sociology can escape from the vicious circle of historicism or sociologism, and that in pursuit of this end it need only make use of the knowledge which it provides of the social world in which science is produced, in order to try to gain control over the effects of the social determinisms which affect both this world, and, unless extreme caution is exercised, scientific discourse itself (p. xiii).”
implications on what was to become the material through which critique would work out its analyses and interpretations – language, historical, social and textual artifacts, etc. Carspecken (1999) provides a useful example here: “Patti Lather’s work is prominent example of these methods and modes of thinking employed by postmodern literary critics, and which were found highly useful for revealing and de-constructing the root metaphors of school ideology, youth culture and the mass media” (p.39). The effects of these approaches were particularly beneficial to communicative aspects of inter-subjectivity and “truth” production.

Another intervention that has colored the critical is the Logocentric turn, which came as a result of the increasing influence of linguistic interpretations in the broader social sciences. Language now became central to both conducting and interpreting the data. The linguistic turn can be seen as part of the larger dynamics of the shift from structuralism to post-modern, post-structuralist critique. Although ill used in educational research, Jacques Derrida’s work is the primary example of this shift. He, for example, critiques structural approaches:

It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word ‘structure’ itself are as old as the episteme –that is to say, as old as Western science and Western philosophy- and that their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the episteme plunges in order to gather them up and to make them part of itself in a metaphorical displacement (Derrida, 1999, p.411).

Many other examples could be given of continental European scholars who have produced work along these lines. But it is more interesting to refer to the less-mentioned Harold Garfinkel, whose work has had significant impact in the US. Garfinkel’s innovation from the 1960s came in the form of ethnomethodology at a time when the social sciences were heavily
influenced and fashioned by Structural Functionalism, American Pragmatism and Marxism. Naturally, his new method became “the brunt of dismissive jokes: a ‘cult,’ ‘California Sociology,’ and the like” (Lemert, 1999, p.436). Against this background of suspicion, Garfinkel asserted that “social analysis begins with the fact that language itself is an attempt to repair the social problems created in human communication” (ibid, p.436). Surprisingly, ethnomethodology found its way to empirical studies and became an approach to understand and redress social problems. According to him, ethnomethodology refers “to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life” (ibid, p.441). A similar linguistic impact can be seen in the work of Carspecken (1996; 1999), who, under the influence of Habermas’s communicative action theory, developed a unique methodology for “validity” and “interpretation” for critical inquiry.

Following the rise of the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1960s, feminist qualitative researchers sought ways that could enable representations of the conditions of “womanhood” through field methodologies that were unique and liberated from oppressive patriarchal research frameworks. Feminist critique in education, albeit fragmented, entered the field roughly in the last two decades of the 20th century (Sprague, 2005). Olesen (2000) elaborates on this: “At the approach of the new millennium, feminist qualitative research is highly diversified, enormously dynamic, and thoroughly challenging to its practitioners, its followers, and its critics” (p.215). Through probing meanings hidden behind patriarchal and oppressive social, personal, and institutional constructs, Feminist qualitative research, albeit critical in nature from the beginning, not only shook what had been considered taken for granted
in schooling practices (which favored males at every level), but also emerged as a bitter critique of critical (and progressive) qualitative inquiry within the field itself (Ellsworth, 1989). Thus, gender as the main node of feminist thought that derives its definitions/meanings from irreducibly social processes has become a highly politicized concept in critical qualitative research. On the other hand, feminist scholars, similar to critical scholars, are tied to each other with very thin intellectual fibers, a common ground resulting from a conceived patriarchal hegemony. In other words, unifying point across feminists has been grounded on the womanhood conditions emerged from living under oppression. Thus, fragmentation was unavoidable. Nonetheless, they were able to bring about new sensitivities to critical research, arguably in relation to conditions of womanhood, which, according to early feminist conceptualizations, were best understood through experience. Body politics, feminization of poverty, gender biases, and queer theory are among these new expansions and sensitivities both in the practice of research practice as well as the selection of the subjects of inquiry (Lather, 1992, Fine, 1991, Collins, 1990).

Scholars like Judith Butler changed the direction of conversation by introducing new conceptual tools for gender studies. Influenced by Hegelian philosophy, she, in her most famous book Gender Trouble (1990) and its sequel Bodies that Matter (1993), introduced groundbreaking ideas in regards to ‘gender formation’ (Salih, 2002). To underline that gender is primarily a formation, scholarly work like Butler’s continues to use the tools of gender

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9 One has to emphasize that this was true in the earlier phases of the feminist intervention. Olesen (2000) writes: “This reflects early feminist interest in women’s subjectivity as well as the erroneous assumption that qualitative research cannot handle large-scale issues. Feminist work has gone far beyond these limited views using a wide range of methods, (see Reinharz, 1992, for descriptions of these) and for reasons found in new intellectual themes to be discussed shortly (p.216).”
standpoint epistemologies in approaching the present intersection of questions of race, ethnicity, and social class.

That the critical feminist intervention was thinly connected on the grounds of countering male hegemony became more visible when scholars like Patricia Hill Collins (1990) claimed that Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology should be framed in line with racial realities. Moreover, Collins was also critical of the extreme relativism among many feminists, and adopted instead the Gramscian notion of the organic intellectual for her work. Other major factions of feminist critique includes “gynocriticism, materialist, standpoint, psychoanalytic, poststructural, African American, empiricist, postmodern, cultural studies, and those defined as postcolonial (Denzin 1997, p.53).” In research on schools, the feminist outlook challenged the “Eurocentric masculinist approaches” (Denzin, 1997), albeit from different angles, and destabilized many assumptions that previous approaches had relied on. Although the institutionalized categories of the gender problematic, such as patriarchy, hegemonic masculinities, etc., are still used as legitimation tools for constructing research that project tendencies in schools that favor boys, recent studies and statistics show that girls, in general, are doing better than boys in schools today. This holds true across the lines of racial, ethnic, and social class alike (Francis & Skelton, 2005; Phillips, 2002). With reference to this last point of girls outperforming boys and the surrounding conditions that permeate the media, literature suggests that the critical outlook is yet to turn critical eye towards the so-called “boys’ crisis” in education.

10 See Weis (2004) for a profound critique of Paul Willis’s approach in Learning to Labor.

11 Some even claim that feminist research along with its activist agenda helped the “feminizations of schools” through outcasting boy culture and boy(ly) learning so to speak, under the banner of countering hegemonic masculinities operating and oppressing female students (Phillips, 2002).
As I mentioned earlier, there is no practical way of entirely differentiating “critical work” from other types of qualitative inquiry. That is why one can say that the concept is highly contested. This has to do, as Carspecken (1999) argues, with critical researchers employing all types of methodological tools and grounding their work in various theoretical and epistemological constructs. Value orientations and commitments to social equality remain the major ligaments among critical researchers, which at the same time seem to work as safety pins for the claims made on critical qualitative research. In other words, reviews of the trajectory that critical qualitative research followed are almost always grounded on the presumed unification towards social equality. Then again, the self-identified critical scholars, whose roots could be easily tracked to earlier appropriations of critical perspectives into the US educational research during 1970s, are still the primary reference points for many reviews and research frameworks today.

According to Jean Anyon, arguably one of the most important figures in critical educational research, the United States today is a not very welcoming environment for qualitative research in general, let alone critical research that sets to destabilize power relations, and thus to disrupt the status quo. In the introduction of her latest book *Theory and Educational Research: Toward Critical Social Explanation* (2008), she attests to the current state of educational research as follows: “In the early years of the twenty-first century, federal grand funding agencies under George W. Bush defined education research so that empirically randomized controlled trials were the standard by which research was evaluated for government support (p.1)” To connect potentials of research funding with the neo-conservative control of power in the US, Anyon was referring to the radical impact the political situation under Bush had
on qualitative researchers. One could speculate that this kind of blockage of funding and else under the neo-Cons might have well reflected on the popular reception and appreciation of qualitative research. On this subject she adds:

Qualitative studies received little attention, and the use of the systematic theory to guide research was not valued. Such a position on what constitutes acceptable research often not only expresses conservative political attitudes but – in case of theory – constitutes a formal acknowledgement of the long standing avoidance by many in the US of theory as impractical (Ibid, p.1).

It would not be a bold prediction to say that this political atmosphere had serious impact upon the survival of critical qualitative researchers at US universities. However, we do not have any statistical data to support such a proposition.

One interesting issue to additionally mention, in an attempt to shed more light on the current condition of critical inquiry in the US Academy, appeared on the pages of The New York Times. The paper carried a feature about liberal professors disappearing in US universities with the sensational title, The ’60s Begin to Fade as Liberal Professors Retire^{12}. After reporters interviewed 50 new academics, they found that many of them believe that they “are different from their predecessors — less ideologically polarized and more politically moderate.” Many responded along the line of “my generation is not so ideologically driven.” Moreover, these new professors seemed not that interested in the fights of 1960s and 1970s any longer:

^{12} Interestingly the person they showed as a liberal professor who was part of social movements and then later on joined the academy is one of my research participants.
Yet already there are signs that the intense passions and polemics that roiled campuses during the past couple of decades have begun to fade. At Stanford a divided anthropology department reunited last year after a bitter split in 1998 broke it into two entities, one focusing on culture, the other on biology. At Amherst, where military recruiters were kicked out in 1987, students crammed into a lecture hall this year to listen as alumni who served in Iraq urged them to join the military (Cohen, 2008, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/03/arts/03camp.html).

Depoliticization of the academy, and consequently research as a primary academic activity, would have detrimental effects on critical inquiry, since Politics and Politicization (with capital “Ps”) are the major arteries of the critical enterprise. But it seems that, as Marxist Professor Erik Olin Wright states: “There has been some shift away from grand frameworks to more focused empirical questions. [I]n the late ’60s and ’70s, the Marxist impulse was central for those interested in social justice. Now it resides at the margins. (ibid)”

Field Theory

The French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu is arguably one of the most influential figures of social theory of the late 20th century. Drawing mainly on Emile Durkheim and Max Weber13, Bourdieu has considerably contributed to modern thought by

13 Bourdieu, it is worth underlining, also adopted various theoretical and conceptual tools from many other scholars. He adopted the notion of habitus from historian Panofsky, the concept of field from Kurt Lewin, etc. What makes Bourdieu’s work powerful and unique is the way in which he would have these concepts deploy and operate into research fieldwork and its analysis.
extending his innovative ideas to several subject matters and areas of knowledge. His influence has also to do with the many powerful and pragmatic theoretical and methodological tools that he has devised in order to evaluate and analyze the sociocultural reality. In this dissertation project, I employ Bourdieu’s notion of field as a theoretical\textsuperscript{14} lens to look at my interview data. Before discussing the reasons for this theoretical choice, I will briefly discuss the notion of field to underscore what makes it employable in and relevant to this project.

Bourdieu focuses on symbolic forms of domination that support and sustain social inequalities. He suggests that this symbolic nature of power disguises social, economic, and political constructs that operate backstage. Because of this implicit and indirect nature of the operation of symbolic power, it becomes possible for this power, and consequently constructions that belong to the same assemblage such as domination, to penetrate and proliferate through different social systems with relative ease, without necessarily facing explicit resistance from the members of these systems. One of the most widespread expressions of exerting symbolic power and domination could be seen in the example of how institutions, social and cultural recourses “hold individuals and groups in competitive and self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination (Scott, 2007, p.42)”. This state of competitiveness, as symbolic domination’s \textit{modus operandi}, hinders one’s consciousness from recognizing the underlying social, political and economic conditions of the reality of inequality (Ibid). To understand such a complex nature of the operations of power across the social scene, Bourdieu had to devise new conceptual categories

\textsuperscript{14} My use of “theory” here is rather closer to the notion of \textit{paradigm} and the definition that Bogdan & Biklen (2003) propose: “People use the word theory in many ways. Among quantitative researchers in education its use is sometimes restricted to a systematically stated and testable set of propositions about the empirical world. Our use of word is much more in line with its use in sociology and anthropology and is similar to the term ‘paradigm’. A paradigm is a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research. When we refer to a ‘theoretical orientation’ or ‘theoretical perspective,’ we are talking about a way of looking at the world, the assumptions people have about what is important and what makes the world work” (p.22).
and instruments to assess how cultural, economic and institutional artifacts (e.g., tastes, language, music choices, networks, and eating habits) help perpetuate social distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984).

The notion *field*, along with *habitus* and *capital*, is among the many central concepts in Bourdieu’s work. However, with reference to the US in particular, the notion *field* has not been as popular as the other two. While *habitus* could be a powerful intellectual tool to understand generative principles that underlie the practices of individuals in certain social settings, some practices cannot be explained exclusively through *habitus* and on the basis of individual dispositions alone. What Bourdieu proposes for such supra-individual situations is a relationality that could address what may exist when multiple *habitus* are at operation within a single social context at a time. This he calls the “field” (Bourdieu, 1984), which could be explained as a context within which interactions between *habitus* take place.

However, it is important to emphasize that Bourdieu remained suspicious of defining theoretical concepts professionally and statically by way of rejecting positivism, and preferred instead to define such concepts as *open*. He asserts that “concepts have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be *put to work empirically in systematic fashion* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.96 [emphasis in original?])” In this manner, the concepts of *habitus, field*, and *capital* should be defined “only within the theoretical systems they constitute, not in isolation (p.96)” If concepts are better defined relationally and systemically, it remains possible

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15 This should not be credited to a post-modern, relativist inclination that Bourdieu may have had. To the contrary, although he believed that concepts acquire their *specific* definitions in the field through interaction, the *general* tenets and functions of these concepts are never closed to abstraction.
to look at each analytically without disturbing its relational affinity to other concepts. Hence, in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Bourdieu does provide an analytical definition of *field*:

In analytical terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (p.97).

Fields are different from networks in that people or agents do not have to be in frequent contact to still constitute a definite social group. In this sense, fields function like social repositories for struggles and maneuvers waged to lay claims to certain resources: “Each field, by virtue of its defining content, has a different logic and taken-for-granted structure of necessity and relevance which is both the product and producer of the habitus which is specific and appropriate to the field (Jenkins, 1992, p.52).”

Bourdieu asserts that relations themselves also obtain their meanings “only within a system of relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.96).” To better understand this, one could refer to how habitus itself is structured by other structures (habitus, *in the plural*), but at the same time also structures those very structures outside of it. Similarly, relations can only exist through and as part of “systems of relations” not separately. In empirical language, the technique of correspondence analysis, which Bourdieu frequently employs to look at relations to construct patterns, is a way of “thinking” in terms of relations. And consequently, the relational aspect of
these different layers naturally extends to the field’s properties, for “[t]o think in terms of field is 
to think relationally.” (p.96 [emphasis in original]) By modifying the Hegelian notion of
dialectic, which tends to understand “things” in terms of controversiality, Bourdieu formulates
the real as relational – the real is relational. It should be noted, however, that thinking
relationally is not to perform simple comparisons between “things”; rather it aims to understand
the generative principles of the relations among these “things”.

In this sense, fields have their own specific logics of operation, and the task of the social
scientist is to understand/explore/reveal these logics by adopting a way of thinking that
materializes relationally. For example, “while the artistic field has constituted itself by rejecting
or reversing the law of material profit, the economic field has emerged historically, through the
creation of a universe within which, as we commonly say, ‘business is business,’ where the
enchanted relations of friendship and love are in principle excluded (Ibid, p.98).”

A field should not be construed as a closed and bordered domain, but more like a “field
of forces”. Fields, consequently, have dynamic characters and possess various potentialities
(Mills, 2008), an important point those who criticize Bourdieu for being over-pessimistic about
the reproduction of society usually neglect to consider. Additionally, fields are also contexts
where struggles for power take shape and unfold in a rather non-static manner through which
different agents seek access to this power relationally, i.e., within the relations of the dominant
and the dominated (Ibid). The instruments of this struggle are the social and cultural forms of
capital. Again, this is a reminder of the dynamic nature of fields that Bourdieu must have had in
mind when he refined the concept: although, analytically, a field is not necessarily identified as a
battlefield, its relational outcome of opposing struggles waged to secure access to certain
Thus, Bourdieu seems to use the concepts of field and habitus in much of his work as means to understand and locate the interrelations that exist socially and contextually. For instance, “[i]n *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu used both the concepts of ‘field’ and ‘habitus’ to criticize structuralism through an exploration of the differences between Kabyle society and modern French society. In that text, he can be seen to gradually substitute the term field (associated with what he called ‘institutions’ such as the church or the economy) for structure. For example, he compared the relationship between ‘incorporated history and an objectified history’ (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.133)”

I found Bourdieu’s notion of field particularly helpful to my present undertaking for two main reasons. Firstly, “[Bourdieu] viewed the academic field, as other fields, as a game in which conflict and struggle over symbolic capital were *de rigueur* (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.1).” This understanding of the field of academy, albeit controversial, provided me with an opportunity to look at the construction of critical research as part of academic struggles over symbolic capital. In *Homo Academicus* Bourdieu (1988b) says the following on this account:

> If the agents do indeed contribute to the constructions of these structures [the field in which they are positioned], they do so at every stage within the limits of the structural constraints which affect their acts of construction both from without, through determinants connected with their position in the objective structures, and from within, through the mental structures –the categories of professional understanding- which organize their perception and appreciation of the social world. In other words, although
they are never more than particular angles of vision, taken from points of view which the objectivist analysis *situs* constitutes as such, the partial and partisan views of the agents engaged in the game, and the individual or collective struggles through which they aim to impose these views, are part of the objective truth of this game, playing an active part in sustaining or transforming it, within the limits set by the objective constraints (p.xiv).

I, however, followed a different path from Bourdieu’s in the analysis of the data that had emerged from my interviews, given that my aim was not to compare different power positions that might be held by various disciplines and/or scholars, which in turn was not of interest to this project. Additionally, I am aware that following Bourdieu religiously would not serve a plausible purpose other than reproducing his theory mechanically. In other words, I did not use field theory as a template to fill in the blanks of my data. On the contrary, in many parts of the data analysis, I engaged the concepts at hand more in the form of a critical conversation with regard to their appropriateness and predictability. Thus for the primary aim of extending the notion of field into the world of academic practices, in this case the construction of critical qualitative research, I looked at generative principles that could underlie the various constructions of critical research beyond theoretical and methodological constraints. To prevent this from turning into a linear application, I simultaneously tried to incorporate the internal dynamics of the research field into analysis, the way this was articulated by my participants. And to accommodate for these internal dynamic differences, I found it beneficial to utilize some of the relevant theoretical constructs that Bourdieu proposed, such as the role of individualism in academic practices. In this regard, in *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, Bourdieu (1998) talks about
the “new intellectuals”, underscoring how this condition of newness is actually a byproduct of contemporary market relations. According to him, there exists a trend among new intellectuals towards praising the importance of difference. This, he claims, could be read as a return to individualism, which may have serious political implications such as sacrificing, and almost abandoning, the collective formation and arrangement of the struggle against market tyranny. He further argues that this academic individualism functions as a “self-fulfilling prophecy” that could produce detrimental effects unto the gains that social theory has managed to make in relation to intellectuals’ collective responsibilities “towards industrial accidents, sickness, or poverty. (p.7)” According to him, these individualistic outlooks in academia are usually sanctioned and promoted by those who enjoy positions of differential power, given that individualism as such leads to a condition of fragmentation that allows the powerful to maintain the status quo.

The proposition that Bourdieu underscores in relation to how individual or collective outlooks impact academic practices and societal objectification differently helped me map out, on the one hand, the interplay of the personal, the political and the academic in the domain of critical research in education, and, on the other hand, the way these manifest as homological distinctions (i.e., constructing difference in parallel ways such as systemic opposition, invoking difference via the same set of tools, etc.). I will discuss each of the theoretical tools that I employed in the analysis section of this dissertation.

In short, as Bourdieu frequently iterates, at the heart of the field theory lies relational thinking, in the sense that relations are also related. This goes beyond simple comparisons of factors that may be influencing the subjects under scrutiny to trying to understand what generates
such factors in relation to the field in which they are embedded. To circumvent this risk of simplifying, I adopted a “fuzzy logic,” so to speak, in order to be critical about my own interpretations and assumptions, as well as to try to avoid slippage into calcifying the observed relations as bordered rather than open types.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Introduction

The current state of the notion of critical in methodological theory is open to a yawning discussion. The political challenges that critical scholars have taken up are usually accompanied by methodological frameworks that have been appropriated to fit the nature of their critical enterprise. Some interpret this methodological appropriation to specific political assumptions and value orientations as research that is partisan and biased (Hammersley, 2000). On the other side of the aisle, those who question the premises on which the “traditional research” has been established insist that research should open up possibilities towards positive social change rather than contribute to only academic/scholarly conversations. However, it is important to underline that the critical camp does not represent a homogeneous group rooted in the same philosophical and epistemological grounds (Foley, 2002).

Some claim that the theoretical veil of criticality no longer drapes the methodological skeleton of critical research, given the ambiguous and uncertain trajectories such research has taken since the days of the Frankfurt School (Honnet, 1979). What adds to this ambiguity is that the epistemological principles of the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory were constructed around the social class problematic of the European proletariat, and that for countries like the United States in which social class presumably comes after race, gender, and ethnicity. There appears to exist a problem of rendering critical frameworks into such different contexts. But at the same time New York in 1934 and Los Angeles in 1941 hosted the Institute temporarily until its
reestablishment in Frankfurt in 1954 (Giroux, 1983). By the same token, people like Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator whose work inspired a good deal of people all around the world (through the mediation of US scholarship, though), infused crossbred philosophical and epistemological conversations into critical discourses intermingling with Christian spirituality and Marxism, which, according to orthodox Marxists, could not be thought together. Tracking down the roots of the US criticalism in educational scholarship in this transnational theoretical and methodological construct, in this sense, is not an easy task.

Such debates circumscribing the notion critical over and above what constitutes critical in contemporary research agenda add a unique difficulty to the methodological construction of this dissertation project. The methodological path that needs to be followed for the purposes of this dissertation project should be able to capture both tensions, differences, commonalities in regard to constructions of critical enterprise, and how these are justified and legitimized within the field of qualitative critical research in education. Towards this end, I defined the notion critical very loosely and in a broad fashion at the beginning of the study. I will detail how and why I developed this definition later in the segments on participant and text selection. And given such difficulty, I additionally decided to look at both written texts and narrations from the field.

Therefore, this dissertation project employs two qualitative data conducting techniques: content analysis and interviews. Both techniques are constructed distinctively to complement each other in an attempt to reveal the various aspects of critical and transformative act in the critical qualitative research in education. The selection of texts and participants followed very rigorous procedures, with the latter, along with data analysis, underlining the political nature of the notion critical.
I utilized *Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications* as a guideline to organize the presentation of my research. Guidelines provided by American Educational Research Association “apply to reports of education research grounded in the empirical traditions of the social sciences” (online source available at [www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)). Although such standardization is directed towards publishing specifically in AERA journals, it also provides a rigorous intellectual framework to organize both the analysis of research data and presentation of the research outcomes. In this sense, I constantly checked the standards set for the various aspects of empirical research in an attempt to see whether my analysis and presentation are in line with the frameworks provided. Engaging in such a practice not only helped me organize my dissertation but also provided auto-feedback in terms of coherence and clarity of my thinking and presentation.

The methods section of this dissertation project should be read as two independent fragments. This is because each technique used in the project is to be discussed separately from, albeit in coordination with each other. In what follows, I will explain the methodological rationale for text selection for content analysis as well as participants for interviews.

**Rationale for Methodology**

What counts as a legitimate subject of sociological inquiry depends on the academic boundaries which are culturally produced and are usually the outcomes of complex power-games (Apple, 1996). According to Bourdieu (1977), a field under study is usually misrepresented because of the external positions that social scientists might have adopted. This is because the
cultural or social maps that researchers mentally construct about a field usually tend to be timeless and static. Therefore, it could be argued that it is not that easy to capture tendencies in a field since the “subjects” of that very field may not share similar intellectual maps that the researcher wishes to introduce. This becomes more problematic when it comes to choosing research subjects.

The question “who represents the field” qualifies the main dilemma of this problematic and needs to be thought of, as Apple suggests, as a part of complex power and structure games inherent to every social institution (Apple, 1988, 2000). In this sense, the possible subjects of any study might be seen as qualified for some, while for others totally irrelevant. And this research is not an exception to this dilemma.

One other major problem concerning subject selection, as Bourdieu depicted in his ethnographic study on French Intellectuals *Homo Academicus*, is related to the respective power relations in a certain field. According to Bourdieu, the cultural and social capital that the reputation of and/or being prolific in the academy also provides privilege to some voices over others, a privilege that may lead to symbolic violence or internal colonialism within an academic field. The field is here considered as a space in which power games take place [*espace de jeu*], “a field of objective relations between individuals or institutions who are competing for the same stake (Moi, 1991, p.1021).”

An intellectual field, according to Bourdieu, is different than other social fields, despite the fact that the social field is also present within the intellectual field. However, the intellectual field enjoys a relative autonomy that could provide different tools and mechanisms for different types of legitimacy. Representation in the intellectual field, unlike other fields, is not imported
from outside, but produced from within its own boundaries. The educational field and intellectual field have their own mechanisms of selection, or, in Bourdieu's own words, *consecration*. The legitimacy of every movement (or knowledge) as a symbolic value is produced by the field itself rather than being consequential to what takes place without, a process that is achieved through various strategies. This leads to the creation of *habitus* for each field in harmony with these strategies of legitimation. The system of dispositions, *habitus*, adjusted to the game (or of the field), also qualifies the positions of individual actors involved in the field in question.

For a field to work there must be stakes as well as people ready to engage the game. Rendered differently, academicians who markedly lack cultural and/or social capital (no matter how qualified they are to talk about a given subject) may not be that readily listened to as much as those who determine and flesh out the rules of the game. Similarly, Bourdieu makes another distinction between “empirical” and “epistemic” individuals: the latter are the individuals “defined by a number of properties in a constructed and theoretical space (Mudimbe, 1993, p.153).” This theoretical space provides more mobility and is another important distinction.

Why did I need to interview people? What did I hope to get from interviews that I cannot obtain through textual analysis? My argument is that it is also significant to look at conjunctures that are not traditionally part of finished products. Wright (2006) suggests that one of the major tasks of emancipatory social sciences is to produce a lucid, plausible theory of alternatives to existing social structures that could remove the harms they generate. He explains these alternatives by introducing three different criteria that could point towards an act of
transformation: *desirability, viability* and *achievability*. “These are nested in a kind of hierarchy: not all desirable alternatives are viable, and not all viable alternatives are achievable (p.96).”

In a critical study seeking to displace existing inequalities, such distinctions (desirable, viable or achievable) among alternatives could be made through a detailed analysis of the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the field in which the study is conducted, as well as through exploring the set of potential external forces by which the field is influenced, from globalization, isolation, negotiation with the broader society, to the physical world, dispositions, openness to change, etc. However, the (imagined) eventuality of a given alternative is highly subjective and riddled with the discourse of transformative hope, since it is only the researcher who could determine how desirable, viable or achievable an alternative outcome his/her research work might bring along. Therefore, the criterion, I believe, is based on the normative and moral grounds of the researchers, which sometimes may be in contrast with the epistemological principles of critical methodology.

It might be possible to better understand the dynamics of knowledge production without being necessarily restricted by the ideological or theoretical indices contained in a study. Diagnosis and critique, according to Wright (1996), are closely attached to the questions of social justice and normative theory. In other words, “[t]o describe a social arrangement as generating ‘harm’ is to infuse the analysis with a moral judgment. Behind every emancipatory theory, there is thus an implicit theory of justice: a conception of what conditions would have to be met before institutions of a society could be deemed just (p.95).” What people understand from the notion of *social justice* is therefore closely connected, answering the moral and
normative question of “how society should be?” Answers to these questions are not explicit in the finished products of research.

In many cases, researchers do not provide any normative background (beyond the theoretical stand points) for the alternatives they are advocating and the possibility of accomplishing these alternatives. Because of this absence there remain some unanswerable questions upon conducting textual analysis: Where do different conceptualizations of the same social phenomena stem from (normative grounds, positionality, etc.)? What are the motivations and driving forces behind the conceptualizations of society, schooling, and education in particular? How does the researcher conceive inequality and social justice (gender, race, ethnicity, disability and the like)? Is it feasible to offer alternatives which are fundamentally controversial to the way society works? Can we really “speak truth to power”? What would be the resistance strategies to reach research goals? Is the researcher conscious about her alternatives, whether they are desirable, viable or achievable? When can we reach those alternatives? What would be the other factors needed to effectuate social transformation? Who can research whom? Theoretically speaking, answers to these questions could be legitimated in various ways but only the researcher could communicate the ways in which her research contributes to the possible answers and where to locate her study within the broader discussions of equality and transformation. Interviewing researchers, therefore, carries the potential of mapping some of these subjective grounds when looking at commonalities and differences among researchers whose work is directed towards the same endpoint, i.e., positive social transformation.
Content Analysis

In the first phase of the study, I conducted analysis of data from written sources. My aim in doing this was to capture various aspects of constructing critical qualitative study as well as transformation tendencies operating in the broader field of education. To ward off the conventional, yet impeding representation problems that I discuss above, rigorous selection and analysis techniques were applied, and I shall elaborate on these later in this chapter.

Content analysis is a research tool that is used to determine the existence of certain concepts in a given text. The purpose of content analysis is to organize communicative information into discrete categories (Bryman, 2001). Fraenkel & Wallen (2006) suggest that, through content analysis, one can study human behavior in an indirect way through an analysis of their communication.

Content analysis requires that all data “must at some point convert, i.e., code, descriptive information into categories. And there are two ways this might be done through:

1. The researcher determines the categories before any analysis begins. These categories are based on previous knowledge, theory, and/or experience;

2. The researcher becomes very familiar with the descriptive information collected and allows the categories to emerge as the analysis continues.” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 474)

In this study, I applied the amalgamation of these both strategies. I determined categories based on my extensive readings on critical qualitative research as well as through incorporating
the categories that had emerged during analysis. In the next section, I will explain how I chose the texts for analysis.

Text Selection for Content Analysis

I applied the *cluster random sampling* technique for text selection. “The selection of groups, or clusters, of subjects rather than individuals is known as cluster random sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 95).” I decided to use *Social Science Citation Index Database* as the main source for data collection, as it includes the most influential educational journals in the field.

Scientific journals are the primary venues where various discussions in education have taken place. I examined the contents of 15% of the Index’s journals for the period 1996 – 2006, since it is almost impossible to explore every single journal on the Index. I used the journal citation report system to determine the most influential journals the database had. This report system, which has been constructed through the “Journal Impact Factor algorithm” – developed by Eugene Garfield, ranks more than 6500 scientific and social scientific journals annually based on the number of citations of the articles they publish. Garfield (1994), the founder of ISI system and Journal Impact Factor, defines this method as:

…a ratio between citations and recent citable items published. Thus, the impact factor of a journal is calculated by dividing the number of current year citations to the source items published in that journal during the previous two years, by calculating the ratio between the number of citations received and the number of citable articles published (p.1).
Below is how the Journal Impact Factor is calculated, as well as an example of its application to one of the major journals in educational research:

*Calculation for Journal Impact Factor:*

\[ A = \text{total cites in 2007} \]

\[ B = \text{2007 cites to articles published in 2005-2006} \text{(this is a subset of A)} \]

\[ C = \text{number of articles published in 2005-2006} \]

\[ D = \frac{B}{C} = 2007 \text{ impact factor} \]

*Journal Impact Factor of Anthropology and Education Quarterly for 2007*

<table>
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<th>Cites in 2007 to articles published in:</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>=5</th>
<th>Number of articles published in:</th>
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</thead>
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<td>=24</td>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>=24</td>
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<tr>
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<td>=29</td>
<td></td>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>=46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1 Calculation of Impact Factor*

<table>
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<th>Cites to recent articles</th>
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<th>= 0.630 Journal Impact Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of recent articles</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After determining the most impactful journals under the section of Education & Educational Research of Social Sciences Citation Index Database, I read through the publishing policies and key subject matters for the top journals. I eliminated the journals that qualitative research articles did not find a place for, that only focus on policy research, that only publish review articles, that are purely theoretical, and so on. In other words, I selected the journals that mainly allocate their pages for field research, particularly qualitative research. On the other hand, I also included *Phi Delta Kappan*, a journal that mostly addresses educational policy issues, but at the same time include research based articles at all levels. This procedure yielded the following ~%15 of Education & Educational Research Journals:

1- American Educational Research Journal

2- Reading Research Quarterly

3- Education and Urban Society

4- Phi Delta Kappan
The next step was to find appropriate research articles for the purposes of this dissertation project. The multitude of topics and the various complications and implications this may engender is not immune to serious criticism. Therefore, and as rigorous means to keep my analysis focused, I chose the area of identity problematics in qualitative research as the main domain of investigation. This is not because the aim of this study is to understand how the
identity problematic is depicted in educational research but to yield data from articles covering similar issues and directed towards similar ends; therefore, this would help me construct manageable categories for analysis. It is because of this reason that I did not use research topics as part of data analysis.

I assigned 4 keywords for searching suitable articles within the 15 journals that I mentioned above: social class, race, gender, and ethnicity. These searches yielded 446 articles published between the years 1996 and 2006. Each search was saved to My Endnote Web Library and organized under a matching classification.

The stage that followed was both problematic and exhaustive in the sense that I had to decide which articles should be considered critical. It is not an easy task to label an article as critical or not based on the premises of methodology or area of study. In contrast to the ‘common’ assumption, researchers rarely talk about how they get raw data for analysis. Rather, they prefer to discuss epistemological or philosophical foundations and political orientations. The latter prominent point was not helpful for the purposes of my selection process. On the one hand, there is no consensus over what constitutes critical or yet what marks off the boundaries of the critical; on the other, almost all the literature, particularly that dealing with methodological issues of critical research, has not provided operational definitions. Phil Carspecken acknowledges this difficulty as well:

My claim is that critical qualitative research has to do more with social theory and epistemology which it makes explicit than with any methods used, any domains studied, whether or not power is a major feature of the investigation or not, etc. Hence, a lot of qualitative research generally works implicitly with the same principles I have
tried to make explicit. Often, things are not well expressed when researchers explain what they have done and why (frequently, ideas about "reality" and "social construction" and value/normative theory, etc. are expressed in ways that presuppose the subject-object paradigm for knowledge with mediations to the relationship added instead of fully shifting to a subject-subject paradigm). And yet what the researcher actually does in the field, how data is analyzed and so on display implicit consistency with this social theory and epistemology.\textsuperscript{16}

To overcome these major difficulties I followed two techniques. First, I read a wide spectrum of articles crisscrossing a variety of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, and literacy. While reading these articles, I tried to extract what authors refer to when they talk about the critical. I looked at the studies that in turn reference or use as examples. Second, I discussed with scholars who possibly know what critical might be or what it might qualify. Other than my dissertation committee members, I asked people who either are well-known for their critical studies or deal with methodological theories. My extensive readings and people’s responses produced the following principles that point towards a critical dimension so that to inform my selection decisions initially:

1- Using research as social critique;

2- Deploying non-oppressive methods;

3- Displaying theoretical and empirical connections of lives/groups/places to political/racial economy;

\textsuperscript{16} From email conversations with Phil Carspecken (December, 2007)
4- Using reflexivity;

5- Employing multi-site research choices;

6- Seeking to challenge/counter hegemonic representations;

7- Employing a concept of critique that goes beyond simply criticizing means-ends relations in educational programs and policies to address the rationale (beliefs, ideologies, values, assumptions) behind patterns of action and their supporting cultural milieu;

8- Distinguishing between culture and system in a way that culture is partially explained in terms of the functions it serves for a social system;

9- Understanding knowledge and the processes that generate knowledge as socio-cultural phenomena themselves, hence research being not just production of knowledge about society but a feature of that very society;

10- Some relation understood between knowledge and self-formation and some idea about self-formative processes such that we can understand knowledge to be related to emancipation. To know / learn without ideological distortion is simultaneously to change / develop the self.

Working with the texts and thinking about the above principles made me realize that people are either referring to the “functions” of the critical (theory/method) – what it serves to accomplish: emancipation, transformation, etc.; or to the “mechanisms” of the critical (theory/method) – how it works: consciousness raising, policy change, socially responsible pedagogy etc. In other words, while “consciousness raising” is one of the critique mechanisms,
“transformation” is its own function.\textsuperscript{17} So, one might propose consciousness raising as a mechanism in the study to alter a certain condition without mentioning what the main premise of the study is, such as transformation. Moreover, my initial analysis revealed that the differential subscription to one of two I mentioned above sets the tone for the study as to whether it is grounded in political or sociological terrain. Although one might rightfully claim that every research act is an outcome of various political choices, the difference I am proposing here should be understood as an overall perspective/grounding of research in relation to what it invokes. If, for example, one evokes the functions of the critical throughout the research, there appears a tendency towards setting a more political ground for critique such as that directed at power relations, hegemony, symbolic violence, etc.

People who are using the mechanisms of the critical may not always use the functions of the critical in the same study, or vice versa; neither case would make research any less critical. However, it seems that using one of these lenses reinforces the controversial accounts among researchers in regards to what makes a research critical.\textsuperscript{18} It should be noted that I am extremely cautious while making this argument here because of the fact that the distinction I put forward is not, of course, the only aspect of the debate contributing to the discussion of the difficulty of determining what qualifies as critical, even when its relevancy to the initial selection processes for this study should not be underestimated.

Instead of proposing a definition of “critical”, which would be very broad and loose, thus problematic as I indicate in this study, I decided to establish new criteria serving as operational

\textsuperscript{17} This difference also became a major node of this dissertation project. I discuss functions and mechanisms of the critical later in chapter V.

\textsuperscript{18} This issue also emerged during my interviews and became one of the major themes of this dissertation project.
definition to locate critical studies that fit the framework of this project. According to this, studies should:

1- Be qualitative in nature or should use at least one qualitative data collection-technique;

2- Use research for social, cultural, political, socio-psychological, and institutional critique;

3- Subscribe to either functions or mechanisms of the critical enterprise; and,

4- Not only be descriptive but should also seek to alter oppressive, unequal and undemocratic.

I read the abstracts of 446 articles in an attempt to eliminate theoretical and quantitative studies. After this elimination, I read the remaining articles with particular attention to the above criteria. When the process was completed after 3 months, there were 60 articles left after this initial elimination, which represented approximately 14% percent of the total number of articles located.

Data Analysis (Texts)

All articles were exported into the qualitative data analysis program \textit{Nvivo}. The first step was to code the articles under the following categories:

1- Methodology

2- Theoretical Background
3- Approaches to Subjects

4- Political Claims

5- Emancipatory Interests

6- Transformations

7- Reflexivity

After creating classificatory schema in accordance with these categories, I started a second round of analysis. This time, I was trying to create concrete divisions for both quantification and descriptive purposes. 20 attributions anchoring more than 100 nodes emerged during this process. All categories were organized under three major headings: grounding research, framing research, and transformations. Quantified attributions are displayed through charts which are organized through percentages, number of cases, and nodes.

During the coding process, I followed a questioning protocol prepared for the purpose of revealing specific themes. For example, some of the questions I asked to scrutinize reflexive practices were: Is there any reflexive practice in the article? What types of reflexivity have been employed? Is there any further explanation for the usages of reflexivity? What does reflexivity serve in the research? Is it explicit or implicit? Almost all of these questions were constructed through employing specific theoretical constructs. Again, for example, I employed Pillow’s (2003) categorization of reflexive practices to look at raw data. However, finding answers to my questions was not always an easy task. I had to read many sections of the articles over and over again in order to re-construct implications as the researchers are not always explicitly write about the issues I am exploring. Similarly, sometimes I could not find an answer to my question. In that
case, I marked the research article vis-à-vis the specific question as “not applicable” or “do not exist”. As presented in the following chapters, these are also used as data. On the other hand, when I find an answer to my question, first I coded the text (paragraph, sentence, or section) through using Nvivo. At the same time, I quantified each answer for pattern analysis. (i.e., Reflexivity is implicit=1, Reflexivity is explicit=2, No Reflexivity=3) After the quantification of the nodes emerged from the coding process, I compared them to see interrelations both with each other and the other themes.

In the last stage of the content analysis, I clustered the characteristics of transformative scholarship in critical qualitative research in education. It is important to mention that these clusters should be thought of within the disciplinarian borders of education. The purpose of this analysis was to theorize and discuss the overall findings of content analysis. A computer program developed in Matlab compared each nodes attributed to every case and drew a chart called dendogram. This dendogram gave visual information about which cases are similar to or different from others. According to the proximities between cases, the dendogram grouped these together. I re-read the articles in each group in order to organize them theoretically under five major headings.

**Interviews**

In the second phase of this dissertation project, I conducted 17 interviews with scholars who were selected through a multi-layer sampling technique. In-depth interviews with semi-structural tendencies were adopted to make comparisons between different approaches to the
same set of questions. However, during the interview process, various issues, which had not been anticipated before, emerged and forced me to be more flexible in terms of questions. Drawing on Bourdieu’s *field theory* (that an intellectual field has relative autonomy which provides different tools and mechanisms for different types of legitimacy), I interviewed researchers who identify themselves as “criticalist”, “critical pedagogues”, “critical researchers”, or who adopt “critical perspectives”.

People who participated in this study should not be seen as the “subjects,” but rather as participants/contributors in the sense that this research is more an attempt to understand how people engage in critical research practices and how these get justified through various concerns, commitments, etc. Therefore, I did not use the participants’ insights to critique, analyze or understand their own respective work. Instead, I utilized the data generated outwards, so to speak, in order to paint a picture of the recent intellectual history of critical qualitative research in the field of education.

**Participants**

The procedures for selecting journals and those for choosing participants are closely connected with each other. Most impactful education and educational research journals were determined through the Impact Factor analysis in the first phase of the study. These journals were then refined to 15 by using the technique that I discuss above. Key words were assigned
and appropriate articles were obtained. Subject selection is based on these articles. Table 2 visualizes this process.
Table 2 Clustering Universities

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<th>Social Class</th>
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<td>Indiana Univ.</td>
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<td>John Hopkins</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. Utah</td>
<td>Univ. Arizona</td>
<td>UC Chicago</td>
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<td>Univ. so Calif.</td>
<td>Univ. California</td>
<td>Penn State Univ.</td>
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<td>Univ. Virginia</td>
<td>Univ. California</td>
<td>Penn State Univ.</td>
<td>NYU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boston College</td>
<td>Univ. California</td>
<td>Penn State Univ.</td>
<td>NYU</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUNY</td>
<td>Brigham Univ.</td>
<td>Penn State Univ.</td>
<td>NYU</td>
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</table>

Representation of different geographical locations

1. University of California at Los Angeles
2. Harvard University
3. University of Texas
4. University of Wisconsin
5. University of Illinois
6. City University of New York
At the beginning of the study, I was planning to select participants according to their impact factor in the field. Similar to journal impact analysis, there are plenty of academic resources available to calculate scholars’ impact, which is symbolized with $h$ and $m$ indexes. However, this initial sketch brought about some ethical and practical problems. It required looking at many scholars in order to decide who has more impact in the field and I did not know where to begin. Besides, it was almost impossible to justify the point of departure. In the same vein, sorting out the researchers with reference to impact factors by quantifying their work did not seemed to be an ethical practice for the purposes of participant selection. This is not something that one can easily explain to his/her participants when they ask about how they have been selected.

Instead of subscribing to this sampling technique, I decided to extend the selection process that I utilized for the content analysis. Having articles at hand, I grouped them according to their institutional roots. I selected universities based on record counts.\(^\text{19}\) In order to represent different geographical locations in the United States as it was suggested to me by my committee members, I also included a geographical location criterion into my selection process. This yielded six universities that are shown in the table above. Consequently, these universities could be considered as the most impactful institutions in regards to my research topic, universities whose faculty’s work appears relatively more in the Social Sciences Citation Database journals.

\(^{19}\) It is important to mention that as the keywords assigned to determine journal articles are social class, gender, race, and ethnicity, the selection of universities is also directly influenced from these attributions. Therefore, the size of the education departments, as well as the number of scholars working on social class, race, gender, and ethnicity influenced the outcomes. However, these are not the only areas of study for critical qualitative inquiry. In this sense, university selection was not based on impact ranking but rather they were clustered in accordance with the criteria I discussed in this chapter. I could not reach every scholar I decided to interview and thus the number of scholars from each university was not evenly distributed.
After determining what school could fall under the category “prolific,” I looked at the web pages of the Education Departments for each school and read the professional biographies of faculty, except those of the emeriti. Given this, the *purposive sampling* technique was employed to determine participants. *Purposive sampling* refers to the technique of selecting research participants who would be representative of the population. The researcher defines the specifics of the research and then chooses the “especially qualified” subjects for the purposes of his/her study. In this process, the researcher’s personal judgments and knowledge about the field of study play a major role (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

I emailed the scholars whom I found to fit my research objectives. As it was expected, I could not access everyone emailed because of various reasons. Below is the list of scholars I was able to eventually interview.\(^{20}\) I utilized every opportunity to recruit more participants into my study. Some of the scholars I interviewed recommended other names to contact with and were personally involved in the process of communicating those other potential participants. I did not want to miss the chance, for example, to talk to scholars from my own university\(^{21}\), scholars whose works I know very well. Besides, interviewing more people would not pose any threat to my study or its outcomes. Thus I interviewed Phil Carspecken and one of his colleagues from Indiana University. Phil Carspecken is arguably the most influential scholar in the methodological theory of critical qualitative research in education.

This research study does not aim to explore any of the personal or private life aspects of the research subjects. Interview questions further clarify this confidentiality goal. Instead, this

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\(^{20}\) I contacted a number of scholars relevant in the field but not all agreed to take part.

\(^{21}\) I interviewed one of my committee members, Lois Weis. This is because her work is so influential in the field and many of my participants brought up her name during the interview process.
project aspires to shed light on the various practices of critical qualitative research in education used as a mechanism of social commentary oriented towards positive social transformation. Although critical researchers usually present their findings in the form of propositions towards a just society, in their writings they are not as vocal about the possible transformative mechanisms that would carry society en route towards this conceived end of social change. This research study explores and reconstructs this concealed facet of the critical qualitative research by investigating the experiences and insights of its “impactful” practitioners. Such pursuit necessitates documenting how influential scholars from influential universities construct their research frameworks. The other major purpose of this study is to build the “intellectual history” of the critical qualitative research in education as mentioned above. This makes it conceptually and practically imperative that the names of the participants be given and recognized as the major actors in the field, also given that the association of the name with the data lends "credibility" to the findings. Anonymity would not have benefited any of the practical or theoretical purposes of this research study. The participants represent different traditions of critical qualitative research. Information provided by the participants would have little meaningfulness if the identities of these actors were not associated with it. Anonymity would also decrease the overall impact and internal validity of the study.

The scholars were notified that their names would be used and that they had the right to decline or discontinue at any stage of the research. Signed consent forms were obtained from the scholars after explaining the details of the research.

All interviews were conducted at participants’ convenience by appointment within a year’s span. For this, I traveled to the participants’ respective locations to conduct face-to-face
interviews. Only three of the interviews had to be done over the phone because of the time limitations and the availability of the participants. The others were conducted in the participants’ university offices (13), houses (3), and one took place at a coffee shop (1).

A digital voice recorder was used to record face-to-face interviews, while a computer program which has the capacity of recording phone calls (Skype) was utilized for the phone interviews.

**Names of the Participants (Alphabetical Order)**

1- Anne Haas Dyson: University of Wisconsin Madison
2- Catherine Cornbleth: State University of New York at Buffalo
3- Douglas Foley: University of Texas at Austin
4- Jean Anyon: City University of New York
5- Jim Scheurich: Texas A&M University at College Station
6- Lois Weis: State University of New York at Buffalo
7- Mark Dressman: University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign
8- Michael Olneck: University of Wisconsin Madison
9- Michelle Fine: City University of New York
10- Patrick Slattery: Texas A&M University at College Station

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22 Some of the scholars whom I interviewed have changed their institutions during the course of this study. Thus, the institutions of the scholars provided here are on the basis of time period during which the interviews are conducted.
Data Analysis (Interviews)

As the goal of this study is to explore constructions of critical frameworks and transformation strategies in critical qualitative research in education, I established my conceptual framework along Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, as indicated and detailed in the section on conceptual and theoretical framework of the present study. Field theory provides solid theoretical and conceptual grounds to explore the relationships between positionalities operating in the field of education and the broader sociopolitical and economic composite outside the academy. It should also be noted that working with and through the conceptual and theoretical sets of “field theory” should not necessarily reproduce it without any modification or appropriation to the contexts and requirements of the project at hand. In this sense, what I did was not simply to have field theory reduced to an open schema in order to fill in the blanks of the data in my hands: I
used it mainly to construct categories for analysis in relation to my research objectives, as I also derived categories for analysis from the combination of critical social theory, feminist theories, and cultural criticism that had examined.

Because of confidentiality reasons, I personally transcribed all the interviews verbatim. Data management and analysis were performed using NVIVO, a text-based data analysis software. I coded all the interviews according to the preliminary categories that had been derived from the above sources as well as from categories that had emerged during the coding process. Combination of both helped me to paint a more vivid picture of the current state of critical qualitative research in education.
CHAPTER IV

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of the content analysis of 60 articles published in tier-one journals of education and educational research. Although the amount of data collected from content analysis is immense and may have significant implications for the different practices of the critical qualitative research, for the purposes of this dissertation project, I will confine the discussion to data that have the potential of revealing how transformation strategies are searched, invented, and constructed. Therefore, the main focus of the content analysis chapter is to explore transformation strategies in critical qualitative research in education while interview data analysis is focusing more on the architecture of the critical enterprise. Towards this end, and as a first step, I will carry out analysis under two major headings: 1) Constructing Research, and 2) Transformations. I will provide charts and examples for attributions that were pre-constructed to code with, as well as those that emerged during the coding process itself. Through cross-analysis of attributions, I will also discuss at what points research construction and framing practices would intersect with each other. At the same time I will be addressing how personal, political, and social considerations might inform these strategies.

As a second step, I will attempt to group together transformation-bound critical scholarship through hierarchical cluster analysis. The levels of proximity among research cases
will be used to organize them into different clusters. These clusters will then be examined to construct general patterns of transformation strategies. I will clarify the process of clustering through schemas and charts. I believe that this will also help to understand how the “critical” in relation to the transformative operates in the field.

My intention in this section is to provide an overall interpretation of the transformation strategies that have been deployed in critical qualitative research concerning the area that I am specifically focusing on, identity politics. It should be noted that the borderline for each of these categories is very permeable and, therefore, drawn insecurely, since the aim of this research is not to invent generic categories and/or rudimental classifications that researchers would not actually subscribe to. Likewise, I am aware that a research study may frustrate the imperative to locate it within definite theoretical, epistemological, and methodological borders, when it could lay claims to belonging to multiple categories.

All quotes from the articles I analyzed were italicized in order to mark them off from the ones derived from the literature.

**Road Map**

Content analysis section of this dissertation project explores the major tenets of critical qualitative inquiry in education. These tenets have been constructed from prior readings on the subject, as well as through informal conversations with the critical scholars. On the other hand, in this section of the analysis, I preferred to stay in the realm of descriptions. I tried to reconstruct implications regarding the themes in the most parts of the analysis. Similarly, although there are many attributions presented in this section, only transformative aspect of critical qualitative is discussed in detail. Similarly, only the parts that seem to be relatively more
important and occur more frequently than the others are discussed. This is done with the purpose of keeping the focus on architecture and transformative aspects of critical qualitative research. On the similar aisle, this section could be read as a mediator between the interview analysis and literature as it provides background information regarding the end-product of critical scholarship.

CONSTRUCTING RESEARCH

Research Subjects

It has been argued that the selection of the research subjects and the research site(s) are the most important components of critical qualitative research. This is because emancipatory interests and/or other socio-political commitments are directly related to the peculiarities of research subjects, be they social, political, psychological or otherwise. Researchers tend to focus more on why they choose a particular group of people and a research site rather than the research topic itself. By the same token, it seems that the most common denominator of the research cases I have analyzed for this project is how they approach and focus on their subject and research site selections.
Table 3 Research Subjects

Before I move on to interpreting the chart, I will clarify why and how I came up with above attributions. It should be noted that, while constructing these attributions, I used the definitions that researchers themselves provided. If a researcher for example prefers to use any definitive term for their research subjects such as “minority-poor”, I directly used it as an attribution. I did not make any further extractions from the text. This attitude yielded, for example, 3 categories for minority: minority-elite, minority poor, and minority. Similarly, although the distinction between upper class and elite is not very visible, I preferred to use the researchers’ own terminology and thus assigned them to two categories. This terminology is closely related to politics of representation. The word elite, in this sense, has political attachments, while upper class is usually depicted more as a hierarchical position in society, since class relationships are no longer defined through one’s relationship with labor.
The data reported here are based on a larger qualitative, ethnographic study of identity formation among a cohort of 34 teenage girls attending a historically elite, private, independent single-sex high school located in a Northeastern metropolitan center (Proweller, 1999, p.778).

If the researcher defines his/her subjects in as much detail as Smulyan (2004) does, it becomes possible to assign appropriate attributions based on these detailed descriptions. For instance, I assigned “mixed” to his subjects after reading the following depiction he presents of them:

*Of the 28 women, 19 were white, 5 were Asian American, 3 were Latino, and 1 was African American. Twenty-six identified as heterosexual, one as bisexual, and one as gay. Twenty described their family’s socioeconomic background as middle or upper middle class, 3 as working class, and 5 as poor* (Smulyan, 2004, p.517).

One interesting finding from subject selection worthy of further investigation is how people tend to confine the research with their own. In other words, there is a tendency of focusing on the subjects and topics closely related to researcher’s identity. While making this claim, I am extremely cautious but it is very interesting to see that how people from Latin America tend to engage research on Latin Americans even though they are US professors. This might give us clues about the power relations in the academia. This tendency towards researching one’s own adds another layer to the methodological discussion of Self and Other in

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23 I departed from the names and then checked their university web sites. I am aware that there might be other names which do not sound Latin American or vice versa.

24 See, for example, Cammarota (2004); Solarzano & Bernal (2001). This issue came up many times during my interviews as well, some of the scholars I interviewed agreed that internal colonialism operates within the research world and this is a sort of historical artifact for United States.
relation to questions of representation in qualitative inquiries. Richard Rorty (1985) explains this as an opposition between “desire for objectivity” and “desire for solidarity” (p.3).

Students' experiences and accounts narrated here cannot be examined with but taking into account my experiences and position as a researcher; the findings of this research are situated, relational, and partial. As a 1.5- generation Korean American growing up in New York City who has worked with Asian American community and political organizations, I am committed to giving voice to those who are historically marginalized, invisible, and denied access to equal opportunities (Lew, 2004, p.308).

Research Site

Table 4 Research Site
Research site selections clearly exhibit that urban neighborhoods are the primary spaces to conduct critical qualitative research in education. This tendency is related to the fact that many forms of systemic race, class, and gender oppression define the urban neighborhoods (McLaren, 1994). Additionally, in urban communities, school practices and lives of students reflect the nature of race, gender and class inequalities because the bigness of gap make them much more visible than suburban settings. 55% of the researchers selected *urban* settings as their principal data collection sites.

Table 5 Research Site vs. Subjects

As above chart comparing research sites to research subjects indicates that researchers who are working on/with minority-poor, working class, and minority categories tend to locate their subjects in urban settings.
10% of the researchers preferred to work in *suburban* settings. Unlike urban neighborhoods, suburban settings are usually associated with material comfort, prosperity, and privileged circumstances. In accordance with this association, researchers, as can be seen from the chart, select their subjects from elite, upper class, and middle class categories.

25% of the researches were conducted in *multiple*-research sites. Surprisingly, researchers who prefer to work in multiple research sites inclined to select multiple research subjects for their studies as well.

Only 3% located their research subjects in *rural* settings. Subjects of this setting are chosen from minorities and middle class people.

Departing from these tendencies, one can argue that in critical qualitative research, cultural, socio-economic, and geographical borders are defined in relation to each other. However, written materials do not give us any clue as to whether geography or subject characteristics are prior to each other by any means during research framing.
Table 6 Data Gathering Techniques

As can be seen from the chart above, 32% of the researches employed at least two qualitative data gathering techniques. In many cases, these techniques include interviews and/or observations.

28% percent of the studies were designed as an ethnographic study. Although these studies detail their instrumentations, I classified them wholly under the banner of ethnography, as ethnography means more than just the combination of various data gathering techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Almost all researches use interviews for data gathering; however, 22% of them adopted interviews as the only research tool for this purpose. Narrations are located at the center of analysis in these studies, and researchers mention their sensitivity towards the problems of representation.
7% of researches espouse participant observation and ground the research on field notes, experiences, and relations with the subjects. Researchers generally visit the research site in an attempt to gain familiarity with their research subjects.

Researches subscribing to more than one data gathering technique sometimes employed quantitative techniques as well. 8% of studies preferred to employ at least one quantitative data gathering technique in addition to the qualitative ones. These researches usually have large numbers of subjects and support their claims with statistical analyses.

Analyzing written materials produced by research subjects: 3% of the researches employed this technique, which is usually utilized to explore the understandings and perceptions of the research subjects with regards to certain issues. This technique is also theorized as a way of promoting self consciousness based on the assumption that subjects have the opportunity to reflect on issues in light of their experiences and in a manner different from what they have grown accustomed to. This allows them to see their positionalities, biases, etc. towards the issues at hand, and it enables them to be empowered with the necessary awareness to become active agents of transformation.
Research Challenges

Table 7 Research Challenges

Research challenges refer to the initial reasoning of the research construction. Critical research in this sense starts with the challenge, for example, against various representations of race, gender, and class etc. These challenges are transformed into research problematics through various mechanisms and approaches. On the other hand, they also provide political grounds explicating the positions of researchers. Challenging is said to be one of the major characteristics of the critical enterprise, both at a theoretical and a practical level. It seems that, without taking up a challenge either vis-à-vis the existing literature, or through counter theorizations, assumptions, abstractions, etc., critique does not find its proper niche effectively. In this sense, it would not be a bold claim to say that challenging and critique go hand in hand towards the end of transformation. When Paul Willis (1977) was collecting data from an urban school in an attempt to critique the effects of political economy on identity construction, he was also challenging the traditional understandings of working class masculinities produced under the
archaic forms and explanations of patriarchy. He was also challenging to elucidate a different understanding of school failure through the idiosyncratic dispositions of school kids, their state of mind that was shaped by structures independent from the actors. Challenge, however, comes before the critique. It is a way of establishing a ground for a “statement”, a statement that can be turned into a proposal for critique.

Researches that I have analyzed for this dissertation project do not always lay out their challenges explicitly. I had to abstract them from various segments of the texts including introduction, literature review, conceptual and theoretical framework, and methodology. As I mentioned above, challenges work as pre-legitimizing tools setting up defendable grounds for the critique.

In what follows I will show what kinds of challenges were put forward in the articles. It is noteworthy to mention that challenges I introduce below should be thought of within the borders of the identity problematic in critical qualitative research in education.

Stereotypes are conventional and formulaic conceptions or images of “things” and “people”. The ones about people, usually in the form of narrations, manufacture stories and are told and fed by conventional wisdom. However, sometimes even the greatest minds may subscribe to or reinforce stereotypes in one way or another (i.e., research). Stereotypes target groups rather than individuals so that the credibility and justification could be expanded through multiple examples. It is beyond the scope of this project to elucidate how they are produced and what ends they serve. However, it is clear that the major nexus on which they operate are power and domination.
People who do not fit formulaic conceptions or images may face certain oppressive conditions as Stacey Lee (1996) points out in her research that demonstrates how conceptions of Asian-Americans as hard-working, successful, etc. may burden them with extra anxiety and pressure additional to the already existing grievances from unequal material and social conditions that hinder success and better life conditions. Such an oppressive characteristic of stereotypes makes it an excellent candidate for critical research.

Approximately 10% of the articles challenge the various stereotypes operating in various domains of social life. Andrews & Ridenour (2006), for example, deal with gender stereotypes.

*Stereotypes of women in leadership roles can produce obstacles for women, evidenced by gender differences in expectations, job prestige and salary, and opportunities in schools* (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). *Raising gender awareness through education is necessary so that women can overcome those obstacles according to Burke and MacDermid (1996), who proposed several reasons for gender-awareness education. For example, men and women must be more cognizant of the similarities and differences between genders* (p.37).

Another level of challenge is established against *hegemonic* representations and dominance through hegemony. Similar to the notion of “critical”, the term “hegemony” is used in a broader and looser sense, and does not always refer to what Antonio Gramsci, for example, originally conceptualized. According to Gramsci (2003), hegemony is a way of creating consensus among people particularly through education in order to “raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class
Concepts that are left relatively unexamined (e.g., motherhood) because they fit our understandings of common sense may mutate into hegemonic systems that could dominate our social life.

Much research, 30% of the articles I analyzed, challenge these oppressive consensuses over concepts or meaning systems. Fine et al. (2004), for example, confront the commonsensical configuration of social hierarchy via the eyes and perspectives of their research subjects. They claim that, even though people of color are depicted as in conformity with what they already have, in reality they upset such an assumption by displaying their awareness of socio-political matters circulating around them:

*Poor and working-class youth of color are reading these conditions of their schools as evidence of their social disposability and evidence of public betrayal. These young women and men critically analyze social arrangements of class and race stratification and come to understand (but not accept) their ‘‘place’’ in the social hierarchy (p. 2194).*

The material conditions of people in relation to their participation in the labor market and broader economic formations are not only the main determinants of their class positions, but also verify the kinds of life opportunities they would have. Although the orthodox Marxist approach still claims that almost all social positioning could be explained through *political economy*, many scholars like Bourdieu (1984) expand the discussion onto different aspects of social life such as tastes and networks. However, these discussions did not shake the primacy of political economy with reference to the analysis of social class. While many of the articles discussed the outcomes of economic formations on the lives of people, 5% of them directly challenged the ways in which
the economy is amalgamated with political orientations and how it affected people’s social and material conditions.

That same sense of hope has been darkened in recent years by the ways in which a changing economy has, led to the further marginalization of working-class Americans. Added to these economic struggles, however, has been one of an entirely different sort. Making its way into Appalachian communities on the coattails of unemployment and high numbers of people dealing with illness’ or injury has been the prescription painkiller OxyContin (Hicks, 2005, p. 218).

The social and political roots of perceptions are common subjects for critical researches. This is because misinformed or distorted perceptions can create behavioral sets or attitudes that are correspondingly problematic. And the social consequences of this would be detrimental for many. 23% of the articles challenge the social construction of perceptions through analyzing their manifestations at behavioral or attitudinal levels. Therefore, in one sense, researchers build unique theoretical bridges that enable perceptions to cross from the domain of psychology to that of sociology.

Due to the continuing social segregation of American society, most white teachers in the current teaching force have had limited contact with people of color. Their knowledge of communities of color is often misinformed by stereotypes or distortions communicated in the media and by family and friends. Their own educational experiences have typically been monocultural rather than multicultural, with major omissions concerning the contributions and achievements of people of color. This limited perspective leaves white educators ill-equipped to prepare their own students,
both white and of color, to function effectively in a multicultural society (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997, p. 168).

On another level, researchers challenge the representations of subjects. The assumption is that the ways in which subjects are represented are closely related to the set social-political goals of the research study. Representations, then, are depicted as outcomes for various political orientations or motivations. Some researchers (10% of the articles) seek to demonstrate how certain approaches or theoretical frameworks are exploitative/suppressive, and how these help to perpetuate existing inequalities, rather than to seek to address some necessary practical and intellectual requirements for social transformation to materialize. Weis and Fine (1998), for example, struggle with the issue of whether to represent “historically oppressed groups as ‘victimized’ and ‘damaged’ or as ‘resilient’ and ‘strong’” (p.285). These concerns force them to “invent an intellectual stance in which structural oppression, passion, social movements, evidence of strength, health, and ‘damage’ can be recognized without erasing essential features of the complex story that constitutes urban life in poverty (p.286).” They suggest that researchers should be “vigilant,” as Spivak proposes, about their research practices and their relation to the research contexts in order not to run the risk of victimizing or damaging people under study. Similarly, McIntyre (2006) states that

However, I have also discovered that in order for those opportunities to be more than blind attempts at alternative approaches to teaching, learning, and conducting research, I need to link them to a way of thinking about education and research that positions the students as active agents of constructive change. Critically reflecting on the multidimensionality of education and research through coursework, student
teaching in inner-city public schools, and engaging in community-based research projects provides students in the courses I teach with various opportunities to engage issues related to co-constructing teaching, learning, and research experiences with school-aged youth (p.631).

Geographical challenges are centered on the problem of exclusion. Although many researchers discuss segregation and ghettoization of poverty as geographical outcomes of inequality, only 2% of the researchers directly locate geography as the main target to be challenged.

Connections between social institutions and social structures are depicted in the articles as political ones, and, therefore, they affect each others’ existence and operations. Departing from this end, some researchers (13%) challenge these political connections and problematize their premises. Similarly, these connections are portrayed as an opportunity to mobilize transformation:

Many feminist scholars have long argued that different, more critical questions must be asked: How is difference produced within and through the curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional arrangements of schooling and how might these be reshaped to combat inequity. However, these questions are rarely voiced in actual schools, drowned out by the deeply entrenched tendency to ask questions about the existence of similarities and differences between males and females (Abu El-Haj, 2003, p.402).
3% of the researches challenge domination through deploying theoretical constructions. The idea is that there are certain theoretical frameworks that are more amenable to justice- and equality-oriented research.

*The study foregrounds the role of ideological and political forces in school change and juxtaposes the reality of educators’ practice with the transformative connotations of restructuring* (Lipman, 1997, p.4).

Table 8 Research Challenges vs. Research Sites

As can be seen from the above chart, researchers who pose various challenges tend to locate their research subjects primarily in urban settings. Among them, counter-hegemonic
challenges rank first, proposing that urban settings are conceptualized as suffering first and foremost from hegemonic constructions, discourses etc. Other major nexuses on which research challenges were located in urban settings are respectively: perceptual, stereotypes, representational, and institutional-structural. Research conducted in suburban settings, on the other hand, propose challenges mainly in regards to perceptions and stereotypes.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

![Theoretical Frameworks Chart](image)

**Table 9 Theoretical Frameworks**

Distribution of theoretical frameworks points out the fact that grounded theory is utilized as the major routine in constructing theoretical frameworks of critical qualitative research in education, a methodological approach that emphasizes the extraction of theory from research data during and after research. 45% of the researchers deployed grounded theory as they were constructing their theoretical frameworks.
Although grounded theory has been seen as not “scientific” enough by “traditional research”, it gained popularity in the wake of interpretative approaches in social sciences in the late 60s (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). I do not think that the popularity of grounded theory in critical qualitative research comes from the epistemological and philosophical foundations of the notion of critical; rather, it is more related to the moral, ethical, and methodological expectations of contemporary qualitative inquiry. It also provides the flexibility that could be utilized to incorporate various personal and political commitments into interpretations.

*Critical theories* were employed as theoretical frameworks in 33% of the research. Although there is not only one type of critical theory employed in all research studies, I gathered them under critical theories. Researchers subscribe to various critical theories including critical race theory, critical literacy, and cultural resistance theory.

*Feminist theories* seem to occupy a distinct place in critical qualitative research as well. 12% of the researchers prefer to employ them as theoretical frameworks. As gender is one of my keywords assigned to generate research articles, this was not a surprising outcome. However, it is noticeable that feminist perspectives were not only used to create frameworks for gender related subjects.

There are some articles (7%) which subscribe to multiple theoretical constructs *eclectically*. These theories, however, cannot be considered among critical theories (e.g. cognitive and learning theories). Therefore, I classified them under the banner of “eclectic”.

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Emancipatory Interests

Table 10 Emancipatory Interests

Emancipation, “which has been part of our political imaginary for centuries (Laclau, 1996, p.1)”, is a notion that refers to an act of eliminating domination as well as social, cultural, and psychological systems that produce unequal conditions. “There is no emancipation without oppression, and there is no oppression without the presence of something which is impeded in its free development by oppressive forces” Laclau says, arguing that “[e]mancipation is not, in this sense, an act of creation but instead of liberation of something which precedes the liberating act” (ibid, p.1). Since grand narratives lost their privileges in social theory and research, many post-structuralist, post-modernist, post-Marxist and feminists scholars suggested that social struggles are fragmented and, therefore, we cannot talk about emancipation in the classical sense anymore, i.e., as the total elimination of oppressive conditions. The promise of emancipation is infinite, according to Collins (1965), given the multitude that awaits its materialization: “[the] mentally
exceptional or disturbed person, physically handicapped, delinquents, prostitutes, prisoners, recidivists, dropouts, family deserters, slum dwellers, unemployables, aged persons, chronically ill etc.” (p.159). I use *emancipation* not only in the classical sense of the word, which barrows its terminology from Marxist orientations, but also as a Habermasian cognitive notion whose interest is geared towards knowledge production that could incur positive transformation.

In this node, I mapped out the ways in which emancipatory interests are embedded into research practices. It seems that emancipatory interests could be found in any segments of the article. While 15% of them did it explicitly,

*By pointing to variability of socioeconomic backgrounds, co-ethnic support, and schooling experiences within Korean American groups, this research challenges the homogeneous image of Asians as a model minority. It critiques the assumption that Asians share a fixed ethnic identity and shows how the process of identity construction is integrally connected to changing social and economic contexts* (Lew, 2004, p.304)

55% of the emancipatory interests are expressed implicitly. Many of these implications are in the form of discussions on how research outcomes could catalyze emancipation. The difference between the explicit and the implicit here is about the roots of emancipation as they get embedded into the text. Explicit interests are the establishment of commitments prior to initiating the research study, when researchers are solidly committed to the struggle to eliminate the oppressive conditions that manifest, among others, into the lives of their research subjects negatively (i.e., stereotypes that are obstructing the way of recognizing individual differences), a priori conditioning towards emancipation, so to speak. Implicit interests are depicted as an outcome of the research. One might argue that
emancipatory interests should exist prior to research and should drive the research from beginning to the end for the liberation of a certain group of people or the entire humanity to become a real probability. But, it is not always possible to extract such distinction from the text alone. Therefore, I claim that an emancipatory interest does not have to be mentioned explicitly in order to give a specific study an emancipatory character. Rather, it could take different forms that are embedded into different aspects of the study:

*These misrepresentations and mistaken identities can erode their sense of self and cause doubt in their abilities and competencies. However, as these women of color attain success in educational leadership positions, they, similar to Athene as mentor, can aid those who follow in their footsteps* (Enomoto et al., 2000, p.568).

For example, such an expression of emancipatory orientation could also be embedded into method. Methods could have emancipatory implications when they are specifically constructed with the aim to transform:

*An explicit goal of the professional development project was to create an intervention that might positively impact teacher effectiveness in working with black students participating in the METCO program* (Lawrence, 1997, p.165)
Normative Claims

Table 11 Normative Claims

Normative claims are expressions of “how things ought to be,” and have a long history in social theory since David Hume first shared his ideas in *A treatise of Human Nature* about the “is-ought” problem (Black, 1964). However, “is” and “ought” are closely connected to each other. Critical theories inherently showed a close interest in this discussion because critique almost always begins normatively. Normative claims in critical qualitative research emanate from practical reasoning (given that there are many forms of reasoning, such as theoretical, empirical, technical, etc.) according to Carspecken (1996), an action-oriented reasoning that looks for answers to the question of “what one ought to do”. He references the “is-ought” problem through the attitudes of the criticalists towards contemporary society: “[C]riticalists find contemporary society to be unfair, unequal, and both subtly and overtly oppressive for many people. We do not like it, and we want to change it (p. 7).” This is an open statement of how
normative claims operate within the critical camp. However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that that is all that exists about normativity or normative claims.

In this node, I departed from this practical reasoning of normative claims “what one ought to do,” and explored how people propose them. Given how it is portrayed in the literature (that normative claims are the *sine qua non* of critical enterprise), I was expecting to find them in all of the researches. In contrast, 30% of the articles do not present any type of normative claim whatsoever.

Researchers who include explicit normative claims in their work usually do so at the beginning of the research as a part of reasoning their research practice. 18% of the research articles did it explicitly. Some of these claims are as straight as Carpecken (1996) exemplifies in the case of the criticalists, whereas the great percentage of them, albeit explicit, use these claims as a strategy to justify why there is a need to conduct such a research:

*Educational efforts that are answerable to this small but important life must seek to align these legitimate dreams of an 11-year-old girl with material possibilities and forms of consciousness that she cannot as yet imagine. Her future, and the futures of young girls like her, will entail increasing vulnerability in an economy in which a job at Taco Bell, the school lunchroom, or the mall is little more than a ticket to a life of working-poverty* (Hicks, 2005, p.213)

It seems that integrating implicit normative claims is a more common practice among researchers. 33% of the research articles preferred to propose normative claims implicitly. On the other hand, exemplifying implied normative claims is not an easy task. This is because
implications are not found in the form of statements or paragraphs in many cases; rather, they are rhetorically constructed.

Was Benita’s academic effort, school performance, and assessments of her own chances of "making it" suppressed by her inability to associate African-American agency with attractive economic and political ends? In other words, are future and academic orientations affected by the meanings individuals construct about the efficacy of human struggle? If so, what facilitates the individual’s ability to imagine that humans can struggle efficaciously, and by what process do these imaginations positively affect perceptions of personal life chances, academic performance, and achievement behavior? These are the key questions raised in this article (O’connor, 1999, p. 596).

One of the most interesting findings of this content analysis is about the way some researchers locate their normative claims. I found that some researchers embed their normative claims into their methodology. This has never been mentioned in the literature that I have examined, particularly that literature that concerns critical qualitative research. While this action is serving as an empirical normativity (how research should be conducted), it at the same time functions as a general commentary on society or the situation that needs to be transformed:

We believe qualitative studies, particularly those that provide comprehensive ethnographic data specifically focused on low-income and minority students in public schools, are likely to yield a deeper and more complete understanding of these schools. To clarify the limits and possibilities of single-sex schooling for this group, we advocate replacing cause-and-effect analyses with ones that focus on the multiple, interrelated processes that shape students’ academic outcomes (Hubard, 2005, p.35).
Table 12 Emancipatory Interest vs. Normative Claims

Cross analysis shows that there is a close connection between emancipatory interests and normative claims. As it can be followed from the chart, if emancipatory interests are added explicitly then normative claims are added explicitly as well. Likewise, if one of them is not added then there is also a tendency towards not adding the other one.

I think that emancipatory interests and normative claims serve specific purposes in research construction passing beyond simply being expressions of social-political commitments and various other orientations. But, given the inconsistencies between promises built upon (or implied through) emancipatory interests and normative claims, and transformative aspect - targeted or realized- of the research, I think that they become standardized research practices of critical enterprise. In other words, emancipatory interests and normative claims of critical research seem to be institutionalized in many of the researches underscored by similar conceptual sets such as reproduction, neo-liberalism, and cultural capital.
Value Orientation

Carspecken (1996) distinguishes “criticalists” from rest of the critical researchers through their value orientations. “Those of us who call ourselves ‘criticalists’ definitely share a value orientation.” says Carspecken (1996, p.3). For him “[they] also share a concern with social theory and some of the basic issues it has struggled with since the nineteenth century. These include the nature of social structure, power, culture, and human agency. [They] use [their] research, in fact, to refine social theory rather than merely to describe social life (p.2).” He notes that unlike normative claims, value orientations are not among sine qua non of critical research. It is, according to him, distinctly criticalists’ characteristic. On the other hand, Habermas (1989) writes, “A value orientation gives expression to the fact that the corresponding values set a preference for one or the other of the given alternatives. Since the regulative force of cultural
values does not negate the contingency of these decisions, every interaction between two actors entering into a relation takes a place under the condition ‘double contingency’” (p.214).

One can critique Carspecken’s notion of “value orientation”, in this sense, through Habermasian idea of double contingency and preference, claiming that every research practice could be an outcome of various value orientations (e.g. staying away any sort of political orientation could be very well relegated as value orientation). Therefore, I believe that “value orientations” that Carspecken talks about are fed by distinct political resources peculiar to critical enterprise. On the same line, one might claim that emancipatory interests and normative claims are kinds of “value orientations” as well. What distinguish value orientation from them are the expressions of why certain topic is picked up as a research subject.

The ones who mentioned (15%) their value orientations explicitly would help clarifying this point. Interestingly, surveying value orientations revealed that belonging to a certain group of people (social, cultural, or emotional connections) and making research on/with them also creates a tendency towards “having value orientations”.

Students' experiences and accounts narrated here cannot be examined without taking into account my experiences and position as a researcher; the findings of this research are situated, relational, and partial. As a 1.5- generation Korean American growing up in New York City who has worked with Asian American community and political organizations, I am committed to giving voice to those who are historically marginalized, invisible, and denied access to equal opportunities (Lew, 2004, p. 308). 30% of the researchers did not mention any value orientation whatsoever. This might be related to the fact that almost from the beginning of interpretative research école in social
sciences, value orientations are depicted as the major contaminants of research objectivity (Hammersley, 2000). Therefore, mentioning the value orientation may cast the shadows of doubt onto “objectivity” of research study. Apparently researchers would not want to run the risk of being labeled as biased, in this sense. I believe that this is a secure claim to make because 25% of the researchers preferred to mention their value orientation implicitly, whereas 22% prefers to construct them discursively.

Table 14 Comparisons of Value Orientation
The above charts comparing value orientations with emancipatory interests and normative claims suggest that they are related to each other in terms of the ways in which they are embedded into text. This would tell us that researchers’ positionalities are the main determiners of their incorporation into research practices. In other words, researcher who explicitly mentions his/her emancipatory interests tends to add normative claims and value orientation explicitly as well.

**Reflexivity**

![Reflexivity Chart]

**Table 15 Reflexivity**

Qualitative research has had the element of reflexivity as one of its primary characteristics over the last few decades; a historical examination might explain such primacy in relation to the field of qualitative research responding to challenges of rigor as well as the standpoints of researchers. In critical qualitative research, reflexivity more often than not has
come to be associated with the dynamics of the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of research. This means that we, as researchers, have come to critically think of our relationship with those who we study in order to insure that our biases and pre-field conceptions should not shape the outcome of our work in separation from the positions and voices of our participants. This is conceptualized when reflexivity is described as tool for the ethnographic practice to reflect on itself within the specifics of the context of research. Reflexivity, then, can be understood as mediation between self and other (Fine, 1994; Anderson, 1989).

This understanding of reflexivity as relational mediation and reflection might have an impact on our conception of what it means for the researcher to be conscious of his/her role with the presence of participants whose voices and subjectivities need to be incorporated in research. But such orientation might have designated the question of mediation through reflexivity beyond the relational to the periphery. In other words, reflexive mediation need not be only characteristic of the relationship between us and them, but it should also relates to how researchers conceptualize and translate the role and the outcomes of their research practices. Reflexivity should be seen not simply a matter of methodology but a mediation between the question of situatedness and eventuality of outcome. If we understand reflexivity as means of transparency, the need becomes to not only make transparent the biases and involvement of the researcher before during and after field work, but to also make transparent the context of the study as tool for going beyond its horizon, which begs the classical question of the goal of the research either as addition to our knowledge of social and cultural phenomena or as contribution to going beyond this phenomena towards articulating alternatives.
Drawing on Pillow’s (2003)\textsuperscript{25} reflexivity categorizations, I defined three types of reflexivity practices: 1) reflexivity as recognition of self, 2) reflexivity as recognition of other, 3) reflexivity as truth. I also found that some people subscribe more than one type of reflexivity. Therefore, I added: 4) reflexivity as recognition of self and other 5) reflexivity as recognition of other and truth 6) reflexivity as the recognition of self-other and truth.

9\% of the researchers used reflexivity as the recognition of the self. Through exploring their social, cultural and sometimes class positions, researchers were trying to give clues to the reader about how they might be reflected on research outcomes.

The interpretations of observations offered here, although based on systematic inquiry, reflect my understanding of the participants and the events in the field and how I view the world (Blumer 1969; Peshkin 2000). Thus, my interpretations may or may not be consistent with the interpretations that the participants in this study might have offered despite my position as a racial insider. Although being black did provide certain advantages in the field, my insider position also obscured my vision of some events, for they seemed so ordinary to me—my educational experiences were in some ways similar to those of the students at the two schools (Tyson 2003, p.330).

12\% of the researchers presented the efforts they spend in the field in order to understand and represent their research subjects “better” and “fair”. Reflexivity as a recognition of other is an attempt to increase comprehension of research subjects through studying them with external links that would have an impact on research data and outcome.

\textsuperscript{25} These are discussed in conceptual framework section in detail.
I observed in two sections of this eighth-grade English classroom at this site approximately 3 to 4 days a week for 6 months. I conducted and transcribed semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994) with as many as girls as possible from both classes to obtain individual perceptions about the literature they read, to understand their thinking and reasoning behind transactions with about their perceptions of their communities and other social groups with which they might identify. Questions asked of the girls were intentionally worded to emphasize participants’ feelings and perceptions of the literature they read and the events surrounding engagement with texts (DeBlase, 2003, p.286).

Reflexive practices are used to generate truth claims in some cases. Reflexivity as truth (22%) is an act of proving that one is capable of conducting such research because of his or her background.

Having been a middle school teacher for many years in an inner city school, I realize how challenging it is for classroom teachers to engage students in activities that increase their chances to fully participate in school and community life. In addition, I realize how challenging it is to develop teaching-learning strategies that combat the psychological effects of being members of ethnic and racial groups that are all too often ignored in a class-stratified educational system (McIntyre 2006, p.630)

While 12% used reflexivity as the recognition of self and other, 3% showed the characteristics of all, reflexivity as truth, recognition of self and other.
We have come to recognize that the multiple positions we and the participants involved hold will always affect our relationships (Wolf, 1996). I am a White, upper middle class, former secondary school teacher who has taught education at the college level for 19 years. In the case of this research, I was also professor or advisor to some of the women I interviewed. I was, therefore, in a position of power with them. In many cases, I was also mentor and advocate. Even if I did not know them well before the interviews began, over the course of the ten years we developed mutual relationships of respect and care. In the early years of the study, when the women left an interview, they frequently thanked me for the opportunity to talk, to be heard; in later years they told me they looked forward to the interviews as an opportunity to reflect and share their experiences with me. During the interviews, I was aware that I could comment on their decisions, make suggestions, or give them examples from my own experience or the experiences of others that might help them think about their own. In some cases I did respond to them, knowing that I was, in the process, juggling the roles of researcher and advisor (Smulyan, 2004, p. 521).

On the other hand, 50% of the researchers did not subscribe to any type of reflexive practices.
TRANSFORMATIONS

Targets of Transformation: What are to be transformed?

Table 16 Targets of Transformation

Analysis of the articles revealed that targets of transformation could be constructed both before and after conducting research. In many cases critique determines what would be the targets of transformation. In this sense, when I categorize those targets I mainly looked at the critique itself.

In the first step of the analysis of transformations, I asked the question of “What are to be transformed through critical qualitative research?” I gathered the answers under the banner of “targets of transformations”. Answers anchored into 7 different attributions. Most popular targets were garnered under social-structural (32%) category. These targets include community relations, economic structures, students’ background etc.
To understand how and why low-status Korean high school dropouts are limited in accessing and accumulating resources embedded in social networks, researchers may benefit from critically examining variability within the co-ethnic communities in the form of social class, schooling resources, and network orientation. Although Korean Americans have been labeled as a homogeneous group of middle-class entrepreneurs, this research shows the significance of noting class variance within Korean American communities and for whom the co-ethnic community may be more beneficial (Lew, 2004, p.38).

The second biggest category that emerged from the analysis (18%) was social-discursive targets. These are generally depicted as discourses surrounding social life of the research subjects and in almost every case as sources of oppression.

Additionally, I gathered and tape-recorded the oral life histories of 21 Latino community members, including those of the 11 mothers with whom I worked most closely. In this way, I too played a part in circulating racialized discourses of 'othering,' as simultaneously an insider and outsider to both the Latino community and the community of English-speaking professionals (Villenas, 2001, p.13).

While structures (10%) and institutions (8%) alone were became the targets of transformation, some researchers mentioned multiple targets. 17% of them brought up the necessity of transforming perceptions, social circumstances, and institutional practices, whereas 12% of the research articles located perceptions and institutions as their main targets for transformation.
I found that both formal and informal institutional practices within schools, “race” and “gender” students in ways that significantly affect their outlooks on education. Young men are viewed as threatening and potential problem students, whereas young women are treated in a more sympathetic fashion. If our goal is to improve the education attainment of all students, we must become aware of the invisible race(ing) and gender(ing) that takes place in the classroom, as well as in the everyday institutional practices of schools (Lopez, 2002, p. 1187).

One distinct category (3%) came out during analysis was about discursively constructed geographical borders.

All major cities in the United States, as well as most around the world, are marked by socially constructed boundaries that divide areas geographically along racial, ethnic, class, and religious lines. Chicago, New York, Boston, and Toronto, to name a few, all have designations such as “South Side” or “Upper East Side” that mark those spaces and their inhabitants as different from those in others parts of the city. The markers are not, as we will show, confined to the informal discussions of city residents. They are also produced and widely circulated in city institutions, including schools (Buendia, 2004, p. 883).
Tools of Transformation: How (with what) it is going to be transformed?

In this node, I explored the tools of transformation in order to shed light on how transformations will be achieved. Some researchers utilize or suggest more than one type of transformation tool. In that case, I put them under only one category. As the above chart shows, consciousness raising was utilized or suggested as the most popular tool of transformation (47%). Consciousness raising could be defined as a process of improving understanding or awareness on certain issues, conditions or psychological states. Closer examination of this tool reveals that it could be fragmented into three major sections: consciousness raising of the research subjects, consciousness raising of institutions and their practitioners (e.g. teachers, principals etc.), and consciousness raising of society in general. For example, Tyson (2003) employs consciousness raising of research subjects as a tool for transformation.

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Making explicit to black students the goals of cultural socialization and the necessity for competence in their own, as well as in the dominant, culture may reduce disruptive behavior and resistance, both of which can undermine academic performance. Letting students in on the "culture of power" and helping them understand the rules of the game may also ease the dilemma faced by teachers of minority students (p. 340).

Likewise, Lopez (2002) deploys it for institutional practices:

If our goal is to improve the education attainment of all students, we must become aware of the invisible race(ing) and gender(ing) that takes place in the classroom, as well as in the everyday institutional practices of schools (Lopez, 2002, p.1187).

What makes “power” so powerful is its invisibility to the bare and unacquainted eyes. In other words, one can learn to see power only through some apparatuses and “knowledge”. These apparatuses are sought by researcher in order to weaken the influences of power. Many researchers revealed that power operates in various fields utilizing numerous mechanisms. In this attribution, researchers try to expose power (15%) to the bare eyes.

Given the political economy of the United States, the racial stratifications and the broad base of social inequities that confront poor and working-class youth, and youth of color, the question for this case asks to what extent do these schools reproduce broad social inequities, worsen them or reduce their adverse impact (cf. Anyon, 1997)? The evidence presented here suggests that these California schools substantially worsen already existent social inequities with psychological, academic and ultimately economic consequence. One may ask, further, isn’t it the case that all public schools serving poor and working-class youth, and youth of color, suffer these conditions and produce these outcomes? (Fine et al, 2004, p. 2217).
8% of the researchers subscribe to the idea that contribution to *theory, research and general understandings* of phenomena would carry transformative potential. This tool is generally constructed normatively and tells why certain method, application, and treatment etc. is good or bad for the subjects.

*This study indicates that the use of progressive pedagogies within detracked classrooms, while well intentioned, cannot alone resolve the inequalities permeating that setting and may in some ways reinforce them. Indeed, these pedagogies often miss the mark by failing to provide the concrete instructional support that struggling students need to meet the higher academic expectations of detracked classrooms* (Rubin, 2003, p. 567).

8% emphasized the importance of *recognizing differences* in transformation. Recognizing differences is very similar to consciousness raising but, in this case, the purpose of research is to alter existing systems and understandings which are falsified or distorted by power relations, domination and so forth.

*Broad principles of fairness and egalitarianism espoused by schools, the media, and government have contributed to students’ perceptions that they are all the same, regardless of skin color. Unfortunately, this generic belief in our fundamental “sameness” does not appear to help a young woman like Danielle relate to or empathize with authentic cultural, language, and class differences or to understand why and how she is privileged relative to many other students in her school* (Lewis-Charp, 2003, p. 279).

*Breaking discursive codes* (7%) is another tool of transformation. Discursively constructed oppressive material, social, or psychological conditions are targeted to be
transformed with this tool. Discourses are depicted as attachments to the social communications, symbols and behavior sets.

Transactions with literacy created a felt sense of fractured or compartmentalized social identities and the girls in this study learned to separate their public, academic lives from their private lives. As a result, the girls did not take up the literature in ways that could potentially enable them to realize social and cognitive transformation in their lives (DeBlase, 2003, p. 279).

It has been argued by many researchers that pedagogical practices should be in line with students’ social and cultural backgrounds (Delpit, 1988). Achievement gap, for example, is elaborated under mismatch of institutional cultures and students’ socio-cultural backgrounds. This according to some could be overcome through developing and implementing socially responsible pedagogical (5%) practices which in turn would prevent alienation, marginalization and resistance to social institutions.

It begins with a close reading of pedagogical discourse situated in an after-school reading project for preteen girls. It then traces the deep roots of language seeped in class meanings-words such as nasty and trash-in the lives of girls in the project. Literary and discursive analyses are brought to bear on questions about how class relations infuse girls' negotiations of voice and subjectivity in school. Such analyses are connected to a vision of socially responsible pedagogy for working-class girls (Hicks, 2005, p. 212).

7% of the studies looked for ways of success and achievement as alternatives to current systems that are not supporting “realities” of students or context. These alternatives are usually
engraved into the existing systems. In these researches, success and achievement were seen as the first step to take towards better and bright future for the research subjects.

_The features I have highlighted — departmental collaboration, heterogeneous grouping, group worthy problems, block scheduling, and student responsibility— are those that emerged from our four year study as critical to the success of the students_ (Boaler, 2006, p. 369)

Agents of Transformation: Who will take part in transformation?

![Agents of transformation](chart.png)

**Table 18 Agents of Transformation**

In this node, I explored who are “portrayed” as the agents of transformation by researchers. Since I narrowed down my analysis with identity politics and assigned my keywords
accordingly, the outcomes of this exploration yielded data in connection with this limitation. As it was stated in research subjects node, critical qualitative research in education adopted an agenda in which disadvantaged and oppressed occupy distinct positions. Research subjects’ relatively “powerless” positions in society forced researchers to turn the glance inwards, meaning that the relationship between researcher and researched also became the subject of inquiry. While dominant approach towards making research was “on” subjects, it has been transformed for many researchers into “with” subjects, a practice which represents the “will” towards allowing subjects to talk and transform with their own terms. And, this is not only limited to participatory action research as the word “with” might suggest. In her famous critique, *Working with Hyphen*, in regards to power imbalances between researcher and the researched, Michelle Fine (1994) evaluated this relationship through colonial analogy.

It has been argued that the relationship between the researcher and his subjects, by definition, resembles that of the oppressor and the oppressed, because it is the oppressor who defines the problem, the nature of the research, and to some extent the quality of interaction between him and his subjects (p.135).

What this brought about to the research world, particularly to critical research is both increased reflexive practices and providing a wider space for the subjects’ own interpretations of their own circumstances. I think that this reflected on the practices in regards to designation of agents of transformations as a shift of power of transforming from the hands of activists, researchers, academia to the actors of research. Analysis of the articles echoed this shift as well.

Analysis of the articles revealed that 33% of the researchers answered to this question as *subjects of the research*. 
This study was a critical qualitative study designed to engage antiracist adult educators who have recognized the norms of whiteness, White privilege, and the power differentials associated with racism. Seven White adult educators who are attempting to challenge or transform relations of power within their practices were selected using criterion, maximum variation, and snowball sampling (Manglitz, 2005, p.1249).

27% distributed the responsibility among subjects of the research, policy makers, and practitioners (teachers, principals, superintendents etc.), suggesting that all people who have any “say” on educational practices should be part of transformation. Similarly, 18% of the researchers did not include policy makers into equation and preferred to stick to in school components of education.

Thus, this case study provides a grounded critique of the dominant paradigms for understanding gender equity and helps reframe the kinds of questions and conversations that practitioners, students, families, researchers, and policymakers might pursue as they search for remedies to educational inequities (Abu El-Haj, 2003, p.401)

We suggest that instructors openly address conflicts about the meaning of responsibility in discourses of social action and engage students in give-and-take talk about how Whites and people of color might join together to ameliorate racism in educational settings and other contexts (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p.625)

Some researches (7%) invoked the idea that policy makers are the most important gears of transformation. This is because they have the power to change whatever is going on in the
field through reconstructions. Therefore, researchers were trying affect their decision making processes through showing them what needs to be done.

But I fear that the important lessons that may be learned from Railside school will be too expensive for U.S. policy makers to adopt for widespread use. Moving away from tracked classes and rote procedural approaches will require a long-term, sustained investment in teacher learning, but, if we care about the future of students in urban, multicultural classes, it is an investment that we need to make (Boaler, 2006, p.369).

While 8% of researchers acknowledge the role of the academy in transformation through “right” and “justice oriented” conceptualizations and discourses, 3% preferred to juxtapose community to research subjects as necessary component of transformation.

Clustering Transformative Act

In this segment, I explored where transformative acts, in light of above attributions, converge into clusters. Towards this purpose, I quantified all the attributions and their anchoring nodes. (For example, Historical Account, symbolized with H, given=1 not given=0) This was done in association with the names of the researchers (or cases). With the help of a computer program, Matlab, all attributions were compared in regard to articles’ subscription to each. The computer program converted the outcomes of this comparison into visual schema which is called a dendogram.
I used the method of hierarchical clustering which works through grouping data objects into a tree of clusters. There are two major hierarchical clustering techniques:

*Agglomerative hierarchical clustering*: This bottom-up strategy starts by placing each object in its own cluster and then merges these atomic clusters into larger and larger clusters, until all of the objects are in a single cluster or until certain termination conditions are satisfied. Most hierarchical clustering methods belong to this category.

*Divisive hierarchical clustering*: This top-down strategy does reverse of agglomerative hierarchical clustering by starting with all objects in one cluster. It subdivides the cluster into smaller and smaller pieces, until each object forms a cluster on its own or until it satisfies certain termination conditions, such as a desired number of clusters is obtained or the distance between the two closest clusters is above a certain distance.

(Han & Kanber, 2001, p.335)
I used the agglomerative clustering method to create the dendogram above, from a single article to clusters. The schema below illustrates how this process works.

![Dendrogram]

**Figure 2 Clustering**

When I cut the proximities at the difference level 0.5 (see, nexus of difference in the dendogram) in order to get better visual information, I saw that there are 5 major clusters. These clusters are not homogenous in that they contain different number of articles. I re-read all the articles within each cluster to see where researches cut each other in terms of transformation act and how other nodes contribute to them. In the end, I came up with 5 major characteristics for the transformative act that researchers implied and/or subscribed:

1- Educational Proselytizing: From Pedagogical to Political

2- Debilitating Power

3- Creating Oppositional Projects
4- Working with Reference Points

5- Opening up New Theoretical Spaces

This clustering attempt is geared towards theorizing the findings of content analysis. Since the attributions and nodes assigned to each research case are not “quantitative” in nature from the beginning but constructed later as dummy variables, the borders of clusters or categories cannot be drawn thick and opaque. On the contrary, they are very permeable and illustrated insecurely allowing, even sometimes encouraging, ins and outs. Put it differently, some researches may belong to more than one category or pass beyond all of them as the categorization crisis is one of the biggest problematics of qualitative research embedded into its foundations.

Educational Proselytizing: From Pedagogical to Political

Critical scholars have long been known for their advocacy for understanding education and schooling in political terms. Education “is ‘political’ in that education informs how the polity is run and translates ideology into more or less controversial practice. Second, education is political in the way that it is a service, the provision of which has to be negotiated with different parties, particularly the providers, governmental agencies, and the users, pressure groups, trade unions, and so on (Broadfoot et al., 1981, p.7).” And lastly, it is political because of its role in the formation of social layers.
The manifestations of advocacy towards thinking education in political terms are solidified in some researches as an attempt to convert the meaning sets of education and educational processes from the neutral, apolitical realm of “traditional” and “conventional” interpretations to a political domain in which the attachments to such processes are constantly problematized. The assumption is that, once we disrupt conventional significations, the phenomena they refer to could be transformed. In other words, it is a war on concepts and how they should be understood. For example, in *Rogue States*, Chomsky (2000) contends that “when they talk about lifting constraints on wage flexibility, they mean flexibility down, not flexibility up. The talk about labor mobility doesn’t mean the right of people to move anywhere they want, as has been required by free market theory ever since Adam Smith, but rather the right to fire employees at will. And, under the current investor-based version of globalization, capital and corporations must be free to move, but not people, because their rights are secondary, incidental (p.203).” Chomsky, thus, retrieves “labor mobility” and “wage flexibility” from their conventional grounds of signification and underlines their political nature by means of redefining them as functions of power and its implications.

Along similar lines, and with reference to what I am calling a process of proselytizing in education, a phenomenon usually seen as only pedagogical leaves its habitual, conceptual dwelling grounds and the language with which it has become associated, and migrates into a political realm whose connections to race, ethnicity, social class, economy, militarization, etc., are both more explicit and novel. While doing this, the phenomenon in question also loses some of its functions – mostly those associated with power asymmetries. This migration, however, happens within the same territories. In fact, it is very similar to the act of changing one’s religion: although the content (doctrine, rituals, symbology) changes, the anathema remains the
same, i.e., the same function of servitude, but to a different deity and with different demands. This is partly because the term political invokes different meanings and people are not always open about what they refer to with the notion “political”. My preference to use the term proselytizing has to do with my analysis of the scholarship that identifies its enterprise as “critical”: the claims, demands and transformative mechanisms of such endeavor suggest, I think, an authoritative voice – “authority not to dictate, rule, diminish or dominate but to transform” and “as a viable tool in the struggle against, oppressive governing systems of order, appropriation and exclusion, just as it can help [open] up democratic possibilities and assist in reestablishing a network of non-commodified public spheres (Weiner, 2001, p.4-6).” In this sense, authority in critical scholarship is geared towards the transformative act. (Burbules, 2000) Although this authoritative tone is far from being unproblematic, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation project to discuss the details of the issue.

The idea that education and educational institutions cannot be separated from ideology, beliefs, values, political ideas, and social goals seems to have become a driving force for such proselytizing efforts. Hegemonic or oppressive projects – developed by the powerful (in many cases the dominant ruling class), and exercised through education, either in the form of attachments to the procedures or embedded into the curriculum discursively- attract the most attention from critical researchers. Departing from these connections, the researcher challenges the pedagogical notions of teaching, learning, instruction, curriculum, etc., and, in the process, reifies them under different meaning sets as tangible daily life experiences of research subjects rather than pure philosophical concepts. Particularly, failures are considered and discussed on the political grounds that are established through critique of the conflict inherent in the pedagogical
messages and how these interact with the different the social, cultural, and historical backgrounds of students.

**Debilitating Power**

One important and distinguished characteristic of a transformative act in critical qualitative research in education that emerges from cluster analysis is the tendency to debilitate power by means of probing some ways to take away its weapons of domination. It is an act of “debilitation” because the purpose of the transformative act is to erode rather than clear off power and domination altogether. In other words, researchers locate the mechanisms or tools that are employed for constructing and maintaining power relations at the center of research, and then carry out their critique over those mechanisms or tools.

Domination shows cyclic characteristics that are perpetuated through various means (Anyon, 1981; Bourdieu, 1977). Disturbing such cycles is a challenging task, as they are deeply embedded into the social, psychological, structural, and institutional foundations of society. Instead of dealing with power itself, researchers look for ways to de-weaponize it in an attempt to weaken the impact and hegemony that it imposes through its instruments. Weapons of power are almost always specific to the context under study. The purpose of this inclination seems to cut the major arteries of domination that maintain power’s replenishment and reproduction. In other words, the debilitation of power is a political process of hijacking instruments of power rather than attacking it directly, a battle which may end up with what Paul Willis (1977) calls “pyrrhic victories”.

This has been achieved through various ways. Some researchers, for example, struggle to put an end to the idea of “essentiality of standards” for betterment through problematizing the political nature of standardization. They usually investigate how standards construct hegemonic centers that marginalize every “deviance” towards the periphery. Differential distribution of knowledge, wealth, health, and so on are constructed around these hegemonic centers, and are organized through the distance they maintain with the standards. Similarly, Lee (2005) suggests that

Whiteness was simultaneously normalized and rendered invisible (and thus above criticism), and culture was understood to be something located solely within the nonwhite other. As the children of immigrants of color, Hmong Americans found themselves cast as the other within this framework. Hmong Americas students were seen either as culturally different (i.e., foreign) or culturally deficient (i.e., not like whites). Both characterizations served to reflect and preserve the normative nature of whiteness and maintain the existing racial hierarchy. Located as outsiders, many Hmong American students were academically and socially marginalized at the school (p. 144). … In short, whiteness set the standards by which students were made either insiders or outsiders at UHS (p.136).

She contends that whiteness serves as an archetype and is thus standard, in a Weberian sense, in drawing perceptual borders for other races, borders that determine who belongs to where in the social hierarchy in accordance with their intersections with whiteness. Likewise, IQ tests, as another standardization knot to deal with, have attracted much attention from critical qualitative researchers. Once scholars realized that the distribution of IQ scores (bell curve),
matches exactly the distribution of wealth, health, education etc. in society, they engaged in research practices that were directed towards mapping the reasons of such distribution so that power would not use IQ test scores for the purposes of sorting, as well as legitimating such an act. For example, in their controversial book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, Hernstein & Murray (1996) attempted to locate academic failure of African-American students in their genetic predispositions and explained their test scores from this angle, proposing that inequalities emerge from this biological inferiority and society should learn to live with this “scientific fact”. The major contestation coming from critical camp addressed the politics of standardization and the very nature of standard tests that were established on premises favorable to White social and cultural codes (Delpit, 1988). At least with reference to academia, these latter researchers were able to take away this tool for legitimating inequalities in society, and the book has remained one of the most controversial, albeit unsuccessful, attempts at Social Darwinism in the last decades of the last century.

In short, standardization is a tool that is employed to construct and maintain power and domination. And the assumption is that, once broken or disturbed, domination will lose a domain that is established through this tool.

Many researchers pave their transformative path onto similar terrains through problematizing tools of domination(s) including but not limited to: stereotypes, tracking, differential distribution of knowledge, structural deficiencies, expectations, geographical exclusions etc.
Creating Oppositional Projects

The notions of opposition and dissidence are among the concepts that power and authority continuously try to circumvent. This is because they see in such notions a persistent destructive potential aimed at their own precincts of privilege and domination (Scott, 2002). In order to effectively deal with these threats to their existence, power and authority usually tend to abnormalize these threats at the individual level. Examples are abundant: pacification of women through Valium, numbing down kids by Ritalin, etc. On the similar isle, poverty, for example, could be explained through laziness and lack of motivation.

One of the most common oppositional projects is created through dragging the personal to sociological and political level. In this sense, people who find themselves in similar material and social conditions realize that it is not only their personal life trajectories but also socio-political forces forming their life opportunities. Such realization always has the potential of turning into a tool of resistance and thus dissidence.

Creating oppositional projects is parallel to the act of “debilitating power”. But this time the act does not intend to take away the weapons of power; rather, it aims to provide the disadvantaged with weapons to defend themselves against power. Oppositional projects are constructed at two levels: engaging in the field through engagement with the research subjects, and launching these projects after the research ends through utilizing research outcomes beyond the imperatives of academic benefits.

Researchers, at the first level, construct their research with an appropriate methodology that allows the research subjects to be equipped with the necessary weapons that they can use against power and domination. For example, researchers provide a digital video camera as an
alternative way of expression and an alternative learning tool, so that students can incorporate their social and cultural backgrounds into the learning processes. Digital video composing is thus turned into powerful tools for social critique in the hands of students as well (Miller, 2007). Similarly, new contact zones created, vis-à-vis power’s tendency to sort out and exclude people, could be considered as an oppositional project in the sense that people from different gender, race, ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds come together and engage in an unprecedented conversation.

The second level can be approximated through oppositional projects developed against the standardization efforts in education. After documenting detrimental effects of standardization in curriculum, instruction, testing, etc., researchers produce counter projects that challenge the test-doctrine. Socially responsible pedagogies are the most common examples of these oppositional projects.

**Working with Points of Reference**

Anchoring bias is a cognitive process that makes us stick to given reference points, particularly during decision-making processes – points that usually serve us to understand who we are. However, sometimes these reference points could be irrelevant and yet could make us blind to other possibilities. The sociological match of this term would be ‘false consciousness,’ which “refers straightforwardly to the perverse fact that in many situations the people who suffer either blame themselves for their troubles or otherwise account for their suffering by referring to almost anything *but* the actual [social] cause” (Lemert, 2005, p.16). In Marxist terminology, false
consciousness has been used to explain the behavior of working class people who adopt bourgeois ideology. Anchoring at the individual level, and false consciousness at the collective plain, are both important nodes for the critical researcher to deal with.

Some researchers work with these reference points, departing from the assumption that some of them are socially constructed and work to perpetuate social inequalities. They may operate differently in relation to one’s position in social hierarchy. For example,

When they [poor] fail at legitimate work because they lack the training, they usually also fail to provide for their families. With rare exception, most of them soon begin to feel ugly about themselves. The feeling that one is a worthless person is psychological, but the reality of the causes and effects of the feeling is sociological. When the economy offers fewer and fewer jobs only for the more highly skilled workers, this is a failure in the larger structure of social things that causes impossible troubles for millions of individuals (Lemert, 2005, p.16).

Likewise, Fine et al. (2004) suggest that “punitive ideology” -past mistakes predict the negative future outcomes- creates one of the most damaging results for the well-being of urban youth. In other words, “these youths have committed what psychologists would call a ‘characterological personal attribution’ or ‘fundamental attribution error’ for past mistakes (p. 2210).”

On the other side of the isle, these reference points may create what Cole (1977) calls “narcissistic entitlements” for affluent students, a feeling that one deserves special treatment because of his or her superiority and “they will receive an inheritance the world is expected to
provide (Harvot & Antonio, 1999, p.324). This feeling is usually boosted through social institutions (Cookson & Persell, 1991), whereas “poor children, especially poor children and youth of color, in contrast, tend to be held personally accountable for “mistakes” for which other children are given “second chances” with potentially dire consequences (Fine et al. 2004, p.2210).” Foster (2004) claim that actually these two states of mind are connected to each other.

Oppressors are dependent upon the oppressed, and their supposed inferiority, for their self-image of superiority. The second issue refers to consequences for the oppressor; they may differ in form, but there are at least three areas implicating psychological patterns. One area suggests a Nero complex involving obsessions with establishing legitimacy and self-satisfaction (Moane, 1999). This may involve self-delusions, arrogance, narcissism and a sense of entitlement. A second area involves processes of dehumanization and objectification, a form of emotional blunting, if you like. Oppressor lose feelings and empathy for the disadvantaged, and transform this into discourses of victim-blaming (the poor are idle, lazy and indolent), and frequently advocate further punitive treatment for those labeled as inferior, Oppressor lose a sense of justice and fairness (p. 31).

If we consider these reference points as mirrors, through which we see ourselves and inform our behaviors accordingly, the task of the critical researcher becomes to break these looking-glasses in order to set new reference points that would not reinforce social asymmetries. This leads to transformation because the researcher provides his/her own mirrors instead to convey who one really is, albeit authoritatively. In this type of research construction, transformation happens for both psychological and sociological ends: emancipation from
psychological assumptions that power provides, and emancipation from holding one’s self responsible in lieu of social causes. This is different from what is called “mirroring approach” in the sense that the major purpose of critical research is more of a replacement project that would mobilize people to look for other points of references. This is notwithstanding that critical researchers in most cases are the ones who provide these alternative reference points. This is not only to show people “who they are”, but to also make them recognize their diversity and how their expectations, attitudes, etc. affect other peoples’ lives. Some researchers accomplish this through having the powerful or simply authority holders keep diaries. These diaries transform into mirrors, a conversation with the self and have a strong impact on recognition of the “true self”.

**Opening up New Theoretical Spaces**

Conceptualizations of different phenomena have been challenged throughout the history of the social sciences. Changing material and social conditions, whether on a global or a local scale, visibly manifest onto people’s lives in multilateral ways that cannot be predicted with previous knowledge about them (i.e., effects of the Vietnam War on Asian-American identity construction). Coupled with the dynamic character of personal and group histories that are open to influence in various degrees and at different levels, research has been obliged to adopt a flexible temperament in order to capture new circumstances in the field. It may be because of this reason researchers still continue to look at similar issues over and over again. Similarly, the
same phenomena are explored and theorized in many different contexts, even sometimes with contradictory outcomes. By the same token, some research challenges the methodologies or conceptualizations of other researches and claims that there needs to be more appropriate ways of understanding the phenomena or there should be some other components that need to be taken into account. Researchers find these theoretical constructs either insufficient and unconvincing or contributing to perpetuate domination, power relations and so on. Carspecken (1996) states that “[Critical scholars] use [their] research, in fact, to refine social theory rather than merely describe social life (p.3).” It should also be noted that many groundbreaking researches have opened up new theoretical spaces without a direct intention to do so.

Social class, for example, sits on one of the most contested theoretical spaces in education. Conceptualization of working class as bound to history opens up many categories for class discussions. Weis (2004) challenges both Willis’ (1977) conceptualization and other conventional theorizations of working class, suggesting that the changing relationship with labor made it impossible to write off working class.

Arguing that we cannot write off working class simply because white men no longer have access to well paying laboring jobs in the primary labor market jobs, that spawned a distinctive place for labor in the capital-labor accord, I track and theorize the remaking of this group as a distinct class fraction, both discursively and behaviorally inside radical, globally-based economic restructuring (p.2).

Ellsworth (1989) contested the foundations of critical pedagogy through her research in her classroom and did not find them as much empowering as initially anticipated. She underlined the absence of woman in the field of theory as one of the major weaknesses. Davies (1996)
challenged conceptualizations of resistance in schools and suggested that connecting students’ background to resistance patterns is problematic.

**CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

This section was a systematic effort of understanding how critical qualitative researches are grounded and produced. Particular attention is given the transformative aspect of critical qualitative research practice. It was also limited to identity problematic in educational research for the practical purposes discussed in the method section. More specifically, the primary intent of the content analysis was to reconstruct implicit assumptions, constructions, and mechanisms of transformations in an effort to see connections among them embedded into critical qualitative research articles. This was achieved under two major headings: grounding research and transformations.

It revealed that there are strong connections between the nodes, which could be considered as the productions of researchers’ positionalities such as emancipatory interests and normative claims, and research constructions and outcomes. On the other hand, transformation strategies were explored through systematic analysis of targets of transformation, agents of transformation, and tools of transformation. After quantification of each node, they were compared in an effort to see intersections. Finally, cluster analysis revealed five major characteristics of transformative act.

Content analysis did not yield any logical pattern that could be linked to the epistemological or philosophical foundations of critical enterprise as it was described in the
literature. Instead, it made visible that the common denominators of critical qualitative research have to do more with mechanistic aspects of the research practices such as possible research subjects and determining research sites, invoking certain theoretical body without direct application. Likewise, overall readings of the research articles and other literature suggest that concept sets of studies dealing with similar issues show great similarities. This may not seem as a surprising finding at first glance. However, closer examination of those similarities revealed that many of them are also mechanistic in nature, meaning that connections with social theory are established through those concepts, but almost always in similar manners without taking into consideration the peculiarities of socio-cultural contexts, historical moment and other field specific realities. Therefore, in one sense, this would be a contribution to Carspecken’s claim that critical qualitative research has to do more with the social theory and epistemology. But, paradoxically, I found that the ways in which such connections are established with social theory and epistemology (that is why I found them mechanistic) hold more importance than the connection itself (or what qualifies such connection).

As Foley (2002) points out, a range of disciplines translated the notion *critical* in accordance with their disciplinary borders. The “critical” of the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s, particularly in educational research and theory (this is a very rudimentary classification serving the purpose of analytical categorization, and does not suggest that the concept has gone through change in every other decade), has allowed distinct heavens for educational scholars in line with their different socio-political positionalities, usually in tangent with social theory and epistemology. It is no bold overstatement to say that, with reference to the entity of the critical in educational theory and research, the 1970s are foundational years, although the intellectual roots of the concept itself date to many years earlier. It should also be added that the work produced
during the decade is indicative of more affinity to the original development of the notion with the Frankfurt school. Coupled with the relief of detaching from the deterministic chains of positivism, “discovery” of the critical also brought about a new excitement into the field, which operated at the same time as glue for scholars who had been looking for the right terminology and vocabulary for their “justice-oriented researches”. Utilization of “critical frameworks” gained momentum during the 1980s, with a content that was politically ‘heavy’ inspired in the US by the works of scholars such as Michael Apple, Peter McLaren and Jean Anyon. However, it seems that this political content got thinned out during the 1990s, and discussions were shifted to “institutionalized” concepts such as reproduction, social-cultural capital and resistance, which were coined to in the 70s and 80s. Even, according to Carspecken (2003), “critical ethnography” is articulated by Peter McLaren for the first time in early 1980s. Analysis of the research articles reveals that those concepts are still in charge informing similar research questions, indicating that critical qualitative research in education lost its momentum for the time being at least in terms of its transformative aspect.

It is also clear that researchers are having hard time in creating common grounds for a struggle towards just society, grounds on which political statements expressing consensuses over injustices could be located. In other words, there is almost no “call” for coming together around bigger political projects transcending individual practices to transform injustices. And, I think that this fragmentation in political struggles has great impacts on answering to the foundational question of critical enterprise as to whether the purpose of research is to show us how we are oppressed or stop oppression. It seems that the answer is gearing towards more descriptive side, a tendency towards leaving transformation job to the “others” (i.e., show them what is wrong and let them find their own way). Of course, I am not suggesting that researchers should take up the
role of “savior” or in similar manner, look for the ways to emancipate their research subjects. But I think that such methodological and ethical dilemmas in regards to the role and the positionality of researcher contribute to what Bourdieu calls “symbolic forms of domination”. By pulling the issues of “social responsibility, values, justice and the like” into the domain of “colonial research practices” through academization, many researchers tend to stay in the “comfort zones” of academic necessities. In relation to this, articles, for example, do not clarify the point that how one can transform structural and social circumstances without gathering around bigger political projects. In other words, although researchers show their fidelity towards the concept sets and frameworks of critical enterprise through reflexivity, normative claims, emancipatory interests, tools of transformation, targets of transformations etc., many of them do not pass beyond what Michael Apple call “possibilitarian rhetoric” with generic categories of critique such as neo-liberalism, institutional racism, and stereotypes.
CHAPTER V
TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM IN UNDERSTANDING
CRITICAL

The 'eye' is a product of history reproduced by education.
Bourdieu, Distinctions

Introduction

This chapter will problematize the contemporary portrayals of the “critical” in regards to the question of referentiality and bordering, and the associations between the researcher and the critical. This is done with the simultaneous examination of the critical in the field of educational research through working with mechanisms and functions of the critical, its alignments, its opposition between epistemic and empirical constructions and understandings, as well as the productions of difference within the critical scholarship. The approach to realize such a goal will be to rely on the analysis of data conducted for this research project through interviews with “critical” scholars at various US universities.

I argue that, in order to assess the meanings and implications of the critical in educational research, one need not be exclusively focused on the research outcomes of work that self-identifies as “critical.” In other words, it becomes equally relevant and beneficial to look at conjunctures that are not traditionally a part of the finished product of research by shifting the object of exploration to the architecture of the critical. Such engagement with the process rather

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26 I am fully responsible from all of the writing problems such as misspellings and grammatical errors etc. that may have occurred in the interview excerpts.
than solely with the outcome is in synchrony with this dissertation project’s aim to primarily incorporate the researchers’ personal moments and socio-political commitments into the broader picture of research production. The analysis of the architecture of the critical research enterprise thus becomes open to dissection that is necessarily internally tied to a certain shaping of the outcome along particular theoretical and ideological fixtures. This may enable a better understanding of the dynamics of knowledge production without being necessarily and exclusively guided by the ideological or theoretical indices contained in a single study.

The foregoing opening lends some appreciation to understanding the rather complex nature of knowledge production beyond the singularities of the theoretical and the ideological. Agger (1992), for example, acknowledges factors that may contribute to critical scholarship other than epistemological and theoretical foundations:

I argue that it is increasingly impossible to privilege theoretical activity that somehow escapes its own banalization and integration. Critical theory has itself been integrated into academy, legitimated as a series of courses, books, journals, and conferences. The academization of critical theory, in part owing to Habermas’ success in mainstreaming critical theory into and across the academic disciplines, has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, people read and study Frankfurt School. On the other, it neutralizes the explosive insights of Adorno and his colleagues, who defied disciplinary integration and legitimation. This is very much the theme of Russell Jacoby’s *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (1987), where he laments the absence of broadgauged critical intellectuals under the age of forty-five in the United
States. The angry rebels of the New Left have doomed tweed blazers, earned tenure, and become timid in the North American University (p.9).

Similarly, Derrida (1992) discusses the complexity involved in producing a scholarly work against the background of academic dynamics, frequently de-centered from the process of production itself, which not only shelters and limits scholars but also structures their interpretations:

By the clearest possible thematization I mean the following: that with students and the research community, in every operation we pursue together (a reading, an interpretation, the construction of a theoretical model, a rhetoric of an argumentation, the treatment of historical material, and even of mathematical formalization), we argue or acknowledge that an institutional concept is at play, a type of contract signed, an image of the ideal seminar constructed, a socius implied, repeated or displaced, invented, transformed, menaced or destroyed. An institution – this is not merely a few walls or some outer structures surrounding, protecting, guaranteeing or restricting the freedom of our work; it is also and already the structure of our interpretation. (Quoted in Bowman, 2007, p. 22-23).

At this point, I believe that first, one has to look at historical artifacts and conjunctions behind divergences and convergences among critical scholars in order to situate further discussion on how contemporary criticals in the field of educational research are architected and why it is problematic to forge direct links between contemporary criticals and historical origins (e.g., Frankfurt School Critical Theory). Likewise, I argue that ideological colorings of the critical initiative, pre-dominantly Marxist, have a profound impact on the architecture and
therefore need to be incorporated into the exploration. This is mainly because, as I discuss later in this chapter, Leftist strategy (or the political Left itself), is still a heuristic point of reference for critical work, not only in terms of unification, but also of fragmentation. The discussion below also serves the purpose of situating why one needs to stay in the realm of open endedness during analysis in order not to oversimplify very complex and sophisticated expressions of the critical enterprise.

The data from content analysis and interviews posed a challenge for this dissertation project in that it appears that looking only at theoretical and epistemological foundations of the critical enterprise does not help us to understand contemporary portrayals in a rounded fashion. This is because the problematic of defining the “critical” contemporarily, i.e., post-Frankfurt, might have to do with the same feature that set the critical initiative into motion at the hands of the Frankfurt School members in the first place. That the Frankfurt School envisioned a theoretical rupture with the past (to a large extent, the liberal Enlightenment)\(^\text{27}\) as well as with the future (the finality of the liberal bourgeois order) suggests a domain that thought itself as oppositional, hence political, to the existing order and its relations of power (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997). But, it was also in relation to the transformative end that this project came to breathe through the borderline that such oppositionality required. Porous borders, nonetheless, yet with some stability because of the political coloring of the initiative, at least at the onset of the Institute which mandated departures, express the rupture that was associated with the School’s initial intervention. In other words, the borderline was made visible between the critical

\(^{27}\) However, some of its member like Habermas considered Enlightenment as an unfinished project.
intervention and its understanding of what needs to be transformed and the conditions that obstructed that very change.

To transcend the Frankfurt School’s authorship of the “critical” meant, not only a disavowal of the term through different means, but also a remapping that could circumvent the dialectic of the border-as-opposition. If the former has been attempted through de-historicizing the critical and destabilizing its centrality as grand narrative, the latter aimed at addressing the polemic of having to do without any kind of border, as engaging with reworking the constitution and implications of the critical made it a question which is not that easily avoidable. There was thus a need to redefine the border when engaging with the critical away from its relatively stable foundation in opposition—a remapping of the spatiality that the critical aimed to do from the very beginning.

If the term “border-as-rewriting” could be used to describe the post-opposition, post-Frankfurt critical enterprise, one could address the nature of the difference of the notion of the border. The contemporary, critical border might be constituted by that which is fuzzier, more porous, and more overlapping, and where referencing and framing what makes a critical “thing” critical is no longer necessarily an effect of theoretical antagonism.

This not only undermines the significance of the political (with capital “p”) as imperative to the critical, but also introduces the need to remap the referentiality of the border, thus diminished. It is somehow similar to the situation in which newly decolonized states found themselves once the rigid division of the world, between a Western bloc and an Eastern one that came to dominate post-World War II—instead of aligning with either, those states had to rework the international geopolitical mapping to create space that could circumvent the borderline
between East and West. And there came the idea of non-alignment as possibility of opening up a third space that could claim presence within the bipolarity. The Third World had to remap the global scene, even though alliances still existed between members of this project and either of the two Super Powers, and sometimes both. I shall talk about this alignment as a way of constructing the critical later in this dissertation.

One of the problematics of the critical, then, is still a question of the border, i.e., the dividing-line between the critical as scholarship and academic claim(s) on the one hand, and what is critiqued and aimed at for transformation, on the other. The difference again is an element of the shift from the antagonistic, hence, the lesser stability of the border and farther positioning from the political. A less stable border, however, should not necessarily mean doing away with locating one’s critical work on the academic map; a remapping does not necessarily mean elimination of the map itself. One is still faced with the need to locate where various understandings of the critical come into play. In other words, one cannot claim their scholarship and its implications to be critical in a vacuity where the post-Frankfurt School is understood as death to referentiality altogether. The disavowal of the Frankfurt School critical is in itself a reference point for mapping the contemporary critical, even when some of today’s interventions do not self-identify as anti- or counter-Frankfurt. Inter-collegiality is another example of this reworking of referentiality, but not through entirely abandoning the dialectic of interior-exterior, for one, scholarship in disagreement with another is still one way or another exterior to that other. I will revisit the question of inter-collegiality as a way of constructing the critical with more elaboration later in this chapter.
The ambiguity of the critical may also have to do with how the Frankfurt School understood its position, not only as an oppositional one to non-Marxist and anti-Marxist theories, but also as independence from the Communist Party itself. Even with the founder of the idea of a permanent critical institute, Felix Weil, the aim was to conduct social and historical research on the workers’ movement, albeit orthodox, yet operating outside the framework of a Communist Party per se. The earlier orthodox Marxist character of research by the Frankfurt School gradually made room for research that was more in synchrony with the other main objective behind founding the School, i.e., carrying out cross-disciplinary research. Simultaneously, the shift away from a Party identification continued, especially after George Luckas was forced to repudiate his 1923 book *History and Class Consciousness*. The realization that independence from the Party was necessary to produce innovative theoretical work gained steady permanence, and consequently meant the suspension of the primary aim of unifying theory and praxis, or, in other words, the development of a Marxist revolutionary theory that is closely connected with the praxis of workers’ movement and the operations of the Communist Party (Jay, 1973).

This inclination of distancing is also visible in how the name of the Institute underwent some change. The initial idea was to call it Institut für Marxismus (Institute for Marxism), which was abandoned for being too provocative. The decision was then made to simply call it Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the allegiance in the early years of the Institute was to Marxism, as science, as well as to researching the workers’ movement, and interest in producing interdisciplinary theoretical work was counterbalanced by overall engaging in documenting the struggle of the working class. But even when theory gained precedence over historical and social research, dissociation from a party remained unchanged. This had implications in how the members of Frankfurt School approached the study of Marxism.
following their initial commitment to understanding it as science, in synchrony with orthodox and traditional lenses, and the researching of the social phenomena, specifically the ones related to the workers’ movement, in the light of this scientific Marxism. For instance, and because of the critique of Stalinism and official Communism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and European Communist Parties that followed its line, a reassessment of Marxist fundamentals, such as the relationship between the structure and the superstructure went underway. Gradually, the shift affected the alignment with Marxism itself. This we could see in the 2nd and 3rd generations of Frankfurt School, such as Jurgen Habermas and Axel Honneth. In the case of Habermas, his communicative ethics is arguably more Kantian than Marxian. On the other hand, Honneth chose to stage recourse to Hegel rather than to Marx.

Critical Theory came to be developed independently from the Party and the organized working class has implications on the question of the borderline addressed at the beginning of this chapter, but it is also relevant to how the notion of the critical has grown into an entity whose delineation is inseparable from shifting and realignment. Firstly, the theoretical rupture that I mention above, which began in the early years of the Frankfurt School as a break from bourgeois theory, metamorphosed into a critique of Marxist theory in its orthodox and traditional versions. This was reinforced by the decision to dissociate from the party line and to sustain theory independent from the praxis of the working class and its vanguard party, when really-existing socialism, i.e., Soviet-style communism, triggered waves of questioning of the principles which were claimed to guide the policies and practices of (statist) Marxism. In other

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28 Historically, the term is used to distinguish theory produced by those at the forefront of knowledge production in a capitalist society, who also own the bulks of academic capital, from theories which are very critical about it and emancipatory in nature.
words, Marxism thus started to develop in academic circles rather than within the Communist Party or in close association with the workers’ movement. This may explain why later member of Frankfurt School broke away from even Marx himself, and it may also explain why today it becomes erroneous to equate the critical with Marxism, as the examples of the work of the Frankfurt School member Jurgen Habermas and post-structuralists like Derrida and Foucault make clear.

Thus, the border that was initially drawn between the critical and the bourgeois, and it is important to iterate, at the level of theory, relocated to also demarcate difference from certain interpretations of Marxism. This added to the distancing from political Marxism in the form of dissociating with the Party altogether and prioritizing theory over praxis. It may, therefore, be necessary to qualify Frankfurt School antagonism as theoretical rather than political, but also as one that is not exclusively directed towards bourgeois theory, but that is also against orthodox and statist Marxism. In other words, it evolved into Marxism without Leninism the way Eurocommunism came to distinguish itself from Soviet Communism. This would be further complicated when the very notion of antagonism, which is arguably at the heart of the practice of Marxist politics, started to be eclipsed with the post-Frankfurt attempts to re-historicize and rethink the critical.

It is, then, a double distancing that one could observe here: a critical theory that is removed from the realm of party and workers politics, and criticality that further disarms its enterprise of theoretical antagonism by expansively resorting to interdisciplinary, cross-classificatory theoretical and practical approaches to researching the social totality. In other words, the first is a decimation of theory from practice, while the second is fragmentation of
theory. The disunity between theory and praxis, whose antithesis is understood to be foundational for effecting social and political transformation from a (traditional) Marxist point of view, is thus conjoined with criticality that is defined as theoretically multitudenal. This may explain the difficulty with which one is faced attempting to define what counts as critical today, for even with the Frankfurt School, the critical came to be shaped as theory minus praxis, which was also later reshaped as theory plus fragmentation and proliferation—from critical as outcome of disunity, to critical as result of fragmentation. Spatially speaking, if the Frankfurt school set its borders between theory and praxis, on the one hand, and Marxist theory and bourgeois theory, on the other, post-Frankfurt School underscore the polemics of the fuzzy borderline by further collapsing the theoretical distinctions that initially allowed for antagonism to define Critical Theory. And this is what is meant by remapping and realigning.

The fuzziness of the critical, one could then argue, may have to do with relocating its initial vessel, i.e., Marxism, to the academy, as well as with the latter fragmentation of this vessel and going beyond it altogether. And this is how I arrive at the second implication: the critical as shifting theoretical notion and practice. In the case of the unity between theory and practice, it is also logical to expect that the process by which a certain goal is to be achieved is always conscious of that goal, i.e., the outcome informs the process. But when this unity becomes absent or is transcended, the process may no longer share such intimacy with the outcome. With reference to the critical scholarship, one could say that the character of this scholarship and the ultimate goal of transformation are no longer collapsible, or at least not entirely. In other words, what gives form to the critical is not only what it critiques and hopes to transform, but also how

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29 Post-modern approaches instigated such fragmentation through emphasizing and sometimes fetishizing “difference”.
it practices this critique, or more accurately the nature of this process of critiquing. In other words, it is no longer exclusively what you eat that tells me who you are, but how you eat it. So this opens up the probability of finding a scholarship that identifies its critical claims singularly with reference to referentiality, yet its transformative ends may not fit one single category, but two or more, or the other way around. This is an aspect of the double distancing that is mentioned above. But it is also due to the well known fact that various modes of approaches, i.e., theoretical, methodological, and practical choices, are shaped through an assortment of filtering processes including but not limited to experience in the academy, intellectual skills, power relations, social backgrounds, political commitments, gender, and so on.

In light of the above discussion of the proposition that the critical is reinvented and redefined in accordance with various factors that cannot be simply minimized to a set of mechanisms involved in a linear production of a particular theoretical or epistemological project, I will reconstruct the variations across the critical researchers that emerged throughout the course of this study. The tool used to achieve this is Bourdieu’s field theory as a theoretical lens that allows an assessment of my data to reveal how such differentiations are affected by the inner dynamics of the field, i.e., in this case, qualitative critical research. According to Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992), each field has its internal logic and covering that manage the game that takes place within its boundaries. Structures external to the field do not directly interfere with autonomous fields, like the intellectual field; rather, it is the habitus, the entity of structured structures, which determines the rules of the game. But despite this visible structured-ness of the habitus, Bourdieu identifies it as non-deterministic in that it dwells on the strong plane of suggestiveness, and hence, it does not always determine thought and action. In other words, while the habitus helps structure the structures of a particular field, it is simultaneously shaped,
i.e., structured by the very structures that operate in the field at large. Therefore, for Bourdieu, people do not act in entirely predetermined ways according to determinants of the particular field into which these people evolve. Rather, it is what Bourdieu calls “fuzziness” (or fuzzy logic) that is more or less the norm for human thought and action under the persuasive suggestions of the habitus, totality of systems of thought and practices that one gains throughout his or her lifetime. However, this logic is also tied to a practical sense. Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) claim that people tend to give reasonable responses to situations they encounter, a condition that Bourdieu calls the “logic of practical sense”. He distinguishes this logic of practical sense from the logic of formal sense by dint of the fact that the former, unlike the latter, is constituted within the realm of the social, i.e., the field itself. When habitus matches the field in this manner, Bourdieu calls this state “cohesion without a concept”, a mechanical reaction without an agent (a fish living and swimming in water without thinking about the water until one takes it out of water). To further clarify this point, Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) quote Merleau Monty’s (1963) soccer player example:

For the player in action the soccer field is not an “object”, that is, the ideal term which can give rise to an indefinite multiplicity of perspectival views and remain equivalent under its apparent transformations. It is pervaded with lines of force (the “yard lines”; those which demarcate the “penalty area”) and is articulated into sectors (for example, the “openings” between the adversaries) which call for a certain mode of action and which initiate and guide the action as if the player were unaware of it. The filed itself is not given to him, but present as the immanent term of his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the direction of the “goal” for example, just as immediately as the vertical and the horizontal planes of his own body. It would not be
sufficient to say that consciousness inhabits this milieu. At this moment consciousness is nothing other than the dialectic of milieu and action. Each maneuver undertaken by the player modifies the character of the field and establishes new lines of force in which the action in turn unfolds and is accomplished, again altering the phenomenal field (quoted in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.21).

Therefore, actions taken in the field, in one sense, might be in line with the logic of the field without having to rely on any conscious efforts. So, my arguments particularly in terms of Academic, Political, and Intellectual resonances of scholarships in regards to positionality depart from these theoretical assumptions. As Ringer (2000) eloquently puts it:

[T]he main point of Bourdieu’s definition lies in the emphasis given to the positional or relational attributes of ideas. Merely to describe an intellectual position is necessarily to chart its relationships with other elements in its intellectual field. The views expressed in a given setting are so thoroughly interdefined that they can be adequately characterized only in their complementary or oppositional relationships to each other (p.4).

But again, I also adopted “fuzzy logic” as “a generative spontaneity which asserts itself in the improvised confrontations with endlessly renewed situations, it follows practical logic, that of fuzzy, of the more-or-less, which defines the ordinary relation to the world (Ibid, p.22).”

After above foundational discussion of how historical artifacts of critical venture would have impact on both contemporary divergences and convergences across critical researchers in an attempt to situate the major arguments of this chapter, as well as elucidating theoretical
assumptions that are utilized to look at expressions of critical enterprise, it is now feasible to pose major arguments of this chapter.

In this chapter, I argue that the differences across critical researchers are homologous, (i.e., constructed in parallel ways) which is discussed in the following section. And, homologic differences across critical researchers can be combined under three broader theoretical and practical resonances: Political, Academic, and Intellectual. First, I argue that Political resonances are expressed through differential subscriptions to the Political Left. In the second section in which Academic resonances are elaborated, I argue that critical is not only academized but also empricized within/through academic practices. And finally, I argue that Intellectual resonances in the case of critical enterprise emerge through invoking either mechanisms or functions of the critical.

**Geography of the Critical in Educational Research: A Glance**

One of the practical ways for exploring the various notions of the critical, embedded within the practices of research, seems to examine the theoretical, ethical, political, and methodological underpinnings of these varied notions. This approach is, of course, far from being unproblematic because the issue remains, to a large extent, under-researched and under-analyzed. Additionally, the postmodern crisis of classification, which seems to further linger in the social sciences, also affects such an attempt to contradistinguish by classifying, which impacts how truth claims are produced within classification, but more importantly, by deconstructing this and other taxonomic tendencies. Although Bourdieu’s field theory seems to
contrarily find benefit in objectifying social positions, Bourdieu also emphasized, as a means to prevent slippage into overdeterminations, the critical need to make the process of objectification itself transparent, or the need to “objectify objectification,” a parallel notion of which is pursuing a sociology of sociology itself. This is because he argues that “the social world doesn’t work in terms of consciousness; it works in terms of practices, mechanisms and so forth” (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p.113), suggesting that objectification is an important step to making social phenomena visible. Although I subscribe to Bourdieu’s position in regards to how the social world functions and how it should be made visible at the hands of the researchers, I still find his understanding of social positions through a process of objectification a bit problematic, since I believe that these positions are instead produced intersubjectively. This is because the objectification of social positions through rigorous determinants and processes is eventually tantamount to a “bad positivism” so to speak.

In this sense, this chapter seeks to examine how the positions of critical researchers vis-à-vis the critical unfold, not in relation, en masse, to an extraneous and objective point of reference, but rather in relation to each other, individually. The aim is also to understand the underlying principles of this relationality, as well as of the constructions of the critical in educational research. First, I look at where critical researchers locate their research practices unto the relational geography of educational ethnography.

When I asked the scholar interviewed where they would locate their research practices unto the geography of the critical in the United States, expressions of the “classification crisis” that I mention above came to again be visible in many of my participants’ narratives. Slattery, for example, relates:
I describe myself as an interdisciplinary scholar and researcher. I don’t categorize myself within a particular discipline. I see myself as traversing many academic disciplines, I don't attempt to locate my work within someone else's analysis or definition. Rather, I do my work as it feels comfortable. I have a piece called the *Educational Researcher as Artist Working Within*. Then, as it may fit within someone else's categories, they can place it how they want to.

Although he calls his work critical, Slattery finds all kinds of classifications, particularly those devised and introduced by other researchers, somewhat problematic. This is due to his unwillingness to and disinterestedness in producing scholarly work to fit categories or borders established by “someone else.” One could claim that his position against bordering is shared by many other scholars whose work could be said to be more in line with the postmodern, poststructural implications of “critique” as something that defies imposed borders. Among them is Dressman, who identifies his work more in line with post-structuralist tendencies, and who advocates resisting topographical classifications:

I would probably try not to locate myself. Politically, I guess, I count myself as pretty liberal; but I also have some critique of the neo-liberal. Basically, I would have a critique of any group of people who think that they have the truth about anything and that they are right and anybody else is wrong. So, in my work at least, I use a lot of social theory and I use theorists from Bourdieu to Habermas. I am working on a paper right now, for example, that is about some interactions that I had with students and faculty in Morocco. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco 25 years ago and I have been going back to Morocco over the past three years, having conversations with
students and giving presentations at universities there. I find that a lot of my experiences challenge my own attitude, what I would call “Bourdieuian attitude,” about the role of belief in educational theory as a driving force for research. So, I am using those experiences to critique Bourdieu, and I argue that he wants to place himself in a kind of ultra-critical space in which he believes that by garnering some reflexivity he somehow escapes his own subjectivity. That is what the paper is about. I think that in terms of my own work, I am still very interested in using social theory; and actually these days I am very interested in critiquing social theory. I believe that the role of social theory will be very limited if we do not engage in critiquing social theory itself.

Although some of the researchers interviewed expressed an objection to classifying the work they produce as an organic part of the critical geography, the notion critical seems to be what qualifies their work in the first place, particularly with reference to the commitments and transformative orientations of these scholars. This apparent contradiction is explained in terms that factor in the broader academic scene as field of necessary legitimation: members of the broader US academy identify many researchers as “criticals” whether or not this latter group self-identifies their work to be organically part of the critical constellation. These scholars may operate within the critical geography, but in ways that infuse the space with multiple academic alliances and devises that may not necessarily appear to be organically critical in the first place. Olneck approximates this point in the following exchange:

Olneck- Critical could just be a colloquial vernacular word. It is critical not in the sense that it carries some critique of society, some notion of “if we do this inquiry” or “if we do this research, we can expose what is hidden in ways that could lead people to act in
ways that are more just,” right? That’s critical. Sociologists, all kinds of studies focused on these, for example, segregation. All that comes out of an interest in social equality, no matter what position and no matter what methodology. Is it more critical when somebody studies, say, the ways in which school integration embodies assumptions about white supremacy. Yea, that’s more critical, that’s more critical than somebody who is just trying to find out if you mix black and white kids, do test scores go up? But I kind of say that for people who just study whether you mix up those kids and whether test scores go up … I don’t think they are any less committed to social justice.

Mustafa- Do you think there is such a hierarchy?

Olneck-I don’t know if I want to frame it as hierarchy. I just kind of map it. I want to map it but don’t know in what multi-dimensional space. I think in the minds of self identified critical scholars who use that name, that label to distinguish themselves, I wasn’t just teasing when I said mainstream scholars are people who critical scholar try to distinguish themselves from, right? I think they believe that their work is in some way both committed to and advances social justice, more so than what they call mainstream.

Mustafa-But there is not many people who self-identify themselves as critical and people usually shy away from identifying themselves as critical…

Olneck-Right, and therefore people who don’t necessarily care for or want to identify as part of that community won’t use the term. But that doesn’t…. I mean if you say, “why do they shy away from it,” if that’s the implied question, I think there are too
many people in what are thought of as critical fields for whom the analysis that will be forthcoming is in some sense already known. I’ve had arguments with my friend Mike Apple, over 30 years or more ago now, about the issue of verifiability, verification, verifiability. And the notion of, “do you adopt a theoretical perspective then you apply it in interpretation” which in a way is what I come to do, versus adopting approaches that allow for falsification. I think that too many of the self-proclaimed critical scholars reject as “bad old positivism” a commitment to falsification as a test based on very complex analyses of knowledge. Approaches different from this are by no means unsophisticated, but for somebody with my temperament, its off-putting. …I’ve always been somebody who connects pretty well to very diverse communities and contradictory ways of thinking. Now I don’t know if that means that I am just uncommitted or if I’ve found a way to be creatively marginal.

Olneck’s narration in many ways sheds light on the tensions operating in the field in regards to some definitive accounts of the critical scholarship in connection with the issue of social justice. In other words, if defining the characteristics of the critical is through value orientations and commitments to social justice, quantitative work with similar tendencies and inspired by concerns for social justice, but which at the same time strictly adheres to “tenets of scientific research” such as falsification and verifiability, could be equally designated as “critical.” But on the other hand, he believes that the problem emerges when it comes to determine whose version is “more critical,” so to speak. And what may resolve such a problem may have to do with referring to points of reference instituted or suggested by the field’s “self-proclaimed criticals.” Referencing opens up the territory to the specifics of alignment and dis-alignment as means to approach researcher positionalities. This process of referentiality, by
scholars whose self-identified critical position is part of how this as well as their work earns legitimation and circulation, is also subject to the tribulations of Bourdieu’s *symbolic violence* when one looks at how the critical gets to be eventually defined and bordered by these research figures. It is violence since, as I further elaborate somewhere else in this dissertation, scholars whose work falls outside the domain defined as the proper of the critical by “self-identified” criticals, are pushed towards the periphery, and thus, are academically alienated from specific “definitive power circles.”

By contrast, other scholars did not have any problem with having their work identified as “critical.” However, this did not necessarily mean an absolute subscription to the condition of static borders that some designate to define a critical domain. Rhoads, for instance, appears cautious on this point:

> If someone asked me to self-identify myself with few limited terms, I would probably say I am a critical, social scientist or critical theorist. I am comfortable with these two terms. I would prefer critical, social scientist because critical theory is kind of a confusing term because it could be interpreted as meaning the Frankfurt School or it could be interpreted as meaning a broader framework that calls upon kinds of critical traditions like Marxism, Neo-Marxism, Post-structuralism, Critical Theory of Frankfurt School, Feminism, etc. I tend to call on all those areas. So a “critical, social scientist” is probably a good term to use to describe myself.

> In other words, similar to Slattery, Rhoads finds his intellectual roots within a broader critical tradition that defies the delimitation of one definitive source. The critical, in this sense, seems to index a perspective and stance sustained and initiated by multiple sources and
anchoring grounds. Along the same lines of establishing the critical away from definitiveness and singularity, Fine very cautiously identifies where her position might fall on that slippery ground of educational research, a particularity she formulates as a “three legged stool” that keeps her “intellectually stable”:

I am probably more comfortable with having multiple roots in the Frankfurt School, but also in Feminism and Critical Race Theory. It seems to me a stool, a three legged stool, is what keeps me slightly stable. I think in education, there are probably more rigid lines as to what constitutes the critical. But in psychology, the critical has been a loose but dedicated space of raising questions about the assumptions of science, the assumptions of action and the assumptions of where knowledge leads, and what is the relation between research and change. So, that's the space I can sit in with people like Freire, Martin Buber, or Kurt Lewin. But again that's a blend of psychology and education.

It is relevant that Fine compares the two domains of education and psychology with reference to critical undertakings. For in this case, borders may be regimented differently according to how these are determined per discipline. Yet, despite this apparent difference, Fine underlines that borders should still be considered less than secure in any presumed capacity of theirs to maintain disciplinary scholarship uncontaminated by interdisciplinary, cross-border contacts.

Another interesting distinction can be highlighted in Luttrell’s narrative: teaching classifications of research, established as bordered entities that are relatively stable, is one thing, and applying these same categories to one’s work as a researcher is another. Luttrell’s practice of
“teaching categories of research” in order to make them visible to the eyes of her students, yet to “feel nervous” about using these to assess possible boundaries that her work may involve, resonates with Bourdieu’s remarks on the necessity of objectification and, at the same time, crystallizes the tension between the subjective and the objective in knowledge production:

For years now, I have been teaching *Logics of Qualitative Research*, where I sort of consistently introduce the idea of there being at least three different paradigms that qualitative researchers use: that would be post-positivist, interpretivist, and critical. And every time I present that, I get a little nervous, on my own, in thinking about my own work because I think that my own work is much more eclectic than those typologies suggest. And so, I always say that ‘here are these three big paradigms that can be identified and with which lots of people identify in the field.’ But my own work … the way I actually think about my own work is that it has elements of all three. So, if you were to say “are you a self indentified critical ethnographer?”, I’m not sure, I would say “yes I’m a self identified critical ethnographer”. I wouldn’t call myself a self identified critical ethnographer, and I don’t think I would, I know I wouldn’t say “oh I’m a post positivist ethnographer”, and I know I wouldn’t say “I’m a interpretivist ethnographer.

Luttrell’s narration is a remarkable example of how people move across various epistemological borders, established around “appropriate” reference points, without necessarily taking into account what I would call “autonomous possibilities,” new intellectual spaces carved out on the walls of rigid academic categories. She also supports that proposition that I make with regards to needing to interviewing people in an attempt to reify such possibilities.
Anchoring does not have to only materialize with reference to actual or eventual delimitation of the critical. Many other researchers, including some whom I interviewed, relate to their position on the scene of critical research in education within the framework of the broader methodological and theoretical references of transformative scholarship in the academy in general. However, it appears that it is more in terms of a transformative “genealogy” than with reference to a particular theoretical “tradition” that these scholars understand their connectedness to similar others. Noffke, for example, says:

It is not like a classification; but I think I belong to a long tradition of people who have been seeking ways in which the gathering of information can be used in socially transformative ways. That could include everybody from W. B. Dubois and the early sociologist or feminist researchers, and that could also include many other scholars, a lot of people who do not see a difference between research and making social change … making effective social change.

Weis elaborates on this issue of genealogy as a medium for establishing connections among scholars. She does this by contrasting the past of the critical and its present. For her, the critical is more like an amalgamation of perspectives and frameworks located at the nexus of power and domination than merely a theoretical or epistemological construct. And in order to understand these present manifestations of the critical, it is necessary to always contextualize, historically:

The way I am thinking about the critical … this has history, this has genealogy. It is also not exactly what we were talking about in the 1970s. It must embody the present… It is shaped by context, and context changes. It is a perspective and it is a set of
frameworks, and it has to include an analysis of power and how power works to sustain, promote, and change positions. And once you include such analysis, that works to give one a critical perspective, assuming, of course, that one wishes to map and simultaneously contest broad based inequalities and the ways in which power works to sustain such inequalities. Having said that, there are a lot of people who don’t use that perspective, who have very, very important data that need to be folded into all that we do as we move forward. So, yes I work from a broadly construed critical perspective. Some other people don’t, but their data are absolutely invaluable to me.

The critical also appears as an “oppositional” arrangement in the manner Dyson, for instance, understands the function of the critical as one of destabilizing the taken-for-granted within the field, and within the broader society to some extent. This act of destabilizing resonates with how Gramsci frames his notion of “hegemony,” an expression and a construction of which is the consensus of “common sense.” In this sense, Dyson’s critical scholarship can be said to take on an oppositional stance towards works in the field that are legitimated through and which contribute to the “hegemonic common sense”:

I think for me … in my own work, I’ve been trying to figure out how to problematize the taken-for-granted. And oftentimes what is taken for granted are things that are commonsense to those in the mainstream, especially in my field. I consider my field the broad area of literacy studies. But my research is on little children. In the 70s when I started, a lot of people were studying their own children and one got the distinct impression of people who really thought their kids were cool and that if all kids could be like their kids everything would be just perfect. And so, I wanted to look at what the
underlying beliefs about language and literacy and development that were taken for granted were, and how we could rethink these. Most immediately, I was teaching, I always loved to teach writing to little children. I taught first grade in Austin, Texas in bilingual schools. I taught writing from the beginning and it was about this time that this stuff was coming out from New Hampshire with articles like “little kids can also write” or something like that. And I looked at what was coming out and I thought it was great people were paying attention to little kids and writing. And I don’t want to belittle or diminish them; but I thought there was a need for another point of view because I thought if we went by that work, my kids would look as though they were not-so-bright.

By sharp contrast, the borders of the critical may still hold validity and significance when understanding where and how one’s work, as a critical researcher, fits the geography of critical educational research. For instance, McLaren, who, according to Carspecken (2003), coined the term “critical ethnography,” still believes that the critical cannot follow its aspired trajectory unless through lines that are rigid enough to distinguish the domain of the critical from all that against which it should operate. For McLaren, then, the critical is a term that has strong political connotations in terms of the struggle that needs to be waged towards a socialist alternative to Capitalism. He argues that there exist “domesticated versions” of the critical, which clearly he does not subscribe to, yet at the same time, these serve as negative reference points for him to distinguish his work differently:

Now, in my own work I have adopted the term used by Paula Allman in England, and it is called “revolutionary critical pedagogy”. That is the term of my choice. I use that
term to distinguish my work from more domesticated versions of critical pedagogy that constitute little more than what I call “democracy of empty forms.” Students coming together in a classroom trying to engage in dialogue … putting your chairs in a circle … having conversations as if in a somehow circular class, chairs in a circle, somehow facilitates democratic participatory and dialogical engagement. It is not necessarily going to happen. The term speaks to a cosmetic sort, of a form of critique which is progressive-liberal. It is kind of what I call “confectionary critique”; whereas revolutionary critical pedagogy suggests a fundamental critique of neo-liberal globalization, and an alternative to capital’s value form, that is, the value form of labor. As a socialist, I struggle to change the value form of labor. What is capital's value form? Wage labor, selling of your labor power for a wage. And if you are dependent on selling your labor power for a wage, you are part of the working class. And if you are not dependent on selling your labor power for a wage, you are part of the capitalist class.

As it transpires from the narratives above, the articulation of the critical, varied as it has been shown, is dependent on a relationality towards others, i.e., how one’s criticality configures relative to and in relation to that of the other “criticals” in the field. The critical, in this sense then, does not only allude to one’s methodological or epistemological subscriptions, but also, and more interestingly, to intellectual relationships that one develops with the other researchers in the field. This adds to the complexity of the picture of how one’s various approaches, theoretical and methodological, as well as one’s practical choices, are shaped through an assortment of filtering processes, including, but not limited to, experience in the academy, intellectual skills, power relations, social background, political commitments, gender, and so on. Fine’s answer to
the question posed on how she finds her research topics is a remarkable example of this complexity and how the personal interacts with social and political considerations and stances in the field:

[I find them through] varied ways. My most existential answer is that sometimes they come to me when I am swimming. Swimming and sleeping are spaces where important work happens for me. I write a lot of my talks when I am swimming, and I re-imagine the work that I do, partly because it is the only solitary moment I get where there is no social in real bodies. But our projects at the Collective come from collaborations with activist campaigns … a desire to interrogate critical theory of justice and critical consciousness, and/or policy/legal work.

For instance, we work with a variety of activist groups. This afternoon we're meeting with the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative. They are launching a major campaign with tomato workers in Florida. Relying on a human rights’ framework, they seek to establish a legal and social movement that could put pressure to force Taco Bell and Burger King to clean up their act. And they’re doing these community meetings. They want to talk to us about how to build into organizing some participatory research practices.

A colleague who I met in the prison has now started a program for a post-prison college. She wants, or needs, to evaluate the program for the purposes of getting more funding. We met with participants and their children, and together decided to take up a two-generation participatory evaluation of the college program, interviewing men and women who had been prisoners and who are in college as well as their children. In fact,
the children have now decided that they want to make a film to train correction officers about how to treat the children with dignity. And that will be their research projects. We are also interested in more theoretically-driven projects, designed to interrogate injustice studies -- theoretical work on critical consciousness and what provokes an awakening of injustice, and when such an awakening prompts demands for change and when does it curdle into despair? This work comes from a 30 year theoretical commitment to understanding how people come to a critical understanding of unjust social arrangements, what percolates it, what allows it to bubble up. Members of the PAR Collective – we are probably up to 40 students and former students who have worked with us. And we formed the collective to really think through the issues of epistemology, theory, method and politics, operating within a DuBoisian double consciousness about being in the academy and engaging with justice work. So, I would say swimming, movements, theory, and students.

It is quite known today how the term critical has become an umbrella term for a variety of scholarly work across disciplines, as well as for groups of scholars and researchers who tend mostly to produce counter-hegemonic studies, sociocultural critique with specific emancipatory interests, and so on. Still, there seems to be a general condition whereby it remains relatively unclear as to how the intersection of the personal and the broader dynamics of the field play out and affect the architecture and geography of the critical. Take for example the role of personal experience in influencing the (re)shaping of academic practices. In more concrete terms, the translation of a quantitative statement, say with reference to Michelle Fine’s case – ‘30 years of experience in one of the leading universities in the United States’ (holding paradigm changes such as the linguistic turn and many emerging –posts in social theory constant) – into a
qualitative language – ‘how this experience would be different from 10 years in another university’ – seems to still pose a major difficulty when trying to map out how and to what extent theory and practice may derive from personal experience elements that would eventually help frame research practices and choices, and ultimately the nature of the critical undertaking itself.

And yet, a simple comparison of two chronological points A and B (beginning to work in the academy in 1970s as point A and today as point B) would exponentially locate any type of social analysis onto very shaky ground in regard to coherent and solid intellectual elucidation. However, one has to proceed cautiously when assessing the personal in the critical lest value orientations of researchers – in the form of normative claims, political commitments, etc. – develop into an unwanted slippage into the murky grounds of identity politics, as could be deduced from the quoted narratives above. And one has to be equally cautious when shying away from the personal under the influence of identity problematics, if one resists the generalization that infusing the personal into the scene of the critical helps, one way or the other, in underscoring the unstable nature of the borders and classifications that have been argued to form the domain of criticality, one should also be conscious how the contrarian subscription to an impersonal historicity, so to speak, may suggest the critical to have always been historically stable and intellectually collectivized. For the latter could be tantamount to saying that there is an unproblematic and uninterrupted linkage between the origins of the critical and its present manifestations. Such a presumption could be used as instrument for legitimating certain depictions of the critical that may still manifest particular affinities with some argued origins for the field. These works, which could be argued to be emblematic, could have a swaying effect on what gets to be considered as scholarship of authority that develops into a point of reference for other pieces of research in the field. At operation here is power, not only of referentiality, but
also due to the eventuality that works that exist outside of their radius of affiliation may very well be pushed to the periphery.\textsuperscript{30}

At this juncture, one of the questions that Bourdieu (1984) poses in his \textit{Homo Academicus} becomes essential to this discussion: do skilled and experienced players of a game follow or control the ball, control translating into more accuracy and success when a player skillfully hits the ball without even thinking about this very act? According to Bourdieu (1984), the relationship between power and experience in autonomous fields, such as the academy, is very intimate and many times invisible to the bare eye. It is because of this complexity that many scholars, especially those who have written on what constitutes the critical and how it manifests in/on research practices, have generally chosen to establish their work within the domain of historical analysis of the theoretical journey of the term alone, in most cases inside recognized disciplinarian borders.\textsuperscript{31} The weight that the disciplinary border has come to gain may have to do with how certain points of reference have developed as the field’s regime of referentiality, of which earlier referential works, dominant figures in the field, major professional organizations, tier-one journals, etc., may be argued to be possible expressions.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{itemize}
\item[30] It has been arguably the case that power relations in the academy determine what work is “more important” (Bourdieu, 1984; Ladwig, 1996).
\item[31] For example, in the field of Sociology of Education, it may be unimaginable to produce critical work without referring to Paul Willis’ (1977) \textit{Learning to Labor}, and Bowles and Gintis’ (1976) \textit{Schooling in Capitalist America} among many other works; yet other disciplines may simply relegate them to a footnote status.
\item[32] Having completed my undergraduate and master’s studies in the field in education in Turkey, I can say that the critical [\textit{elestirel}] is mostly associated, at least among educational scholars, with a stance that is in line with the Frankfurt School and Marxist approaches. In this sense, there is little confusion among Turkish scholars on what qualifies the critical in both theoretical and empirical studies that are conducted in Turkey. Transferring my somewhat naïve “universal” notion of the critical from that Turkish context unto the earlier stages of writing my dissertation proposal, I titled my dissertation as \textit{Legacies of Marxism in Educational Research}. Visibly, the aim of exploring the critical enterprise in educational research was founded on the assumption that Marxism, Frankfurttian Critical Theory and critical research were unified and interchangeable. Needless to say, this was radically changed the more I examined the rather different development and implications of the critical in the US.
\end{itemize}
Another risk for overemphasizing the personal in mapping out the critical scene may lie in what Carspecken calls an “old personal relativism,” which suggests that the same thing may be seen indefinitely differently if assessed by more than one person, and that this condition could become a tool for validating one’s stance in distinction from others:

I think that a true paradigm shift is required to understand critical theory. The shift has to move one from the now customary subject-object framework for understanding knowledge. Even poststructuralist and postmodern work usually assumes tacitly a subject-object relationship at the bottom. Foucault is a good example. Derrida certainly deconstructs this; but Derrida is often ill-used. In the qualitative research community, the “stance” theory of epistemology is stuck in the subject-object paradigm. The idea that two different people can look at the same “thing” and see something different is sometimes presented as if it were a “new” idea in some writings on qualitative research. It is one of the oldest ideas to be around, and is fundamental to positivism.

Carspecken rightly criticizes the over-simplistic fetishization of the personal as both the point of departure and the point of arrival to explaining variations in critical research. So how can one then understand the variations observable among critical researchers differently and more solidly? In what follows, I elaborate on this problematic and a model of evaluation and analysis.

_Similarity within Difference: Homologies in the Field_
Bourdieu’s notion of “homologic differences,” which he derives from Panofsky, is significant for this attempt to understand the issue raised above differently and more roundedly. He deploys this to establish links among various fields, and fields within fields, like microcosms. “Similarity within a difference is what Bourdieu means when he describes fields as homologous (Benson & Neveu, 2005, p.4).” According to him, “[t]he more technologically complex and socially differentiated the society, the more fields—‘relatively autonomous social microcosms’—there will be. The boundaries of fields are imprecise and shifting, determinable only by empirical research, although they include various institutionally constituted points of entry (Jenkins, 1992, p.53).”

The term homology, actually, has its origins in evolutionary biology. According to Princeton University’s Webword Net Dictionary, homologous in biology means “having the same evolutionary origin but not necessarily the same function (e.g. the wing of a bat and the arm of a man are homologous)” (Online source: http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu). The concept of homology shifted with its appropriation into the social sciences—instead of designating commonality through shared functional, evolutionary origins (as in anthropology and sociology), homology in the social sciences now indexes conditions of proximity by relying instead on resonances. This is relevant because both functionality and origination have come to acquire attachments synonymous with static and closed constancy, conditions that the critical, to one degree or another, tries to destabilize. Resonances, then, are indices of this Bourdieuian “homologic difference,” which are generated in ways not dissimilar from how field relations, again according to Bourdieu, are generated, i.e., flexible, varied, and far from mechanical: “[The] field is not an aggregate of isolated elements; it is a configuration or network of relationships. The elements in the field are not only related to each other in determinate ways, each also has a
specific weight or authority, so that the field is a distribution of power as well (Ringer, 2000, p.4). In other words, Bourdieuan homologous differences and field relations can be said to emerge from the same generative principles.

Figure 3 Homologic Differences

I will explain the homologic differences by the help of above diagram. As social class is no longer defined only through one’s connections to the division of labor in society, I added two practices which, according to Bourdieu (1984), produce class distinctions across social classes: music and dressing. I will use music taste as an example to clarify my point about homologic differences. In his ground breaking study Distinctions: A Social Critique of Judgment of Taste
Bourdieu claims that aesthetic dispositions are closely related to one’s social position as well. According to Bourdieu, these aesthetic dispositions are transferred from the social origins. The cultural capital one will have in his life is related to “total, early, imperceptible learning, performed within the family from the earliest days of life” (p.66), meaning that one starts his/her life with such aesthetic predispositions, e.g., acceptable forms of language, music, eating style etc., initially presented by family members. Subscriptions to the class specific aesthetic styles/tastes in this sense are cut by social, cultural, and economic capital horizontally as above diagram indicates. Bourdieu suggests that each fraction of the social classes develops their own aesthetic criteria, and thus, those criteria are also indicators of social class. In terms of music, while the upper class tend to listen to either A or B type of music, the working class listens to E or F type of music. Let’s say, A type music is opera whereas B type is classical music. Bourdieu says that the difference between listening to opera and classical music is homologous. This is because they both belong to the same class taste, that is, the upper class. Same holds true for E and F type of music as they both belong to working class taste. This is what Bourdieu calls “similarity within difference.” But, on the other hand, A and F type of music are not homologous as they belong different social classes. It should be noted that this is an example of “structural homology.” Homologic differences could be set through other resonances as well, such as function, origin, oppositional stance, etc., In order to see if the differences (or variations) are homologous, one has to explore generative principles of such variations, (in above diagram they are music and dressing). My main concern in this dissertation project is also with “generative principles of variation.”

Along similar lines, I argue that the different positions that educational researchers take in their undertaking the critical scholarship and intervention can also be considered homologous.
as I have stated above, “critica ls” operating in the field of critical qualitative research represent oppositional stances against certain social, cultural, institutional, racial, and other injustices. This, as a point of initiation, seems to be grounds that are almost consensually identified as common across the different critical positionalities. Disagreement, however, emerges once one moves from departure to realization of this oppositional stance. In other words, these positions subscribe to the same general aims in opposition to injustice, yet they differ over how to achieve the goal of making the world more just, i.e., differences are created through a series of homologous oppositions. This resonates with Bourdieu’s assertion that “merely to describe an intellectual position is necessarily to chart its relationships with other elements in its intellectual field. The views expressed in a given setting are so thoroughly interdefined that they can be adequately characterized only in their complementary or oppositional relationships to each other” (Ringer, 2000, p.4). I applied this approach to my data to try to find out whether there existed certain principles that could be said to generate differences in realizing the critical. The outcome indicated three possible major generative principles: Academic, Intellectual and Political. Instead of creating a classificatory schema that could possibly gear the analysis towards objectifying, my exploration of the modality followed a less fixed approach. This explains why I used generative principles instead of classifications or categories in organizing this discussion. The model that I present below lends a visual clarification to the argument that I am making here.
As the model above demonstrates, critical researchers relate their “roots” to various theoretical, personal, methodological, and other territories or features, which, for analytical purposes, I call by the name “background.” What constitutes the background of researchers does not always have to be intrinsic to the field or attributions acquired once there has been some form of formal entry into and belongingness to the field. It can well be exterior to the field itself, as in the example of a researcher with an academic training in psychology or English who makes an entry into educational research/teaching. These features of researchers’ backgrounds can clearly be used to establish certain knowledge claims in contradistinction from the positions of
others in the field. But on the other hand, they have to be translated into the logic of the field in order to gain meanings. This is because, “[e]ach agent is defined by her position in a field with its own themes and problems, at least so far as the field possesses autonomy (Bourdieu 1969, pp. 161–62). Accordingly, each field has an Eigengesetzlichkeit (cf. Bourdieu 1990b, p. 389; 1993, p. 72). This does not mean that external events or factors are not important for actors, but they do need to be translated to the internal logic of the field (see Swartz 1997, pp. 128, 215)—akin to the principle that the magnet may cause the field, but it is the field that has the effects on the iron filings” (Martin, 2003, p.23). However, backgrounds alone seem not that sufficient to understand variations across the contemporary portrayals of the critical because of two reasons. First, subscribing to similar theoretical, epistemological, or methodological constructs does not necessarily yield similar understandings of what the “critical” may invoke. Second, many of the scholars whom I interviewed did not distinguish their practices by referring to features from their own backgrounds. Rather, they relied on strategies such as negative dependency to consciously delimit their work from “other” criticals.

If background features can be described as initial moments for the proposed model, i.e., moments that exist temporally or spatially before the development of any major interaction within the field, once these moments establish their field presence more fully they become media through which different, non-static interactions take place en route to producing an instance of critical research. I call these moments-turned-media “generative principles for variation.” The transformation is not discreet, but rather manifests reciprocal interaction between features and generative principles. While providing guidance to the former, the latter also get affected by them to a great extent. For example, a scholar who tends to utilize Marxian framework for his/her research, also tends to identify and practice the critical with mostly the “functions” of the
term (I shall explain this later in this chapter). Similarly, a person who adopts a Habermasian model of the critical theory tends to be closer to the center of the political Left, and would not subscribe to the terminology of “revolution.” In other words, the issue of equality for the latter is seen to be an operation from within the system, while the former, by contrast, talks about more macro structural adjustments such as changing the entire system. Of course, distinctions are not always this stark, and it would be misleading to locate them onto a linear cause-effect approximation. I need to emphasize here that the potential interaction between “background” and “generative principles for variation,” quite interesting as it appears to me to be, was not explored fully since this seemed outside the scope of this project. Nevertheless, it is equally important to underline how these “generative principles of variation” populate a spatiality that is multidimensional, and how their boundaries are constantly in motion in correspondence to different entries from the background.

The third part of this model concerns power relations in the academy, as well as the social and cultural capital that the actors in the field hold. From a generation of variation in the second part, we now arrive at a different kind of interaction that is mostly extraneous to the researcher, i.e., the interaction with power and capital, means for legitimating the rendition and dynamics of positionalities within the field. “The agents in the field are in conflict with each other. They compete for the right to define or co-define what shall count as intellectually established and culturally legitimate. The participants in the field may be individuals; or they may be small groups, ‘schools’ or even academic disciplines” (Ringer, 2000, p.52). In other words, a certain criticality may become dominant by virtue of the weight of capital enjoyed by its respective agents/actors. Every particular field has a coherence based on a working consensus as to the nature of the game, and people take predictable sides due to the more general
structuring of social space. Yet this coherence is a dynamic one, for “every field is the site of a more or less overt struggle over the definition of the legitimate principles of the division of the field” (Bourdieu 1985b, p. 734). What is at stake in a chess, tennis, or sumo tournament is not simply which individual will be the winner, but what kind of chess, tennis, or sumo (and hence, what kinds of players) will dominate the field in the future (Martin, 2003, p.23).” But again, examining in full the implications of power and its interplay in this regard may be a topic for a separate dissertation on its own. The focus of this project, it is worth reminding, is on “generative principles of variation” in an effort to understand distinctions across critical researchers.

In what follows, I will elaborate on each principle and discuss how they each generate differences. First, I’ll begin with “Political.”

The Political in the Critical: Of the Left, Fragmented

As the preceding sections of this dissertation have tried to underline, the critical is a concept that engrains much fuzziness that sometimes makes the task of attempting a definition quite difficult. This is again because of the many shifts the domain of critical research has undergone, accompanied with a tendency towards fragmentation that upsets clearly defined dividing lines against the backdrop of the process of doing research that frequently loosely ties its outcome to one notion or another of transformation.
A similar difficulty at mapping arises when considering the political dimension of the critical enterprise. The question of this dimension, its constitution and implications, might misleadingly appear to be a simple one – an engagement that sees in doing critical research, and for that matter any kind of research, as not that isolated from the influences of politics inside and outside the university setting, the way it is oftentimes projected, in a rather folkloric manner one could add, that “everything is political.” The political components of the critical, similar to the broader nature of the critical enterprise itself, lack the straightforwardness in definition. Politics, philosophy, and political science have proposed over and over complex mechanisms by which they unfold in a multiplicity of ways that defy a linear topography—they are both micro and macro, cause and effect, process and outcome, action and reaction, temporality and spatiality, local and global, etc. Consequently, a single political issue such as race would have very dissimilar implications once one shifts focus from one locality to another. Thus, the historical relationship between African Americans and Whites in the United States sets/poses major differences from race relationships in Britain for instance. Similarly, if the class problematic in Britain is the major intellectual knot for British scholars, class in the United States may rank higher on the hierarchy of dominant sociopolitical questions, such as race, gender and ethnicity.

Another feature of the challenge that the political in the critical poses has to do with mapping it against the two epistemological nodes that have historically given meaning to the practice of politics, in particular within the context of the nation-state, and consequently at the level of the supra-national. These are, of course, the polar categories of Political Left and Political Right. What is Left and what is Right may shift considerably from one context to
another depending on a multiplicity of factors. Thus, a liberal may in one political context qualify as leftist, while the same person, in a different political locality, may be seen more like a centrist or even right-leaning. This is not simply a matter of semantics, as some would probably like to project; rather, it is the particular nature of the polarization between Left and Right within a specific context that sets the criteria of identification. At the same time, variation as such is not solely the case across the nodal borderline; on the contrary, internal differentiation within political Left and political Right is more the norm than the exception. This rather challenging topography of the political needs to be incorporated within any serious assessment of what constitutes the critical intervention in the form of knowledge production. In this sense, the question is no longer simply to agree on whether or not the critical research can be identified as explicitly political, but is rather an examination of the specific political coloring that this research establishes its premises upon, i.e., the politics of the Left or the politics of the Right.

According to Sage Encyclopedia of Politics, “In countries operating under democratic constitutions, like the United States, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and various other republics and constitutional monarchies, the terms left and right were used to describe parties and politics of the center that addressed domestic issues, rather than the role of international communism. That is, leftism became associated with liberals who endorsed a wide variety of programs designed to mitigate the harsh effects of capitalism, such as programs of social welfare, unemployment compensation, a progressive income tax (that is, one that taxed higher incomes at a higher proportion than lower incomes), provision of health services to the poor, and more equal educational opportunities. Those who were conservative, who believed that the economic status quo should not be tampered with, and that free market conditions should be allowed to operate without too much government interference, were generally regarded as rightists. Often, those on the right believed that while government should allow the free enterprise system to operate without interference, they were quick to demand that government use its authority to impose and enforce a moral code on the general population. From the point of view of those who owned property, of course, maintenance of law and order and protection of property were the major and proper role of government. While such distinctions appear simple enough to apply to the politics and movements of many nations around the world, they often tend to oversimplify the complexities of politics. Individual political leaders and political movements often defied easy categorization. For example, in the United States, in Eastern Europe, and in Latin America, “populist” leaders arose in the late 19th and through the early and mid-20th centuries. While populism in each context and in each era was somewhat different, it usually represented an appeal for social reform and egalitarianism which seemed radical and leftist, but it also often incorporated a reactionary thrust that was opposed to modernization and was often quite nationalistic and ethnically exclusive, ideas usually associated with the right. Often a leader with a populist agenda was accused by some of his enemies of being a right-wing reactionary, and by other enemies as being a left-wing radical. And in some cases, both charges made perfect sense (p.viii)”. 
It is almost unanimous that critical research is associated as more leftist than rightist. It is almost a given to think of the Left when conducting and examining research that has been produced under the banner of the critical. While it is clearly beyond the scope of this dissertation project to deal at length with the lineage of each the Left and the Right, for purposes of framing the discussion one could still essentialize the Left as tendency towards progressive politics, challenging the status quo or commitment to social equality. This could inform a similar broad, contrarian identification of the Right. Weis, for example, had this to say about the contrast between the two.

Mustafa- Do you think that the critical is inherently Left?

Weis- I think it is inherently Left because the Right can use power, and they can even consciously use power, very consciously use power. But they are not analyzing that power, they don’t focus on the ways in which this happens. It is the critical perspective that enables and encourages us, broadly defined, to focus on the way in which that works. So I don’t think a neo-liberal perspective is a critical perspective.

But one should also acknowledge, outside the binary opposition, that the contemporary Left and Right are not mutually exclusive in every aspect due to the variations in complex Leftist and Rightist intellectual systems which have been developed as responses to social, cultural and political challenges. In this sense, and for the sake plausibility, I will refrain from further discussing what Left and Right in the United States are or are not. My concern with the Left is

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34 In fact, the question as to whether political Right could produce a critical research (in a broader and loose sense) has never been posed. I think that answers to this question would be overwhelmingly no. However, the borders of left and right are so porous, particularly in the academy, that even positivism and/or researches conducted with positivistic tendencies might be regarded as “right wing”.

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limited to how it relates to the construction of the “critical,” since political outlooks and values of leftist leanings, more often than not, seem to underwrite research that is critical in nature. This relational relevancy between the Left and the critical, on the plane of politics, is reinforced through what these two share with reference to how they have both been historically associated with elements of dissidence and opposition. It would be useful here to refer to Bourdieu (1998) quoting Kant on the subject:

The class of the higher faculties (in a manner of speaking the right wing of the parliament of knowledge) defends the statutes of the government; however, in a free constitution, as any which respects the truth must be, there must also exist an opposition audience (the left), for without the severe scrutiny and objections of the latter, the government would not be sufficiently informed of what can be helpful or harmful to it (Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, quoted in Bourdieu, 1988, p.37)

So if it is plausible to essentialize Left and Right in the binary manner mentioned above, it would be a disservice to this project to attempt a similar trajectory in relation to mapping out the dynamics of the critical enterprise as influenced by the politics of the Left. This is the case because, as I stated above, critical research is almost always identified as leftist, but also because this relational particularity is essential to understanding the many shifts and fragments that the critical scene could be said to have developed into. In other words, conceptually at least, the variation within the Left are not in disconnect from the proliferation of the critical into modes and formations that bear little resemblance to an assumed unitary (political) origination.

It could well be the case that it is easier to define what a rightist individual or collective is by referencing the usually conservative attitude towards maintaining a certain political, cultural
or social status quo. It is more challenging and less consensual to condense a leftist into a similar attributive singularity. For instance, many people would not accept the idea that talking about the oppressed, the disadvantaged and the like automatically qualifies one as a “Leftist.” Another example can be observed in how Marxism, as a dominant leftist ideology, lacks a universally definite locational fixing along what could be described as the continuum that the political Left represents today. Many may locate Marxist parties/groups at the extreme end of the Left, whether described as revolutionary, radical or else. This is not the sole attribution that Marxism triggers: several Marxian frameworks have been academized and appropriated for uses that have little in common with Marxism as oppositional praxis of revolutionary transformative potentials. At hand, then, is a situation where different perspectives, in this case leftist, conflict and compete for the same stake, as Bourdieu would have argued. Foley reflects at length on the academic appropriation of Marxism, and how the latter came to gain meanings and usages that are radically different:

Mustafa- Where does Marxism and the Left stand in contemporary critical research?

Foley- I think that that's the root of the whole thing and I think that comes in the 1970s. What was influencing a lot of people who were calling themselves critical was Marxism, and a little bit of Feminism. And then as the 70s moves on, it is Marxism, Feminism, Critical Race theory. Mouffe and Laclau’s book begins to advocate strongly for post-Marxism, a kind of multi-dominance theory which de-emphasizes social class a little bit. Stuart Hall and other people in England were saying the same things. They were not trying to get rid of class but they were trying to take, say, Gramsci’s version of Marxism as the most up-to-date, most democratic and the most acceptable one. Because
it doesn't privilege class theory the way Althusser and the French did it. And so what you got there is a kind of confluence of ideas between the British Critical Cultural Studies and of course EP Thompson and people like that. And so there were debates in the 70s between Thompson and Althusser. And you got kind of a fundamentalist position in Althusser, and you got this revisionist position in EP Thompson. And then Stuart Hall picks up on that and it's all about using Gramsci and a more multi-dominance de-emphasis of class and a very traditional definition of social class. So, then, that all started to be called post-Marxism after Laclau and Mouffe.

…Although classical Marx was not very interested in patriarchy or even the question of race and so on, modern Marxism is sort of incorporated in, whatever you want to call it … parallel systems or articulations. So, some versions of Marxism, probably the Gramsci’s version, are underlying all of the contemporary thinking about how study should be. It's another kind of Marxism, it is some kind of either cultural Marxism or Post-Marxism or something which incorporates patriarchal notions of gender and notions of race more deeply into the idea of social formation and how you study all these manners. So, it is some kind of a notion of multiple systems of dominance and also the multiple bases for red revolt or politics, reform or whatever. Now what sort of drops out of that is the idea of the proletariat as the vanguard of history and that only through revolution things are going to happen. So, it is more of this “war of positions”. May be classical Marxists are too political like Lenin and Trotsky, etc., and would not recognize this contemporary version of Marxism. They would say “that’s not really Marxism anymore, because it does not lead to overthrowing the state and the revolution and all that.” But I think contemporary academic Marxists … most of them have now
resigned themselves to the kind of politics of war of positions. So, the idea of building some kind of movement, whether as rainbow politics or whatever it is, is probably their idea of what's left of politics in the present era. So, I think you can still say that there is still a Marxist strain in what's called critical ethnography. It is definitely a different kind of Marxism than classic Marxism, though.

That Marxism in the Academy has shifted as such highlights how it has become possible, for instance, to utilize this explicitly leftist ideology, as many would argue, for interventions as different in nature as identity politics is, again as many would also argue. Symptomatic of this indeterminacy is the predictable reaction one encounters when investigating Marxism and the Academy: which Marxism?, and by extension, which Left? Eventually, Marxism is fragmented into several Marxisms, and the Left is collapsed into several, and sometimes competing, Lefts. In this respect, it is relevant how Cornbleth responded to the question whether contemporary critical research was inherently leftist or Marxist:

It depends on which version of Left or Marxism we are talking about. In the most general sense, whether we are talking about being able to exert power one way or another or about the distribution of benefits, economics otherwise … If we think Marxism with very, very loose terms, probably, yes. But and I would really say, whose Marxism?

I argue that where one locates herself or himself within the leftist political spectrum predicts their positionality vis-à-vis other “criticals.” In other words, it is the problematic of
“Left” vs. “Left” that politically qualifies the general coordinates of contemporary critics on the academic plane. This positioning is inseparable from what the Left usually critiques, which also defines where one stands on the continuum of the political Left, i.e., political Right. Conservatism, Neo-liberalism, and mainstream (to some extent). Olneck had this to share with regards to determining on the basis of what one is not, or what one critiques:

Mustafa-How do you draw the line between the mainstream and the radical?
Olneck- It is what the radicals call mainstream. I think historically an explicit Marxist, Marxian framework … at least underlies some of what’s clearly critical. And much of mainstream sociology is not Marxist at all. On the other hand, I think it’s influenced by Marx, it’s influenced by Durkheim, and it’s influenced by everybody who came since. But it has a more functionalist orientation. But it still is every bit interested in equality of opportunity. I think all I’m saying is that both political liberals and academic liberals are no less interested in social justice than radicals are. I don’t think radicals have a monopoly on any commitment to or interest in social justice. (At least some conservative scholars are not uninterested in what I would call social justice, by that I mean a world of less exploitation and less inequality.) They just happen to believe in Marx in a way I don’t.

Olneck explains here how shifting also comes to influence related notions such as social justice and equality. By dint of the same academization that I mention above, these questions, fundamental to the domain of the critical, become laden with elements that could further

35 For example, the metaphor that is used occasionally is to call mainstream Left with small “l”. In this sense, one can formulate this discussion as small “l” vs. capital “L”.

36 As there seems to be an easier over the nature of the constitution of the Political Right.
neutralize any explicit political commitment for the sake of staying within the plane of academic study and value orientations. This, he argues, results in positional movements along the continuum, towards the center or even political Right in this case:

(Mustafa-When I read your articles, I saw some implications of social justice and equality…)

Olneck- Yes, absolutely. That’s what motivates me in many respects. I’m trying to draw some distinctions in education when we hear the word “critical educators” or “critical scholars.” It tends to mean something more specific than simply being committed to social justice. A lot of the people in mainstream sociology … like if you look at Lois Weis and Michael Apple’s 1983 book … I don’t remember if they co-authored it or it came with just Michael’s introduction … He was very critical of the kind of quantitative work that I had been doing up to that time. I think that people doing that work are every bit as committed to social justice as he is. So I think that mainstream sociology of education and mainstream sociology grew out of the commitment to social justice. It also has a history in social engineering.

But despite what he proposes as one mechanism for drawing the line between “radicals” and the “mainstream,” Olneck had this to say about his political outlook may impact how his positionality is perceived by others in the field:

I don’t have a natural community that I am part of. I am really kind of on the outside.

So for example my writing about multicultural education … I am not part of the multicultural field. I do not belong at the National Association of Multicultural Education. There are people within that field like Gloria Ladson Billing and James
Banks who really like my work. There are people in the field who seem to dislike it like Carl Grant who is here, Christine Sleeter who has used me along with Cameron McCarthy. There are examples of people on the left who “attack multicultural education”. I don’t think that I am attacking it, Gloria and Jim don’t think I am attacking it; but I am from the outside.

This condition of alienation from others within the field was also highlighted by McLaren, who one could describe as populating the far left end of the continuum of the Left. He addresses how being at the edge of the leftist spectrum does not make one’s intellectual life any easier, contrary to expectation sometimes. Paradoxically, he suggests that the pre-condition to be taken seriously in the US academy is to be in line with mainstream stand points on issues that are usually defined as controversial. Lacking such synchrony with what is usually accepted as the norm pushes one to the periphery of the academic scene, since mainstream becomes a “basis for credibility” that qualifies prestigious inclusion and its lack thereof:

Mustafa- Where do you locate yourself in educational conversations in the academy?
McLaren– I am so far to the left that it is difficult for me to function as a public intellectual here. Somebody like myself who is a Marxist Humanist, who is struggling for a socialist alternative to capitalism … there is no basis for me having a credibility here. That alone would sink you from being taken seriously. That is basically how the United States and media work. There are certain positions you cannot simply take up. The conditions of possibility that give you voice in the debate would not just be there. Obviously, in terms of schooling, I did a piece with my friend Juha Suoranta from Finland called Socialist Pedagogy. Very much infused with liberation theology, very
much infused not only with red issues, but with green issues as well. We were trying to
take very seriously issues around ecosystems, the environment, and animal rights. My
work is starting to address that, not as much as it should be, but it is beginning to
address those issues nonetheless.

Both narrations suggest that one of the factors for determining one’s location unto the
geography of critical in the US academy is, then, where one positions along the political
spectrum (of the Left). The coordinates of positions are assigned by positions that others occupy.
On the other hand, both Olneck and McLaren approximate, say, counter/conflictual positions
similar to hegemonic centers that operate as negative magnetic fields. And they deploy the tool
of deligitimatization of normative grounds or credibility. However, this is not a novelty for the
Left. Lenin, for example, was critical of the attempts to replicate the Bolshevik Revolution in
Russia elsewhere in Europe in the absence of the necessary conditions that could make such an
action possible relevant to the specific conditions in those European contexts. He also critiques
the refusal of some parties to compromise with the existing capitalist system. The name he gives
to these phenomena is Left Communism – see Lenin (1999) “Left-Wing” Communism, an
Infantile Disorder. On his part, Trotsky criticized the massive collectivization that took place in
the USSR under Stalin as too far left. Many communists may also criticize the actions of
Anarchists, for instance, as too extreme and mostly spontaneous.

Many of the scholars I interviewed drew particular characterological types that subscribe
to various critical agendas. The Left classified as “radical” or “revolutionary” had attracted more
criticism by the scholars than other segments of the Left. This, of course, might be related to
selection of my participants. In this sense, names gained more significance than the types of
scholarships produced or philosophical and epistemological foundations utilized. On the other hand, that the political spectrum that constitutes the Left is stretched from revolutionary to mainstream is one of the primary tension points, even with reference to academic exchanges (e.g., book reviews, forum discussions, etc.), which sometimes take an *ad hominem* character. In other words, the conversation does not focus on what Left or Right is, but seems to have been shaped around the problematic of how a leftist (and critical) scholar should understand both the social and the political, as well as their ramifications. Moreover, “what not to do” with/through critique, especially if the target is the work of other critical researchers, appears to create further divergence among scholars (see the example that Olneck provides above). On a similar note, Dressman points out how it is *who* uses the term critical that qualifies what critical means rather than *what* the term actually refers to:

I have a lot of problems with the term in the way that it is used, particularly because people who always use it are never self-critical. And that notion of criticality also frankly presumes that the people who are making the critique have a kind of moral high grounds from which they are judging others without being critical of themselves. So, if you mean by *critical* analytical, then I do not have any problem with that. I do have a problem with people who would assume that they are taking a stand for social justice, and other people are not; they have some sort of truth but other people do not. I’ll tell you a story. Years ago, I worked in another university with a colleague who once said to us in a meeting: “Now, that we are post-modern, we have the truth.” He would also call himself a Freirean critical theorist. That is what I see a lot of people who would call themselves critical. They are very eager to interrogate other people’s assumptions but not their own. And, let me say this, they set up a kind of dichotomy, a kind of binary
between themselves and the rest of the world, which is obviously, completely a part of the critique that people like most critical figures engage in. It is a primary move for anybody who would want to deconstruct or engage in post-structural critique. They just set up a binary but they never deconstruct their own binaries. That’s what I think about the term critical.

The above shows how different scholars understand their ideological attachments to the politics of the Left differently. Differentiation also colors the demands and practices that their ventures within the domain of the critical may require. In other words, while being on the “far Left”\textsuperscript{37} of political spectrum demands a “revolutionary stance” towards, say, social justice and equality problems, falling within other segments of the same continuum may promote taking relatively more reformist positions. Or let us inverse this claim. While a revolutionary stance tilts one’s position on the scale to the “far Left,” a reformist stance, by contrast, may induce different coordinates relatively closer to the center. Hence, the manner in which the term \textit{critical} resonates for “revolutionary” leftists is naturally very different from how it may sound for liberal leftists. McLaren articulates this condition as follows:

My work is focused on bringing about a socialist alternative to capitalism. For me, research has to become part of that project, which is to create a post-capitalist alternative. So, I am looking at contributing to that project in all of the research that I do. That is the focus. For me, critical education for socialist alternative is the key. I am very explicit about that in my work. Certainly there are many critical scholars who talk

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} There is not, of course, one type of far Left, mainstream, etc. And all these may blend into theoretical positions such as structuralists, post-Marxists etc. Therefore, I should mention that far Left as I use it here refers to “struggling for a socialist alternative”.}
about social transformation or they talk about creating radical democracy or they talk about creating spaces of democratic engagement … talk about creating participatory democracy, direct democracy. But they won't specify what the social relations of production are supposed to look like in those spaces. They do not use the word socialism; they use ambiguous terms. They use terms that really seem to me to be basically left-liberal; and that can be problematic. Yes, democracy is important, radical democracy, but how will that fight against necessity articulate? So, I prefer to name what that alternative is. And so, naming that alternative as socialism, you immediately forge a link with traditions of socialist struggle. I would like to think about myself as non-sectarian; but I think the tradition I am mostly aligned with is a Marxist-Humanist group that came out of Chicago. It is a very Hegelian Marxism that focuses on the negation of negation … a concept of absolute negativity is the key term. So, it is an operative term because most revolutions failed in the past simply by not moving to the second negation. And so, there is a very sophisticated philosophical discussion of what we mean by negation. Negation of negation is not something that Hegel discovered. It was actually discovered in 15th century Persia by a philosopher, long before Hegel did. But generally speaking, that is how I pitch my work. So, for me, these are all operative terms for understanding the social totality, primarily the notion of absolute negativity or self referential negation as the seedbed of the wholly new. Those are operative terms for me and in my work within the critical tradition.

Despite the many fragments that the Left has descended into, we seem, according to McLaren’s reading, to reclaim a sense of the binary that many believed to have been unsettled. This binary is one that relates to the character of the intervention mobilized to realize the goal of
transforming the social conditions that the critical seeks to redress. And here we are talking about wanting to transform by working within the established order of “bourgeois normalcy,” on the one hand, versus aiming to accomplish such an end through more radical means, i.e., by replacing the established order altogether with an alternative formation.

Scheurich says:

Scheurich-[Leadership for Equity and Excellence] is written in a language that connects to their [teachers’] world that they can use. Now have they moved from step one to revolution? Absolutely not, but have they moved from step one to two, or three, or four? Yes. I’m very much for what steps can I get today and tomorrow, and next month, not some holy idea of revolution. If we were back in the 60s … I was a young man in the 60s … that was a different environment. Mass movements were possible then. Right now, I don’t see that they are possible.

Mustafa- Where do you think politics stand in these research practices? Politics, actual politics?

Scheurich- I want a revolution too. I want to a good one that doesn’t turn bad, which many have. But I think that they are … on the one hand, I would say they’re [self-proclaimed critical scholars] doing valuable work, which I read, and it affects me and it’s useful to me. On the other hand, they’re not on the ground. And I think that’s where I think change happens. Again I have to go back to Freire, Freire got on the ground with people and that’s the way you write. He writes about what it’s like, how you work. Now, are there elitist things in Freire? I think there are. But there’s a lot of good stuff
there in terms of actually participating with people, in their own language, in their own terms, and their own way of thinking.

In summing up, one could propose that the notion of social justice, and consequently inquiries such as *Who is after social justice?*, *Whose version is more viable or achievable?*, *How should it be constructed?*, *What would be an appropriate political atmosphere for a just society?*, *Who is going to establish it?*, blends into the discussion of the impact that the Left exercises on the critical research enterprise. And again, these questions are closely related to the dichotomy that I mention above regarding working within the established system or changing it totally. Nevertheless, one must not forget that the critical alone and in isolation cannot qualify as a political project per se. To become one, it necessarily requires a political (leftist) strategy that could, more or less, anchors its actions and implications more on the “ground” of the existing social totality with all its contradictions and imbalances.

In the next section, in connection to the points raised above, I explore another generative principle for variation across critical researchers at the level of *Academic resonances*.

**Mechanisms and Functions of the Critical**

In this node, I will address one of the reasons why the critical seems to display certain definitional complexities and differences among critical researchers in the field of educational research. Such a condition, I am arguing, has to do with the discreteness of two dimensions of
the critical, its functions and mechanisms, rather than their conflating into a monolithic constitution of the term critical on the basis of unilateral, unilinear attributions. In terms of defining the two, one could propose that functions of the critical concern what the critical seeks to accomplish and/or to what it serves; on the other hand, its mechanisms are apparatuses employed to realize the purposes the critical attempts to accomplish. Semantically speaking, leaving things at this level would be a simplification, even with explaining, as I do below, the syntaxes of the two and how they unfold with variation among my participant scholars. And defining the two is here realized by establishing parallels with the specifics of another similarly overused and authoritative concept as the critical has been – democracy. Thus, a parallel understanding is befitting of the context of what I discuss here, given that a reasonable degree of agreement could be observed as to how both concepts, i.e., democracy and the critical, more or less manifest an “excess of meaning” (Warren, 2006).

Although there are various implementations and understandings of democracy, it would not be erroneous to suggest that one of the “universal” functions of the concept is to sanction and protect the rights and the liberties of every individual under a form of government that claims to have been established and to be operating as democratic. At the level of applicability, democracy, as a concept with universal attributions, cannot come into implementation unless enabled through tools of a more particularized nature that we call “mechanisms” – national constitutions, relevant bylaws, electoral regulations and other balances and checks within the complex bureaucratic structures of a given government. Hence the two, i.e., functions and mechanisms of democracy need not converge into one mold that one may call the process of democracy. On the contrary, the ideology that qualifies what democracy may mean (e.g., liberal, Christian, Social-democratic) has considerable impact on the functions of democracy, and by a
comparable measure, these functions may not come into proper or aspired realization even when the mechanisms have been implemented *pro forma*. An example of this disparity may be seen in Liberal or Social democracies, where the law, as abstract, universal and *a priori*, performs a role that can be said to be similar to the function of public education in such societies – “great equalizers,” even when, as a matter of implementation, both may work against equality, given how they could qualify and maintain systems of uneven distribution of justice. When blurred into one, certain conceived functions of democracy may very well overshadow mechanisms that are conducive to malpractice that undermines democracy in implementation. Similarly, either one or the other may determine what democracy is. In other words, the concept is sometimes defined by its mechanisms, i.e., free elections as vehicle towards the democratic end and in other cases, it may be determined by its functions/purposes, i.e., every member of the public has the right to run for office. Thus, while for one group of people, having a right to vote to elect their representative in the government is a primary sign of democracy, for others, the socio-political conditions that would allow anyone to become a representative are what give democracy its shape – this is not to mention how disagreement is the norm when it comes to debating what “more” and “better” democracy may actually mean. My point here is that democracy may sometimes derive its meanings not from its functions but through its mechanisms, or vice versa. One has also to highlight how a similar lack of consensus is observable when it comes to defining, not only democracy as a concept, but also its functions and mechanisms. In other words, both the forms of democracy and the various constellations of their functions and mechanisms are subject to a process of meaning attribution with correlations to the entity or ideology that sets the definitional tone. Warren (2006) explains this meaning attribution:
As with all things we care about, democracy suffers from an excess of meaning, written into the concept by a long history of usage, and further complicated today by its identification with so many good things. And like all political concepts, the concept of democracy is stretched even further by opportunistic usages. Nonetheless, at a high level of abstraction, concepts of democracy tend to work with two sets of ideas: Equal Moral Worth of Individuals; and Boundaries of Inclusion/Exclusion: Defining ‘‘The People’’ (p.384).

By parallel, if one is to look at the critical through similar lenses in order to explore variations manifested across the field’s criticals at “a high level of abstraction,” one can compare, say, Adorno to Habermas or Kant. Likewise, one can talk about various versions of the critical, both in methodological and epistemological senses, through approximating and/or interpreting the theoretical or philosophical contributions of the scholars involved. However, the broad variety of the usages of the critical in the field of educational research presents us with a major obstacle if one were to limit their understanding to philosophical or epistemological comparisons/classifications alone. This is because I think that the definitions of the concept critical also suffers\textsuperscript{38} from a similar excess of connotations in that it derives meanings not only from theory and epistemology, but also from attributions to its functions and mechanisms as they have come to unfold throughout its “long history” of serving this purpose of the other. Thus, I argue that one way to explore the depictions of the critical operating in the field is to look at concept’s functions and mechanisms, and to understand how these are legitimated within the broader framework of the critical enterprise in the Academy.

\textsuperscript{38} Not in negative or derogatory sense, but in terms of definitional complexities.
By examining McLaren’s narration, for example, two major functions of the critical are proposed: 1) to build a social struggle towards a more just society in which there is no racism; and, 2) to transform (override) the racist conditions that are deeply embedded into various social processes. In relation to these 2 specific functions, McLaren underlines the mechanism of exposing how power relations reproduce racism in society. However, exposing such workings of power may not necessarily guarantee a unified, consensual understanding of the function this exposure aims to serve, i.e., the realization of a society where racism has been eliminated. This is because, similar to the example of democracy above, there are many attachments to the functions of the critical as they produce/get produced by various understandings, sociopolitical commitments, and power relations in the field within which these attachments themselves circulate (i.e., revolution vs. institutional reform vs. policy change). Counter to this approach that underlines the multiple in the critical/the democratic, other approaches exist where a more definite stand/understanding is the norm: some forms of the critical/democratic may be dismissed as “bad” versions, forms that are “not critical/democratic,” because of their argued departure and distancing from an “original,” more “authentic” construction of a specific ideological coloring, etc. Given such an opposition, one may better understand McLaren’s criticism of the mushrooming varieties as “democracy of empty forms.” An oppositional anchoring as such is a legitimate and useful way in delineating where one stands in relation to the scholarship of the critical in a political way. However, the binary would have implications, both epistemological and practical, as to how the critical has undergone and is undergoing several shifts that may require some going beyond the binary.

Therefore, although every critical scholar is, one way or the other, against racism (and almost all the scholars I have interviewed produce work against racism), how to struggle against
racism becomes a territory of divergence concerning what factors and forces produce and sustain racism. The latter thus comes to overshadow the universal acknowledgement that racism exists in society, i.e., function vis-à-vis mechanism. That is why there is no discussion among critical scholars as to whether or not racism exists in the United States.\(^{39}\) This duality is not reducible to only a matter of differing intellectual approaches to the issue of racism, given that this is also an objective social phenomenon experienced at an everyday, material level. Such problematic creates variations regarding both functions and mechanisms of the critical. At the same time, it is also possible to observe a divergence of a different character, as when the same mechanisms are deployed, yet the functions they give realization to may very well be dissimilar. This is indicative of the affinity that exists between the two, but is more importantly telling of how meaning of the critical overall is attained in relation to functions and mechanisms and how these two are constructed.

Neglecting the above distinction may lead us to adopting totalitarian portrayals of the critical. For example, Walzer (2002) asks the question “[w]hen Socrates questioned his fellow citizens about their understanding of the good, wasn’t he engaged in what we call today ‘ideological critique’?” (p.4) He claims that one of the myths of the critical enterprise is its being a recent phenomenon and the product of “enlightenment and romanticism (p.4).”\(^{40}\) He

\(^{39}\) This also makes differences homologous in a Bourdieuan sense.

\(^{40}\) Marcus & Fischer (1999), however, assert that “the notion of critique” (as opposed to mere criticism) “derives from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment effort to clarify concepts, to evaluate the relation between their logical grounds and their degree of validity (p.xvi).” For them, cultural critique, as it was used in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, refers to “methods of inquiry directed at evaluating cultural and social practices,” while highlighting the genealogy of predecessors who have informed the practice of the critical, such as the Frankfurt School in Germany, surrealism and its allies in anthropology in France, and documentary realism in America.
continues to question the claims of contemporary criticalism in regards to its social character as opposed to earlier critics’ focus on individualistic and moral aspects of life:

…that all previous critics focused their attention on individual conduct or belief; they did not set themselves in opposition to the social order itself. They were social critics only insofar as society is directly constituted by the actions and ideas of its members without the mediation of ideologies, practices, and institutional arrangements. But this claim involves a misreading of past and present alike. For the past, consider Hosea’s angry line, ‘They have set up kings but not by me.’ Or Socrates’ claim at his trial that ‘no man on earth who conscientiously opposes either you [the Athenians] or any other organized democracy… can possibly escape with his life.’ Hosea apparently believed that there was something wrong with monarchy itself, not merely with this or that group of citizens. It is true, however, that throughout the Middle Ages and into early modern times, criticism was concerned almost exclusively with individual moral character and intellectual commitment: wicked actions and false doctrines (p.5).

According to Walzer, what brings two modes of criticism unto the same platform are their roots in “opposition/antagonism” against certain unacceptable conditions. Therefore, in both cases (past and present), criticisms have remained less than dissimilar, since they both target similar ends. While I agree with his assertion that they both have similar stances, I would disagree in their being depicted as one and the same: I argue that they are homologous. Following this reasoning, one would have to either include Foucault, Habermas, Adorno and even Marx as part of the same critical devise as elements constitutive of the same political project, or one would have to acknowledge that they have diverse approaches but that they
essentially not that different from each other. However, I think that one has to pursue a different
logic to better capture the ins and outs of the contemporary critical. I suggest that instead of
looking at what brings different modes of the critical together, one has to depart from their
differences in order to explore the underlying generating principles that produce variation among
them. In this sense, constructing similarity within difference is a much more helpful strategy in
going beyond generic claims towards the relationship across criticals performing in the field of
educational research. My distinction across functions and mechanisms provides an opportunity to
look at, for example, Foucault’s attempts to destabilize power through exploring discursive
constructions of the historical subject, vis-à-vis Marx’s approach that places the same subject
within the terrain of historical materialism.

My interview data indicate that, in line with what I argue here, one of the ways that
scholars define or distinguish the critical is to refer to its functions and mechanisms. Subscribing
to similar mechanisms but not to the same functions, or vice versa, is what generates difference
among scholars in terms of attempting a mapping of the critical today.

McLaren uses a very similar terminology when he discusses the parallel-ships between
democracy and the critical, despite the fact that does not appear to make any distinctions between
functions and mechanisms:

The term critical does not mean much. It is a term that casts a wide net. And it can refer
to liberal educators, progressive educators, small “l” liberal educators, left liberal
educators … Usually, I think that’s what it is referring to. The term critical attached to
education does not mean much. It does not mean, for instance, you critique neo-liberal
capitalism. It probably means that you are against racism; and you are for multi-
culturalism; it probably means that you are for equalizing already existing resources under capitalism. You want to bring more resources to aggrieved urban communities or rural communities. It does not mean changing the system; it doesn't mean overthrowing capital; it doesn't mean fighting against neoliberal capitalism. It simply means making the situation a little bit more tolerant. And if that is the function of the term critical, then the term can masquerade a reactionary politics. The term can actually function as an alibi for neo-liberal capitalism, it can be functionally advantageous for capitalism, if that is all that the term critical means. It is almost like the term democracy: who wants democracy if democracy is defined by the Bush administration? If that is what democracy means, then we are in a serious trouble. And that is what the term critical has become.

As I mentioned in the previous segment, one of the determiners of the functions of the critical is the political choices as to whether a scholar works within or outside the existing system. As with democracy, McLaren then argues that if one defines the functions of the critical within the logic of existing system, the practice constitute its own “naïve” mechanisms that are aligned with the less than progressive purpose it seeks to accomplish, i.e., being merely against racism, or being merely for multi-culturalism. For him, these mechanisms serve the function (and he did use the term “function” in the interview) of “making the situation a little bit more tolerant.” By contrast, what qualifies a true critical engagement for McLaren is attempting transformation at the macro level—the function of the critical is to transcend the confines of the present system by trying to change and/or replace it entirely:
Now, in my own work, I have adopted the term used by Paula Allman in England and it is called “revolutionary critical pedagogy”. That is the term of my choice. I use that term to distinguish my work from more domesticated versions of critical pedagogy that constitute no little more than what I call a “democracy of empty forms.” Students coming together in a classroom trying to engage in dialogue, putting your chairs in a circle, having conversations as if in a somehow circular class, chairs in a circle somehow, facilitates democratic participatory and dialogical engagement. It is not necessarily going to happen. The term speaks to a cosmetic sort of, a form of critique which is progressive-liberal. It is kind of what I call “confectionary critique”; whereas revolutionary critical pedagogy suggests a fundamental critique of neo-liberal globalization, and an alternative to capital’s value form, that is, the value form of labor. As a socialist, I struggle to change the value form of labor. What is capital's value form: wage labor, selling of your labor power for a wage? And if you are dependent on selling your labor power for a wage, you are part of the working class. And if you are not dependent on selling your labor power for a wage, you are part of the capitalist class.

On the other hand, McLaren implies that if one defines the functions of the critical within the logic of the existing system, both the definition and its implications would be susceptible to the hegemonic reconstruction of the system, which eventually appropriates the “critical act” to its own benefits. In other words, the “system” could tolerate criticality when its functions are defined within the borders of the former (i.e., as in the form of being against racism, sexism, classism, etc.); yet at the same time, mechanisms that seek to alter the critiqued social conditions get tamed through the system’s own defensive reflexes and absorbents. Thus, critical
mechanisms that are apoliticized and emptied, such as having a “circular formation” as a seating arrangement in the classroom in order to foster “critical dialogue,” are actually only illusions of transformative acts that are inculcated by the system itself – a safe mode through which the system could tolerate a criticalist practice.

This also refers to the unresolved debate about what actually constitutes the transformative function of the critical. When this function of the term is defined as the necessity to eliminate the main source of problematic conditions under critique, the mechanisms to be employed to realize such a function tend to be explicit political means that involve the generation of broader social actions. Therefore, although critique is practiced vis-à-vis the educational or schooling processes, it seeks to directly address the root cause of the problem rather than some of its symptoms, such as white supremacy manifest in biased testing systems. One has to mention that engaging with the broader social conditions of inequality need not limit itself to one ideological coloring; it could vary from Marxism, Feminism, to Post-Structuralism, etc.

Unlike this macro approach to transformation, many of the scholars I have interviewed think that the transformative function of the critical needs to be instead located within schooling and education where critique takes place. Narrative data suggest that as both parties, i.e., those who advocate transformation within the existing system, and those who seek it outside, equally claim to share the commitment to social justice among other aspects of a progressive worldview; yet there appears to be a clash among my participant scholars which one could relate to

\[41\] As mentioned in the previous segment, Olneck clearly articulates this clash in the field of education: “Sociologists, all kinds of studies focused on these, e.g., segregation; that all comes out of interest in social equality no matter what position no matter what methodology. Is it more critical when somebody studies say the ways in which school integration embody assumptions about white supremacy. Yea, that’s more critical, that’s more critical then somebody who is just trying to find out if you mix black and white kids do test scores go up. But I kind of say
differential attributions given to the functions and the mechanisms of the concept critical. This is because sometimes (it is very important to stress this in order not to suggest any constancy) both groups of scholars may think that the other side of the spectrum brings more harm than benefit to the cause of transformation towards the goal of social justice and equality.

For example, contrary to what McLaren proposes, Miller thinks that classroom processes should be at the center of the critical work, and thus the transformational agenda. Definitions of critical functions outside “the context” may lead to an intellectual attitude that is a devise of othering:

I would say, I am situated at the nexus of interpretivist and critical research. I said that is a “nexus” because people who are often involved in critical theory and research … they frame as critical, but do not often have any interest in classroom processes. So in those people's minds, as best as I can tell, the macro issues are what they become interested in. And so they are going to research things, maybe students' lives outside of school, but the micro-processes-- what they mean seems to be a dismissive term—that, they aren't interested in but I am interested in. So right there at the nexus of those two, I ultimately hope that my research has an impact on what can happen in schools, what can happen to open up spaces for students to be designers of their understanding and also to read against-text not just read with-text. And so given all that, I am interested in the teacher-student relationship and what can happen. I understand that some people and critical literacy theorists dismiss what is happening in schools because clearly

is that people who just study whether you mix up those kids and the test scores go up I don’t think are any less committed to social justice.”
schools are still set up to just reinforce the stratification of society. But there are plenty of people in schools who push against that. It's not easy; it is long-term and there are immense benefits for students but it seems to me to be a good fight that we have to fight. Otherwise we are disrespecting teachers and students and possibilities for education.

I think that if you are going to work in, maybe they [other criticals who often do not have any interest in classroom processes] have decided they are not going to work in structures and so they are just going to spin their wheels….But they are going outside of school, but that does not create change in schools. So, you've got to engage with schools. It is the harder thing to do, you have got to engage with those people who maybe need their consciousness raised. But if you demand change, like “Let me raise your consciousness,” you are not respecting the very people who you are supposedly bringing to consciousness. So there's a hierarchical power issue that some critical theorists seem to be unaware of. “Why doesn't this feel empowering?” is a good example. So, there have been people who've done critiques of the rhetoric. I think that it was, (forgive me), but it was a male-dominated field for a long time, and I think that the inclination to be angry and then to have that rhetoric get into the prose they were writing, really distanced them even farther from the lives of the very people who needed and sometimes wanted to change. What they were doing was so diametrically opposed to the conversation you can have with people.

As Miller’s narration suggests, “critical pedagogy”, particularly the Freirean tradition, appears to have generally blended into critical educational research theory and practice in the
United States to the extent that both its followers and critics now tend to carry out “critical” discussions over its functions and mechanisms. This alludes to what I have already discussed above with reference to the interaction between critical pedagogy and critical research, observable at both the theoretical and practical ends, and how this interplay may have slipped into feeding the intellectual identity politics within the Academy.

Miller is not alone in her critique of how the term functions for scholars following in Freire’s footsteps. Scheurich says:

I want a revolution too. I want to a good one that doesn’t turn bad, which many have. But I think that they are … on the one hand, I would say they’re doing valuable work, which I read, and it affects me and it’s useful to me. On the other hand, they’re not on the ground. And I think that’s where I think change happens. Again I have to go back to Freire, Freire got on the ground with people and that’s the way you write. He writes about what it’s like, how you work. Now, are there elitist things in Freire? I think there are. But there’s a lot of good stuff there in terms of actually participating with people, in their own language, in their own terms, and their own way of thinking.

It should be noted that there is considerable controversy among scholars who adopt the Freirean epistemology for their own works. But almost all these discussions focus on functions and mechanisms of the term. For instance, Olneck addresses the mechanisms of the critical and the kind of functions they serve as an end point. He asks a very important question as to whether there exists a hierarchy across the criticality of the works that concern mechanisms to effect change:
Is it more critical when somebody studies, say, the ways in which school integration embody assumptions about white supremacy. Yea, that’s more critical, that’s more critical then somebody who is just trying to find out if you mix black and white kids, do test scores go up? But I kind of say that people who just study whether you mix up those kids and the test scores go up, I don’t think they are any less committed to social justice.

Whose version of the critical may dominate the field is then, more important than the levels or degrees of commitment to social justice, as Bourdieu would argue. I think that critiques that embrace discourses of social justice can thus be said to simply be manifestations of sub-intellectual practices. Therefore, although in many cases the functions and mechanisms of the critical yield various intellectual nodes for scholars to discuss, conversations, on the other hand, tend to follows an inductive path – from commitment to social justice to how to enable this very goal. This may be why, as Miller proposes, the tone is sometimes perceived to be dismissive.

Weis discusses a different but also relevant point, when she invokes the staple of scholars whose work are extremely important for “critical scholars,” but who also cannot be classified as critical:

People like Adam Gamoran, who is not a critical scholar … I would not call Adam Gamoran critical, but Adam Gamoran’s work is absolutely invaluable. I would not call Scott Thomas critical, I would not call any of those people who are carefully mapping social and economic inequalities necessarily critical. Walter Haney, I would not call him critical, but he is carefully mapping structural circumstances, and he helps us all think about and understand changing structural circumstances. Then secondly, I think it
is really, really important to understand how people live both collectively and
individually in relation to those changing social structures. That is really a key.

It is not simply a question of who is situated where in relation to social structure, but it
is explaining how that comes to be. That is what that gives that critical edge. The
mapping is important but it is not enough. We have to engage empirical work and
theorize such work with regard to how that comes about, how that happens.

These scholars are, for Weis, not critical primarily because they shy away from the
reflexive practice of questioning the position one occupies in the Academy and society in the
first place. Weis adds that the critical edge comes into a study if the researcher takes on the
challenge of exploring the reasons/causes of such differential positioning. She thus critiques how
one of the major critical mechanisms, “mapping injustices,” does not sufficiently and
automatically qualify one’s work as critical. Instead, explaining the map through exposing how
its topography is constructed, with her own words “how that comes about,” is the key practice
for a critical enterprise. In other words, subscribing to the idea that the critical enterprise should
function as an exposing technique of the formations of how power unevenly operates, she
continues to argue, would lead to a possible struggle towards de-formation of power. This is
done through unraveling the mechanism of power and then de-legitimating them. Weis’ outlook
thus brings her together with other critical scholars who assign more weight to the functions of
the critical, i.e., its endpoints, rather than the tools that would enable materialization of such
purposes.

Another possibility is that a scholar might engage with mapping injustices as a
mechanism for her/his critical research without necessarily subscribing to certain functions of the
critical, that is, despite how this study may contain implications towards enabling the critical endpoint per se. Such delineation between mechanisms and functions of the critical is what eventually generates divergences in the field. This in turn gives rise to another problematic that concerns whom to define or associate as critical/more critical and whom as not critical. Weis, for example, makes a clear distinction between the two. Lee follows a very similar path, when she locates her research as one that engages with macro structural issues but without attaching it to any “transformative claims” per se:

I think the simple answer would be to say that I go in with certain assumptions about how inequality functions, and particularly how inequalities regarding race and class function in the larger dominant society. Having said that, I don’t know, going into the field exactly what inequality will look like in a particular space. The fact that there will be inequality, however, I do assume. And so I’m interested in locally specific ways that inequality presents itself, and I am interested in how this happens. Locally specific expressions of inequality are related to larger/macro issues. So, I’ve focused on how racial inequality manifests itself in particular schools. For example, I’ve been interested in how Asian American kids are racialized and how Asian American kids respond to systems of inequality. I’ve been also interested in how race intersects with other identities.

Examples on how different attributions to mechanisms and functions of the critical generate variations across critical researchers are abundant in my data. But how can one theorize this beyond simple individual differences among critical scholars? In reference to my discussion in Chapter V regarding Foucault’s idea of the “regimes of truth,” we can look at the various
discourses operating in the field (particularly in terms of mechanisms and functions of the
critical) as unaligned regimes. I believe the concept of dialectics could be used here to
foreground the homology of differences that I have discussed earlier. So here we have a
dialectical contradiction due to the fact that there are some underlying principles that produce
difference, and I believe this is what I want to explain by deploying the notion of homology. The
way I see this is that dialectical contradiction is inherent in the spatiotemporal of the critical and
the mapping out of its uneven terrain.

In the following section, I will talk about Intellectual Resonances that create variations
across critical researchers.

Epistemic and Empirical Critical

Two approaches seem to overshadow the attempt to define what the critical social inquiry
is all about, one is practical and the other is theoretical. The latter approach emphasizes the
possibility of mapping out a comprehensive theory for the social totality where the concept of
criticism plays a central role as to how to understand and analyze social phenomena.
Nevertheless, such a theoretical anchoring is not monolithic, for it integrates a variety of theories
and explications whose unifying force could be said to be the significance of criticism. Still, the
first generation of the Frankfurt School criticalists was not that successful in using this function
of unification-through-criticism as springboard for its institution as social science for their own
program. If the marker of theory in the theoretical approach is how much it subscribes to the
aggregating functioning of social criticism, it is the politics along which a certain theory is aligned and in which is embedded that determines how critical theories come to differ according to the practical approach. In other words, the validation of theory, so to speak, comes not from its commitment to criticism as a supreme social function, but rather from its practical verification as unfolding of and expression of a certain politics. But, as Bohman (2002) argues, to reduce the critical to the practical alone without considering its theoretical and the epistemic attributes is to turn critical inquiry into a mere reflection of the practice of politics in society, regardless of whether this is radical or bourgeois-liberal:

First, it has been long held that only a comprehensive social theory could unify critical social science and thus provide a “scientific” basis for criticism that goes beyond the limits of lay knowledge. Second, not only must the epistemic basis of criticism be independent of agents’ practical knowledge, but also an explanation must be correct regardless of its political effects on a specific audience. So conceived, social criticism is then a two stage affair: first, inquirers independently discover the best explanation using the available comprehensive theory; then, second, they persuasively communicate its critical consequences to participants who may have false beliefs about their practices (p.93).

It then transpires that the binary opposition between theory and practice has been, to some extent or another, a major lens through which to look at how critical social inquiry tries to make sense of the social totality. An extensive body of literature has been produced on this subject of opposition; and, since it is not my intention to represent the debate around the critical-as-practice vis-à-vis critical-as-theory, I propose an alternative approach that understands the
critical instead and anew as “empirical” and “epistemic” regardless of whether it falls in the
category of theory or the category of practice along the lines of common designations in the
field. Thus, I would use this node to expand on this alternative delineation of critical inquiry in
the Academy as both empirical and epistemic—while in the former, the critical derives its
meaning from the practice of critique itself and becomes a distinguishing feature of the research
process, in the latter it gets its meaning from the broader tenets of the critical enterprise such as
power, authority or politics, as well as from the practitioner of the critique him/herself. Lee, for
example, says that political and emancipatory tenets of the critical inquiry could be thought of as
ligaments for the diverse approaches across critical researchers:

I think that folks, and obviously we’re not one type, as you suggested already … we are
quite diverse as a group and we have different positions and different styles of work.
But if we share things in common, I would imagine it to be things like understanding
that research is political, it is always political. Being upfront about the political nature
of our work -- at least I'm talking about my own, being concerned about structures of
inequality – race, class, gender, some sort of a combination of these and other kinds of
inequalities. I think some people do work … do more transformative work to change
things at the site where they're doing work and/or pointing towards directions of
change.

The critical, in this sense, is not closed to how the personal and the academic appear to
intersect across almost all scholarly practices from various points, and one would have to
similarly locate it along this nexus. In other words, the critical, as it lives through this
intersection, is at the same time an aggregation of the stylistic/expresive that the personal
aspects may infuse/induce, on the one hand, as well as of the instrumental that the academic contributes, on the other. While the stylistic elements of the critical inform the ways in which it is produced and presented, the instrumental elements refer to its acceptability as an academic practice as well as to its construction as a domain with locatable intellectual boundaries.

Considered from its stylistic end, the “critical” in contemporary critical research is a distinct way of presenting and constructing narratives, be they grand or local. In other words, the critical thus becomes an effect of narration the modes of which are assembled through a complex amalgamation of personal history, experience, academic skills, intellectual abilities, socio-political commitments, and so on. Yet the stylistic is not exclusively personal, for this narration practice, to a great extent, is subject to go through the tribulations of conference boards, publishing houses, and journal editorial boards and reviewers before it may fulfilled in print. Whatever the purposes, sites, subjects, and frameworks of the research may be, a study has to be narrated in order gain legitimation in the academy as a research. In this respect, critical research with transformative aims could not go beyond the domain of social-work unless it is told to the rest of the academy or people whom it might interest. These approval processes can be thus described as the production of various academic routines which are sanctioned by certain control mechanisms. Given this, it becomes useful to refer to the distinction epistemic critical that I am proposing here especially if one is to better understand these “routines,” or differently put, the internal logic of the field of critical inquiry. This is because the epistemic critical relates to the interiority of the field and what this means in terms of the location of individual critical work

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42 Here, I am strictly discussing the “critical,” not what critical social theory or critical research may be.

43 By complex I mean with different proportion or not homogeneous.
relative to the mapping out of the broader critical field. Bourdieu (1988) applies a similar
distinction to academics. The epistemic individual, according to him, refers to the position one
holds in the academy, while the empirical refers to the particular features an actual
person/academician has:

Scientific discourse demands a scientific reading, capable of reproducing the operations
of which it is itself the product. However, the words of scientific discourse, and
especially those designating persons (named individuals) or institutions (such as the
College de France) are exactly the same as those of ordinary discourse, of fiction or
history, whereas the referents of these two species of discourse are separated by all the
distance which is introduced by the scientific break and by construction. Thus, in
everyday life, the proper name merely identifies, and, acting in the same way as what
logicians call an indicator, it is in itself virtually insignificant (-smith does not signify a
blacksmith) and gives virtually no information about the person designated (unless it is
an aristocratic or famous name or if it is ethically specific). As a label capable of being
arbitrarily applied to any object, it says that the object designated is different, without
specifying in what respect it differs; as an instrument of recognition, and not of
cognition, it singles out an empirical individual, generally apprehended as singular, that
is to say, different, but without analyzing the difference. The constructed individual, on
the contrary, is defined by a finite set of explicitly defined properties differ through a
series of identifiable differences from the set of properties, constructed according to the
same explicit criteria, which characterize other individuals; more precisely, it defines its
referent not in ordinary space, but in a space constructed of differences produced by the
very definition of the finite set of effective variables (p.22).
To make this point clearer, Bourdieu uses Levi Strauss as an example. And in a similar fashion, and in order not to be repetitious, I will instead apply Bourdieu’s approximation to an influential figure in the field of critical educational research, Michael Apple. The construction *Michael Apple*, according to the Bourdieuan model, is produced by scientifically analyzing his work, a tendency that is more common than not, given the position and prestige he enjoys in the field of educational research. Through such a process, the construction *Michael Apple* loses its affinity to the proper name Michael Apple. This is because the name “is a signifier to which may be applied the infinite universe of predicates corresponding to the various differences” which may distinguish an American Education professor “not only from all other professors but from all other human beings” (p.22). In other words, *Michael Apple* does not only refer to an *individual* but at the same time, the name is a reference to a *position* “which he occupies in the space which his properties have helped to construct (Ibid, p.22).” In this sense, what Michael Apple as a figure in the academy practices becomes important both for himself and the *field* in which he operates and which he influences. At the same time, outside this understanding of the individual, the work that this specific individual produces blends into his position in the *field*. This is due to the condition that he is now setting the rules of the game, as Bourdieu would say, rather than approaching the game as a player not different from any other. This kind of differentiation is what Bourdieu calls distinction through symbolic capital.

Thus, similar to Bourdieu’s distinction between the epistemic and the empirical, the attributions of the critical have come to derive from the long trajectory of the critical since the days of the Frankfurt School, as well as from academic precedents that have come to be identified as norm-setting elements in the field of critical social research. This is to highlight that, regardless of the theoretical character it comes to be identified with, the critical acquires its
meaning and implications from its usages and positions within the field itself. On the other hand, the empirical critical in research has marked features that could distinguish it from other types of research theory and practice, particularly from interpretative social research. To relate to what Lee says above, the empirical thus seems to provide mechanisms that mark off the different political boundaries of the critical in many instances. But unlike this internal functioning, the epistemic critical, on the other hand, serves a different purpose, not that of distinguishing internally, but that of formulating an “antagonistic” stance vis-à-vis its own exteriority, i.e., power and domination.

One can find examples of what I propose here in how the seminal work of Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor* (1977), seems to have provided a template for criticality in the early years of the critical qualitative research in the United States, as Carspecken (1999) argues when he discusses the influence of the Birmingham School of England on the field of critical research. The big splash that Willis created in the US Academy was followed by the development of hybrid research mindsets aligned with the criticality that he himself performed and suggested. In this sense, Willis’ work has not only become the seminal book of resistance theories but has also turned into a guide to perform “critical” ethnographic work in urban schools. I call this particular form of the critical “epistemic” because it showed scholars how critical work should be implemented or understood as well as what the critical would aim to eventually accomplish. Numerous research has been conducted from this angle (Carspecken, 1999), which is a form of epistemic alignment specifically because it has deployed mechanisms that other researchers could use with regards to how to perform critique. Bourdieu (1988) would call such phenomena doxic. This is because, here, the critical is more about “comprehension,” a way of knowing and understanding that is more or less derived from the commonsense that the field could be said to
create directly or indirectly, rather than from the knowledge of an “agent” who actively bases their authority upon the problematics of the field per se. Relation to similar works in the field has also to be considered here, as this helps understand field-specific relations that would eventually serve the function of validating and legitimating one’s research in relation to others’. Take what Fine says for instance:

I think in education, there are probably more rigid lines as to what constitutes the critical. But in psychology, the critical has been a loose but dedicated space of raising questions about the assumptions of science, the assumptions of action and the assumptions of where knowledge leads, and what the relation between research and change is.

Weis similarly underscores the necessity of defining the critical within the framework of education and in relation to how scholars in the field perform critical work:

When we talk about critical work, we have to talk about the work in education that has some analysis of the issues of power and the ways in which power shapes what is going on.

Not dissimilarly, Foley highlights the epistemic character when attempting a definition for the critical. According to him, and quite interestingly, “the critical ethnography” as a mode of research or research genre has not evolved into anthropology but rather into sociology of education. Critical ethnography as such had to be invented and continues to be a matter of the innovative contributions of the many scholars who employ the notion in their work:
I think that the term critical gets invented in a way, and it's mostly in education. Because the term that develops into anthropology and anthropology of cultural critique comes from the most influential book of Marcus and Fischer. So, you do not really see anthropologists using the term *critical ethnographers*. But you see that it is a kind of a term that somehow comes out of the sociology of education. Because even anthropology of education people did not really start using that term until the 80s, and Enrique Trueba and other people positioned themselves as critical ethnographers. Trueba is the most prominent figure in our field who started using that term. So, I do not know, it's hard to know exactly what the term critical means. It may be what Carspecken says. It means whatever an individual thinks it means. There's no school of thought that precisely maps that. I think that postmodern critique in the late 80s and early 90s begins to make an influence on the diversity of critical ethnography. And that article I wrote [*Critical Ethnography: The Reflexive Turn (2002)*] was trying to show how those kinds of critiques begin to influence anthropology. In the 80s, you have James Clifford writing several excellent critiques of the field and on Marcus and Fischer, and there gets to be this group of people who are influenced by postmodern thinking that is very critical of realist ethnographic narratives and are critical of grand theory and the other entire usual postmodern thing.

The implications of this field-specific relationality surfaces in instances of scholars relying on the work of prominent researchers like Jean Anyon to understand social class as factor influencing education presently instead of deriving such grounding from, say, political scientists who may have dedicated majority of their work to analyze and theorize social class conditions and changes in the US. It thus becomes possible to point out how what Paul Willis or Jean
Anyon does in the field most probably qualifies the critical for other researchers in the field more than the theorizations of Habermas or Weber may contribute in this context. And I think that this may explain what Anyon (2008) proposes in her book in terms of critical educational studies shying away from extensive theoretical borrowing from the body of critical work that exists outside the educational domain itself. For the various concepts, practices, approaches, etc. (critical or otherwise) that are necessary for carrying out critical work in education have already been translated into the logic of the field and have also been accepted by the broader audience.

To put it in clearer terms, the critical, then, derives its meanings from the ways in which it is used within the field. In this sense, the critical sometimes has more to do with the who of the field rather than its what “when we hear the word ‘critical educators’ or ‘critical scholars,’” as Olneck points out. It tends to mean something more specific than simply a commitment to social justice.” For Olneck, using the critical as a qualifier distinguishes a certain group of scholars who willingly identify with the label “critical” from those whose work may qualify as critical for being loosely engaged with certain social issues, but who would not choose to identify it as such:

…[A]nd therefore people who don’t necessarily care for or want to identify as part of that community won’t use the term. But if you say “why do they shy away from it, if that’s the implied question”? I think there are too many people in what are thought of as critical fields, for whom the analysis that will be forthcoming is in some sense already known.

Critical could just be a colloquial vernacular word. It is critical not in the sense that it carries some critique of society, some notion of “if we do this inquiry or if we do this
research, we can expose what is hidden in ways that could lead people to act in ways that are more just.” Right. That’s critical.

This sheds some light on how the critical could get its meaning from epistemic differentiations through its usages and through performers who carry out critical work. With regard to the latter, it is thus the case that, in many instances, what defines the critical is the individual researcher who conducts critical research rather than a certain critical theory that can be seen as the point of departure and the tool that colors research as critical. This supports what I am proposing here in terms of needing to go beyond the conventional opposition between theory and practice unto differentiation that looks at the critical as determined and marked epistemically or empirically. Dressman’s narration is a very good example of the epistemic depictions of the critical:

I have a lot of problems with the term in the way that it is used, particularly because people who always use it are never self critical. And that notion of criticality frankly also presumes that the person who is making the critique has a kind of moral high grounds from which they are judging others without being critical of themselves. So, if you mean by critical analytical then I do not have any problem with that. I do have a problem with people who would assume that they are taking a stand for social justice, and that other people are not. They have some sort of truth but other people do not. I’ll tell you a story. Years ago, I worked in another university with a colleague once said to us in a meeting, “Now, that we are post-modern, we have the truth.” He would also call himself a Freieran critical theorist. That is what I see a lot of people who would call themselves critical. They are very eager to interrogate other people’s assumptions but not their own. And, let
me say this. They set up a kind of dichotomy, a kind of binary between themselves and the rest of the world, which is obviously, completely a part of the critique that people like most critical figures engage with. It is a primary move for anybody who would want to deconstruct or engage in post-structural critique. They just set up a binary and they never deconstruct their own binaries. That’s what I think about the term critical.

Dressman then, relates exposure to and in association with particular ways of doing critical work as prescribed and practiced by “some of the critical scholars” to developing a certain identification of the critical in general that is anchored in those ways and through those influential others. As for scholars who do not subscribe to these ways of knowing, whose validation seems to come from a consensual cross-referentiality, they tend to understand and define the term critical away from those scholars who could again be described as norm-setters. In this sense, the critical does not appear to be separate from its practitioners. This should not be understood, however, to mean collapsing knowledge and the knower into one entity following the common postmodernist practice. Rather, the inseparability of critique from the critic, in my opinion, has more to do with consensually recognizing that certain ways of critical knowing are authoritative than, say, instating a certain characterological type of the critical scholar.

Dyson addresses this affinity when she discusses the role of academic circles when it comes to designating or labeling certain ways of knowing and researching as “critical”:

Sometimes I think that if one wishes to get accepted in certain academic circles, with those who are doing the “real” critical research, one needs to make children seem pathetic—as victims irreparably harmed by societal forces. Yes, society is unfair but, looking at schooling from the perspectives of young children, one does not get to know
“pathetic” children. Literacy does not belong to a certain set of people with a certain kind of background. It is learned in all different kinds of ways and serves all different kinds of functions all over the world. So, I would say, this is how I am “critical”—I do not accept the status quo beliefs and assumptions about children, literacy, and schooling and I try to problematize these assumptions.

Dyson, then, is critical of what she perceives as a totalitarian labeling approach at the hands of the “real critical researchers,” whereby those who seek admission into the critical circle have to follow certain ways of knowing and doing the critical, where particular foci are given to issues-causes that may seem mandatory, as is the case with needing to overemphasize the victimization of children in critical literacy work as means to have it validated critically. She continues her commentary with another good example from her own experiences, being, admittedly, one of the most influential figures in the field of literacy:

Even if we redistribute the wealth and provide all children and families with adequate food, housing, and health care, there will still be variations in how families organize their time, express their love of their children, and have (or don’t have) uses for written language. And there will be individual differences in how children attend to the written system and orchestrate it for useful ends. So, how can we have these models say that “this is the way”? I took up the research personally because of my own humble roots. A glaring illustration of this narrowness of view is the frequent public service messages about reading to your children (a good idea, I agree). But my own mother who’s well into her 80s periodically will say to me “I was such a bad mother”, and I’ll say “why”, she’ll say “I’ve never read to you, kids”. I’ll say “Yeah, so we all ended up so illiterate
because you did not read to us!!!” But research on childhood and literacy can make people and their situations seem unworthy of producing educated people.

If the epistemic critical is an effect of the field relationality and positionality vis-à-vis certain influential others, the empirical critical, on the other hand, refers to distinguishing features of the critical in relation to both its methodology and theoretical and political claims, hence the significance that broader social and/or political concerns and theories acquire in this case. This does not mean that concerning one’s work as a critical researcher with these broader concerns that lay outside the field would have to monolithically translate into piecemeal association with, say, the Frankfurt School or German Idealism. Instead, such an engagement could take on a variety of formulations, as is the case with the focus that Luttrell gives below to how relevant reflexivity is to achieving the critical edge:

I think that for me the issue is even more than just not wanting to kind of name myself and then limit. To me, the real issue is about reflexivity. If I was forced to the wall to give a qualifier for my work, it would be that I place a huge premium on reflexivity. And reflexivity in at least three senses: reflexivity about all of the research decisions that I make along the way and making those as transparent as possible and identifying why those decisions were made, what gets lost and what is gained as a consequence of it. I am not afraid to take my own subjectivity into account and tie my research questions and concerns with, where I am in history, and in a particular moment, working with very particular people. I embrace this subjectivity in my work and try to figure out how much of this self-other encounter is playing into the production of knowledge. I want to consider, when it’s important and useful to really examine that
[the self-other encounter], and when that’s getting in the way of the work. I think of reflexivity as a whole lot about the relationship that develops between the researcher and the researched. And then the other part of reflexivity which I think a lot of people write to me about and are extremely concerned about has to do with representation. So, I also try to pay a whole lot of attention to what the burdens of representation are for me as the ethnographer, but also for the research participants. And in all of my research, every group that I have ever worked with has as many issues about the burden of representation on them as I have about being the ethnographer. They’re just different issues.

Luttrell, then, is interested more in how reflexivity grants her work the necessary edge that would qualify it as critical enough than concerning herself with whether or not she seeks to be labeled or recognized as a “critical scholar.” In other words, reflexivity for her, closely tied to that fundamental problematic of social research, representation, is the distinguishing feature that defines her work, empirically, as critical.

Another example of the empirical critical is when defining criticality on the basis of its connection to social theory. This should not mean, however, that scholars who emphasize the epistemic in the critical are disconnected from social theory. Rather, by connection to social theory, I am underscoring how the critical derives its meanings and is constructed within the field differentially, and what it transpires to mean for different critical scholars. In this regard, Carspecken addresses what the critical is in the lengthy excerpt below. It is noteworthy to mention again here, as Carspecken frequently does in his writings, that the critical he discusses here, which is heavily influenced by Habermas as we shall see, is but one version of what the
critical may mean. The important issue to highlight here is, again, the ability to define the critical through its distinctive epistemological features. Another useful reminder is how Carspecken’s scholarly work is mostly focused on critical qualitative research in education, which may explain the detailed and sophisticated response he provides here:

The word critical really goes back to Kant. He called his philosophy “critical”. What he is talking about was how not all knowledge can be placed in a form of an object of consciousness. So, there has to be a reflection to capture the conditions that make possible our object and knowledge. And that reflection is what he meant by critical. It is critical for Kant in terms of revealing the conditions that enable a form of knowledge, but which cannot themselves be understood in their form of knowledge. So, that idea got … it was picked up by the philosophers right after Kant and Hegel and then had an influence on Marx down the road. And so that idea of reflecting to reveal what is making a form of knowledge possible became understood as social, cultural and historical. So in Hegel’s philosophy, the frameworks that enable forms of experience and knowledge change to history and cultural forms. With Marx, you find the same idea and you also give the birth of the idea, ideology. So, what critical means … it means initially to enable to reflect so you can parent conditions of knowledge, as they cannot be understood on their own what they may enable. It does not mean directly that we are criticizing racism, sexism, classism, although it’s implied. Then you have Habermas, as an extremely sharp thinker and it seems that nobody else likes him very much. He is not easy to read. And so, I hear him criticized by people who really don’t know what they are talking about. This has become a problem for me and for my work because people who should be my allies, when they see that I am using Habermas, it
instantly turn them off … they don’t even understand him. One of the brilliant things Habermas did, was that he changed the idea of what dialectic is from subject-object to reflective relation to the idea of inter-subjectivity. And that was really a huge thing. He talked about the concept of illocutionary force in this paper called, *What is Universal Pragmatics*. And the point he is making there was relocating things you find in Marx and Hegel, but he relocated them in a better more compelling framework. Illocutionary force has to do with, when we study human beings we can find patterns but they are not casual, like patterns we find in nature. So, there is a fundamental difference. And illocutionary force has to do with the fact that people are coordinating a lot of the actions by accepting validity claims. But each person has the right to say “no” to validity claims, this is a big thing. So, human subjects not like an object … human subjects can say no … there is some freedom. And so, when power is not in the picture, which is never … there is always some form of power … In an ideal situation, people coordinate their actions together because they agree with reasons. So, from a subject-object paradigm, we go to a subject-subject paradigm.

The basic idea is that we first focus on meanings at the explicit and implicit levels which are used by our participants in coordinating their actions, communicating with each other, making sense of their lives, and maintaining their identities as human beings. So just as in traditional forms of qualitative research, we seek to understand our participants as they understand each other, themselves, their lives, the society and world they live in.

Although our social theory, methodological theory and so on are “critical,” we
usually avoid a full social/cultural critique in the beginning of a research project because it takes a while to understand the people we work with in the ways they understand each other. Just as in traditional forms of qualitative research, we try to keep aware of our biases and keep them open so that we ourselves may change from our experiences with other people and so that we do not end up imposing our own frameworks on them. This is very important. In this sense, critical qualitative research is generally *not* openly ideological or explicitly biased research as some have referred to it.

There are no set “rules” about when and how critique comes into the picture—everything about critical qualitative research requires making decisions in relation to contexts. A practitioner just has to be able to explain what she is doing and what she has done, and the principles of the methodology are used in giving such explanations. So for example, if one were to conduct a study of the way upper-class people interact with their servants, the manner in which critique comes into the picture may well differ from other studies. It might be harder for an internal critique to form in a study of privileged groups.

The critique is best if it comes from the actors themselves. In that case, the researcher begins as a facilitator of the processes of explicitation (making the implicit explicit) and analysis / critique. Of course, when we understand other people we do so through our own hermeneutic forestructures which originate in our own previous life experiences and cultures. We must methodically use the hermeneutic circle to change our forestructures so that we understand others as they understand themselves as best
we can. Now, in the process of understanding we find ourselves, chronically, taking our own positions on the validity claims of others. We agree or do not agree and have reasons on hand for our agreement or non-agreement. We have the basis for critique in ourselves both for the culture we study and for ourselves as reflected in this culture. But it is best to first allow an internal critique to become formulated by our participants. In later stages of a study we bring our own criticisms and ideas into play with our participants to make critique fully ripened.

What I have proposed in this node was that one may better understand the trajectories of determining what the critical, elusive as it has been, may actually come to mean – relationally across the practitioners of the critical enterprise, as well as individually to critical researchers themselves, if one transcends the conventional binary opposition in relation to the critical between theory and practice. I have suggested that working through the critical as epistemic and empirical is more useful, as the narratives from my participants that I have included above may indicate. On the one hand, qualifying the critical based on the positions that it occupies in the academy and the ways in which it gets interpreted by scholars is what is meant by the “epistemic” dimension of the notion. On the other hand, identifying the critical through the particular features of research that could distinguish it from other types of social research and/or connections to social and political theory is what I mean by the “empirical” critical. And as has been shown here, the two approaches are rarely used to define the critical simultaneously by the same scholar. Rather, there seems to exist an inclination across critical scholars towards interpreting the meanings of the critical one way or the other. One could also argue that this function of interpreting what the critical means more often than not belongs to the epistemic critical and is shaped by the relational aspects of producing and recognizing criticality in the
field of educational research. And because it is primarily a relational affair, certain colloquial convergences and divergences appear to emerge in the form of what I have called “alignments” throughout this dissertation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have explored how the critical scholars I interviewed understand and construct the architecture of the critical in the field of education. My analysis suggests that explaining variation across the critical scholarship may not primarily be a matter of differential subscriptions of individual critical scholars to a variety of theoretical or epistemological constructs. Rather, the academic, intellectual, and political resonances that are present among these researchers generate conditions of convergence and/or divergence through a process of interaction with factors that I have addressed in the above model and discussion. Similarly, I propose that one has to go beyond the usually consensual, and valid, projection that it is the political and emancipatory nature of the critical which brings together critical researchers from different walks of scholarship. This going-beyond is more like going-deeper to make transparent what may not be immediately visible about the nature of the workings of the critical enterprise, especially when one is primarily concerned with the end product of the research process.

I proposed that such homologic variations could be read in reference to three major resonances: Academic, Political, and Intellectual. At the level of political resonances, I claimed
that critical is mainly (maybe inherently) leftist and various subscriptions to the leftist political spectrum generate variations across critical scholar. Locating mechanisms or functions at the center of the critical enterprise while determining what makes critical critical is also another anchoring point of convergence or divergence across the scholars. Finally, at the level of academic resonances, I claimed that there are two main criticals essentially: epistemic and empirical. Epistemic critical is the critical (re)invented or rectified within the field of educational research whereas empirical critical is referring to the distinguishing features of critical research from other types of research practices.
CHAPTER VI

“PERSONAL is POLITICAL”: NORMATIVITY and REFLEXIVITY

Introduction

Thus far, I have been trying to make the point that the answer to the question of what is critical in critical qualitative research lays both in the intellectual trajectory of the term and the dynamics of boundaries within the Academy. In this chapter, I will try to excavate issues related to politics of personal that play a role on its construction in an attempt to dismantle some definitional complexities across critical researchers. I will briefly discuss the “personal” in architecting critical qualitative research in education under two problematics: normativity and reflexivity.

Content analysis and interview data indicate that “critical” as one of the building blocks of critical research theory and practice is employed for specific tasks relatively independent from each other. I claim that this characteristic attributes (or it is because of this autonomous position) self-governing position to “criticality” in comparison to other elements of research. This relative autonomy could be jointed into personal standpoints and explained through emphasizing the importance of “personal” on knowledge construction through hammering inter-subjective elements of social world. Standpoint theory, after its invention by feminists, has inspired many scholars as a way of invoking political aspects of experience and understanding how meaning making process is filtered through various positionalities. (Longino, 1994) In this sense,
standpoint theory has been used as a major guide in exploring how “personal” is connected to social and political. While drawing on standpoint theory to a great extent, I also shift the analysis towards exploring the role of broader academy.

Normative Claims of the Critical: What ought to be (done)?

*There is nothing more practical than a good theory.*

*Kurt Lewin, 1952*

The critical in its contemporary formations can be said to be the manifestation of both normative and explanatory features that one can find in social theory, empirical research, research interactions, in conflicts that arise when and after doing research, in power as it influences the production of knowledge, among other things. Despite the methodological, theoretical, and epistemological pluralism that I argue exists among critical researchers, for their research to be explicitly affiliated with the critical enterprise it has to contend with “a unique relation to human emancipation” as a primary qualifier of the critical (Bohman, 1999, p.461). This should not be taken as merely contrastive singularity. The critical as a relational boundedness to the goal of emancipation materializes, both theoretically and practically, at different levels (personal, social, institutional, academic), and for various purposes (political, ideological, personal). In this sense, such multiplicity supplements the unique relationality of the critical towards undermining, if not dissipating, realities of inequalities towards, in Horkheimer words, liberating “human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (p.459). Such
common relationality of the critical presents us with a normative character that is distinct from other normative claims. Given the primacy of this critical relationality to the emancipatory-transformative, the critical necessarily takes on normative understanding and outlook of the social phenomena which it tries to unsettle one way or the other. And since this critical normativity is relational in the first place, its being bound to a purpose within the territory of altering reality makes it practical (ibid).\textsuperscript{44} For even when critically engaging with reality is limited to the task of consciousness raising rather than targeting the social structures that need to be transformed, the practical dimension will still be present due to its being bound to the same purpose of engaging with reality to alter it, but here with a different magnitude of alteration.

Thus, the critical enterprise, both on theoretical and empirical levels, cannot be thought of and through in separation from the normative claims embedded into its various practices towards the emancipatory-transformative purpose. And this element of purposefulness should not be confused with utility, although the critical may have various social applications that can be described as useful. What pertains to this discussion here is an assessment of the critical as relationally purpose-bound, as movement in the direction of the particular purpose of altering reality (Bohman, 1999).\textsuperscript{45}

This last point differentiates the critical from the pragmatic, which is historically and philosophically associated with the notion of utility. Here the criterion of “[judging] any idea by

\textsuperscript{44} This does not mean that only practicality gives a normative character to research, social theory, or epistemology. My point here concerns what links the practical nature of the critical inquiry and the normative claims it makes. See Bohman (1999) for further discussion.

\textsuperscript{45} Without this directionality/relationality, it would not be possible to link even the classical texts of the critical by Marx, Weber, Adorno and others to this “practical” endpoint. In other words, I argue that critical theoretical works that engage with “emancipation of human beings” could be regarded as practical because of this very relation to this specific purpose. The Communist Manifesto, as Foley suggests during an interview, may thus be more transformative than any other critical research produced so far.
its consequences” that Dewey proposes (Ibid.) may suggest a commonality with the critical in the sense that the pragmatic is also purposeful. This is not to suggest that the two are identical, for they may considerably differ in the nature of the purpose each is directed towards, as well as in how the purpose is to be arrived at. This motivated many to try to forge connections between the two entities. One of these attempts came at the hands of Habermas out of the realization of the tension between the totalizing claims of the Marxian theoretical project on the one hand, and the pluralism that the Weberian intervention proposed, on the other. Another example of more recent attempts to reconcile the critical and the pragmatic, which are both purposeful so to speak, can be found in the work of Cornbleth and Waugh, who developed a “hybrid” perspective they call “critical pragmatism” as “a response to the insufficiencies of both ‘conventional’ critical theory and pragmatism” (Cornbleth, 2000, p.4):

Bringing together critical and pragmatic traditions links the contextual emphasis and equity of critical theory with the self-questioning and pluralism of pragmatic philosophy. The critical perspective gives depth and direction to pragmatic inquiry and dialogue. Pragmatism, in turn, reminds us that cultural critique encompasses us all; none of us or our cherished beliefs, individuality or collectively as a member of one or another group, is above or beyond question. Emergent and oriented toward action, this critical pragmatism eschews materialist and theological determinisms on one side and postmodernist quick sands on the other. Critical pragmatism employs standards or principles of judgment, and it subjects them to ongoing scrutiny and possible modification (Quoted in Cornbleth, 2000, p.4)
During one of the interviews that I conducted with her, Cornbleth elaborates on this reconciliation between the pluralistic tendencies of pragmatism and theoretical solidity and consistency of criticality:

…And then more recently there’s what I call “critical pragmatism,” which I developed in relation to our project involving state curriculum policy, multicultural politics in educational policy making. And trying to open up what I consider to be a critical theory perspective. And I thought pragmatists include authors not only like William James in this country, but also DuBois and more recently Cornel West and some others. The notion that in fact nothing is sacred is critical theory’s auto-questioning … being reflexive about the critique’s own assumptions. And it seems to me, if you sort of bring together pragmatism and while critical theory, critical theory keeps the focus on questions of equity and justice, of non-domination, whatever language one prefers. And the pragmatic end keeps you from not questioning your own initial position or preferences. It invites everyone to the table, so to speak, to be considered. So, that is the second way I locate my research. And related to those is very much a concern for more inclusive, more equitable education. The research and writing I’ve done has involved more inclusive curriculum and politics surrounding the social identities of young people … identities are not a multiple choice question. The most recent project is on the interaction of individuals and institutions and on how prospective teachers deal with diversity. So I guess those three dimensions would be where I locate my research, So, there is a practical; there is a conceptual; there is a political piece. And hopefully they are comfortable together.

If utility is the primary feature for pragmatism, a form of action-orientation that derives
from individual experience more or less, critical research need not be determined by the same characteristic, even when practical application is a research outcome. It is, once more, defined by a particular practicality, the specific purpose of altering reality. And this explain why pragmatism, even at the most abstract theoretical levels, can be absent from the work of critical researchers. This is clear in the way Anyon, for example, relates theoretical anchoring of the domain of criticality to two non-pragmatists, Foucault and Butler:

Foucault, for example, is critical in that he is trying to destabilize hegemonic ways of looking at things like power. Judith Butler, I was reading today, is also post-structuralist and post-modernist and she is very critical in that she is trying to destabilize the ways of thinking about gender. I think critical research used to be modernist when the Frankfurt School was doing it. But it does not have to be. Foucault or Butler has a just society as a goal but it is a different way of looking at justice, even with different definitions. For Judith Butler, a just society is a society where people have the freedom to be what they want to be, sexually and gender wise. For Foucault, it is much harder to say; but people take freedom in various ways of caring for the self and in resisting power. He is concerned with ways that the marginalized in society could be made more powerful, like prisoners, people who are insane, so to speak.

By distinguishing the critical from the experiential action of the pragmatic, it becomes possible to highlight the different modus operandi that the critical deploys, from which the emphasis on “action” per se is secondary to the emancipatory relationality as I proposed earlier. In other words, as Anyon’s narration above implies, the critical is marked off from the pragmatic through the tendencies of the former to delegitimize power and to destabilize hegemonic
relations in society. This explains how research that is self-identified as interpretive or descriptive could still be labeled as critical. The following exchange with Lee is useful here.

Mustafa- How do you define your work? Like as descriptive? Or like you put some claims on interventions, transformative etc.?

Lee- Well, I guess within a continuum of research that places basic research at one end and applied research at the other. Mine is perhaps closer to the basic end. Now you said transformative. Because it is slightly different … I believe my work is primarily about interpreting what I think is going on; making sense of social situations, social problems; and adding to larger conversations and literature about race and migration, about Asian-Americans, about education. I hope that my work has implications for policy and practice. I hope that, for example, my most recent work can challenge people’s thinking about Hmong students, and about sort of how we are thinking about Hmong students, how we are responding to Hmong students. In my early work, I focused a lot on the model minority stereotype and that was actually my dissertation work and I’m actually revising that dissertation book right now. My goal in that book was to challenge our assumptions or the dominance of hegemonic assumptions about Asian-Americans as high achieving minorities and to get folks to think about how that stereotype is being used against other groups of color and how it limits our understanding of who Asian-American kids are. To get back to the question, I think ultimately my research has two goals: one, to describe and make sense of and interpret what's going on, to uncover qualities as I see them, to uncover moments of resistance if and when I see them and find them. So, in other words, providing a picture of what's going on. Secondly, I hope
my work will make people think differently and hopefully have some impact on what people do with kids in terms of practice and policy.

To sum up, normativity is inherent to the critical enterprise in relation to its practical end, whether it is acknowledged (as in the form of pragmatism) or not. But the presence of such critical normativity introduces yet another challenge. Some may argue that the normative claims that the critical makes can be equated to value orientations that critical researchers carry out their work equipped with. Carspecken (1996), for example, argues that,

[T]he principal criteria that have been used by critical ethnographers to distinguish their genre of research have been the value orientation of the researcher and a broadly defined belief that society is structured so as to produce disadvantaged and oppressed groups of people. This shared orientation is not hard to specify. Critical ethnographers generally research social sites, social processes, and cultural commodities like text books, films, and video games in order to reveal social inequalities. All such researchers basically begin their research with the assumption that contemporary societies have systemic inequalities complexly maintained and reproduced by culture. They are opposed to inequality, which they conceptualize as a structural feature of society, and they wish to conduct research that will support efforts to reduce it. (p.30-31)

I, however, argue differently from Carspecken’s subscription to “value orientations” as the only thing that sets critical researchers apart. It is more an inescapable normativity that defines the critical by virtue of the very constitution of its practical dimension, i.e., the emancipative relationality. One could agree with Carspecken’s generalization that critical
researchers all have certain value orientations towards existing social inequalities – “We do not like it, and we want to change it” (p.7), given that it is not possible to produce research, let alone social research, without value orientations. Values enter any research process in a variety of ways, such as selection of topics, subjects, methods, etc. (Israel, 1972). Besides, there is a tendency to address this interaction with the term political – every research is political. And I find this expression also problematic as it also defames the “political” and closes the gap between the sociological and the political in many cases. Then again, while I agree with Carspecken’s claim that consciously chosen values (this is what makes them orientations) are one of the distinguishing features of the critical enterprise, I argue that it cannot be exclusively summed as value orientations, period. I think that it is necessary to also discuss the critical as a practical engagement of reality in terms of the normative claims it embodies, which are inherent to the movement of critical research towards the end of human emancipation. My position is more in line with Israel’s (1972):

The confusion of value-terms with normative terms "tends to obscure the conceptual (logical) difference between norms and valuations (von Wright, 1963 a, p. 100). Very broadly speaking, value-sentences are about something which is "good". Normative sentences in the same broad sense are about what "ought" to be done. I do not deny that there exist certain relations between values and norms. However, to state what exactly these relations are is difficult (p.70).

By thus associating normative critical claims with the practical ends of research practices, I defined four major characteristics of critical normativity as the latter was articulated by many of the scholars that I interviewed. I employed an objective “normative fact,” that is, there are
inequalities in society, and consequently, defined related conditions that need to be “altered,” but which are not reducible to particular visions of social equality, democratic or otherwise.

Inequality is a normative term because it is wrong, and is thus, it may be safe to generalize, unjustifiable by any means. However, if one cannot justify inequality, abstracted, on any ethical grounds, the material conditions or forces that produce and sustain it might be differently treated. This is of course a discussion that is broader than the specific scope of this section. Let us, then, spell out the four features of the critical normativity that I refer to above. I argue that the critical normativity is established on the claims that:

- Certain conditions create inequalities;
- Certain conditions perpetuate inequalities;
- Certain people, individuals or groups, live under unequal conditions; and,
- Power leads to privilege.

**Certain Conditions Create Inequalities**

According to several of the scholars I interviewed, certain conditions seem to create inequalities in society, and thus need to be altered. These scholars have normative conceptions (and thus claims) about what these conditions of inequality are, and how such normativity guides their critical work. One good example is Rhoads’ narration about the sociocultural obstacles that obstruct participatory democracy:
Mustafa- Do you have any normative claims while constructing your research framework?

Rhoads- I don’t know how a person can claim to be critical and not have that. Because if you are critical, you are critiquing and challenging things as they are. And on what basis are you doing that if you don't have some vision of how things ought to be? The question is how precise we are to be in delineating what we believe ought to be. And my precision or what I think how things might be is really rooted in the concept of democracy and how we create more democratic societies and organizations, etc. So, my normative vision comes from a progressive democratic view of society not that far removed from the notion of participatory democracy. I believe basically in a kind of an Aristotelian arrangement where everyone has the potential to be engaged in important decisions that shape their existence. And social structures that limit our ability to participate in democratic processes are by definition oppressive and marginalizing.

According to Rhoads, then, people should be able to participate in decision-making processes which, in turn, also form their own existence. The conditions that prevent people from participating in those processes are oppressive and marginalizing, and need to alter/transform them if things in society are to become any better. In this manner, defining the specific conditions that create social inequality is inseparable from the implications of this inequality manifested in people’s lived experiences. This connection allows Rhoads to allocate in the obstruction of participatory democracy a main factor that generates inequality, and which should be targeted by critical researchers to realize a more equal society. The centrality of this normative claim for him should not be taken as necessarily dismissive of other important factors.
that may play into the imbalance, such as power relations, psychological or cultural dynamics, etc. What is relevant here is to see how a specific normative critical claim can orient research one way or the other.

Racism is another condition that is said to generate inequalities in society, and similarly becomes a target of critique and a common research topic. In this regard, Noffke discusses how she conceives racism and its effects on the one hand, and what should be done about it, on the other:

Mustafa-You also say that you are using the lenses of anti-racism. So what does that mean? How do you look at the issues?

Noffke- Well, I use it in two ways. One is just an ordinary language thing that says that racism is an important force in society. It’s just always there. It’s the critical race theory … it’s endemic to American society. In that, we have to act in opposition to it, we can’t be just multiculturalists or anything else. The strength of anti-racism as a term is that it identifies the nature of the beast that we struggle against. It’s sort of like when using the word feminist means you prioritize issues of women’s rights. An anti-oppressive educator works across different forms of education. Probably the strongest thing I’ve had to learn in my life as a European American growing up in an almost entirely white environment is that it’s the biggest dimension. So, I think it is grounded in my own autobiography as well.

Here too, a condition that generates inequality, in this case racism according to Noffke, provides a normative claim that the researcher could deploy in order to devise mechanisms
respond to such negative aspect of the social reality. In other words, anti-racism that she underlines as a necessary oppositional stance is grounded in her normative claim that racism is part of reality that needs to be transformed.

It is important to indicate here that there exist other conditions that could generate social inequalities to one extent or another, such as stereotyping, division of labor, immigration laws, and geographic exclusion, among others. It is also relevant to mention that a certain conditions may lack the consensus whether they belong to the category of generating inequality or else – for example, others may understand racism not as a cause the way Noffke depicts, but more like an effect of a broader system, i.e., capitalism. However, I rely on how these conditions were defined by my interviewees to frame whether they belong to one or another of the proposed characteristics of critical normativity, rather than to establish referentiality external to participant narratives.

**Certain Conditions Perpetuate Inequalities**

In other cases, it is the conditions that sustain and perpetuate inequality in society that orient and frame the normative claims that critical scholars make. Here is what Cornbleth, for example, says:

Oh yeah. Because it seems to me that those normative claims are assumptions that are very much part of a critical perspective. There are certain assumptions going in … there is no pretence of being neutral or objective even if one could be, which I doubt. So, for
example, in US history and culture, there is this really strong individualist strand, dimension, legend … the individual; and this works in a couple of ways that I think are highly problematic. One, it assumes that the accomplishments of all individuals and the recent Western history in the US has debunked a lot of this. There had not been roads; there had not been water projects; there had not been whatever. These individuals would not have made it if the United States Army did not defeat the Native Americans living in the West. And I would say defeat in various ways. What I see as a problem with this is that we do not recognize, we tend not to recognize, or give sort of credence to or take seriously structural issues and concerns. So, it also plays out in disparaging group identity. The individual and the nation with no intervening or intermediary groups. And you see this played out with racism being conflated with prejudice as an individual problem. Oh well, if it is an individual problem, you do not need to address structural changes. And so, how I see these concerns affecting my work is looking explicitly at structural factors and dimensions. And trying to make them concrete so people who do not see them, or who don’t want to see them, will have a difficult time ignoring them or not understanding them. So, if I can show, for example, in the recent project … and I am still working on it … which includes more structural, theoretical pieces … If I can show what you may call institutional pressure and how it has an impact on the individuals who enter in. Yes, individuals are important. But Tom Popkewitz used this phrase in a book chapter years ago. But the individual in social circumstances, those social circumstances, those social structures make a difference. If I can show how this works it is more difficult to deny that it exists.

In Climates of opinion and curriculum practices, it bothered me for a long time that
there is this talk of social forces and their influences as if this is how things are. How does it work? What should we take seriously? Because then if we want to bring about some changes in the interests of right, of fairness, or equity, we need to know how things got to be the way they are. Because otherwise this effort is not just going to happen, anyway.

This lengthy quote from my interview with Cornbleth above demonstrates how critical scholars frame their normative claims with relation to distinguishing racism as generator of inequality from social, political and psychological problems that can be said to perpetuate it in the first place. Here, Cornbleth argues that one of the factors that sustains racism in US society is the illusionary tendency to perceive racism as only an individual problem, which becomes, in one sense, a sociological attribution error. This is because the common understanding grounded in “the individual and the nation with no intervening or intermediary groups” disguises the political and sociological nature of racism operating in society. Her account also echoes Marx’s notion of ideology critique. “The argument here is that the belief systems of class-divided societies work in such a way as to conceal inequalities, and place them beyond meaningful discussion and challenge (Edgar, 2006, p.16).”

Institutional practices in education are another constellation of factors that are usually critiqued for perpetrating inequalities, such as the differential distribution of knowledge, teacher expectations and school resources. Therefore, these institutional educational practices become the material that many critical researchers use in order to frame the normative claims they establish on the basis of critiquing that perpetuates inequality. Scheurich’s work in racially mixed high school is a good example here:
One of the things we developed in that book [Equity Traps: A Useful Construct for Preparing Principals to Lead Schools That Are Successful With Racially Diverse Students] has gotten a lot attention is what we call “equity audits”. And so equity audit is that you look at, say, who is getting disciplined in a school. In high school, that's mixed-race high schools, who is receiving the discipline? The data show that it's overwhelmingly African-American boys and next to them Latino boys. We have a process that gets people to actually look at their own data so that they see “Woow 20% of our kids are getting 50% of the discipline. Why is that true? Is that because they deserve it or there are biases in the system?” Our point is, of course, there are biases in the system and helping them to look at that so that they change how they operate, have an impact on what kids are actually experiencing in high school. So would I call all these critical work? Yes. It's all about transforming environments to make them more equitable and just. A big term in my field now is social justice, that's got a lot more attention and it's traveled a lot better than, say, critical theory.

The normative claim Scheurich is trying to make here is the critique of the overrepresentation of minority kids at the receiving end of disciplinary action at schools. This is indicative of bias embedded institutionally in education. The normative claim, then, becomes one that argues that the educational system works against the wellbeing of individuals or groups who are not part of the “mainstream” US society. His normative claim framed as such could pave the path to establishing yet another normative claim that relates to how pupils who are usually subject to disciplinary action at schools respond, i.e., with reference to developing oppositional tendencies against schooling practices, which may in turn reproduce certain educational hierarchies that are specific to educational settings.
It is quite realistic to claim that what factors that perpetuate social inequalities usually have a larger presence than the structures that generate these inequalities in the critical scholarship. This would have to do with more frequently these aspects are made empirically visible through research vis-à-vis research aims to disentangle, theoretically or empirically, the structural causes of imbalance per se.

**Certain people, individuals or groups, live under unequal conditions**

Another territory in which the critical can establish its normativity is through the critique that certain individuals or groups of people tend to be more affected by conditions of social inequalities than other members of society. Belonging to a certain community, or to a particular racial or ethnic group may bring along attachments to one’s life that play out differently among individuals and in society at large. Thus, a certain affiliation may generate privilege, while another may cause strife to the individual and his/her group. It is the latter group of disadvantaged members of society that critical research sometimes targets in differentiation from a focus on what socially generates or perpetuates strife in the first place, as is the case with the two previous categories above. A representative instance of this line of normativizing by focusing on those subject to inequality is Lee’s research on Asian Americans in general, and the Hmong people in particular:

My research is focused primarily on the ways that race, gender, and social class inform, change, and shape the experiences of Asian-American immigrants specifically in education. More recently, I've expanded to looking at other immigrant groups but it's
still the same interest in looking into how issues of race, class, and gender inform, change, shape, constrain, and limit student experiences. A lot of my work has looked at how the social hierarchy in the United States functions – how the racial hierarchy functions; and where Asian Americans of different ethnic backgrounds and class backgrounds fit into the racial hierarchy; and the roles that the schools play in racializing Asian American students.

I go in with certain assumptions about how inequality functions and particularly how inequalities regarding race and class function in the larger dominant society. Having said that, I don’t know, going into the field exactly what inequality will look like in a particular space. The fact that there will be inequality, however, I do assume. And so I’m interested in locally-specific ways that inequality presents itself; and I am interested in how locally-specific expressions of inequality are related to larger/macro issues. So, I’ve focused on how racial inequality manifests itself in particular schools. For example, I’ve been interested in how Asian American kids are racialized and how Asian American kids respond to systems of inequality. I’ve also been interested in how race intersects with other identities.

Lee explores social inequalities through the experiences of Asian-Americans. Being a member of Asian-America group(s) might mean for many that they are exposed to stereotypical expectations. Since these groups are not heterogeneous, the members who do not fit stereotypical expectations, say in schools, may suffer from inequalities at many levels. Power produces stereotypes about individuals, groups or people in order to set control to operate discursively. In other words, Lee grounds her normative claims on the necessity that certain groups are not the
way they are depicted in society, and that such illusionary perceptions need to be altered for the
liberation of members of these groups suffering from inequalities to materialize. What
distinguishes Lee’s work from Scheurich’s, then, is that Lee looks at the effects of certain
harmful conditions on a certain group, while Scheurich compares different groups in relation to a
particular schooling practice.

**Power leads to privilege**

It may be fair to say that, in comparison to the previous three categories, fewer critical
researchers choose to establish their normative claims in the act of “studying up” the trajectories
of power and those who hold its keys and enjoy its privileges. But those of the critical research
community who frame their normative claims within the realm of power bring to visibility the
flipside of power that is less examined, i.e., how those members of society in possession of
power become immune to the very effects of inequality to which those who are denied access to
this very power are exposed. This is an area where establishing normativity within the critical
undertaking poses more challenges because the critical domain itself is not immune from the
workings of power within the academic field and in relation to border social formations. In this
sense, power sometimes determines what areas researchers choose to investigate through
mechanisms that become thus more pressing to uncover through power-bound normativity. Fine
elaborates on this point by comparing two instances of school research:

> Studying privileged settings and how privilege accumulates is crucial; but elite
> institutions have an endless number of ways to protect themselves and keep researchers
out. So, the fact that Brett is doing this research in privileged settings is great, and he has written some very thoughtful essays about what it is like to do participatory work in privileged settings, as have Bill Tierney and Stanley Aronowitz. It is called studying up. As you suggest, critical researchers need to infiltrate spaces marked by profit and accumulation of privilege. One of the many theoretical and political benefits of contact-zone research is the ability to study the same phenomena in privileged and marginalized settings. And we begin to see that learning disabilities, teen sexuality, drug use may be equivalent; but the consequences are far more severe in marginalized communities of color. Wealthy students may mess up in schools but they get diagnosis and are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act and get untimed tests and it doesn’t show up on their records. At suburban parties they may drink a lot or get picked up for drugs, but they don’t typically go to prison for 20 years. But it is hard to get into those places, private schools are hard to get into, elite communities are hard to get into. Sometimes, when we pursue expert testimony in educational lawsuits we get access, through discovery, to privileged information about elite communities. Really love, because you do discovery, I remember testifying in a case involving Englewood, a mixed community and Tenafly, a wealthy community; and in the legal materials we learned that a kid was caught with drugs, quote “in a blacker school.” The principal would call the police. And yet in the wealthier community, when students were caught with drugs, the school would call the parents or psychiatrists. So, then we went to court because the white parents in the Englewood school wanted to go to Tenafly and to prove that Englewood wasn’t as good, they checked the police records for evidence. Tenafly had no police records to speak of because elite problems are confidential.
There is a kind of whitening out of privilege pathology. I definitely think we need to be doing more work, but it is really hard to do.

This extraordinary example on how the workings of power determine how, where, and when critical research can lay any normative claims to an emancipatory endpoint with relation to the question of privilege. Accrued through power, this privilege eventually results in filtering which aspects of the social phenomena can be subjected to critical study. In other words, power functions as a gatekeeper that in many instances prevents critical research from infiltrating into particular domains for no reason other than that privilege has managed to seal these areas off in the face of the generalized task that the critical is said to have, challenging and unsettling the hegemonic. Thus, instead of only assessing what generates and perpetuates inequality on the one hand, and who suffers from such inequality, on the other, critical normativity can be established with relation to this fourth category of the understudied workings and implications of power in demarcating what to or not to examine.

In this section, I argue that critical qualitative research should by necessity establish claims that are tied in with the practical ends it seeks to realize. This is what distinguishes a normative proposition from a value orientation that can be said to color research one way or the other. A normative claim rather frames critical research relationally to the main purposes it plans to accomplish. This relationality, as a movement in the direction of an emancipative purpose, is what grants the critical a normative character, despite the multiple ways in which individual researchers seem to engage with the many issues that the critical enterprise is fraught with, like inequality, oppression, and injustice. In this sense, and in relation to social inequalities, one can say that critical research in education is one that takes up the question of what ought to be
The last part (doing/acting) is intentionally parenthesized to iterate that some critical research is anchored not necessarily in an outlook of doing-to-transform; but instead, it could engage with realities of inequality at different levels, such as the interpretive, the theoretical, or the descriptive. Again, the normative dimension of the critical is an aspect of relationality rather than functionality. Yet this normative is practical in the sense that research is bound to an emancipative purpose that seeks to alter reality. And this makes a normative claim different from “complaints.”

**Turning the Gaze Onto One’s Self: Reflexive Practices**

The interpretive turn in the social sciences during the 1970s, in the wake of postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminism, and postcolonial theory, began to question epistemological foundations of qualitative research (Herndl, 1991). Critiques problematizing the security of traditional ethnographic practices, for example, raised initial questions surrounding “the politics of the gaze” during and after conducting research (Pillow, 2003). This emerged from the belief that “all researchers are to some degree connected to a part of the object of their research (Davies, 1999; p.1).” These researchers had consequently to contend with the need to reflect on one’s research practices, since, as Bourdieu (1994) argues, the process of representation through research was never free from the entanglements of one’s predispositions

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46 See Walzer (2002) for a discussion on critique versus complaint.
as a researcher against the reality of reproducing, through research, structures of power and ideology. The divide between the subject of research and the object of that research has thus posed as a constant challenge that researchers try to mitigate and maneuver in a variety of ways, which Michelle Fine designates as “working the hyphen” (1994). This opened up the territory of research to the novel tendency of scrutinizing the researcher’s role and position vis-à-vis those researched and the context of research, rather than focusing almost exclusively on those the researcher seeks to represent (Lincoln, 1997). With a particular reference to one of the dominant, contemporary types of research that seeks to represent – ethnographic research – it has been proposed that, in Foley’s (2002) words, “It is only through being reflexive that we explore our fantasies about ethnographic texts being copies of reality. We also deflate any fantasies we hold about absolute truth and objectivity (p.473).”

Reflexivity is thus a gaze reversal that enables a new and conscious mapping of research that examines what the researcher does, and does not do, hence its importance for the critical qualitative research as it anchors the validity claims of the latter into being “vigilant about research practices.” Still, reflexivity is frequently assumed to be at operation when conducting research that many researchers, according to Pillow (2003), utilize it as a methodological tool without necessarily explicitly defining how this is being put to work, “as if it is something we all commonly understand and accept as standard methodological practice for critical qualitative research (p.176).” Added to this ambiguity is that reflexivity is not merely a matter of the researcher’s positionality or their politics of representing the object of research. It is also a temporal tool of interpretation and claim-making that is not restricted to the immediate present of the research process: reflexivity makes claims as to possible alternatives that could emerge and be proposed by way of critiquing existing conditions.
With reference to this dissertation project, understanding reflexive practices in ethnographic research is crucial mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the need to locate one’s self within the research context and to explore the implications of positionality that have always been a key strategy for many critical researchers in challenging suppressive and objectified (positivist) approaches and methodologies of quantitative research, as well as in searching for the possibilities of transformation (Weis, 2004; Maxey, 1999; Fine, 1994, Patai, 1994; Leather, 1994; Foley, 2002; Pillow, 2003). For as Michelle Fine states: “[W]hen we construct texts collaboratively, self-consciously examining our relations with/for/ despite those who have been contained as “Others,” we move against, we enable resistance to Othering” (p. 139). Secondly, as field stories that enjoy circulation and value, reflexive practices are the only way through which we can dig out individual contributions, dilemmas, failures, successes and other broader effects of research. It is the only way to understand implications of the researcher’s actions, and how research is perceived and consumed (Maxey, 1999, Pillow, 2003). In *Homo Academicus* Bourdieu (1984) says:

One cannot avoid having to objectify the objectifying subject. It is by turning to study the historical conditions of his own production, rather than by some form of other of transcendental reflection, that the scientific subject can gain a theoretical control over his own structures and inclinations as well as over determinants whose products they are, and can thereby gain the concrete means of analysis of this kind, which owes and concedes nothing to self indulgent narcissism, can really help to place the scholar in a position where he is able to bring to bear on his familiar world the detached scrutiny which, with no special vigilance, the ethnologist brings to bear in any world to which he is not linked by the inherent complicity of being involved in its social game, its
illusio, which creates the very value of the objectives of the game, as it does the value of the game itself (p.xii)

Reflexivity (or reflection) has long been a practice particularly present in ethnographic studies. Anthropologists like Clifford Geertz and Margaret Mead, having had their actual ethnographic studies published, used another publication to share stories that they had compiled from their fieldwork. This proliferation of stories unto the plane of those who used to represent the stories of others enabled the destabilization of the myths of the “purity” of research and the “neutrality” of the researcher, given how talking about one’s self had been rigidly viewed as a form of “contaminant” to the argued objectivity of the study. The reflections of the ethnographic researcher were usually conveyed to the readership in the form of journals or letters from the field. These texts served a purpose similar to that highlighted by Geertz’s emphasis on “thick descriptions”: to provide important clues about the researcher, particularly in terms of his/her research practices, fantasies, reality perceptions and biases, in the case of the former, and to discourage the reader from readily adopting misconceptions of cultural artifacts and over-generalized behavioral codes, in the case of the latter.

Reflexivity gained prominence with the advent of the new understanding that “all research is political,” research as being the “manifestation of various political choices.” Feminist field methods contributed to this understanding a great deal. Apart from the claim that two people might see the same thing differently, feminists took the challenge of understanding how this difference was shaped politically and how the “male eye” constructed the female subject throughout history. This differentiation was primarily a political one in the sense that representation was not simply about demystifying representation of the researched as a mute
absolute; rather, the feminist intervention mandated, it was the representation of certain subjects and who by the representation was carried out that mattered more. In other words, looking at the experiences of either the researcher or the researched gave way to looking at them both conjointly from the perspective of the common, in this case established on the ground of gender. This has had important implication on research practices and the politics of representation, especially given the argument that Rorty (1985) makes that two desires underscore researchers’ engagement in reflexive practices – “desire for objectivity” and “desire for solidarity.” This shared commonness between the researcher and the participant, whether on the basis of gender, ethnicity, class-affiliation, etc., was the attachment of insiderness to the community/group researched vis-à-vis the detachment of a proclaimed neutrality that maintained the gap between the two ends of the research process. Both “solidarity” and “objectivity” have been used as mechanisms of legitimizing the positionality of the researcher, as either “one of them” or “away from them.”

The issue has also been fraught with the problematic of the power conceived to belong to that who represents at the expense of those who are represented. The very mitigation of this power, which had also emerged from the initial question of “who can research whom,” had to rely on the practice and the incorporation of reflexivity as staple of conducting research. But reflexivity-as-solidarity could not eliminate the reality that the researcher would still be in a more privileged position in comparison with the subjects of his/her research. Mitigation rather than elimination would thus become the formula in the practice of reflexivity in research. Today, reflexivity is seen as the necessary modus vivendi between the power of the researcher and his/her desire to establish solidarity with the researched.
When examining how such solidarity is achieved between the researcher and the subject, it would be relevant to quote at length what Foley designates as necessary “qualities” that one needs to have to enable such attachment, in a non-colonial way nevertheless. (Still, it remains an open question as to what kind of researcher would have the required attributes for connection to happen as such, and whether it is possible in the first place to have these qualities objectified in a Bourdieuan sense. But above all, it would be a question of whether one could have access to such qualities by means of the reflexive practices at operation):

I go to a field site and introduce myself and try to say what I am doing in a generalized way, and try to develop human relationships where there is a certain amount of trust and a certain amount of connection. But it's kind of a funny relationship. Maybe only with a few people in one field site, we developed intimate relationship. Most of them are kind of temporary, professional, cordial, and quasi-professional relationships where you're trying to get information on the things they are either willing or not willing to give you. So, a lot of times the connections you make are not very intimate or very deep. With a certain number of people, I think we make deep and intimate connections. And how do you do that? You do it through your capacity, I guess, to be kind of an open person who has some degree of empathy in them for human relationships. If you hate people and you can't relate to people in general, it is going to be very difficult for you to do field work because it requires you to like people; and you have to like social chitchat; you have to like interactions with people; you have to have some respect for human beings in order to gain their respect. I think making a connection in the field is a very complicated set of social relationship; you cannot generalize about them very easily in various ways. It is part of some of your capacity to not hold yourself above
other people. And it's like you're no better than anybody you are studying, no matter how much education you have or how much experience you have; or what kind of position you have in the university; or how much you get paid or whatever. None of that counts for anything. The only thing that counts is like, if you're capable of opening yourself up to relate to somebody else on their level and basically how they want to relate to you. The way you relate to them should not be in a manipulative kind of way, but just one human being to another. So, I don’t know how to describe it other than this… I have some confidence after 40 years of fieldwork with lots of people that I can go practically with any group and can relate to them. Because I don’t feel like I have these giant pretensions that I am above any other group or my race is superior, my social class is superior; my body of knowledge that I carry in my little head is superior. I think it’s just a matter of how you see yourself in relation to a human race. I suppose one term for that is humility. I hate to use that term because too often we are tricked by our own fault humility. So, I am not going to sit here and tell you that I am totally humble either; I have my own arrogant qualities. But I think it's some kind of quality of openness, maybe it's a better word, and interest in people and openness, not being highly ideological like I am filled with theoretical frameworks of this and that. And I am probably very prone to be ideological; but I try really hard not to be an ideologue. That's a different kind of thing: you filter everything somebody says through your ideological framework; that's a really important thing not to do. As an ethnographer, you are trying to understand how they see the world and how they talk about it in the words they use. I think it's very important to somehow, even though you're filled with highly ideological frameworks, not to permit those to dominate the way you listen. I
think somehow you have to listen in an open manner and suspend your own frameworks to some degree because you cannot really hear what other people are saying if you're constantly filtering it as they're saying it. You try to write it down and record it, remember it and then maybe you filter it through your frameworks afterwards. But at least while you are interacting with them, try not to be sort of fitting everybody's experience into your theoretical framework. This is a very difficult thing to do, to have all these frameworks of critical analysis and yet somehow be open to the experiences of others. I think the most difficult thing for ethnographers to do is to have a strong theoretical framework but still be open to hear what other people's experiences are like. I think you're only capable of doing that if you are not an ideologue.

It may not be that difficult to skillfully incorporate one’s self into the context of research in a non-colonial manner for a master ethnographer like Foley, who has 40 years experience in the field. But it definitely is more challenging for many emerging and junior researchers, who, in an attempt to maneuver around developing technical and epistemological capacities that would make that level of incorporation possible, would have to focus instead on how their work as researchers is legitimated and justified to the public. And this public dimension makes justification all the more relevant. In *Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas in Field Research*, Fine (1993) acknowledges that:

> Qualitative research is both more and less than its public image. We indulge in claims, assumptions, and rationalizations about the method and the analysis behind it that require close and cold scrutiny. Humans have unlimited abilities to justify their actions through moral discourse. Further, so much of the process of fieldwork is hidden and
backstage that judging texts is complex. Researchers are lone rangers, cowboys, individualists. Analysis is private, field notes are rarely available for secondary analysis, and much ethnographic writing is accepted on faith. We assure ourselves that there are good and sufficient ethical mandates for this secrecy. Opportunities for deception are great. Although researchers are fundamentally honest, as lawyers, clergymen, doctors, and car salesmen are fundamentally honest, everyone's goal is to permit life to run tolerably smoothly—to engage in impression management (p.268).

I would subscribe to the position that reflexivity can be used as a tool to legitimate and justify research, and that it does not necessarily have to be an element in the objectification of the researchers or mere recognition of one’s “baggage” going into the field then going into the process of writing. In this sense, it is a political issue that alludes to the tension that is characteristic of the dynamics of research.

**How to Practice Reflexivity**

The question is not only what reflexivity might be and what purposes it is made to serve, but also how to practice it. There is no clear cut answer to this question of practice. For, in Luttrell’s words, “it has never been systemized.” One could say that, at least from the interviews that I conducted, there seem to be some “right” ways of practicing this much talked about reflexivity. And these could range from an exploration of the self hermeneutically, to incorporating one’s voice, as researcher, into the narratives of the subjects of research. For example, Carspecken commented that:
One interesting issue here is why the word “reflexivity” is now favored so much over “reflection” without any explanation or investigation of the different meanings.

Anyway, reflection is internal to hermeneutic processes, a constant activity, something tied to the chronically present identity claim, something internally tied to responsibility and accountability and freedom. It is always in process. We understand others as they understand themselves only to the extent that we can reflect during our interactions with others in the hermeneutic circle to change our forestructures. Reflection is not a choice to make but rather an endemic feature of understanding meaning. However, we can use it methodically and thus deliberately and we should do so. We must seek to understand our own forestructures and do so critically. This is not literally “confession” but rather “self-examination.” “Confession” is like declaring limitations for being of the gender, race, class, culture, sexual orientation and so on that one has found oneself to be “thrown” within. It suggests that we can declare such things and never in any way transcend them. That is a poor epistemological position to take on. How can one know, for example, that one cannot escape one’s “thrown” position? To know that or even believe that is to invest already in a broader epistemology. But self-exploration we can do, by writing about ourselves or, even better, have someone interview us. The process of self-exploration should continue in the research process continuously. In a sense as we understand others better and better we understand ourselves as reflected from their experience and interpretative schemes better and better. We must be willing to change, to do self-critique, and to have our own existential investments threatened in this way. We have to be willing to be hurt, shocked, wounded, and so on. This means that catharsis can result but it is not something to choose, it will or will not happen. We can
choose to be open, self-aware, aware that we are not fully aware, ever, of ourselves or other people. Then catharsis may or may not come. Peer debriefing, member checking, and interacting with our participants all involve continuous reflection. I distinguish reflexivity from reflection in terms of a continuum of awareness. The more aware we are of the process the more we can call it reflection rather than reflexivity.

Thus, according to Carspecken, it is this “endemic” self-awareness through the otherness of theory and peers/colleagues that benefits a reflexive commitment on the part of the researcher, a “mirror approach,” I would like to call it, to highlight the utility of theoretical and collegial mirrors over mirrors that simply reverse the outward gaze inwards. This mirroring needs to be explicitly incorporated within the workings of the research process, even when the outcome of such integration may not have been that foreseeable by the researcher at the initial stages of the work. For this specific reason, it is not a confession, as Carspeken states above, but reflexivity that is more like what Scheurich identifies as “public reflexivity,” a deliberation:

I think, in kind of a more mainstream or standard critical theory, reflexivity is taken as a kind of a reliable source of adding trustworthiness. I think that Wanda Pillow destabilized or problematized reflexivity as not being dependable. Not trying to erase it, but just saying that it’s an unstable, not as reliable a source of, say, critique that had been portrayed before. But, nonetheless, in my own work I’m always practicing reflexivity. I’m always running a self critique of what I’m doing.

I would say, both within myself and like in a public sense – in a sense that what we’re saying is not truth, what we say is not necessarily free of race, class, gender, sexual orientation biases. Like we did this book on accountability and we got people from all
different types of perspectives to participate; and to me, that is kind of public
reflexivity. Doug Foley and Angela critiqued a piece we had in a teacher magazine.
And then we got to write a rejoinder to that and our rejoinder was respectful of their
critique. It agreed with some things and disagreed with others. That was what I would
call public reflexivity. Again, I say, I often find mainstream critical theorists not very
open to a critique of their own work.

Public reflexivity then, according to Scheurich, is a way of incorporating perspectives
and critiques other than one’s own into his/her research practices, as one cannot be fully
cognizant about his or her own biases. In this sense, it is not sufficient for one to be vigilant
about one’s own research practices; also necessary is to recognize the need for making one’s
research public by way of assessing the work through public eyes and public deliberations. He
argues that this “publicizing” helps advance one’s competence of conducting and publishing
“better” research. On the other hand, given that he is very critical about a certain group of critical
scholars whom he calls mainstream, he believes that public reflexivity is possible only through
being open to critique and respectful of others’ perspectives. He critiques these “mainstream”
critical theorists for lacking similar characteristics, and goes further to suggest that even the way
one conducts reflexivity could create tension among researchers. This is because others’ critique
of one’s work or study might be perceived as an investigation of one’s capacity at conducting
research, one’s level of knowledge, political and ideological assumptions and the like, i.e.,
critique with an *ad hominem* character. In this sense, the public reflexivity that Scheurich talks
about may never end up ending exchanges among scholars. Carspecken, however, warns us to be
ready “to be hurt, shocked, wounded and so on” as an outcome or side-effect of this public
deliberation.
Foley, whom Scheurich mentioned in his narration, suggests getting help from others in order to recognize to what extent one’s reflexive practices are the production of his or her ego. In other words, similar to public deliberation, he sees this practice as a fuse deployed against slipping into the realm of “egoistic reflexive practices.” But this time, Foley believes that this has to be done before publication, i.e., prior to making the research public:

I always tell my students: “if you do this auto-ethnographic work you need to let people read this before you publish it so they can tell you when you've gone off the deep end. Because you may not be capable … you may have so many grudges to harbor or so much sense of victimhood in you that you're not even aware of your own psychology; that you're confessing all kinds of stuff just as a cathartic exercise. And it has nothing to do with the study you are trying to produce.” If that kind of confessional stuff does not really facilitate the study, then it's useless. It’s just your narcissism. But I think people can't see their own narcissism until their colleagues tell them. So, having a collective where you share your work with other people is very important because it shows you when you have been excessively confessional for no great purpose.

For Miller, however, reflexive practices begin during research process itself rather than in the interim before publication. She follows a different path of being vigilant about her “own biases”:

I try to become aware of my own biases, I try to have a research team with diverse points of view selected to keep the interrogation of the processes that we’re using. If you don’t do that, it's too easy to fall into an ethical hole that you don't want to be in. So, I think it can help. I think reflexivity is essential. If you don't do that you have….
It’s really problematic. I'm not sure that in itself, though, it is enough. I think that that’s why I do respect and read critical theorists because sometimes they … they’ve raised to consciousness something that I might not have realized. And I think you need these other perspectives in order to raise consciousness. So, you have to be self reflective and you have to look at these other perspectives of people who were doing critiques of research and ethical issues so that you don't fall into the trap. So I value the critiques people make, then it helps me to be reflexive. That's why but it's also the trap of being a researcher or a scholar; you have to read and read and read and read way outside of your field. That's another thing that's very dangerous. Let’s say I am in English Ed. and so I only read research on English education-- I think that's dangerous, although English Ed of all the content areas is probably the most critically focused, has more critical edge and critical research. Because what we look at started off with composition and literature; so the critiques pretty early concerned how composition was taught and how literature was being taught, in addition to questions of colonization, canonization, and all the rest… And so my field itself is pretty self-aware for the most part. I mean it depends on where you are positioned or situated. Reflexivity is essential but not sufficient.

For Miller, then, diversity is a key component when practicing reflexivity. Having people around who come from diverse backgrounds, as well as reading outside of one’s own field, are major strategies for her to understand her own biases. She also calls attention to the idea that a field could impose limitations on people involved in its practices and happenings. In other words, she claims that certain fields of study may have developed their own perspectives in ways regimented enough for these to have become institutionalized. Such institutionalization may have
a strait-jacket effect on the minds of the practitioners within the field. In order to counter such potential restriction, she urges researchers to read “way outside of [one’s] field.” Diverse perspectives and approaches, according to her, would provide necessary mental faculties and eyes to see one’s practices from various angles.

Another way of practicing reflexivity can be found in the emphasis Fine places on dialogue to investigate the “validity and generalizibility” of her research practices. For her, it is not possible to decouple the purpose of research from the type of the reflexive practice needed, for the latter is pretty much determined by the former. This makes it slightly different from the case of reflexivity as “public deliberation” above, in the sense that reflexivity-as-dialogue for Fine seems to be the testing grounds against her personal biases against the background of the criteria of valid and generalizable work. It is somewhat a disambiguation mechanism of the researcher, rather than a stripping away of their value system and political commitments:

Sometimes, it's a little too narcissistic. But given my earlier statement that all research is political, I think it is crucial to be clear about where we begin, what we are scared to know, from what position we write, where we start, where our blind spots might be. For me, dialogue, engagement is a way to know to what extent the work we produce is valid and even generalizable. I want to be able to consider, does this work, what we have documented and theorized, does it move across contexts and communities? Can the questions we interrogate be in dialogue with communities and organizers? And I like to know that in the beginning of our work, in the middle and at the end, the questions we ask, with allies and colleagues, have a life that will grow and transform over time.
Dressman, while maintaining the need for self exploration through various reflexive methods, highlights a different meaning for reflexivity as more of the “researcher’s attitude” towards the framing of their research. For example, focusing on an emerging situation that you think might be problematic rather than restricting your approach to pre-structured research modules is manifestation of such attitude:

I never begin by stating that I have a clear question at the outset of research… What I have is the situation that I'm trying to understand. It might actually be that research questions or the outcome of that inquiry is not the starting point. I think that is a kind of reflexive attitude to take. I don’t think that one can apply social theory as a whole without engaging in a critique of these theories. I do not think that you can apply Bourdieu without interrogating what you are applying, or Foucault or anyone. So, my notion of reflexivity is that it is questioning every aspect of what we are doing all the time. And yet somehow not being so bowed down in indecision that you can't come to an interpretation… I think a large part of it is also continually acknowledging what you really are doing. It is about sticking close to your data, trying to find closer connections between your data and theoretical frame. When you don’t find those connections, it does not mean that those do not exist. That problematizes either your interpretation or the theory that you are using.

His understanding of reflexivity-as-attitude also goes beyond the mere level of exploring one’s self to accommodate for the need for one to also practice critique that targets the theoretical or epistemological foundations of research. In other words, theories applied to research studies are also subject to critique and need to be an essential part of reflexive attitude.
But although the “personal” or “confessional” seems to be the thing demoted in reflexive practices that do away with the straightforwardness of a gaze reversal, it could still be seen to influence, in the positive or negative senses, how much of that other “self” gets to perspire in the narratives of the research. In this regard, Noffke comments:

I’m not an overly private person but I’m not good at sharing the stuff about who I am, really. Somebody asked me one time to be a part of a study of activist women and I was like “nah. I don’t want to do that.” So, I think there has to be enough in there for people to see who I am and what I’m about; but you’re not seeing much in my writing that’s biographical, really, that tells you anything about where I come from or who I am, what my kids are like. Things like that … I’m not reflexive in that sense at all.

By no means is this an exhaustion of identifiable categories when one talks about reflexivity. Other scholars have for instance underlined other kinds of reflexivity, such as reflexivity as recognition of self, reflexivity as recognition of others, reflexivity as truth, and reflexivity as transcendence (Pillow, 2003). One could argue that these other classifications could be applied to make sense of my data. But I chose to focus instead on the categories that had emerged from my empirical data (public deliberation, collegial filtering, advancing researcher’s capacity and potential, timidity in constructing research framework and problem, etc.), for they held more potential in drawing a more plausible linkage between my participants and how their research practices, including their reflexive practices, convey who they are as critical researchers.
How Much is Too Much?

As can be seen from the previous section, the majority of the responses that I had received from my participants may highlight a general tendency to understand and define reflexivity by its antithesis, i.e., its lack or the presence otherwise of bad reflexive modes. With reference to the latter, narcissistic reflexive practices were frequently mentioned in participants’ narratives as instance of “bad” reflexivity. And this criticism of narcissistic reflexivity usually brings along the question, how much reflexive practice is too much? I argue that these narcissistic reflexive practices are a modified version of the old “thick descriptions,” now concerning the researcher rather than the researched as used to be the case. Cornbleth had the following to say about the researcher-focused “thick descriptions”:

If we go on and on and on, it nauseates you. I think the extent to which we want to be explicit about where we are coming from politically, theoretically, or any other way that might be relevant to the work we are doing. I don’t like some of the pieces I read. Lois and I joke about it. “We don’t want to know where you went to in kindergarten”! People get involved in talking too much about themselves and that is not really relevant and it is inappropriate; it is presumptuous and too narcissistic. But we all have some kind of perspective or framework whether we acknowledge or not that the so-called “subjectivity” always enters research. It enters in all kinds of research just as in different places and in different ways. And I think that talking about where we are coming from is appropriate; can be helpful. It is sort of saying to the reader, “take this into consideration as you read.” Maybe, “think about your own preferences and biases.”
I don’t like the idea that field research, ethnographic research is subjective and that other kinds of research are objective … it’s nonsense. What is objectivity but intersubjectivity?

In parallel to Cornbleth’s point that reflexive practices should bear connections to our work, or else they fail to serve a worthy purpose, Weis stated:

I think that we should self-locate. The problem is that … here’s one of your questions which we did not get to … It is that whole question about what is happening with qualitative methods now. The demand for explicit detail about method and argumentation and evidence and all of those things comes from somewhere. We went too far with reflexivity, we became too self-locating what we end up saying is that I see things a certain way because of my biography, and we can take that position too far. By too far, I mean not only that it is overly narcissistic at times, but that it undermines our work as researchers. We end up saying that “we find what we find” because of who we are. While there are certain elements of truth to this, we cannot build a research agenda on this basis. In the final analysis, that stance becomes about us, and we do not engage knowledge production to describe ourselves. Why would anyone take our findings seriously, if such findings come down wholly to who researcher is. It just does not work to build a corpus of knowledge. I agree that it is very important for me to self-locate: yes I am a White woman, I am a Jewish woman, I am seeing the world in a certain kind of way, etc. This is my perspective. Although frankly, much of my perspective should be clear from my frameworks. I think we have to be very careful not to get into too much narcissism with regard to who we are. Because then what we end up saying is
that there is no reality. It is all about the investigator and how he/she sees it. That seriously undermines our position when it comes to building knowledge, challenging knowledge and so forth.

Weis believes that one should not go too far, since too much narcissistic reflexivity obfuscates the whole research process altogether. But despite this sanctioning against too much narcissistic disclosure in research, many questions remain valid and worth attempting. Where could the red line between *too much* and *just about right* be drawn? How do we understand that we went too far? Many may find these questions to be inspired by positivism, an effort to delimit qualitative research, or they may see in them an attempt to inscribe vulgar relativism into the research practices by stressing the role of personal differences. But on the other hand, although I do not subscribe to the idea that relativism is the norm for research practices, as people understand and see things differently, it is also not my intention to wipe away the effects of the personal and the political on research construction and practice articulated by the scholars that I interviewed.

Researchers have various ideas about the way through which one can understand this “too much/too far.” However, I prefer to sum these up the way Luttrell chooses to identify such a condition: “I know it when I see it.” Her approach highlights the significance of the personal when evaluating the demarcations of “good” reflexivity. Scholars like Foley, by way of suggesting that the researcher should “have somebody read [one’s research] before publishing,” seek to engender some mechanism for harnessing any slippage into “going too far.” Luttrell had the following to say about the “red line” and how to guard against excessive narcissistic tendencies:
I think it all has to do with how it bears on the explanations or the claims that researchers are trying to make. And I don’t think there is value in and of itself to be constantly explaining what the researcher’s position is. Unless it is part of the story that’s being told. Certainly, I think that readers need to have enough information to know about who this person is, who is making knowledge claims on some level. But, I wouldn't say that it is always necessary in every single moment. I think there's a continuum, let’s put it that way of how much is too much, when and why. And then there is also our research subjects that they may have a different idea about when it’s important, necessary for the researcher to be clear that his or her own position or background and perspective come into it. I think I don't want to say, “you know it when you see it,” which is an answer that I could give in relation to what the right amount of reflexivity might be. I think Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot refers to it as “a disciplined subjectivity.” There are all kinds of different phrases that people have used about it and I don't know that it has ever been systematized.

Such “disciplined subjectivity” was consequential to the effort to add some reliability to qualitative research practices through rigorous self-analysis, recording and analyzing every phase of the research study, as well as through being conscious that “one cannot be truly objective” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). This was no small contribution to understanding and choosing contemporary research practices. And at the same time, it could also be seen as safety pins devised to attach some trustworthiness to the practices of qualitative research. But such an approach is still seen as born out of the personal, and how this is approximated with a grain of doubt for the effects it is argued it could have on the devising of, especially qualitative, research.
But despite the numerous criticisms, many studies whose reflexive approaches are more or less narcissistic or confessional find their way to publication. Additionally, that the question of narcissistic reflexivity was brought up with almost every researcher that I interviewed attest to the negative prominence this has gained in the field. But Foley argues to the contrary:

I don't think the field is generating into that narcissisms because nobody will publish those types of things. Those are quickly revealed as a bad confession and that is not going to convince anybody of anything, and we've already seen too much of that. And so, you cannot even get that published. I think that people are learning how to self-discipline themselves; but I think the ego will make people do some bad reflexivity, and bad reflexivity is no better than bad positivism. So, I think that as the practice evolves, confessional reflexivity becomes less and less important. I'm not too worried about that. It's an honest effort by many people but people don't know themselves; and so their own egos take over sometimes, they are not even aware of that.

Rhoads, for example, still sees a danger in the researcher becoming merely a narration in displacement of the role of “seeking to uncover the narrations” of research subjects that should be the case. He summarizes the real problem of too much reflexivity for research subjects as a representation problem:

There's a danger in viewing ourselves into narrative that we become the story and rather than our research participants and the issues that we are trying to address. It is indelicate balance I think. I wrote a paper called Writing the Self into Qualitative Research and Narrative [2003] or something like that I remember talking about. It was Mike Rose, who is a professor here, who brought up the issue. Sometimes students go
overboard and their story becomes the central theme and not how their participants went about, or how their research inquiry was. So, reflexivity is important both in our own thinking before doing research and as we do research. But it also sometimes needs to be part of the narrative that we produce. So the delicate balance involves balancing our story without centering it versus the stories and narratives that we’re seeking to uncover. I have been seeing a lot of writing on that. But I think there needs to be some on, “how does your story not become distracting from the research participants who deal with real forms of oppression and marginality?” That worries me.

But on the other hand, Dressman asserts that “going too far” also harms the researcher in that it can create a paralysis effect, which means that researchers may spend too much time and energy on investigating self, and this may paralyze the researcher’s ability to produce research:

It is important to be self-conscience about where you’re coming from when you are writing what your point of view is, and not just laying them out over and over again but asking yourself whether you have an accurate understanding of your own position or not. I also think that at some point it can become paralyzing. I frankly know lots of researchers who question themselves so much that they cannot get any work done. And that’s a problem too.

Over-questioning one’s self constantly and the effects this has on the researcher have been known as a common problem, particularly in Reflexive Anthropology. Gellner (1995) calls this uneasiness as “epistemological hypochondria”. Researchers susceptible to this “academic sickness” usually tend not to like what they produce because they are always under the paranoid suspicion of whether what they say actually represents other forms of life accurately or not. The
mood of uneasiness, hesitancy, cognitive timidity, concomitant unwillingness to follow intellectual endeavors etc., are considered to be among the major symptoms of this “epistemological hypochondria” (Ibid.).

Other than the general principles that my participants articulate, there seems to be no clearly established dividing line between moderate and excessive reflexive practice in qualitative research. Relevancy and connection to the focus of the research study are identified as two major principles that could guide one’s reflexive practices. This should not undermine, however, the important role that reflexivity is said to have, i.e., its being an element towards producing “better research.” So the question is ultimately not whether to use reflexivity or not; rather it is essentially a disambiguation of how certain deployments of reflexive practices, such as the narcissistic and the excessive, could impede rather than enhance the accomplishment of the work needed, i.e., doing research.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the issues of normativity and reflexivity in critical qualitative research in education. I argue that critical research is inherently normative because of its engagement with practical reality at different magnitudes. Critical research acquires this character because of its various practices towards the emancipative-transformative purpose. Such
a purpose, which gives the critical enterprise its practical coloring, should not be confused with utility, although the critical may have various social applications that can eventually be described as useful. I have grouped the foundations of the normative claims of the critical under four major categories: Certain conditions create inequalities; Certain conditions perpetuate inequalities; Certain people, individuals or groups, live under unequal conditions; and, Power leads to privilege.

With reference to the question of reflexivity, I argue that its discussion is inseparable from bringing into focus how it gives rise to and engrains the polemic of “turning the gaze unto one’s self,” which becomes a considerable political question to contend with at the personal level of critical researchers working in the field. This individual politic of the “I,” so to speak, emerges as contentious when needing to address the question of what aspects of this “I” are to be incorporated into and towards critical representations of subjects. This, according to many of my participants, sometimes occupies a primary position, vis-à-vis methodological and epistemological considerations and differentiations, when assessing the potential impact of this “I” on the research process and its outcomes. However, this integration of the “I” is not always immune to narcissistic and egoistic slippage, which altogether complicates this reversing of the “gaze” towards the researcher.

The dialectics of the production of knowledge do not only invite the complications of what this may mean as a scientific or social phenomenon, but it also highlights the tensions inherent in the subjectivity of the process of production and the materiality of the end point of production. My intention in this chapter was to explore the intricacies of this dialectical tension in order to shed some light on the underpinnings that the, often observable, eventuality of knowledge produced may not reveal. In doing so, my aim was to explicate what constitutes the
tensions of the process rather than to simply repeat the usual elaboration of the conditions of disseminating knowledge and the positions this takes in relation to the social interpretations of education today. Therefore, interrogating the process of knowledge production in critical qualitative research in education may assist in better articulating how the broader field operates. On the other hand, personal narratives have the apparent advantage of looking at one of the most logical manifestations of subjectivity in producing knowledge as a process initiated in the intimacy of individual effort.
CHAPTER VII

GROUNDING TRANSFORMATIONS

In this chapter, I will focus on three issues: methods, where to bring critique, and giving back. Given how the Content Analysis Chapter focuses on transformations in critical qualitative research in education, I have decided to follow a slightly different path in this chapter. The methods and where to bring critique subsections could be read as preparatory for discussing the transformation strategies, here included in the third giving back subsection. However, my concern in this chapter is not to scrutinize whether critical research can bring transformation, nor to explore individual transformation stories of the scholars I interviewed. Even these scholars themselves do not necessarily have enough tools or data to evaluate to what extent their works may have influenced the subjects of their study. Rather, the focus of this chapter is on how and where transformations are grounded. For this particular reason, I frame transformation as an act of giving back, both to avoid a simplistic utilitarian depiction of the transformative, as well as to give attention to how the professed purpose of research is approached and realized.

Focusing on the how of the critical rather than on what it is, follows how critical social research itself has not remained one and the same since the early days of its inception. Of the early predicates of the critical undergoing change was the shift from a psychological focus to a social one, when meaning making stopped being the delimitation of an individual mind and consciousness and became instead an element of societal interaction. In other words, this significantly meant that social inquiry should start from and be grounded in the social world beyond the limitations of any individual consciousness. What this underlines is how consciousness need not be only a matter of individual tribulations in isolation from those of the
other, but it could become, and this is what was critical about it, consciousness of a historical nature in its being collective, social, and transcending. Similarly, understanding individual consciousness requires grounding it within the broader cultural and historical contexts across which individuals operate socially. Here we could be referring to language, rules, and various social-cultural artifacts and so on. Given this, meaning making and its specific fields have both become social, cultural, and historical phenomena rather than an exclusively psychological affair. Fay (2003), for instance, comments:

> Besides the replacing of consciousness by language and culture as the focus of social inquiry, another reason for the apparent irrelevance of phenomenology for the theory of social inquiry is its deeply ahistorical character. In recent times the historicity of human being in general and human consciousness in particular – historicity understood as being a product of a specific historical situation – has come to be appreciated. The result is that enterprises that think that human beings can be understood independently of their particular sociocultural and historical location have come to be suspect. (ibid, p.52)

Habermas was the first to theorize such a connection. He argues that there are certain preconditions for knowledge to become possible. These, what Habermas calls cognitive interests, function as survival mechanisms for human species in that they motivate people to produce knowledge about their social and physical worlds, as well as knowledge about the exercise of political power. While the efforts to produce knowledge about the physical world are directed towards “controlling nature,” knowledge produced about the social world aims at “maintaining society.” On the other hand, political knowledge, according to Habermas, serves to enable ways
in which human beings can live free from political oppression. He links physical, social, and political knowledge to certain forms of actions: “[T]he use of technology to control nature; improved communication and understanding; and political emancipation of the oppressed. The three interests thus serve to make possible and to shape the natural sciences, the social sciences and the emancipatory politics of critical theory” (Edgar, 2006, p.10).

In the realm of emancipatory cognitive interests, Habermas claims that both victims and oppressors are unaware of the exercise of political power, which in a certain sense makes its workings invisible. Such invisibility may also plague even Hermeneuticians, social scientists who interpret the world through looking at texts and other social phenomena. Thus, Habermas suggests, there has to be another form of social science that develops its own methods to make visible the exercise of power, precisely given that “a group does not typically manage to exercise control over another through the mere threat of violence (as might the bully and even the riot police). Rather, the group exercises power because it is perceived to have some right to do so. Its power is legitimate (ibid, p.11). The reason hermeneuticians may fail to capture the intricacies of how power operates and is exercised would have to do with how their scholarship and their analytical tools are embedded in, and thus contaminated by, the very regime of power which makes invisible the very workings of this power. To confront this polemic, social science, whose aim is to expose how political power is exercised, should instead acquire an emancipatory nature, with the objective of human liberation functioning as guide and motivation. Achieving this is closely tied with engaging with the task of freeing this emancipatory social science from its self-imposed illusions:

The task of ideology critique is therefore to expose the real meaning – in terms of the political interests being served- that is concealed by the apparently meaningless or
inevitable ideological appearance of society, just as the task of the psychoanalyst is to expose the meaningful but traumatic experience that is being concealed by the apparently natural symptoms of the patient. The emancipatory sciences may therefore be understood as a necessary fusion of the natural and hermeneutic sciences. If power is typically exercised under the veil of a “second nature”, then it will remain invisible to both natural scientists and hermeneuticians” Only an emancipatory science that is sensitive to the limitations and failures of communication and language use, and that is prepared to suggest that such failures are not due to mere accidents or incompetence on the part of language users, but are rather rooted in inequality and oppression, will have the resources necessary to expose illegitimate exercises of power. (Ibid, p.16)

The way Bourdieu accounts for how power is exercised shows a great similarity to how Habermas attempts the matter. This is because Bourdieu also emphasized *symbolic violence* as one of the most causal ways of exercising power. What makes this symbolic violence invisible for Bourdieu is how this gets legitimated through the various mechanisms necessary for the exercise of power culturally and socially. He suggests that “in all societies, order and social restraint are produced by indirect, cultural mechanisms rather than by direct, coercive social control. In doing so, they draw heavily upon Weber, in particular upon his discussions of authority and legitimate domination” (Jenkins, 1992, p.65). In other words, what enables symbolic meaning systems to be imposed upon people is how this is done to make the process appear legitimate in the eyes of those who are subjected to its complex workings. Appearing legitimate relies on undermining, transpiring, and exposing the underlying relations of power. This is a cultural process that does not reach saturation when legitimation has been initially instated; for the survival of the latter is dependent on a cycle of reproduction, where
misrecognition becomes key: “the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder (ibid, p.66).” But what sets Habermas and Bourdieu are the kinds of tools each uses to expose the mechanisms of legitimation. On the one hand, the former uses psychoanalysis to show the parallelship between the second natures of human beings and societies, while giving primary attention to the central role of communication and rational deliberation. Bourdieu, on the other hand, is more interested in how things are done in practice: “it is not possible to read other minds, but it may be possible to step into other shoes.” (p.30). He “presents practice as the product of processes which are neither wholly conscious nor wholly unconscious, rooted in an ongoing process of learning which begins in childhood, and through which actors know—without knowing—the right thing to do. Taking these two points together, [he] describes the practical accomplishment of successful interaction as ‘second nature’. (ibid, p.44)

One of the shortcomings of Bourdieu’s field theory is how it avoids the possibility of knowledge production evading and circumventing the intricacies of the exercise of power within the intellectual field, precisely through his designation of this field as autonomous. This happens in the case of scholarly work produced in academia as a critique of power relations within and without the field itself. What his theory then fails to address, and this transpired in interviews with several of my participants, is how to account for works that are, in identification, against power, yet which enjoy broad circulation, and one may even say legitimacy. This latter type does not exactly seem to fit Bourdieu’s framework. One way to relate this condition of incompatibly would be to point out that the classical question in the field of sociology of education, whose knowledge?, may be after all less relevant than identifying who asks this question of ownership in the first place. Oppositional knowledge created with its eye on the end of social justice thus
operates contrary to dominant power relations, yet it seems to accrue prestige of its own precisely through going against this very power. In other words, we are confronted with the contradiction of gaining authority by countering the very determiner of authority in the first place, i.e., power as it operates socially and culturally – non-coercively. Thus in academia, one can spot critical scholars who have risen to the highest ranks of circulation and recognition and who have become “rule setters,” to use Bourdieu’s term, on the basis of critiquing power itself. An example is how Bourdieu himself has become one of the most prominent scholars in sociology through destabilizing the power balance operating in the field.

For Bourdieu, an intellectual field is relatively autonomous in that it demonstrates a considerable degree of self-sufficiency in terms of legitimating the specifics of the interior espace de jeu. On the other hand, the notion of regime of truth according to Foucault lacks this very independence because it is always permeated and fraught with what is otherwise theorized as its exteriority, i.e., power.

Therefore, I think that Habermas’ approach in general captures a much more coherent picture of the practices of “transformation” in educational research. This is mostly because my interview data and content analysis suggest that critical research seems to converge more in terms of social justice and equality commitments. This is done by focusing on power and inequality in particular. I am well aware that this is not a unique discovery of this research project: however, my emphasis is more on how the convergence, more often than not, happens to be the case. Therefore, the segments on the transformative aspects of the critical enterprise below draw on a similar perspective. First, I will look at methods of the critical to explore whether there is certain methodological approaches that are more amenable to conducting critical research.
A Brief Look at the Methodological Choices

In this node, I explore, from the perspective of the scholars whom I have interviewed, whether there is a certain method(ology) that is more amenable to the critical research framework. The focus of the node is not to scrutinize methodological dilemmas and/or academic conversations that concern the specifics of particular research methods; rather, it sets out to understand the interplay between the method used and other aspects of the critical research framing. Also, given that the focus of this dissertation is “critical qualitative research,” special attention is given to exploring the meanings attributed to qualitative techniques as mediation between the problems of research and its purposes, as well as to examine the connotations that such qualitative techniques acquire in the process.

Although the literature in the field corroborates the idea that majority of critical research is conducted through qualitatively oriented means, there was a consensus among my participants that critical inquiry could employ any kinds of methodological tools. Rhoads, for example, speaks to this:

Mustafa- How about the methodology part? Do you think that justice-oriented research requires special methodology?

Rhoads- No, I don’t think it does. It tends to be more qualitative, though. I think that people who focus on social justice issues … I think that many of them, for a variety of reasons, are qualitatively oriented, but not all of them and nor should they be. Think about Gary Orfield’s work on the re-segregation of American schools. He does a lot of quantitative analysis. He does not follow, I don’t think, the critical ethnographic
tradition. And yet I think his work is very important in contributing to our understanding of social injustice and the role of schools. So I don't think that the critical ethnography or qualitative methods are the only ways or there's one way or one preferred methodology for addressing social justice issues. I think there are some connections among the scholars and some leanings towards qualitative methods; but I think that is a complex development rooted in the role of Ethnic Studies programs and Women's Studies programs, etc. and to some extent also in the early marginalization of qualitative methods and narrative approaches. But I don't think those are the only methodology that can be used to address social injustice.

Rhoads underscores how theoretical and philosophical approaches have converged towards employing qualitative techniques as a method in critical qualitative inquiry. He also recognizes the influences of feminism and (new) culturalism on this convergence. And yet for him, the critical tradition could accommodate both qualitative and quantitative methods unproblematically. An aspect of this relaxed bordering of the critical could be seen in the case of Gary Orfield whom Rhoads refers to above. Orfield is usually referred to as one of the most important scholars mapping out injustices, hence the important position he seems to occupy (in) the critical enterprise. Nonetheless, his belonging to the critical tradition as one would expect is not a matter of consensus, given that many scholars tend to locate his work, not directly within the realm of the critical, but more or less at its fringes. This is an interesting situation, especially as Orfield is one of a group of scholars who are constantly referred to by critical researchers because of the influence their work has had on the field.
Cornbleth agrees that there is no specific methodological tool that best suits the conducting of critical research. For her, to talk about the superiority of certain methodological approaches over others in the field of critical research is erroneous:

Methodologically, no. This is one of my speeches in class. When we talk about research, we talk about perspectives, paradigms or theory in methodological terms, arguing about whether a hammer is better than a screw driver. I think that is silly. Topics are inert or too bland until you ask a question about them. So, you could say, social class, but what about social class? Social class as a topic is neither critical nor something else. It depends on the kind of question that you ask.

As Cornbleth puts it “hammers cannot be superior to drivers or vice versa”. Thus, methodological tools become appropriate and relevant in relation with the research questions that the researcher asks. But despite this seemingly relaxed attitude to methodology, the literature tells us (and so did my own participants) that, exceptions notwithstanding, scholars tend not to change their methodological orientations. This highlights the problem of which gives shape to the other, the method of research or the question this seeks to answer. In other words, one could wonder whether certain questions that researchers pose for their work are inherently only attemptable qualitatively, i.e., method as a priori to the research problem. Relationally speaking, a critical researcher could then formulate their research question in line with their methodological orientation; or, the interest they have prior to conducting research could be explored in accordance with their methodological orientation in doing research. Dressman elaborates on this:

Mustafa- Do you think that there are certain topics, research questions that might be more in keeping with your research or framework?
Dressman- Yes, of course. Or, let me say that there are certain WAYS of framing a question about a topic that are more in keeping with my approach than others. I have a hard time, for example, framing a question in cognitive terms because for me, the sort of elimination of extraneous variables that happens in the development of questions that lead to experimental research completely undermines the ecological validity of whatever answer a researcher might find. But I should also say that I have colleagues in psychology who would argue this is because I haven't thought my questions through enough before I begin to ask them. This is also probably true; but I'd counter by saying that it is a critical (small c) part of my method. What I mean by this is that the formulation of a "research question" for me is not the beginning of the project; it's what comes AFTER I've gone through a process of clarifying the issue for myself--of using social theory to strip away some of the unacknowledged assumptions that I would bring (and I would argue experimentalists inevitably bring) to an issue at the beginning of its exploration. So...what I'm saying here is that research questions do not drive my research in the sort of positivist way that they drive quantitativeexperimental designs. What drives my research is a general situation, my initial grasp of what I see going on in a setting, and my desire to figure it out and figure out its connections to broader social and cultural conditions.

As Dressman articulates above, approach is an important factor in formulating a research question. One can assume that method is an important part of this approach, although he does not explicitly identify where one may locate it precisely. Dressman, then, turns to social theory in order to crystallize the research problem and to translate it into a question form, a practice not
uncommon among qualitative researchers. This is an indication that, similar to Dressman, method precedes problem for many critical researchers.

Similarly, Anyon proposes that, although critical research is usually conducted through qualitative techniques, the methodological character of the critical is not necessarily determined by such qualitative leanings:

Mustafa- Do you think critical research should be qualitative in nature?

Anyon- Usually it is, but not always. I think it can be. I talk about this in the new book too [Theory and Educational Research Toward Critical Social Explanation]. Very often quantitative research serves the status quo but not always. Look at Gary Orfield’s work or David Berliner’s work. They do not engage in critical theory and their work is qualitative but it has a critical point to it.

Mustafa- Do you think that there are certain research methodologies, research questions and frameworks, that are more in line with critical research?

Anyon- Yes and no. Yes in that when you study the powerful, you show what they do and how they interact with power; that is obviously critical but you could almost study anything that way. People often study power to show how legitimate it is. So I would have to say that I think most things could be studied to end injustice. But there are probably some topics that take it up in a more revealing way. One of the problems is that people so often study the poor and not many of us study the powerful, and that’s why I wrote Radical Possibilities to reveal that some of the real power does and has in this country.

Mustafa- How about methodology?
Anyon- You can use any methodology to conduct your data. Like I said, Gary Orfield studies racial integration; his methodology is very quantitative. He uses big data sets. David Berliner does that kind of research as well and yet that is critical. You can use narrative research, any kind of qualitative research, quantitative research. I do not think it matters what kind of method you use, the important thing is what you are trying to do.

Gary Orfield’s work enters into the conversation again, despite his not being a “full” criticalist, so to speak, as transpires from what my participants say. One could speculate that the critical enterprise may have created its undecidables. In other words, sometimes it is not that possible to decide whether a certain thing belongs to one category or another, or to morally or ethically show that it only has one definitive characteristic. Orfield’s work, and that of several similar others, is neither inside nor outside the critical tradition. The picture becomes more complex when one thinks of the group of critical researchers, who Fine seems to best represent, who conduct their research using quantitative methods additional to using qualitative ones. This does not appear to diminish the critical character of their work. The reason behind this lies in that the claims the researcher makes are, in this case, of a political nature. What differentiates between two scholars like Orfield and Fine who use quantitative methods in their work is how their claims are grounded – sociological in the case of the former; political with regards to the latter.

Similar to Cornbleth, Anyon believes that the critical could be embedded into research through various ways. In this way, method is just a deployment for the “critical point” the research aims to realize. Still, she establishes connections (most probably historical) between quantitative studies and the tendency to reinforce the status quo. This may have to do with the
historical frustration of critical qualitative inquiry at the dominance of positivism and its methods of investigation, which led to its development as oppositional. Nevertheless, researchers seem to agree that research studies may deploy similar methods and research foci only to have some serve a critical purpose while deeming others to be aligned with the status quo. The differentiating factor, according to Luttrell, lies in the researcher. Thus, with reference to Cornbleth’s point, who holds the hammer or driver is more important than what the tools themselves are capable of doing:

**Mustafa-** Could ethnography be more appropriate for understanding phenomena in comparison with survey research for example?

**Luttrell-** I think that depends, though, on how the survey is constructed; who wrote the questions; what the purpose of the survey is. I’m not sure that … because I’ve seen plenty, I think an ethnographer can be blinded to a whole series of things. So, I don’t think it’s automatic … don’t think there’s an automatic assurance that taking the ethnographic approach will uncover hidden assumptions. I think that’s a goal and I think of questions we really want to learn about, like how people make meaning or how people understand their own situations, and how they take action in those situations and what they think is important. Certainly, I think for ethnographers who are concerned about getting underneath a surface set of explanations, that’s important work. But it doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s going to uncover or expose issues of inequality or lack of justice.

In this sense, qualitative methodology in “unqualified” hands is also not immune from bypassing the blind-spots of the empirical reality, a symptom generally thought to be endemic with reference to quantitative techniques. Still, Luttrell thinks that qualitative methodology could
be more accommodating for exploring elements that may be overlooked or understated by quantitative methodology. However, such lineament of qualitative research vis-à-vis quantitative may not necessarily yield certain desired outcomes, for instance the intricate ways and forms in which power operates.

Slattery, on the other hand, speaks of the importance of personal commitments when it comes to modifying the research methodology in correspondence with the purposes of research. Thus, the method that is employed by critical researchers gains political meanings during the process:

No. I believe that these issues can be addressed in any research methodology. I think it is the commitment of the researcher who foregrounds that kind of commitment in their work and in their lives. That can come through any methodology; there is no particular methodology that one must adopt in order to do this work.

Fine takes up this point and states that method gets its meanings from “a set of epistemological and methodological commitments.” It thus functions as a hardware developed for specific tasks but not purposes:

I don't think that justice-oriented works require a particular method. I think it requires a set of epistemological and methodological commitments, that expertise is widely distributed, even if not widely legitimated, and a recognition that people who are most affected by the particular line of injustice you are investigating should be fundamental to shaping the question, informing the theoretical frame, involved in analysis and determining the products of the research. Ignacio Martín-Baro identified this research as having a preferential option for the poor. To do this we rely upon large scale surveys, archival analysis, focus groups, interviews, ethnography. We take seriously the
conversations that are made possible between quantitative and qualitative methods. In the prison research and looking at desegregated high schools or policy harassment of youth -- we want to be able to map statistically who has access to education, who's been picked up by cops, who has access to reproductive health care. And then focus groups and interviews with young people allow us to hear the implications, the resistance and the collateral damage – we can hear how being undocumented translates into a life under surveillance and blocked access to college; or how being in foster care, in NYC, typically means living in a facility owned by the Catholic Church and therefore not having access to sexual or reproductive education or health care. Focus groups are giving us a thick, deep understanding of how these dynamics play in the life or in a community and how dynamics saturate a body and how they are negotiated and resisted. The combination of large scale quantitative data, with deep qualitative material, allows us to theorize what Jessica Ruglis and I call “circuits of dispossession” and “tactics of resistance.”

Fine’s work invests in the future in the sense that her methodological choices are assembled towards seizing opportunities for her research subjects. In other words, inseparable from the nature and prevalence of “inequalities,” Fine struggles for a research that has “a preferential option for the poor.” I think that this is a very important remark in order to understand where and how methodology intersects with the concerns of research as a whole. Thus, her work acquires a political character in its being oriented towards the future and its engaging with looking for possibilities that attempt to transform existing social conditions. Here, methodology is aligned with the “presumed” conditions of the subjects of research. In this sense, again, methodology holds a certain degree of detachment from the research question, so to speak.
This, however, does not mean that the research question and the issues under scrutiny are not closely connected; rather, it underscores the relation between the researcher’s commitments and the methods he or she employs. Fine explains: “Justice oriented works [do not] require a particular method. I think they require a set of epistemological and methodological commitments.”

Scheruich extends the terrain of discussion by juxtaposing different philosophical approaches. This does not mean, however, that his position on the issue is dissimilar from that of other scholars except for the idea that even positivism could be deployed for social justice causes.

I think quantitative, positivist, interpretivist, postmodernist, post-structuralist, constructivists and any kind of research method can be used to enable, support, and facilitate social justice. I think there are some really good quantitative people doing excellent social justice work. I think there are qualitative people doing social justice work. Patti Lather is a poststructuralist feminist. She’s doing social justice work. I don't think social justice has to do with method. I am pretty flexible, what will get us there?

What will help advance the cause?

Thus, even a positivist outlook, which is generally associated with “law” and status quo, could be used in constructing research as long as it serves the causes of social justice. This is an important line of argument because he does not refer to quantitative methods in general, but to positivism, specifically. While methodological discussions in qualitative social sciences take up a contrarian position against the harmful effects of positivism on social justice issues, such as the justification of biological determinism in race, Scheruich claims that it is all about the commitments of the researcher. In this regard, to some extent, he shares Fine’s position towards
the importance of the political purposes of research. However, this point is open to considerable
debate as to whether positivism is a mindset with its own strict path or whether it has the
flexibility of serving a specific purpose, even in the terrain of social justice. Clearly, it is beyond
the scope of this dissertation project to take on such an issue; yet, Scheurich’s point compels to
reconsider the relationship between social justice and positivist research.

Master ethnographer Foley depicts the current methodological picture of critical
qualitative research situated historically. And the last word goes to him:

Mustafa- Do you think that justice oriented research requires that we employ certain
methodology? Or is there any methodology or framework that is more in keeping with
critical qualitative research?

Foley- I think that what's interestingly happening in anthropology, and which I lately
saw at a conference that I attended. It is called collaborative ethnography. Richard Fox
and Les Field edited a new book that came out … I think it is named, Anthropology Put
to Work, and it has about a dozen different participants in there who are doing some
very interesting activist kinds of ethnography. And the principle that underlies most of
that work is a much greater collaboration, both politically and intellectually, with the
group you are so-called “studying.” In other words, the authorial and the autonomous
positionalities of the intellectual have been greatly reduced in that methodology. And it
is nothing like what traditional anthropologist used to do. It is because the gold standard
of it is supposed to be that not only do this to the subjects of your study, co-collect and
co-write, and co-theorize the project; but they should also sort of define what it is
you’re even going to study. And so it's a little more like what Linda Smith calls “de-
colonizing research,” where an outside researcher who comes to a tribal group and says: “Well I am here. Tell me what you want me to study”. And this is quite different than classic anthropology and it's also quite different than classic educational research, where the expert comes in with his theoretical framework to write a piece for his colleagues. So, this is much more like in education. I guess it's more like participatory action research where there is a high level of collaboration and the intellectual gives up some of his powers to define the project. To me, this is quite different than critical ethnography. In critical ethnography, a Marxist or a post-Marxist comes in with his multiple-oppression model; comes in and, since he or she thinks that they know the framework of truth that produces the most interesting questions and the most interesting results. They define the study and collect the data and write the story that they want to tell – either the revolution is working or it is not. Well, in this other mode, it really is quite a bit more along the lines of what I think the critique was postmodern critique, that decentering the author and decentering the power of the intellectual, decentering of his intellectual discourses, that frame the research. So, I think that the collaborative ethnographic approach is significant, although it’s certainly not the major thing in anthropology. A book by Luke Lassiter called “Guide to Collaborative Ethnography” is a good example of somebody who's advocating an alternative way of doing ethnography. And he doesn't necessarily theorize it as if it has postmodern roots; but he theorizes it as a more ethical, more democratic way of doing ethnography. It purports to be a highly democratic way of doing research and the researcher in a way is more like an applied anthropologist. They are supposed to be… when they show up, they say “What do you want us to study?” And in Charlie Hale's model of it and John
Rappaport’s model, which are both in this new book I am telling you about, they are advocating that the anthropologist who is a true activist basically joins whatever social movement there is, and says: “I'm here to write for you; I'm here to do what you want me to do. I am here to produce the knowledge that will benefit your movement.”

I do not think Carspecken with his Habermasian model of verification is a collaborative ethnography in any sense of the word. Neither was I when I did *Learning Capitalist Culture*. Neither is Willis, and neither are any of the traditional critical ethnographers. So, I think that is what I see out there in the literature … I do not think that model is particularly good for, for example, it's not going to be the methodology that dominates the field. But it's a response, a critique of classic ethnography and even of critical ethnographers … And so it will be around as an alternative methodology. I think it does have a different methodology because you can see immediately that, once you give up, the investigator gives up that much power – power to define theory, power to write – you’re suddenly in a very different position, a different relationship to your subject. So, I think that is the most radical thing that I see out there in terms of methodological changes. Now, I do not think that should replace like good investigative ethnography, where you have anthropology of cultural critique, where the intellectual with his critical model of how capitalism works comes in and he is autonomously positioned and he kind of studies a lot of people – which we now call critical ethnography or anthropology of cultural critique. So, I think there are places for both of those in the field, and I think that the anthropology of cultural critique, or critical ethnography or whatever its theoretical orientation might be, will still be the dominant model in
academia. And the reason for that is because it produces knowledge that other academics recognize as theoretically sophisticated or recognize as adding to some universalistic knowledge of the production of knowledge, etc. Whereas it’s not the case for this approach of collaborative ethnography. It’s more geared to producing local knowledge and to winning local struggles or assisting local struggles of some sort.

This section has sought to demonstrate that scholars agree that there is no certain methodological approach that is more amenable to the critical or social-justice research framework. Rather, there seems to be a considerable degree of flexibility within the critical enterprise in terms of methodological preferences. It is quite interesting how similar names, e.g., Gary Orfield, are always quoted when referring to research works that are outside the qualitative tradition, yet connected to the critical one way or the other. But despite the apparent flexibility, data suggest that method is generally set a priori to the research question or the research topic. This, I believe, owes to both political orientations and personal academic histories of scholars. In other words, scholars tend to ask questions which could be answerable through their already established methodological orientations.

After this brief look at the methodological choices of critical researchers, in the following segment I will discuss where to bring critique during research.

**Grounding Critique**

In this node, I will address practices usually followed when attempting to ground critique by scholars in the field, and what seems to eventually influence these. Interview data suggest that
there are four issues relevant to grounding critique: bringing critique from outside or facilitating the inner (already existing) one; “studying up” or “studying down”; “not asking, or stop asking, certain critical questions”; and “analyzing and connecting with the broader political atmosphere.”

Transformation in social and political theory is a notion in constant motion. When Kant said that “truth shall set you free,” he was demonstrating a deep comprehension and critique of the individual aspects of where emancipation was to actually be grounded. That is why many neo-Kantian perspectives today, along with their innumerable ramifications, tend to facilitate or spark critique that presumably already exists in people and which is embedded in their life conditions. However, one has to remind that this critique is primarily sociological, not psychological, today, where social groups are elevated as the essential unit when analyzing social phenomena. According to Carspecken:

The word critical really goes back to Kant. He called his philosophy “critical”. What he is talking about was how not all knowledge can be placed in a form of an object of consciousness. So, there has to be a reflection to capture the conditions that make possible our object and knowledge. And that reflection is what he meant by critical. It is critical for Kant in terms of revealing the conditions that enable a form of knowledge, but which cannot themselves be understood in their form of knowledge. So, that idea got … it was picked up by the philosophers right after Kant and Hegel and then had an influence on Marx down the road. And so that idea of reflecting to reveal what is making a form of knowledge possible became understood as social, cultural and historical. So in Hegel’s philosophy, the frameworks that enable forms of experience and knowledge change to history and cultural forms. With Marx, you find the same
idea and you also give the birth of the idea, ideology. So, what critical means … it means initially to enable to reflect so you can parent conditions of knowledge, as they cannot be understood on their own what they may enable. It does not mean directly that we are criticizing racism, sexism, classism, although it’s implied. Then you have Habermas, as an extremely sharp thinker and it seems that nobody else likes him very much. He is not easy to read. And so, I hear him criticized by people who really don’t know what they are talking about. This has become a problem for me and for my work because people who should be my allies, when they see that I am using Habermas, it instantly turn them off … they don’t even understand him. One of the brilliant things Habermas did, was that he changed the idea of what dialectic is from subject-object to reflective relation to the idea of inter-subjectivity. And that was really a huge thing. He talked about the concept of illocutionary force in this paper called, *What is Universal Pragmatics*. And the point he is making there was relocating things you find in Marx and Hegel, but he relocated them in a better more compelling framework. Illocutionary force has to do with, when we study human beings we can find patterns but they are not casual, like patterns we find in nature. So, there is a fundamental difference. And illocutionary force has to do with the fact that people are coordinating a lot of the actions by accepting validity claims. But each person has the right to say “no” to validity claims, this is a big thing. So, human subjects not like an object … human subjects can say no … there is some freedom. And so, when power is not in the picture, which is never … there is always some form of power … In an ideal situation, people coordinate their actions together because they agree with reasons. So, from a subject-object paradigm, we go to a subject-subject paradigm.
As Carspecken mentions, then, Marx, and to a great extent members of the early Frankfurt School, discussed the emancipation of the masses through the politics materialized by reformed or reestablished government systems. The critique is thus brought from outside. But despite this apparently active initiative of “bringing” as means of introducing something new and external, Carspecken still identifies the role of researcher as one of facilitating critique rather than “imposing” certain of its modalities while conducting research with and on the subjects:

You are part of the group ideally. So you can say “I really agree with things you were saying; but have you ever thought of this?” And then you can bring into the dialogue your own critical position. So, that is how you balance critique with the traditional view. Every study is different; so you cannot make hard rules. But in lots of studies you initially want to understand people, the way they understand each other and themselves. And you facilitate critique … then you become participant in the critique. So, you’re never judging another culture. People around the world like the Western feminist movement has been regarded as arrogant by Muslim women in a lot of countries because they say “how can you tell me that I am oppressed; I am the one to tell you” I agree with that. I think we have to listen to people.

Along similar understandings, Noffke, who comes from an action research tradition, underlines how important it is not to prioritize the purposes/objectives of the research(er) over the participants of this research. In other words, what needs to be critiqued, and hence transformed, needs to be decided in collaboration with the research subjects. Imposing critique directly from outside in this sense is unacceptable. Given this, the direction of critique should be in reverse, as Noffke elaborates in the example she relates below from her own research:
I actually think it happens the other way for me. It’s not like I go in with a research project that’s supposed to expose operations of power. It’s that I’m in this political context where there’s social struggle going on and there’s an intersection between what I know from theoretical work and the way that I can interpret and change that situation. And that produces the knowledge. So, there’s a little piece that I wrote with two teachers who exposed an error in the state testing system. It was in the third-grade reading achievement test … an excerpt from a story with comprehension questions. And it’s a very beautiful story; it is a lovely children’s story. But in the test, the illustrations were white kids. And the book that it came from, those illustrations were African American kids and families. So, they literally got erased out. What happened with that in the generation of knowledge was first the teachers came to me and also went to the author of the book and we created enough of a stir over that event that it forced the state superintendent of the schools to send a letter of apology to every third grade child in the state. We wrote a little article about it. But the way the theory was important, the way I articulated it, was that the publishing company did assume characters are white unless told otherwise. And since there was nothing in the text that said anything about what color the children were, the illustrators assumed they were white children. And that is part of the endemic nature of racism. We were able to use that as a conversation point in the schools, as well as the subject of an article and a political intervention at the same time.

On the other hand, Anyon’s approach seems to be more in line with “bringing critique from outside.” It is more theoretically oriented. This is because Anyon thinks that, while people generally have intuitions about their “problematic” conditions, they may not necessarily have
access to tools that could clearly define and analyze these disadvantageous conditions. Here comes the intervention of the critical researcher as someone who could transcribe or codify people’s intuition in the language of oppressor-and-oppressed/power-and-oppression. That is why the researcher has to have a schema that could enable such a translation, i.e., a theoretical model within and from which he/she could operate towards that end:

Mustafa- You mentioned destabilizing power. What are the ways of destabilizing power?

Anyon- To give people information as to how things really work. If you give people information about how they’re getting oppressed or exploited, then you can confirm their suspicions and intuitions about these things. And if they have factual information, they can use it to work for changes.

Thus, unlike Carspecken, Anyon does not seem to define her goal as to similarly become “one of them.” Rather, of more significance and relevancy for her is the kind of theoretical outlook that the researcher deploys towards the critical transformative end:

… [E]ven though the naturalistic studies I’ve done may be called ethnography, they are actually not. Because, I go in not particularly looking for the way participants understand. I go in with this theory that I want to test. So, my positionality has really been as an outsider. I do not try to become one of them. I cannot, because I am White or I am upper middle class, they are either non-White or coming from a different class.

What makes Anyon an outsider, then, is the distance that usually sets her apart from her research subjects, who, more frequently than not, relatively occupy less advantageous positions than her in the social hierarchy. She thus argues for the importance of such an imbalance between the positionalities of the researcher and the researched, not only in terms of power-
fraught process of representing the subjects of research (in Fine’s (1994) words, contending with the hyphen that sets the two sides apart), but also with reference to how the very practice of producing and grounding critique necessarily stipulates such distancing. This is mostly because of the common patterns of subject selection involved in conducting critical research. Thus, it would not be a bold claim to propose that “studying-down” appears to be the norm in critical qualitative research in education, although there are plenty of exceptions. Scheurich, for example, relates to this below.

The first one. Overwhelmingly, my focus has been on schools that have significant portion of students being African-American or Latino. So I don’t study white suburban schools. I do know that there are African-American and Latino students there, and I know there's racism going on. And that's important work and I would support somebody doing it. I'm just not very interested in it. I'm more interested in where most of the African-American, Latino kids are going and what we can do to make a difference in their environment.

In many cases, researchers may choose to focus on people who can be identified as members of societal segments that are disenfranchised or less privileged. This, of course, is clearly related to how central the power-oppression problematic seems to occupy within the critical enterprise. Luttrell, for example, says:

It’s been years since Laura Nader wrote that great piece about the need for anthropologists to “study up” rather than “study down,” and how little we did that in North America. And I think that it has not changed. I think what is changed, however, is that there are more efforts to do participatory action research where it's not as though the researcher goes to a community and then leaves and reports out. There is more
research activity where investigators work with groups rather than working on groups. Still, I think it's a totally fair criticism or observation to make that there is a general pattern of asymmetry in the way the knowledge is produced and therefore what we can even know about aspects of American life and inequality is limited by the tendency to study those without power.

“Studying-down,” according to Luttrell, has clear implications for how to ground critique and knowledge production, yet is arguably one of the major limitations of the critical enterprise itself. It is the focus on the “weak,” so to speak, that has, to a considerable degree, given rise to critical research historically. Thus one would have to contend with the historical and methodological artifacts that have been stably embedded in the field of critical educational research because of this particular grounding in the “weak.” However, studying down may not always be a matter of researcher choice; “studying up” is not an easy task, after all, as Fine elaborates:

Studying privileged settings and how privilege accumulates is crucial, but elite institutions have an endless number of ways to protect themselves and keep researchers out. So, the fact that Brett is doing this research in privilege settings is great, and he has written some very thoughtful essays about what it is like to do participatory work in privileged settings, as have Bill Tierney and Stanley Aronowitz. It is called studying up. As you suggest, critical researchers need to infiltrate spaces marked by profit and accumulation of privilege. One of the many theoretical and political benefits of contact-zone research is the ability to study the same phenomena in privileged and marginalized settings and we begin to see that learning disabilities, teen sexuality, drug use may be equivalent – but the consequences are far more severe in marginalized
communities of color. Wealthy students may mess up in schools but they get diagnosis and are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act and get untimed tests and it doesn’t show up on their records. At suburban parties they may drink a lot or get picked up for drugs. But they don’t typically go to prison for 20 years. But it is hard to get into those places, private schools are hard to get into, elite communities are hard to get into. Sometimes, when we pursue expert testimony in educational lawsuits we get access, through discovery, to privileged information about elite communities. … I remember testifying in a case involving Englewood, a mixed community, and Tenafly, a wealthy community; and in the legal materials we learned that a kid was caught with drugs, quote, “in a blacker school.” The principal would call the police. And yet in the wealthier community, when students were caught with drugs, the school would call the parents or psychiatrists. So, then we went to court because the white parents in the Englewood school wanted to go to Tenafly and to prove that Englewood wasn’t as good. They checked police records for evidence. Tenafly had no police records to speak of because elite problems are confidential. There is a kind of whiting out of privilege pathology. I definitely think we need to be doing more work but it is really hard to do.

Thus, critique by studying up and critique by studying down may unfold in contradictory and sometimes antagonistic ways, even when the main aim of both is to challenge/destabilize power and privilege, and even when both may entertain similar research questions. They do not, then, follow the same path or pattern. However, such a practice runs the risk of proliferating certain arguments that relate to the question of power which are heavily invested in the conditions of the “weak.” Fine elaborates:
Mustafa- I think you touched upon a really important point about common research practices. Although we know that money matters, there are problems with urban schooling and how race, gender etc. contribute to them, why do you think that people continue to research the same issues over and over again?

Fine- It is a good question. I don’t know. I think some things we already know, we already know that high-stakes testing causes dropouts. I don’t want to do anymore research on that. It’s done, people have done that and they’ve done it well. But policy makers don’t always listen to research, especially when they want to impose neo-liberal reforms on youth of color. Take for instance the issue of graduation requirements in New Jersey. New Jersey has the highest graduation rate in the country, New York has 38 or 49 and 50. New Jersey has a high-stakes exit test and an alternative called the SRA. Corporate forces and conservative accountability folks launched a campaign to do away with the SRA alternative. If they did away with the alternative, dropout rates for the most vulnerable youth would spike. So, we decided to launch a participatory or collaborative research project, bringing together lawyers, youth, teachers … gathering all the information we could. We put together a report using a lot of the existing data, explaining the perverse consequences on education, economics, health care and criminal justice, particularly for youth of color. We prevailed – for the moment. But in general, I agree: at some point education needs to say “we know this,” a moratorium on research. Imagine an AERA or activist group that gets together to decide “these are not questions any longer” - are IQ tests racist?; “does money matter in terms of student achievement?”; “is one outcome of high stakes testing a rise in dropouts?”
Similarly, McLaren discusses how particular issues have always been at the center of the critical research agenda for years. This materializes in his depiction of the current affair of things within the field: although social and political conditions outside the field are increasingly deteriorating, the field’s scholars continue to ask the same questions, a symptom that he relates to the failure of years of producing critical research to effect any change of the existing social conditions. A condition of lack that he identifies as follows:

The problems that we are seeing in the conditions of US schools – the racism, sexism, patriarchy, lack of funding, the standardization of knowledge, and the punishing of poor schools – all of these conditions have been talked about ever since I first started as an educator back in the 1970s in Canada. Same questions. They have tried to change the curriculum; they have tried to change class size. It would have been a really interesting study just to go through public archives and identify, since the 1970s, what the key concerns have been in education in the United States. You would find such a similarity over the last 50 years. The problems are actually being exacerbated, the problems are getting worse. They are getting worse, not because of the fundamental change of capitalism, but because of financialization, or finance capitalism, neo-liberal capitalism. You will find the species of capitalism we are dealing with, and you will find why the situations are becoming exacerbated now. In the days of Keynesian capitalism, there was the possibility of envisioning schools as robust sites for creating a kind of liberal democracy. Indeed, public schools could affect and function advantageously for democracy. Now what we have is a retreat from the whole notion, not only in public schooling, but in relation to the whole concept of the public. The fight for the public schools has been pretty much lost already. It is just how long the death rows will last.
Public schools have been eviscerated by the *No Child Left Behind Act*, by the vouchers, by the forces of privatization of schooling, by neo-liberal educational policies and practices. Public schools are barely hanging on. It is so bad that people are looking back wishing that things could be where they were in the 80s or late 70s, for instance. So, the next step, it is hard for me to even envision a step, any step outside the abolition of capital.

It is obvious at this point how complex different questions of grounding could be that each would be worthy of more elaborate exploration. I thus maintain a focus on the architecture of the critical in its commitment to the transformative end. My point is that exploring the grounds of the critique would yield more information about the transformative potential of the critical enterprise. This is because we are no longer talking about “saving the subjects” but “transformation” of conditions that are identified as problematic. Although a consensus exists around this diagnosis, there is much divergence in terms of prognosis. Foley, for instance, is quite pessimistic about how to trigger bigger transformations in society because of the shaky grounds of critique that one could observe today. And this is partly because of the broader political atmosphere:

I don’t think any of these studies in education which you would call critical ethnographies have located anything that leads to mass social movements… may lead to consciousness-raising about people’s suppression. But I don’t think it leads to any particular social movement or any particular larger politics that might impact the nation in any dramatic sort of way. I am thinking about the US context. But I think it may be politics with small “p”, consciousness-raising politics. So, I would say that I don't see
that the youth … I am not as optimistic about youth for being the vanguard of the revolt
because they creatively consume products or something. I don't see a lot of unifying
politics in social movements coming out of a lot of the stuff that we see educational
anthropologist or educational sociologist study. I think what they are documenting
much more is sort of the problematic situation that working-class and people of color,
kids of color, find themselves in contemporary America. Those guys like Laclau and
Habermas are hopeful that new social movements will be there. I think that new social
movements, Feminism and green parties, have a potential for mobilizing larger
numbers of people. But sitting here in the US and watching religious right and
conservatism dominate American politics to a point where there's no serious liberal
movement … Even there is no social democratic group and there are certainly no
organized leftist groups that anybody in academia would recognize. And all of the
union-busting that's taken place and I know all the arguments underneath this. Their
search for new union movements forming … There are alienated youth, and then there
is green movement, etc. But, I don't see it yet evolving into some kind of a powerful
united force. I think there are a lot of disparate kinds of oppositionality that there is a
growing group of this completely criminalized group, what Marx might call a new
Lumpen Proletariat. They are populating the urban areas, because there is no urban
policy of development in this country and the welfare state has been slashed
tremendously in this country because of the conservatives. But I think that that group is
not a very viable political force and it's like what Marx argued originally – the lumpen
proletariat could be growing like leaps and bounds but it's a very difficult group to
organize. And I don't think gangs and stuff … there are some examples of gangs that
have organized among that group, gangs that are organized to do progressive stuff to their communities. I don’t think that is generally leading to very much politics in an organized sense. I see a lot of disunity, a lot of different things that are maybe bubbling. But I don’t see a unifying moment. I don’t know what it would take – economic crisis, charismatic leaders … what it would take, I don’t know. We are in the middle of the conservative backlash against the 60s, and I think that's beginning to exhaust itself and the economy is going down and it could be that we’re headed toward some time when there will be all kinds of dramatic new mobilizations. But right at this moment, I don't see it yet. And maybe that's because I have not been that involved in organizing it.

Foley is thus quite skeptical about transformative claims and the transformative potential of critical research in education. For him, research conducted under the banner of the critical generally tends not to depart from the territory of descriptions, i.e., the mere documentation of the negative conditions in which disadvantaged groups, such as people of color, find themselves entrapped. According to him, “consciousness-raising politics,” with a small $p$, seems to be the major mode of transformation, since Political unification, with a capital $P$, has not been successful in overcoming the fragmentation and divisions that have characterized the contemporary critical enterprise. Thus, as long as there is no political convergence, research would not lead to “any dramatic social change nationwide.” This, however, is not always determined by the mere choices of researchers. The political context dominating the United States in general, and thus the Academy in particular, is also not that “critical” friendly. Cornbleth addressed this hostility:
I would say that this is not the best time for critical theory or critical research. Because, I think it is supported, nurtured, and encouraged by society. In a period when society is economically more robust, where there are more willing in society to take risk, where people are looking for reform, where people who have done well economically, socially are more willing to share because they do not feel threatened. So, some of it is economic; but you think of a period of time where there is growth, where there is more comfort in society, we feel less threatened. And then you have more encouraging and supportive time for critical research and theory. So, it is not a good time for critical theory, it is a good time in the sense that it is needed. It is not encouraging, nurturing supportive time.

Foley, on his part, considers the contemporary political atmosphere to constitute a kind of backlash against when, during the 1960s, liberal and leftist discourses predominantly inspired mass social movements. More dramatically, he seeks explanation in the concept of the Lumpenproletariat class fraction as defined by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*. Its members do not have any interests towards revolution, and yet are very vulnerable to conservatist and vulgar anti-revolutionist discourses. As for now and here, Foley sees that a new Lumpen segment has emerged in the urban neighborhoods of the United States, as an outcome of the attack on the welfare state that conservatism and the political right has been waging. The lumpen(ization) of urban neighborhoods also mitigates his optimism and hope with regards to the youth as the vanguards of possible social transformation. I think that this is an extremely important point that transformative research of any kind needs to take into consideration how Lumpen segments, in the Marxian sense of course, tend to resist class consciousness. The rudimental assumption that “when we facilitate critique through consciousness-raising among the
disadvantaged, the marginalized, and the disfranchised, this would lead to transformation” may be doomed to failure because of neglecting this “class fraction” or the mindset that emerged in contradistinction with the material conditions circumscribing urban neighborhoods.

**Giving Back**

In this node, I explore how and what critical researchers contribute back to the groups/communities they study, an element that is repeatedly underscored as an attempt to ameliorate the “disadvantaged” positions of their research subjects. Certainly, using the phrase or the terminology “giving-back” alludes to the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched in that it invokes the advantageous position of the former vis-à-vis that of the one latter, as well as in its being the product of a set of assumptions. Therefore, one has to be aware of what he or she summons by using such terminology, while critically engaging with possible distinctions across research types and contexts. Given this, I should mention that I use “giving back” in a broader and non-colonial sense, as outcome of dynamics other than victimization and imbalance of power/status. Nevertheless, the term still suggests a certain differential disposition, which may explain the discomfort that some of my participants articulated with regards to such ambiguity. An example is what Luttrell says in the following exchange:
Mustafa- How about giving back to the community that you research. What’s this giving-back story?

Luttrell- What’s this giving-back story? I think it’s an interesting phrase, “giving back”. It has a certain assumption built into it, that there is an exchange. I think that there are a lot of participatory action researchers who might say that “giving back” is all a part of the process, that it’s mutual from the beginning, it’s not as if you do something together and then the researcher gives back and the participants take.

Similarly, Miller thinks that,

I think that that is important. I think it sometimes looks like I am going to take stuff and turn around and give you something. I think that's not a good way to look at it. I think that a part and parcel of what's happening should be something that is good for the community.

One of those action researchers whom Luttrell mentioned was Noffke. For her, the act of research itself is a way through which a person chooses to give back and cannot, therefore, be thought of in separation from such an act. The resistance, then, is at the undermined potential for reciprocity that “giving-back” may suggest, i.e., a condition of non-mutuality that reinforces differential dynamics between the researcher and the participant. This is particularly true in the case of participatory researchers, who, instead of seeing in the generation of data a process of benefiting and representing subjects of research, understand such an operation as reciprocal and collaborative. Hence, to “give back” in this instance becomes problematic for these researchers,
since it relationally reduces the subject to an object, whereas that latter should be viewed as an indispensable collaborator. Noffke addresses this critically:

It is funny, because I always think that data do not exist apart from the relationship between the researcher and the researched. They are not things that you can actually use to construct the representation apart from that relationship. So, it feels funny being sort of like data for somebody else’s dissertation.

She exemplifies how it works for her work:

Well, the best one that happened recently is that some of the work I did involved getting our student teachers to work with the local curriculum development teams. So, while the students are learning how to do unit planning, they are actually producing units that benefit the local district. So, actually one of the local school districts is going to fully implement a curriculum next year, and that curriculum came out of the collaboration between student teachers and the local people. So, I saw us as generating in some ways academic knowledge about best practices whatever you want to talk about in terms of curriculum that’s given back to the district. I think of the ways in which we take our abstract principles of what should be good work in education and make it real for the social situation. Also, I will spend a lot of time next year actually working out in the field with teachers who are trying to implement the new curriculum, to try to figure out where we got it right and where we did not have it right. And I help them. So, it’s more than just the usual service routine. It’s connected to my research, but it’s research that actually benefits the people hopefully who are, can constitute, the site where I’m doing the research.
Additionally, these researchers might have to contend with situations where giving back is not that possible due to various ethical and methodological concerns or because of practical problems. Strategies of giving back operate on different levels relative to the aims of research, the researcher’s motivations, the research context, susceptibility of subjects, socio-historical conjunctures, and the like. But it seems that the most important determining factor is the way in which the researcher connects with her/his subjects and how she or he justifies such linkage within the ethical, methodological and epistemological concerns of the study. Dyson summarizes this point:

I think that [giving-back] is important; but I think the way that people do it has to be authentic to them and who they are in relationship to the community. So, what people can do varies.

This variety translates into different types of strategies researchers may deploy in order to deliver back to their research subjects and their communities. These could be theoretical and epistemological, personal and individual, public and collective, formal and institutional, and even inspirational. Obviously, these need not be exclusive categories, for giving-back, whether in terms philosophical or practical, could be determined by and bound to the personal considerations of the researcher as they interact amidst aspects of methodology, theory, epistemology, the research site, the subjects of research, etc. They are also non-exclusive in the sense that researchers could navigate through and deploy various strategies simultaneously, a condition I address below.

One of the most common types of giving-back appears to be the contribution that research is expected to make, theoretically and epistemologically, to academic conversations
about a certain phenomenon under study. Theory as a giving-back strategy, as I suggest above, may operate in a variety of ways, sometimes in conjunction with, and other times in separation from, other types of strategies. For instance, some researchers may prioritize the testing and production of theory over other categories. Also singularly, other researchers may work to undo certain oppressive theoretical constructions, for in these they find major perpetuators of inequalities. Both the promotion and demotion of a certain theory generally relate to the politics of representing the subjects of research. In this case, researchers seek to demonstrate how certain approaches or theoretical frameworks are exploitative/suppressive, and how these help to reinforce existing inequalities, rather than to address certain practical and intellectual issues that could constitute a needed ground for the social transformation to materialize. Weis and Fine (1998), for example, struggle with the issue of whether to represent “historically oppressed groups as ‘victimized’ and ‘damaged’ or as ‘resilient’ and ‘strong’” (p.285). This struggle surfaces through the process of writing:

We stretch toward writing that spirals around social injustice and resilience; that recognizes the endurance of structures of injustice and the powerful acts of agency; that appreciates the courage and the limits of individual acts of resistance, but refuses to perpetuate the fantasy that ‘victims’ are simply powerless and collusive (p. 286).

These concerns force them to “invent an intellectual stance in which structural oppression, passion, social movements, evidence of strength, health, and ‘damage’ can be recognized without erasing essential features of the complex story that constitutes urban life in poverty (p.286).” Weis and Fine suggest that researchers should be “vigilant,” as Spivak proposes, about their research practices and their relation to the research context in order not to
run the risk of victimizing or damaging the people under study. By the same token, Fine (1994),
warns against a similar peril: “…[Q]ualitative researchers need to recognize that our work stands
in some relation to othering. We may, self-consciously or not, decide how to work the hyphen of
the Self and Other, how to gloss the boundaries between, and within, slippery constructions of
Others (p.139).” Paul Willis’s signature concept “resistance” emerges from similar concerns over
the existing politics of representation which underestimates the power of the “weak,” and which,
therefore, perpetuates hopelessness:

Structural theories of reproduction present the dominant ideology (under which culture
is subsumed) as impenetrable. Everything fits too neatly. Ideology always pre-exists
and preempts any authentic criticism. There are no cracks in the billiard ball
smoothness of process. All specific contradictions are smoothed away in the universal
reproductive functions of ideology. On the contrary, and in my view more
optimistically, there are deep dysfunctions and desperate tensions within social and
cultural reproduction. Social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active
appropriators who produce existing structures only through struggle, contestation, and
partial penetration of structures (p.175).

In this sense, using research to produce studies that are theoretically more sophisticated
and less mechanical could be considered as one way to give back. And as I mentioned at the
beginning of this section, this need not be a separate category altogether, simply because almost
all critical qualitative research is conducted in affiliation with the academy. And the academy
means an ongoing theoretical conversation, as Cornbleth, for example, explains:
I cannot point out any specific point I have done that would be of direct benefit to the participants in the study. I have done things like share the results with the participants, participating teachers. I am in the process of giving copies of *Diversity and New Teacher* book to the new teachers who participated, some of the cooperating teachers and school people. I have had participants say to me … I can give you an example here. The interviews they participated in got them think about things they had not thought about before. I got mixed reviews on that: some appreciated; some of them said it is a little bit disturbing. But I guess that was good. But that is the positive side of it. It is not purposeful giving-back. Sharing, making available, but it has not been sort of the activist work that Michelle Fine does. I don’t think this is actively giving-back; but both Christine Sleeter and I have done work with teachers who, we think, are truly impressive maverick teachers. I don’t like the word maverick especially with John McCain overusing it at the Republican Convention. But I started this project about half a dozen years ago about teachers who are against the grain, out of the ordinary and very successful in less than ideal circumstances. Christine worked with some teachers like that too. And we are putting together a prospectus for an edited book; we are, instead of our talking about these teachers, we are asking them to speak themselves. There are couple who would rather have us do the writing. “I’ll talk, you listen, you do the writing, I’ll edit, I don’t want to write.” But that is not so much giving back as it is providing access…

As Cornbleth suggests, at this level of struggling to *give back*, communities are affected indirectly, and the discussion is carried out instead, within the walls of the academy. For this
reason, benefit seems to be more inward, especially in the long run, in that these theoretical contributions have the potential in becoming reference points for future studies.

Another common strategy of giving-back relates to the personal level. I am using the term “personal” to refer to both the researcher’s struggle to contribute to the understanding of how to transform the disadvantaged situations of the people under study, as well as his/her efforts to help these subjects with their daily-life hardships when these emerge in the course of the study. In the end, critical research, as Weis (2004) conceives, is a quest of “traveling between the lives of people and larger social structures” (p.192). This level of struggle provides us with clues about how the researcher positions himself/herself vis-à-vis those under study, as well as the nature of the moral and ethical issues involved in a study. When I asked Weis about her take on the issue, she stated:

I think that is a very difficult question. It sounds easy. Because we should not do this only for our careers, we should go back, help the people we are working with. It sounds good. I would never say that everybody should go back and report their data back to communities because we are not part of those communities. Sometimes we should report, sometimes we should not. There is no way that I would go back to that White working class community and report on that question of violence. I am not there. I could be inciting something far worse inside their community given that I am not there; I am not responsible for the ripple effects of my giving back; I am not there to see it through. Who knows the consequences of simply reporting out my findings? What I think we have to do is we have to be adults and we have to think through the potential

47 Of course, if you take up structuralist position.
consequences of everything we do. Now, having said that, there are things we do too that can be very, very helpful. We oftentimes have talks for groups … we report certain kinds of data. We are always there as advisers in this sense, especially around issues related to colleges and universities or school-based questions. But I think that the “giving back to the community” point has, like the reflexive methods point, become too much of a cliché. I really do. I think that it is really, really important to keep that critical perspective alive in our field in the research university. Doing that is not just about our career, it is about teacher-education students having access to this stuff; they read it, they discuss it, we teach it. It is another voice. So, at some level, that might not be a direct giving back. But in the long run, it is a giving back. That perspective is critically important. That is where I ended up in *Class Reunion*. Working the hyphen is not necessarily … I have an enormous respect for Michelle’s piece, and I think it is brilliant; but there is another side to working the hyphen that can be working responsibly and respectfully with the communities in which engage research while contributing to the critical literature which is a very important literature. Imagine if it was not there. You would just have work on the achievement gap; you’d have no critique, imagine that. I think it is very important to do this kind of work in a research institution.

In *Class Reunion* (2004), she pushes this argument further: “It is the capturing of the experiences of groups and individuals in relation to broader oppressive structures, with an eye toward altering such structures that is at issue here (p.191).” She additionally argues that “we must, as investigators, give back – we cannot see our role as arrogantly assessing how those “other” than ourselves make the most of their meager circumstances – circumstances with which
we do not, on a daily basis, have to live (p.191).” By reflecting on her position in relation to the subjects under study, Weis finds herself as an outsider. Her reflections on how she has given back to the community point to both the moral grounds against which she positions herself as a researcher, on the one hand, and the extent of vigilance she needs to exercise in relation to her practices, on the other:

In a *Class Reunion*, I was a relative ‘outsider’. While I gave back to the community by providing lists of names, addresses, and so forth to reunion organizing committees, as well as offering information with respect to schools and colleges in the local area and general knowledge regarding the stratified educational system, I remained an outsider (p.192)

Dimitriadis’ reflections (2008), on the other hand, portray the possibility of the researcher becoming a part of the daily lives of the people under study, to the extent that these might rely on him/her to meet some of their immediate needs:

My relationship with these youth deepened as I became a functional part of their lives, as they came to rely on me more and more for meeting their everyday material demands. I was one more resource to meet the myriad and often unpredictable demands that face young people at the margins.

But this *giving-back* was mutually helpful for Dimitriadis, since he argues that it assisted him to shift his positionality from an “outsider” to an “insider” of sorts. However, he does not tell us if this was a conscious choice which was framed or foreseen before conducting the research, or whether it came about in the course of the study:
Meeting these needs allowed me to renegotiate my particular relationship with each of these teens and also the young people at the community center more broadly. Yet, the story was not a linear one, with my moving from simple “outsider” to “insider” status…. But the ways we connected around their immediate needs helped open up and deepen my relationship with each.

Unlike Weis (2004), Dimitriadis (2008) does not take his giving-back beyond providing “daily life help” to the subjects, and prefers not to directly intervene in their lives by providing information. He confines his giving-back strategies to offering help for “extremely particular and extremely immediate” needs. For him direct intervention (helping them to see right from wrong, for example), would not change a lot because of how their real material conditions would overshadow any “wiser perspective” that tries to preach them the right way of doing and living things:

I am often asked, when teaching *Friendship, Cliques, and Gangs*, if I “helped” the youth in the study, if somehow my wiser perspective on their lives allowed them to see themselves in new ways. The answer, sadly, is “no.” The material circumstances of these youth, I argue, were always paramount. They did not need or want me to tell them that their decisions were good or bad ones. They continually faced specific, immediate, and overwhelming needs. I tried to meet them here, on this fraught terrain.

Dressman follows a different path. After conducting research, he prefers to give back in the form of aiding in the personal development of a subject with whom he collaborated in the course of the study at the site of research:
At the same time, if you are talking about giving back to the community, yes, I do think that a researcher has some sort of obligation to be responsive. So, in the case of this research that we did in Morocco, we brought a Moroccan professor and a student here to the United States. I gave some demonstrations using technology in English-language education. So, there was some giving back and some sharing of both material wealth and knowledge in the project. When I do research, I try to do that.

He also mentions that this is not the only way he utilizes to give back. By considering and understanding the importance of the type of work carried out, the communities examined, the context of the research study and the like, the research can determine a method to give back that befits one context or another, one need or another:

We worked in an alternative middle school; we did a study with struggling middle school students. And a large part of what we did in the course of the research was to do a lot of teaching, a lot of tutoring for the kids, and to provide some feedback to those teachers about what we saw working in their classrooms and what we saw not working.

Sometimes, the researcher may not deploy personal-level contributions to assist with particular study-related needs of the subjects; instead, delivering back to participants may involve the researcher using their personal connections, knowledge, and other relevant capital to make available resources that the subjects could use within and without the context of the research study undertaken. To be clear, activist scholars like Fine may not have to be actually engaged in a research study in order to help out disadvantaged communities or groups. As she is very well known for the type of work she produces:
[I] got a call from a woman at Brandeis University. She’s working with a woman in Nicaragua who started the first battered women’s shelter in the east side of the country or something. And she said “Everybody said I should call you, your students. Do you have Latina students who are bilingual who can help her?” So, we decided for that the PAR Collective would choose one project a year, pro bono, to dedicate whatever skills they might need. So, right now they are working with the police in the community to try to get them to provide safe passageway for the women to the shelter, women and children. We were just having this conversation, Maria and Jen and I, about how to be of use. While they will work with the organization to figure out how to be meaningfully engaged, we came up with two different images of what they might offer: one is to create a local capacity for research and collaborating to do some training around how to build participatory battered women shelters. So, the women who are coming to the shelter are shaping its governance and more participatory than merely being social workers helping the women. Or alternatively, we could just be the New York researchers who study the impact of the shelter on the local community’s wellbeing, gathering evidence they can use for fund raising. So, on the one hand we could work with and help build local participatory capacity … On the other hand, I now know that using the privilege of the university is also really important for them to be able to get money from the Nicaraguan government or foundations. So, they can choose how to use us, probably end up doing both, but also using our privilege as the members of the academy who studied this project, have seen these kinds of outcomes for the children, for the women, for the community, for the police.
Fine, however, sees the act of giving-back as something more than “lending the capital of the academy,” or relationships built upon similar arrangements; instead, for her it is more about building a “legacy of research”:

In some of our projects, youth researchers in high school earn three college credits for doing the year’s worth of work. The projects all have an action component – a policy change, evidence for an ongoing issue, a website for youth, testimony in state or local legislatures. But mostly we leave behind young critical researchers. We give testimony in Albany and the City Council. So, at the level of the young people program and policy as well as money I think there is a lot. The language of “left behind” is funny because usually, at least my students they don’t leave. They stay with the community, they work with the kids, they are all paying for their college.

In other words, what Fine explains in the foregoing comment is that participants in a research study could simultaneously be actively contributing to the construction and implementation of the research study outlook and specifics, while benefiting from the research processes and outcomes, as well as benefiting others in the group/community.

Giving-back could also represent an intervention at the institutional level, i.e., the broader context that deems personal-level assistance by the researcher above necessary in the first place. This is primarily because institutions, defined as sites of systemic contact between individuals and society, have frequently been conceived as the source of oppression by the dint of enforcing and producing social inequalities. Consequently, the argument goes, institutional practices and structures that maintain these inequalities need to eventually be transformed. Miller’s work exemplifies this effort:
In my work, I'm trying to help teachers have a better way of interacting with their students and teaching curriculum -- what they think is so important. But I have to negotiate with their needs and their concerns and their fears. But I hope that after I've done that research … I always think of my work as development and then research, rather than research and development (R & D). So we develop a potential and then we see what happens. So developing the potential is the first step in that it’s helping that community and that if you continue it for a long time things can change. We have 20 more teachers who are going to be going through a professional development program, there will be a total of 200 teachers in one school district; unfortunately it is a huge school district. But there are enough seeds planted that I hope even if after 10-12 years later, if we are not going to be there anymore that there will be some things that go against the grain, that aren't business as usual in those classrooms. And I've seen evidence of that in the classrooms, in the transcripts, in the students. Even if the students only have one teacher who does that, it opens a potential for them to think about themselves in a new way as a designer of knowledge and as somebody who can make sense of the world and then communicate to other people. That for me is central. To go against the grain of what's being taught in history class or against the Ernest Hemingway's vision of women or whatever it is; to be the one to pose questions that are not ones that may have been posed before. So that's the way I see giving to the community …

At this level, then, the aim of the researcher is to undermine social institutions in various ways (Orfield & Lee, 2004; Smith et al., 2003; Rist, 1970; Lee, 1996). But such engagement can also operate positively when researchers highlight the potential involved in creating institutions
that could engender a new space for empowerment as a means to transform the existing social relationships between the powerful and the oppressed (McCormick, 2004). Torre’s study is one of the best examples of this type of trying to give back to the community by targeting the structural conditions of the subjects’ oppression. Analyzing the experiences of three participants of a “constructed site” (Weis & Fine, 2004) of the Echoes Institute, Torre (2004) raises some important points concerning silence and collective voice in integrated space, “benefits and necessities of contact (at and between the levels of individual, collective, and space) (p.374)” as well as the investigation of the meaning of creating diverse democratic spaces of inquiry. By putting a diverse group of young people together, she had aimed at creating “contact zones,” described as “a messy social space where differently situated people ‘meet, clash, and grapple with each other’ across their varying relationships with power (p.376).” She tries to develop strategies of creating contact zones which move us “Beyond Silenced Voices and into Extraordinary Conversations.” This is given her claim that bringing groups of the oppressed and the oppressors together into a shared space would be mutually beneficial for a dialogue that fosters change. Torre finds this alternative form of “integration,” creating constellations of people who would not usually come together if it were only a determination by the more conventional categories of race, ethnicity, gender, etc., as a mechanism of “redressing” social inequalities by attempting to provide the kind of social and structural support needed.

The researcher might thus try to target the “harmful” practices that occur within certain social institutions, which help perpetuate and reinforce inequalities, by replacing them with “empowering” practices that could effectuate some kind of transformation in the structure of the social institution itself. One good example of this is the focus that Lee gives to her in terms of targeting the stereotyping of a certain group of students in the social institution of the school:
I hope that my work has implications for policy and practice. I hope that, for example, my most recent work can challenge people's thinking about Hmong students, and about sort of how we are thinking about Hmong students, how we are responding to Hmong students. In my early work, I focused a lot on the model minority stereotype and that was actually my dissertation work and I'm actually revising that dissertation book right now. My goal in that book was to challenge our assumptions or the dominance of hegemonic assumptions about Asian-Americans as high achieving minorities and to get folks to think about how that stereotype is being used against other groups of color and how it limits our understanding of who Asian-American kids are.

Tackling stereotypes is not necessarily the only strategy used by researchers in this regard. McCormick (2004), for example, establishes an alternative framework where poetry is the tool for redressing harmful practices, the power and transformative potential this form of artistic and literary expression holds. She concludes that “writing poetry” could be a way of subverting the dehumanizing effects of poverty, the militaristic pressure of the school setting (metal detectors etc.), and the violence surrounding the lives of urban students.

Another variation on the strategy that tackles the institutional is when researchers try to attract public attention or seek policy reform to alleviate certain structural causes of inequality in society. Although all critical qualitative researchers in a sense aim to change policies and affect public support for an issue they are examining, many do not necessarily subscribe to the idea that “policies could redress inequalities.” Rather, policy change is seen as a part of a bigger transformation project or as an outcome of this process of transformation. Anyon gives an example:
With *Ghetto Schooling*, for example, I went back to give the teachers what I thought and they did not want to hear it. But the superintendent who had just been chosen by the state … the superintendent gave every principal, every administrator, and district the copy of *Ghetto Schooling* and asked them to read it and to write her their responses and to incorporate their ideas about and the ways to reform their school.

The involvement of critical research with policy is usually limited to a critique of the oppressive manifestations of social policies on daily life practices. Policies about school admission, standardized testing, discipline, tracking, and school reform (*No Child Left Behind*) are critiqued under the guidance of questions such as ‘what causes test score discrepancies among different social classes/groups/ethnic minorities etc.?’ ‘Are standardized tests fair and legitimate?’ and, ‘How have testing practices damaged education?’

Haney (1993), for example, discusses the impacts of tests on minority students, the SAT in particular, and argues that “standardized tests have often been used to the disadvantage of minorities and that charges of cultural bias and unfairness have often been leveled at standardized tests (p.56).” In *Black in School*, Ginwright (2004) ties “multiculturalism” to “a larger struggle for economic and political equality (p.3).” He builds up his struggle towards social transformation by reflecting on his own experiences throughout his academic career:

Over the years, I’ve listened to numerous stories where black youth encountered police brutality, coped with unimaginable family violence, struggled to support their families, contented with sexual abuse, and survived rape. (p.1)
Similarly, in another study (2003), he looks for public reform which he believes will help to alleviate the conditions of the black urban youth:

My work with poor communities and with youth who struggle to find meaning in their schools has prompted me to examine how we might conceptualize urban reform in ways that affirm black youth identity while simultaneously challenge oppressive economic conditions in their communities. (ibid. p.2)

Communal giving-back, so to speak, is yet another, and probably the most common, strategy of delivering back, through direct interaction, to communities or groups of participants that the researcher has worked with throughout the study. This usually happens by sharing the outcomes of research with the subjects and beyond, i.e., the involved groups/communities.

However, interaction could involve complex issues that may require the researcher to dedicate specific attention to an aspect of the research process, such as the language of interactions itself. An example is how Dyson articulates her experiences with the parents of the kids she worked with:

I guess when I was at Berkeley I had some fantastically marvelous students who would be working in communities with which they identified, say through ethnic or racial identity. They would get involved from their research—say, with a parent organization. I have no immediately visible connection to the families in the schools in which I work, except, of course, through an interest in the children. I try to give back to the school and to the families; for example, before I publish, except this last time when the school closed down in Michigan, I have tried to present and discuss my findings in story terms to the parents of the kids and to the teacher. There are lots of people who help me. In
the Brothers and Sisters project, we were even helped by the best known DJ in the Bay Area at the time in San Francisco—he and his producer talked with my assistant and me about the children and popular culture; we were also helped by people who worked in record stores and by an assistant coach for the Oakland Raiders. So, many, many people are generous with time in the interest of contributing to understanding their perspective on kids. But, in the end, I feel most responsible to children, parents, and teachers. I love discussing research with parents. One has to purge oneself of the jargon which can be intellectually useful but can also limit who you can communicate with. So, when you're talking to parents, parents who didn't have the opportunity to get a higher education, you have to really be sure that you can communicate respectfully and clearly. That was the best experience I've ever had, talking to parents. Because I would show them their kids’ writing. And first they would think, even not be pleased, then I would tell them the whole story of it. I remember Nicky’s dad… he said “Wow first you look at [the child’s work] and you think it is nothing and then you hear the story and you think, “Hey! That’s my kid.” I think giving back the information to the people who were involved that's something that I can do.

Along the same line of language as a conscious and significant element throughout the interaction with the subjects of research, Scheurich underscores its importance during the giving-back process. He is very critical of researchers who seem to only engage with “heavy academic writing practices” that generally address transformational issues at the macro level alone. For him, such practices could never reach beyond mere academic rhetoric:
Scheurich- I have some arguments with Freire but he got a lot of things awfully right. That you speak in the language of the people, you’re working with people in their environments, you’re not in a separate place writing about them and studying them. But you have to change your language. You can’t talk, you can’t be saying “capitalism” and “imperialism”, and you got to talk in the language that’s common, common language to raise whatever issues there are at hand.

Mustafa- Yea, it seems like the major node in your work is language. But at same time there is this idea that people do not read our works.

Scheurich- They don’t! But they read mine. *Leadership for Equity and Excellence* was the best seller for Sage. That means thousands of teachers and schools and in principal preparation programs read that book because of that.

In this sense, language is very relevant, not only as an element of interaction throughout research, but also in the post-fieldwork stage of writing, when the main question is one of working towards making the final written product accessible by multiple audiences, rather than the usual readership of academicians. In other words, to write so that the research subjects could access and benefit from the written articulation of the study and its outcomes could then function as an important giving-back strategy. An example of this is the special attention given by Dyson to a particular audience group, teachers:

I've stayed in touch with the kids until I moved. I have done that. But I don’t think I give in any huge way except through teacher education and through trying to write
different kinds of pieces for different kinds of audiences. Some days, I don't feel I've been successful at all in changing how we look at children and literacy.

This should not mean, however, that the audiences targeted remain stable; rather, they get redefined according to and depending on the type of research conducted. With regards to this, Luttrell explains:

In my own work, I’ve often thought of that in terms of writing for multiple audiences and making sure that along the way the kinds of products that come out of the research process are of use, are of value to the people that I’ve worked with. So, in my first work with adult literacy learners, even before, way before I finished my dissertation, I wrote adult--literacy curricula based on some of the ethnographic work that I did because that was a form of knowledge production that was useful at the time to the women I worked with. Same is true in the teen pregnancy work that I did. Along the way, every year we made books and those books were for the girls to keep; they were authors of their stories. And that was separate from the research report or the book that I ended up writing. So, I think it sometimes has to do with writing for multiple audiences and I think it also from the very beginning it’s about negotiating mutual beneficial relationships. And I love Karen McCarthy Brown’s way of talking about ethnographic work, where she says something about the line between anthropology and human relationships ends up being both moral as well as aesthetic, and I would add as well as related to social justice. So, I think those lines are very blurry at times and that doing intellectual work for me has always required trying to find that line in different ways,
depending on what the context is, what the community that I am working with, and what they say, what they wish or desire at the time.

The scholars that I interviewed reflected on other possibilities of giving-back that they would also want to realize. Many of them defined ideal giving back practices in which researchers could engage to yield much better outcomes than the ones that they had been able to achieve and formulate. The literature is consistent with this tendency of deploying a language of possibility that usually sets the tone of giving-back, which I have discussed in the content analysis section. And before one takes the common skeptical stance towards the idealistically-sounding possibilitarian language critical researchers use, one could have a better realistic appreciation of the many hurdles that stand in the way of conducting critical research and achieving outcomes that could contribute to the aim of transformation. One interesting example from Miller may expand on this last point:

I haven't done this yet, but I would really like to do it. There are professional organizations who could have capacity to invite people to all do the same research project and write the research project, get some funding for it, everybody gets a little pot of money and then you get this look like across the US with 40 sites across the US and you get 40 people looking at an important question. This hasn't been done but it should have been done – looking at the impact of No Child Left Behind on fourth-grade reading, let's say. And then you get all this together, you have this huge national study that if you actually wanted to apply to the government to get it done, it wouldn’t work. First of all they wouldn't fund it; but secondly it would require so much money. But if you have people who are professionally interested in doing that, you could get, let’s
say, 40 case studies. You aggregate them. You put it out in all the various publication forums, including periodicals that parents read, and all that. And then you create a buzz about these things that are happening. And I think that is giving back to the community by becoming part of a professional cohort of researchers who are contributing to a single research question… You could go and publish on your own, but you have a bigger impact potential. I think that could give back to not just the people who you are looking at, but to the whole country. I think research needs to do that. Research is often looked at as university people going in and studying indigenous people and classrooms, and that's I think, that's a bad thing.

Another relevant point that Miller raises here is the need for broad political environment and arrangements as a basis for engaging with issues of social transformation in transcendence of individual attempts at changing things, as is the case with research studies carried out by critical researchers individually. Such broader engagement would also necessarily try to have an impact on policy makers and the government through the kind of language used to articulate policy change recommendation that prioritize “generalizibility” of research outcomes and applicability on a large-scale plane – formulating a nationwide response to particular impacts of No Child Left Behind above is a manifestation.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter attempts to explore three major issues in grounding transformations: methodological choices, grounding critique, and giving back. The method section reveals that
there is no particular methodology that is more amenable to critical research. Although critical researchers overwhelmingly conduct their studies through qualitative techniques, there is a consensus across critical scholars that it has to do more with the commitments and thus researchers than the methodology and the tools employed. My participants underlined that what gives a certain study its critical edge depends on how the research leading up to its materialization has been conducted. Additionally, data indicate that in many cases the method is determined/selected prior to engaging with the research question and the research subjects, which may explain the lesser flexibility that it holds relative to other aspects of the critical enterprise. In this sense, scholars usually tend to adapt certain aspects of their research in accordance with their methodological orientations. This exists in affinity with how struggles within the Academy and different qualitative research practices construct particular research identities that are aligned with reference to methodology.

In the second subsection, I addressed the concerns influencing the practices of grounding critique. Data suggest that, while some researchers prefer to incorporate theoretical models within which critique has already been embedded, others tend to generate critique from their research subjects and participants. While, in the former, the researcher actively intervenes with the deployment of critique that is external in nature, the latter mode could be identified as one of mere facilitation. Likewise, the practice of “studying up” or “studying down” shapes the nature of critique. More importantly, the broader political atmosphere determines not only the possibilities of critique (novel perspectives useful at analyzing educational and social phenomena), but also its susceptibility to stagnation and the installment of new orthodoxies. While the political and ideological rhetoric surrounding critical ethnography in education often subscribes to the idea that the purpose of research is to seek social and cultural transformations,
the mechanisms through which these transformations are to occur do not seem to occupy a comparably central location in academic debates today.

In the *giving back* segment, I presented the reflections of my participant critical researchers on how and what they contribute back to the communities they study, an element that is repeatedly underscored as an attempt to ameliorate the “disadvantaged” positions of their subjects. The scholars sometimes highlighted what they wanted to *give back* but could not because of various ethical, methodological concerns or practical problems. Thus, I have argued that the strategies of *giving back* might work on different levels in accordance with the aims of research, the researcher’s motivations, the research context, susceptibility of subjects, socio-historical conjunctures, and the like. Across these levels, I additionally argued, it is more the norm not to find clear-cut boundaries that may discern discrete characterizations and techniques that may fit one level but not the other. Instead, these two seem to deploy at multiple levels and to interact variably when *giving back* eventually becomes a concern for critical researchers.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS and IMPLICATIONS

In this dissertation project, I have analyzed the constructions of critical qualitative research in education. Towards this end, I have engaged in mapping the theoretical, practical, and epistemological variations across both critical researchers as well as the research published in the most influential journals in the field of educational research. I have also explored variations/differences and the principles that give rise to them along the lines of “open ended” classifications discerned in accordance with the purposes of this dissertation project. The arguments put forward in this project have been established on the basis of empirical findings accomplished. Supplemental to this, the theoretical and philosophical trajectory of the critical and the critical research attempted here served the purposes of assembling a conceptual framework and highlighting connections with the broader body of research and literature in education.

I employed two qualitative data conducting techniques: content analysis and interviews. Both techniques were constructed distinctively to complement each other in an attempt to reveal the various aspects of critical qualitative research in education. While the content analysis section may seem to provide a somewhat mechanistic view of research construction through exploring various patterns observed in research articles, the interview analysis section, on the other hand, addresses the various meaning fields and their mappings as means to better assess and understand the architecture of criticality and critical research practices.
Drawing on Bourdieu’s field theory, as well as on patterns abstracted from content analysis throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the critical enterprise is not a static theoretical construct that is applicable across different research studies. Nor is it limited to the realm of the theoretical; for its usage in empirical studies and the contextual and conceptual variations that its instances show, from German idealism to French structuralism, etc., underline the need to adopt both theoretical and empirical tools in order to explore the current manifestations of the critical enterprise. I have also argued that the political dimension of research construction and practice is inherent to the various aspects of the social, academic, and personal and is re-enforced through power relations within the field – one of the major building blocks of the critical enterprise.

Although the content analysis segment may have broader implications than what has actually been presented here, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation project to talk about all the methodological or epistemological implications that may have emerged from data conducted from the journals consulted. To have included all implications, I believe, would have both weakened the coherence of the dissertation’s structure and diverted its focus from objectives defined in the introductory chapter. Thus, I limited content analysis to describing in general what I was able to extract; yet, a much more detailed discussion was given to patterns of transformations, given their direct relevancy to the main themes of this dissertation. Overall, content analysis serves to underline that, unlike the conventional categories the available literature offers on constructing critical research, particularly with regards to methodology, the construction of critical research, as I argue, follows instead, non-linear paths. In other words, the theoretical, methodological, and philosophical indices of critical educational research could undergo remolding in response to how these may interact with principles impacting research
choices and practices, which, to some extent, are discussed in the interview analysis section. Because of the complex nature of such interplay, research variations are consequently irreducible only to the intellectual choices of the individual researcher alone, although the “personal” has a lot to offer to research construction and practice. This project has also attempted to address the complex question of the political in critical research, arguing that the broad variety one finds particularly in relation to issues of social justice and social transformation are reflections of the kinds of politics that circumscribe the practical and/or discursive features of critical qualitative research. Therefore, an emancipatory/transformative research, I have argued, cannot take shape unless it tackles the question of the political, establishing itself in some political grounds or another, although the “critical project” might eventually be but the sum total of the different political undertakings of individual studies.

On the other hand, the interview data analysis segment, which consists of three major chapters, provides a multimodal look at the critical enterprise in the field of educational research from the perspectives of scholars whose works are loosely and broadly defined as “critical.” In this segment, I have argued that in order to assess the meanings and implications of the critical in educational research, one need not be exclusively focused on the research outcomes but should also look at the research process as well as the researcher herself. In other words, it becomes equally relevant and beneficial to look at conjunctures that are not traditionally a part of the finished product of research by shifting the object of exploration to the architecture of the critical. In this sense, interview data could be thought of as complementary to the content analysis and vice versa. I have additionally argued that variations across critical researchers are homologous. Instead of reducing the differences one could discern among them to
commonalities, I preferred to depart from differential variations in order to explore the principles underlying and generating such variations.

This dissertation also integrated that methodological stands hold the critical framework(s) of the research study intellectually coherent and stable, as was put forward by the scholars I interviewed. Clearly, as it was not reasonable or exhaustive to argue that there actually existed a solid (objective) framework that could hold the various building blocks of critical research together, I instead chose to look at hinges and foundations of the different frameworks. In other words, how one grounds and legitimates his or her methodological choices, in conjunction with supporting epistemological practices such as normativity and reflexivity, is just as important as theories and data conducting tools the researcher may employ.

Regarding the transformative dimension of the critical enterprise and how it gets deployed differently from one research to the other, I have relied on grounding as a conceptual tool of interpreting and organizing my interview data. I argue that assembling transformative desire/practice unto various sociological or political grounds plays a very important role in determining the type of research conducted as well as its tone towards transformation. Similarly, I propose that strategies researchers deploy in giving back to the groups/communities they have investigated, with the purpose of altering or transforming some of their existing conditions of grievance, are not monolithic either, and should be analyzed at multiple levels.

In what follows, I will briefly discuss the theoretical and methodological implications of my data analysis under two subheadings. First, I will provide a panoramic view of the critical qualitative research through the themes that emerged from this dissertation project, and how, internally, they work with and against each other. Second, I will address the practices in
conducting critical qualitative research that are embedded into a set of relations I was able to abstract from literature reviewed and interviews conducted.

An Architecture of Critical Qualitative Research in Education

Critical qualitative research in education in the United States has come a long way from where and when it took off as an academic initiative. One of the earliest instances of critical research was Anderson’s (1989) seminal article, in which he locates critical ethnography in educational research at the crossroad of converging independent trends in both epistemology and social theory. On the one hand, epistemological foundations had been set in an effort to “break out of the conceptual cul-de-sac of quantitative methods.” On the other hand, epistemology also registered the advent of the interpretive movement in sociology and anthropology. However, I think that incorporation of the “critical” into qualitative research and/or ethnography needs to be thought of in separation from anti-positivist, post-modern, and even linguistic tendencies in qualitative research, albeit without negating the existence and importance of such connections, in order for one to better assess the broader meanings for the evolving field. In this manner, similar to Habermas’s assertion in regard to the cognitive interests of human beings, one of which being an emancipatory interest, I think that the evolution of the critical research into social theory and epistemology has had greater implications than merely introducing conceptual or theoretical innovations into the field.

48 The term critical ethnography has been used interchangeably with critical qualitative research in many of analyses and reviews I have examined.
The trends that Anderson (1989) highlighted paved theoretical and epistemological ways for the critical to foster; yet, when it comes to the question of emancipating through research, such a practice needs to be thought of as a political act that transcends interpretative turns and other exclusively theoretical and epistemological approaches. Such a political character of the critical enterprise may explain the occurrence of political convergence among researchers when their theoretical, epistemological, and methodological choices and practices prior to engaging with the research process may suggest otherwise. In other words, this condition makes it possible that many critical quantitative researches may choose to work with the framework of positivist epistemology while at the same time pursue critical political agenda(s). Likewise, as I discussed in chapter 5 at length, although all of the scholars I interviewed agreed that the critical research could take on any form theoretically and methodologically, it should, however, politically follow a progressive path. Disagreement emerges in relation to where and how to take this path, rather than the necessity of following one in the first place. And it is in this path being one of a necessarily progressive nature that one may understand why people of strong leanings to the political right cannot produce critical research because of the latter’s addiction and ambition to exert power and authority in order to maintain the status quo. Contrariwise, the political right can produce and is producing interpretative qualitative research studies but they differ on the plane of interpretation. Nonetheless, works produced under the blueprints of positivism are clearly more accommodating for what may prolong and maintain the status quo, despite its not being the only way.

\[49\] It should, however, be restated that such political convergence does not represent a unified understanding or statement ground. Rather, it denotes a large political spectrum with transformative politics. At the same time, as I discussed in chapter five, the critical is exclusively Leftist in nature.
Departing from how things stood in the 1970s, it may appear that critical qualitative research has come to presently lose its political momentum in the Academy, a momentum which had colored the critical initiative significantly in the early years. In the early years, conceptual and theoretical frameworks were established on/around new readings of Marx (Carspecken, 1999). The political economy of schooling, race, ethnicity, and gender were explored with the purpose of emancipation as a guiding principle. Additionally, these readings were motivated by wanting to cast out the economic deterministic view of society that classical Marxism had held, which grew increasingly unpopular among scholars after the 1960s. Thus, for example, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s version of Marxism started to have more appeal among critical researchers, especially with its emphasizing of the transformative need for and possibility of working-class intellectuals. Across the Atlantic, however, such re-interpretive attempts had to contend with coexisting with, and more often than not blending into, the most enduring of the Anglo North American traditions of thought, American pragmatism. Important figures like Habermas, the last representative of the Frankfurt School Critical Theory, were not as stable a point of reference among US educational scholars compared to their peers in Europe. And despite the fact that Habermas shifted Critical Theory altogether to a position closer to the standpoint of the Social Democrats, thus de-radicalizing it (Bronner, 1994), the level of interest of US researchers in his work initially remained relatively low. This may have had to do with how he was seen, according to Foley, as “very detached” from empirical reality. Later in the 1990s, intellectuals such as Carspecken (1996, 1999) approached Habermas in a contrarian fashion to show how his work could have empirical application. However, according to Carspecken, Habermas is still not accorded the status he deserves in critical research in the
United States. It is French (post)structuralists like Foucault and Bourdieu, however, who have been able to find a bigger appeal in terms of empirical research on schooling.

In the literature that I have examined for this dissertation project it has emerged that an explicit political identification of the critical has often been replaced with a state of mind which proclaims criticality, not as a matter of a political positioning, but rather in relation to the practices that one engages in during and after research. In other words, what now qualifies research as critical has more to do with the researcher questioning various aspects of his/her work and the research industry in general – with this questioning more often than not concerning its practices with the “I” of the researcher and the impact their identities, beliefs, etc. may have on the process itself. Another manifestation of the critical has been the practice of synthesizing various research approaches in redressing any methodological monopoly of sorts. In this case, then, what legitimates research is not the act of critique but rather its processes, i.e. research practices. That the representation of the findings of research was not immune to reproducing certain structures of power and ideology along the researchers’ own predispositions started to require researchers to examine and reflect on their own research practices. Elitism of the researcher, as a major instance of this reproduction, could not claim as big a spot on the plane of reflexive and confessional practices in the field of critical educational research. This is given that almost all of the scholars that I interviewed talked about their discomfort at this type of reflexive practices, which is, in my opinion, nothing more than re-heated anti-positivist discourse about the manifestations of personal relativism. Likewise, when I was trying to assemble my initial framework around the notion critical, I looked at a number of dissertation projects, which employed either critical theories or claimed to be a critical study, completed in various universities all around the United States. In a great portion of these excellent dissertation
projects, any type of social commentary and/or reflexivity towards research practices have been recognized as major qualifiers of the notion critical.

Interviews and content analysis also suggest that from the beginning of the critical research tradition in the US, which is also to some extent infused with a critical Freirean pedagogical model, French and British traditions still occupy greater philosophical and theoretical space in the field. After 32 years of its publication, Paul Willis’s Learning to Labor still serves for many critical researches as a major anchoring point (negative or positive) both methodologically and theoretically. Carspecken (1999) mentioned that works produced in Birmingham School, particularly Willis’s, were employed as initial templates by US educational researchers.

Similarly, feminist movements have had a significant impact on redressing the patriarchal elements of the critical enterprise, given that there is almost no vernacular woman critical theorist in the continental European tradition. This condition remains a subject that is yet to be attempted in terms of internal critiquing within the field. If not all, many of the woman scholars that I have interviewed, such as Weis, Luttrell, and Fine, applied certain “feminist” concerns into their works, which, in my opinion, helped to extend the practice of critique unto new grounds, where certain shared conditions among women, whether as subjects or conductors of research, were sought to interrupt the traditional, patriarchal theoretical constructions of hegemonic representation. This newly emerged commonness in the form of a new feminist sensibility made it possible for a form of solidarity, commonly called “sisterhood” by second-wave feminist scholars, to come to the fore, albeit without entirely breaking Anglo or Continental traditions with strong patriarchal grounding. Although much can be said about the
unstable political trajectory that this feminist “universalism” has had to experience in the cobweb of the questions of class and race, in the US in particular, it is not the intention of this dissertation to address this in detail. What matters here is primarily underline that any attempt at mapping an architecture of the critical is significantly incomplete without referencing the impact and contributions that feminism has introduced.

Another aspect of this architecture is the disparity over the question of inequality. At the center of the difference is whether critical educational scholars deploy “high” or “low” level approach to the phenomena of inequality in the context of schooling. Elemental to this is the observation that, while critical research has helped create new perspectives to look at educational and social phenomena, it is sometimes not immune from the tendency of installing new orthodoxies and fixations. The overwhelming presence of concepts of racial and gender inequalities in critical education works may suggest that, within schools, certain subjects are made peripheral due to broader social inequality, which is a high level phenomenon. This is argued to shift the focus from “low level” phenomena that are equally needed to understand what goes on inside schools, such as the problem of underachievement for instance. Thus it becomes legitimate to wonder whether functionalist essentialisms of the past have not been replaced by essentialisms that assume the differing character of being radical: by canonizing minority as the primary category and narrative for critical educational research, one runs the risk of boiling down the influence relevant issues such as the poor performance may be playing in the schooling of US students in the areas of reading, writing, and math, for instance, across minority/majority divisions and in comparison with the performance of students in other parts of the world. Minority, as manifestation of the periphery, seems to have been made to occupy a prestigious status on the agendas of critical theories up to the extent that other arguments that may
recuperate “pre-critical” examination, such as assessing basic abilities to read and write, can easily fall out of favor for critical theorists whose main terrain is more or less the academia, even when the subject of investigation overwhelmingly is exterior to it. Thus, too much celebration of the periphery as almost an exclusive referentiality for educational research can, one may propose, amount to what might be a new orthodoxy, critical nonetheless, whose fodder seems to come mainly from highly prestigious concepts and phenomena like racial and gender gaps – in turn a conscious response to earlier counter high level associations like hard work and innate characteristics. Scholars who work on ‘low level” phenomena such as underachievement and instructional methods therefore feel they may have been pushed to the sides of the “critical agenda,” which they define as having been set by “self-proclaimed criticals.” This, of course, is an integral part of the broader political discussion in the field, and in many an instance outside its confines, regarding transformation and how to realize it.

One point that needs to be taken into consideration when evaluating the implications of this dissertation project is that almost all of the scholars I interviewed are senior professors at various US universities. This means that they have been in the Academy for at least two decades as either major contributors or influential initiators of critical educational research in the US. This makes it possible for one to have them “classified” as the first and second generations of critical researchers in education. A study that engages with 3rd and even 4th generation critical researchers may, I believe, yield different accounts towards mapping an architecture of the critical, particularly in terms of the political. The main reason behind this may be to the origins of the critical research enterprise in the United States. This is because, although the issues of race, social class, and gender had always been part of the research agenda, these were incorporated, as political questions, in the 1970s, hence the influence that the radical 1960s and
its emancipatory discourses still held for researchers who investigated these issues within the context of schooling. Therefore, the emergence of critical research a decade after the 1960s was not a coincidence. History and its era-defined specificities seem to exert a similar impact with regards to the more recent 1990s and 2000s, an era of depoliticization by the admission of many, in particular given the new normalizing trend of “everything is political”: so instead of prescribing how to effectuate emancipation as response to oppression as was the case for the earlier critical researchers, now it is more probable than not for discussion to focus more or less on describing how “oppression occurs.”

In the following section, guided by my discussions in the data chapters above, I address the issue of the assemblages of critical qualitative research in education. It should be noted that mine is one way of reading but by no means the only one. It draws mostly on the political character that pertains to making “emancipatory social research” as well as the effects of power within the Academy.

**Critical Alignments: Expressions of Critical in the Field**

I have explored how the critical scholars I interviewed understand and construct the architecture of the critical in the field of education. My analysis suggests that explaining variation across the critical scholarship may not primarily be a matter of differential subscriptions of individual critical scholars to a variety of theoretical or epistemological constructs. Rather, academic, intellectual, and political resonances that are present among these researchers generate conditions of convergence and/or divergence through a process of
interaction with factors that I have addressed in the above model and discussion. Similarly, I
propose that one has to go beyond the usually consensual, and valid, projection that it is the
political and emancipatory nature of the critical which brings together critical researchers from
different walks of scholarship. This going-beyond is more like going-deeper to make transparent
what may not be immediately visible about the nature of the workings of the critical enterprise,
especially when one is primarily concerned with the end product of the research process. It is this
deeper “second nature,” to reference Habermas, that provides how relationality, specific to the
field of the critical, is the element of the inter-subjective configurations among critical
educational scholars.

To understand this “second nature” as mechanism of inter-subjective configuration
among and by critical scholars, it may be useful to refer to what Bourdieu says about how a work
of art is judged to have an artistic value, more in relation to the particulars of the process of
judging rather than to qualities that could be argued to be inherent to the work itself: “The ‘eye’
is a product of history reproduced by education” and “[t]he pure gaze is a historical invention
linked to the emergence of an autonomous field of artistic production, that is, a field capable of
imposing its own norms on both the production and the consumption of its products” (1984, p.3).
In other words, Bourdieu is arguing that appreciation of works of art, along with developing an
artistic taste that gives form to an act of judging the good from the bad, is aligned with a process
of normalizing certain artistic qualities and styles as legitimate at the hands of the educated and

50 Habermas (1989) argues that theories and researches with emancipatory interests should follow different paths
from those that usually define other social sciences, in that they have to look at society’s “second nature” in order to
reveal how power is exercised. This is particularly significant; given how such power mechanisms remain invisible
to the hermeneutic eye of conventional social scientists (I discussed this in the chapter VII in detail). Similar to how
a psychiatrist targets the deeper, unconscious layers of a patient’s visible and more immediately identifiable
conditions of trauma, a critical researcher should uncover the second, less visible agents in identifiable (problematic)
social phenomena.
trained class of art critics. Thus, when an individual judgment or appreciation of a work of art is aligned with established and circulated, thus legitimate, modes of critiquing and appraising art, non-expert appreciation comes to resonate with expert critique, with the latter being inseparable from the question of legitimation as mentioned above. While one cannot talk about taste with reference to critical research in education, the question of alignment is nevertheless operational for assessing how a particular criticality may come to enjoy more legitimation and circulation than other critical formations if it is aligned with an authoritative expertise that has become a reference point for what may count as “critical.” When a novel researcher enters the field of critical educational research, the way he/she uses the already established and authoritative norms of researching and analyzing the critical would determine how his/her work is aligned or unaligned with the work of those influential others in the field. For the field of the critical is not devoid of a genealogy of scholarships and scholars that are referentially significant for the organization of the field in general, and the incorporation of its new entrants in particular. Thus, to claim a genealogical relationship to certain researchers who have already set some guiding tools to performing critical research becomes similar to setting the norm as to how the appreciative and evaluative artistic eye of the receiving audience comes to be preferentially constructed as a posteriori to the aesthetic and conceptual consensus of influential experts.

Alignments within the field of critical research in education, then, underline how researchers locate their scholarship in affinity with or dis-affinity from others, given that, even when a researcher tries to disengage or un-align their work from a dominant reference point, their position remains a question of alignment, in the negative sense nonetheless. In other words, the underlying resonances of dis-alignment can be considered to constitute a counter-alignment vis-à-vis some other alignment with an influential and dominant referentiality that has been
established and accepted in the field. It thus remains a question of situatedness, whether in line with or away from an exterior referentiality within the field, a relationality that operates as an instrument of legitimation, be it positively (alignment) or negatively (dis-alignment). This is most visible in the kind of responses that many of my participants provided to my question about what constituted the “critical” for them and for their work. These responses related not to what the critical was, but rather to what it was not.

Alignment, then, is not necessarily and exclusively dependent on sharing similar background features, which I have clarified in the model in chapter V. Rather, it is interaction with various academic, intellectual, and political considerations within the field and how this is determined by the specific relationality of the critical to an emancipatory purpose and to critical others that enables alignments and dis-alignments. In other words, alignment is also relational, and not simply materialization through similarity at the level of the end product of critical research in education. This appears to be parallel to how Habermasian deliberative theory operates. According to Habermas’s theory, the precondition for communicative acts is the interaction among equals who are pre-equipped with the faculty of rational deliberation. But more importantly, this rationality should also be expressive of the relation with deliberatively capable others to ensure that the communicative process eventually leads to the desired communicative act. In other words, one is rational not only by possessing the intellectual faculty of rationality, but also through subscribing to relationality that sustains deliberation with rational others. Likewise, one could possess enough background features that could qualify as “critical” without being automatically considered critical. It is the relations within the field that enable a critical dimension, relation to an emancipative purpose, but also relations with others, either towards them or away from them, i.e., alignment or dis-alignment. Legitimation, which is again a
question that is always relevant to research and its social implications, materializes through this relational specificity. Aligning with an influential referentiality gives legitimation to the research in question as an instance that resonates with other, already-established examples of critical scholarship. By contrast, to dis-align from the field’s dominant criticals would have consequences in terms of how legitimation is negotiated and established, at least until this counter-alignment comes to possess enough momentum and circulation to itself turn into an influential aligning tool, i.e., an established referentiality.

Given this dynamic nature of how relational interactions within the field shape the critical, it is, then, erroneous to assume that accepting, say, the Frankfurt tradition as an a priori regime of referentiality (after Foucault’s “regimes of truth”) is by itself sufficient grounds to project a condition of alignment that leads to legitimation. It is interaction with the field’s nodal figures, who could be said to have established themselves through their work and the work of others as alignment-setters, that becomes a more effective analytical tool of the critical. In this sense, defining what the critical is becomes secondary to, and almost overshadowed by, the critical as a relation, whose expressions are, again, alignment and dis-alignment. And since the critical is relational, to others, but also to an emancipative purpose, the potential for some ensuing fuzziness is relatively higher than if the critical were strictly established by that which it defines. The critical as a relation of alignment, in positive and negative terms, eventually gives rise to discourses of the critical that validate one’s research by situating it within a given regime that sees itself capable of laying claims to legitimate understandings of the critical vis-à-vis other discourses that belong to other regimes/alignments. A counter validation is thus a question of belonging to alternative discourses and regimes of the critical. Thinking this through the notion of discourse is useful because the points of departure are not limited to language that one uses in
depicting the kind of transformation one aspires to achieve through research, but it is more a question of how one’s research is relationally configured in alignment with and/or dis-alignment from others and their critical research. In other words, it may all be called critical, but variation emerges in how individual instances of the critical are relationally produced within the field and in movement towards an emancipative purpose. It is the expression of the dialectic of similarity within difference that the concept of homology pertinently embodies. In summary, one may say that the critical in educational qualitative research is more about the relational than the definitional, alignment rather than essence. For only through this newer dynamic can only understand the complexity of conducting critical research today, but above all the shifting meaning of that very critical that defines the whole practice. This is one of the major findings of this dissertation project.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX-A ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARTICLES USED FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS


Contemporary school reform strategies require extensive school-community collaboration, yet the actualization of this goal is very difficult to achieve. Social class and cultural barriers often impede the development of cooperative relationships between school staff, parents, and other community members. In this qualitative study of a planning year for a full-service elementary school, the authors discuss conflicts and tensions that emerged between various groups of participants as well as avenues for coalition and cooperation. A year of field observation and interviews with 21 school staff and 14 community members form the basis for recommendations for successful school-community collaborations in urban schools.


Debates about achieving gender equity in education have largely been conducted along a single axis, swinging between two questions: Are girls and boys fundamentally the same or different? Consequently, should girls and boys be treated similarly or differently? This article grounds these theoretical debates about approaches to gender equity in the experiences of one group of female high school students' struggle to achieve gender equity in their mathematics education. An analysis of students' talk yields that the young women and their male peers understood the relationship between gender and educational equity through competing discourses. Thus, this case study provides a grounded critique of the dominant paradigms for understanding gender equity and helps reframe the kinds of questions and conversations that practitioners, students,
families, researchers, and policymakers might pursue as they search for remedies to educational inequities. At the same time, although this particular case study focuses on competing discourses about gender, these discourses mirror other debates in feminist, multicultural, and critical race literature about the relationship between race, class, and disability, and approaches to equity. Thus, this article holds implications for how we understand the relationship between differences (race, gender, class, and disability) and educational equity.


Influential work on oppositional culture explains involuntary minorities' disadvantage as the result of a culture that discourages academic effort by branding it as "acting white," which leads students to resist schooling. Much of this work depicts involuntary minority cultures as internally uniform. This article challenges the oppositional-culture explanation in three important ways: (1) by demonstrating that through the religious tenets and practices of the Nation of Islam (NOI), young female members develop a black achievement ideology, resulting in the adoption of the kind of studious orientation to school that is usually demonstrated by voluntary immigrant groups; (2) by demonstrating the ways in which black people differentially make sense of and enact what it means to be black that challenge previous binary or dichotomized accounts of black oppositional social identity; and (3) by illustrating how resistance for NOI young women is transformative, as well as reproductive, of existing patterns of social, racial, and gender relations. The evidence, from a two-year ethnographic study of female high school students who were in the NOI suggests a systematic reexamination of the oppositional theory and its main suppositions.


Students who aspire to become school principals and superintendents must be prepared to lead schools committed to serving boys and girls equitably. In this qualitative study, 122 graduate students in a cultural diversity course maintained journals of their experiences. The authors kept records of teaching the course and of selected written assignments given to the students,
according to Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards, which drive reform in school leadership. From analysis of all written materials, themes emerged showing that students (a) grew more aware of gender stereotyping and its limiting effects, (b) sometimes changed their professional practice toward gender fairness, (c) became aware of gender discrimination and power differences on the basis of gender, and (d) developed heightened sensitivities to gender biased language.


Teens encounter a barrage of messages about sexuality in popular culture-messages that shape their identities and schooling experiences in profound ways. Meanwhile, teen sexuality, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) increasingly arouse public panic. To date, however, schools do little to help teens make sense of their sexualities. In this article, I argue that schooling will grow increasingly irrelevant and ineffective if educators fail to address teen sexuality and popular culture. My argument is twofold. First, I suggest that sex education in particular must attend to popular culture. Second, I contend that we can no longer confine efforts to address teen sexuality and popular culture to sex education; rather, we must extend such efforts across a wide range of classroom and schooling contexts. Doing so is important for accomplishing three educational goals: (1) to make a wide range of curriculum (e.g., literacy, social studies, sex education) more relevant and culturally responsive to diverse youth; (2) to develop critical multicultural curriculum that interrogates social inequities, and (3) to indirectly create conditions that would reduce teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS. To make this argument, I draw from my 9-month ethnographic study of ESPERANZA, a progressive peer-driven sex education program. In contrast, I then analyze how two popular films deal with issues of sexuality in different ways. I conclude with a discussion of how the insights from these popular texts might inform research and practice in critical multicultural curriculum and in educational efforts to help youth address sexuality.

This article examines how class, race, ethnicity, and identity interact at the macro and micro levels to reify the model minority stereotype of Asian American students. Specifically, data from a qualitative, interview study conducted in New York City with Indian American high school students (whose parents immigrated from India) reveal how, messages from school and home shape professional and ethnic identities, pushing students toward careers promising financial security (for example, medicine) over those that may interest the students but be less financially viable (for example, teaching). Implications in terms of representation in school and society as well as teacher education are discussed.


By revamping their school's entire mathematics program, the teachers at an urban high school were able to help their disadvantaged students attain high levels of mathematical understanding. Just as important, Ms. Boaler notes, the students learned to appreciate the contributions of all their peers, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social class.


Citywide constructs such as "West Side" or "South Side" are spatial codes that result from more than the informal conversations of city residents. This article shows how elementary school educators in one U.S. metropolitan school district participated in the production of a local knowledge of the East Side and West Side space and individual. It demonstrates how educators used these codes to name race and class, as well as to obscure the codes' meanings. The article maps the convergence of institutional technologies and local educational knowledge whereby this knowledge resisted change and buttressed the citywide East Side-West Side relations and knowledge. The disjunctions in this knowledge base are also identified, as educators attempted to produce a knowledge of a third space that they termed "Central City".

This article explores the student resistances that shape orientations to schooling. Drawing on a study of Latina/o youth, I examine how race and gender influence whether they perceive education as oppressive or useful in resisting oppression. The key lever that may alter their perceptions is how school and society treat Latinos differently from Latinas. This study shows how ethnography can inspire pedagogical practices that bolster urban students' resistances to the oppressive forces negatively impacting their education.


This article presents the results of an investigation of the following questions: How do low-income African American and Latino youths negotiate the boundaries between school and peer group contexts? Do variable forms of negotiation exist? If so, what are they, and how do they manifest? In addressing these questions, the author posits two arguments that directly challenge the "acting white" thesis. The first is that black and Latino students' academic, cultural, psychological, and social experiences are heterogeneous. This article examines three groups of low-income African American and Latino students who differ in how they believe group members should behave culturally-the cultural mainstreamers, the cultural straddlers, and the noncompliant believers. Second, this article returns to the sociological signification of four dimensions of the phenomenon of (resistance to) acting white and highlights the varied responses of the three groups to the social boundaries that collective identities engender and that status hierarchies in schools produce. Straddlers appear to traverse the boundaries between their ethnic peer groups and school environments best. The analyses are based on a combination of survey and qualitative data that were collected from a series of in-depth individual and group interviews with an interethnic, mixed-gender sample of 68 low-income, African American and Latino youths, aged 13-20.

This study describes White women preservice teachers' talk in and about an antiracist teacher education course aimed at raising students' awareness of racial inequities. Rather than be fully engaged participants in classroom discussions, White women distanced themselves through strategies of silence, social disassociation, and separation from responsibility. They used these strategies in response to perceptions that they were being positioned as racist, directly implicated in institutional racism, or responsible for racial discrimination. The article concludes with thoughts about how instructors might engage White women and antiracist curriculum, and therefore affect their ability to effectively teach students from various cultural backgrounds, through metadIALOGIC approaches to race discussions.


This study contributes to the ongoing scholarly debate about the relative importance of parents' resources and values in influencing parents' child-rearing practices. Using ethnographic data on children's summer experiences, the authors examine how families from different ethnic and social-class backgrounds assemble child care and other activities for their children during summer vacation. The authors argue that social-class differences in the quality and quantity of children's activities do not stem largely from fundamental differences in parents' desires to help children develop or cultivate their skills and talents. Instead, these differences stem from parents' differential access to a wide range of resources, including money, the human capital to know how best to assess and improve children's skills, the cultural capital to know how best to cultivate children's talents, and the social capital to learn about and gain access to programs and activities. The authors also show that children's own values and temperaments, or "child capital," strongly influence children's activities, sometimes compensating for parents' lack of resources and sometimes impeding parents' efforts to construct stimulating summers for their children.

Interviews with a diverse group of juniors and seniors from three secondary schools in the northeastern United States revealed substantial agreement in their images of America. Three themes predominated: inequity associated with, race, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability; freedom including rights and opportunities; and diversity based on race, ethnicity, culture, and geography. Three additional themes were voiced by at least one third of the students: America as better than other nations, progress, and the American Dream. Crosscutting these themes were a sense of individualism or personalization and an incipient critique and/or activism expressed by more than 30% of the students, Sources of or influences on students' images of America also were investigated as were changes over time, Although not overly positive, what students do know about the United States is both realistic and generally supportive of the nation-state. There are, however, grounds for concern insofar as the major themes about which students agree play out differently for different individuals and groups, masking deep societal tensions and fissures.


A cultural and relational framework of social class is used to present an ethnographic portrait of class as it unfolds with race and gender in a black Irish school and community. Traditionally viewed as troubling, these students and staff) pray between classes in ways that impact structural analyses of class and their implications for public policy.


In this critical ethnography, interpretivist methods were used to focus on the perspectives of African American, Latina, and Native American girls in an urban middle-school classroom to better understand how they constructed social identities of gender and race through their experiences with literacy. Because the enacted curriculum lacked critical awareness of the sociocultural contexts of gender and race, the perspectives of the girls in this classroom were largely missing from transactions with literacy. Consequently, girls' efforts to make intertextual links to their own lived stories were not taken up in meaningful ways. Transactions with literacy
created a felt sense of fractured or compartmentalized social identities, and the girls in this study learned to separate their public, academic lives from their private lives. As a result, the girls did not take up the literature in ways that could potentially enable them to realize social-and cognitive transformation in their lives.


Social stratification may emerge within efforts to reduce it. Although open admissions policies increase access to college, many students may not really be college students; they are taking noncredit remedial courses, which raises concerns about stigma and "cooled-out" aspirations. Studying two community colleges, this article describes a remedial approach that avoids stigma and cooling out but created unintended consequences. Analyses of interviews with staff and students and of institutional procedures show how this approach arises. The analyses also indicate how this approach inhibits and delays students' awareness of their remedial status, causes them to misjudge their prospects, and prevents them from considering alternative options.


In this article, the authors use data from interviews and observations in four urban elementary schools-two high-performing and two probation schools-to examine how schools respond to high-stakes accountability policies. The authors show that school responses to high-stakes accountability depend on the schools' accountability status. In probation schools, responses focus narrowly on complying with policy demands, focusing on improving the performance of certain students, within benchmark grades, and in certain subject areas. In contrast, higher performing schools emphasize enhancing the performance of all students regardless of grade level and across all subject areas. Given the concentration of poor students and students of color in the lowest performing schools, the authors conclude that issues of educational equity need to be given greater consideration in the implementation of high stakes accountability policies.

This article describes the ways in which mentoring provides the means for women of color to gain entry and access into educational administration. Briefly the authors sketch the mentoring relationships of their respondents of color and explore how issues of race and gender might have affected careers in educational administration and how mentoring aided in negotiating their way within White-male-dominated organizations.


Provincetown, Massachusetts is a popular multigendered tourist destination where openness to diversity is part of the school and wider community ethos. Youth encounter their hometown as a place whose cultural ethos they do not always embrace. Based on participant-observation fieldwork from 1995 to 2002, this article explores how students have developed a "culture of resistance" to dominant discourses of tolerance and acceptance. By deconstructing how schools are sites of intergroup conflicts over gender tolerance and public school ownership, student-resistance conduct is shown to be a response to perceived alienation from mainstream social norms and discourses.


This article draws from research conducted with poor and working-class youth in California attending schools that suffer from structural disrepair, high rates of unqualified teachers, high teacher turnover rates, and inadequate books and instructional materials. Arguing that such schools accomplish more than simple "reproduction" of class and race/ethnic inequities, the authors detail the penetrating psychological, social, and academic impact of such conditions on youth and educators, accelerating schooling for alienation. The evidence suggests that these schools not only systematically undereducate poor and working-class youth, and youth of color, but they taint pride with shame, convert a yearning for quality education into anger at its denial,
and they channel active civic engagement into social cynicism and alienation. The consequences for schools, communities, and the democratic fabric of the nation are considered.


In this Spencer postdoctoral funded, qualitative inquiry across a range of cities, schools, and family circumstances, African American high school students were given the opportunity to voice their perceptions of the influences on African Americans' college choice—their decision making to participate or not to participate in higher education. The study concludes that to address the issues relating to African Americans' college choice, there is a great need to better understand these factors within a racial/cultural context.


This article examines themes of academic resilience in the descriptions of academic achievement by three students at Benjamin High School, one of the least affluent high schools in Bayside, Florida. Through ethnographically informed interviews conducted during their senior year, coherent themes emerge that provide insight into these students' resilience. I argue that the students diminished the degree to which academic achievement separated them from their peers, in addition to situating achievement in a utilitarian fashion. Ultimately, acting on the notion of academic achievement in this manner positively impacted their resilience. [academic resilience, school achievement, African American males, high school, narrative analysis].


This case study explores the contextual factors involved in one high school mathematics department that is successful in getting African-American students to take advanced levels of mathematics. Examination of the school site, teacher and staff interviews, and school documents highlight the particular manner in which student success may be aided by five characteristics of
the department: a rigorous curriculum and the support to maneuver through it; active commitment to students; commitment to a collective enterprise; a resourceful and empowering chairperson, and standards-based instructional practices. This article also explores the role of race and racism on student learning. Implications for policy and research are discussed.


Despite the popularity of self-published teen zines, few studies have been conducted of the adolescent girls who write and read them. Past research on teens' reading and writing shows that adolescents read and write along stereotypical or gendered lines. This study explores the out-of-school literacy practices of three adolescent girls who write and publish their own zine by writing against gender, race, and class stereotypes. The study identifies what motivates and enables these girls in writing differently on their own and describes how young women use and develop their literacy skills to enable them to form and express their identities. Methods of participant observation were used to address these questions. Findings have implications for student-centered instruction by identifying relevant ways to engage adolescents in literacy activity.


This article describes a four-year ethnographic and pedagogical project set in an urban community with historical ties to rural Appalachia. It begins with a close reading of pedagogical discourse situated in an after-school reading project for preteen girls. It then traces the deep roots of language seeped in class meanings-words such as nasty and trash-in the lives of girls in the project. Literary and discursive analyses are brought to bear on questions about how class relations infuse girls' negotiations of voice and subjectivity in school. Such analyses are connected to a vision of socially responsible pedagogy for working-class girls. [social class, gender, literacy, poverty, education].

Single-sex public schools are seen as a vehicle for improving the educational experiences of low-income and minority students. Our two-year ethnographic study of low-income and minority students who attended experimental single-sex academies in California indicates that improving achievement involves more than separating students by gender. Using students' and educators' voices, this anthropological study shows that these schools' successes were due more to the interrelated contributions of the schools' organizational characteristics, positive student-teacher relationships, and ample resources.


In this article, Kather Jervis explores how children's experiences of race, even in the "best" schools, often go unnoticed by faculty, and how students' questions about race go unaddressed. As she documented the initial year of a New York City public middle school, Jervis did not intend to focus her observations on issues of race. However, in retrospect, she found children's questions about race and ethnicity were prominent in her field notes, and educators' responses significantly absent. Jervis suggests that even in schools that seek to create diverse and integrated school communities, silence about race prevails. She argues that unless educators consciously create the safe spaces for both children and adults to explore honestly the implications of race, culture, and ethnicity, discussions of race that might be opened by children's seemingly inconsequential questions are not pursued. Jervis concludes that, although discussions about race are difficult, educators - especially White educators - need to focus attention on race and racism if children's questions about discrimination and equity are ever to be part of school discourse.

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This article analyzes how socioeconomic backgrounds, social capital, and school resources affect Korean American youths' educational attachment and aspirations. In the context of limited social and economic support, students delineate differences within coethnic communities along class lines and adopt an oppositional cultural frame of reference to endure and resist institutional barriers. This study demonstrates the significance of distinguishing socioeconomic differences within Korean American communities and for whom the enclaves may be more beneficial.


Many white students feel uncomfortable talking about "racial" topics, Ms. Lewis-Charp reports. She shares the findings and implications of a study of how students in multiracial schools relate to one another across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines.

Teacher participation is central to many school restructuring projects. This article challenges assumptions regarding the connection between greater teacher empowerment and school-based reform, particularly for students in marginalized groups. The article presents a case study of teacher collaboration and decision making in restructuring a junior high school and the implications for low-achieving African-American students. Using ethnographic methods, the study examines the influence of teachers' ideologies and the social and political contexts in which the school is embedded. My analysis of the data suggests that, if restructuring is to transform the educational experiences of marginalized students, it will require both personal and social change-challenging educators' beliefs and assumptions as well as relations of power in schools and communities.


At high school graduation ceremonies across the country, a curious gender gap has emerged—more women graduate than men, particularly in Latino and Black communities. This trend begs several questions: How do formal and informal institutional practices within high schools "race" and "gender" students? How do racializ(ing) and gender(ing) processes intersect in the classroom setting? How can principals, school administrators, and teachers work toward dismantling race, gender, and class oppression in their schools? Drawing on 5 months of participant observation in a New York City public high school that is 90% Latino, mostly second-generation Dominicans, I found that both formal and informal institutional practices within schools, "race" and "gender" students in ways that significantly affect their outlooks on education. Young men are viewed as threatening and potential problem students, whereas young women are treated in a more sympathetic fashion. If our goal is to improve the education attainment of all students, we must become aware of the invisible race(ing) and gender(ing) that takes place in the classroom, as well as in the everyday institutional practices of schools.

This article explores the connectivity of research and theories of African American emancipatory pedagogy to Critical Race Theory (CRT). In doing so, the guiding principles and maxims of CRT as an emergent ethical and moralistic discourse on race and racism in the law will be briefly outlined. Next, the premises of CRT will be used to analyze ethnographic interviews conducted with eight African American teachers. The interview data will then be used as a manner in which to articulate a Critical Race Pedagogy.


Unlike school-aged youth attending well-resourced suburban schools, working-class poor students attending inner-city public schools are oftentimes denied the opportunity to develop a sense of agency within their schools and communities. In this article, the author addresses one way that educators and researchers can encourage young people to engage in participatory processes of teaching and learning aimed at developing personal and collective agency. In addition, she describes how a group of university-based students participated in on-the-ground experiences that contributed significantly to their understandings of how individual and collective agency energizes teaching and research processes. The author embeds those discussions within the framework of a participatory action research project she engaged in with a group of middle school adolescents in the northeast region of the United States.


Despite the many studies of student departure, colleges and universities continue to face difficulties in retaining underrepresented student populations. The authors argue that contemporary social integration and multicultural theories of student retention theory do not adequately address the academic needs of underrepresented students of color. Relying on case studies of student initiated retention projects (SIRPs) at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, the authors develop insights into how student retention theory might be reconsidered for students of color. Three key components of SIRPs are
discussed: developing knowledge, skills, and social networks; building community ties and commitments; and challenging social and institutional norms. Findings are then synthesized with theoretical constructs largely deriving from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Frantz Fanon, and Paulo Freire. The result is a theoretical framework grounded in the concepts of cultural and social capital, collectivism, and social praxis.


The purpose of this study was to understand how White antiracist adult educators challenge racism. Seven participants from 5 different antiracist educational organizations were included. Data were collected over a 5-month period using interviews, documents, and participant observations and were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Results addressed the understandings of racism and White privilege that adult educators bring to their work and how these understandings guide them to challenge racism. A systemic understanding of racism, as well as an understanding of how their own White privilege affects them and People of Color, guided the adult educators' work. Their analyses of racism influenced the participants to take particular and strategic actions to challenge racism. The study has implications for adult educators who recognize the entrenchment of racism in our society and who want to move their abstract understandings to the concrete level of daily interactions and take specific actions within their educational practices.


Although U.S. schools typically express commitment to preparing students for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, most American youth are socialized for adult civic life by an institution that defines them as passive and subordinate and treats them in ways that are anything but, democratic. In contrast to such counterproductive practices, the author offers a comparative analysis of two schools' efforts at student empowerment. He first outlines why schools should be empowered students and then proposes a conception of student empowerment founded on three dimensions: the academic, political, and social. To explore the "possibilities
and pitfalls" of empowerment in practice, the author presents case studies of two schools' student empowerment efforts. Each examines how the schools sought to help empower students, what power students gained, and how students and faculty responded to these efforts. Drawing on insights derived from these studies, he discusses some practical implications for schools hoping to promote student empowerment.


The relationship between status categories and extracurricular activities is examined by considering an incident that produces a situation of status incongruity. In a suburban middle-class junior high school there is an important assumed congruence between the prestige of an individual's status category and the extracurricular activities in which she or he participates. When this tacit cultural assumption is violated in the selection of cheerleaders, students cast aspersions on their cheerleaders and thereby threaten the latter's social and personal identities. This article seeks to delineate the cultural meanings that provide the symbolic glue between status category and activity and make their incongruity so threatening. Put another way, the article examines the role that the assumed congruence between categories and activities plays in reproducing the basis for prestige and privilege in mainstream American society.


The author sought to understand an African American English teacher's multicultural curriculum transformation and teaching in a suburban, mostly White, high school. Building on Banks's (1998) model of multicultural curriculum integration, the study focused on a context that might otherwise be ignored because there was not a large student-of-color representation in the school. The teacher in the study was operating at one of the highest levels of Banks's model, the transformational approach. Although the teacher shared characteristics with many of the Black teachers explored in the literature, there was one important difference: much of the research and theory about Black teachers and their instruction focus on Black teachers and their effectiveness
in predominantly Black settings. The Black teacher in this study taught in a predominantly White teaching context. The study suggested that even teachers highly conscious of race, culture, gender, and ethnicity may find it difficult to reach the highest level of Banks's model: the social action approach. Implications of this study suggest that multicultural curricula can be well developed and received in a predominantly White setting as long as the curriculum is thoughtfully and carefully transformed. However, the study pointed out that the pervasive discourses and belief systems against multicultural education in a school can discourage highly effective curriculum transformers, and there is a great need to help critically minded teachers persevere in the face of such adversity.


Structural changes necessary in detracking efforts challenge not only the technical dimensions of schooling, but also the normative and political dimensions. We argue that detracking reform confronts fundamental issues of power, control, and legitimacy that are played out in ideological struggles over the meaning of knowledge, intelligence, ability, and merit. This article presents results from a three-year longitudinal case study of ten racially and socioeconomically mixed secondary schools participating in detracking reform. We connect prevailing norms about race and social class that inform educators: parents: and students' conceptions of intelligence ability, and giftedness with the local political context of detracking. By examining these ideological aspects of detracking we make a case for reexamining common presumptions that resistance to policies providing greater opportunities to low-income and minority children is driven by rational estimates of the learning costs and benefits associated with such reforms.


Relying on the life stories of three age cohorts of Black women who were first-generation college graduates, this article reveals how structural constraints shifted from one generation to another to differentially place the women at risk for limited educational attainment. In response
to these shifting constraints and accordant changes in opportunities, the women's strategies for negotiating the constraints on their educational mobility changed from one age cohort to the next in the production of educational resilience. These findings convey that the changing dynamics of social life must be accounted for in our efforts to improve the theoretical precision with which we understand educational resilience as a socio-historical and institutionally responsive process instead of as an individually determined phenomenon.


As more U.S. youth claim "mixed" heritages, some adults are proposing to erase race words altogether from the nation's inequality analysis. Yet such proposals, as detailed ethnography shows, ignore the complex realities of continuing racialized practice. At an urban California high school in the 1990s, "mixed" youth strategically employed simple "race" categories to describe themselves and inequality orders, even as they regularly challenged these very labels' accuracy. In so "bending" race categories, these youth modeled a practical and theoretical strategy crucial for dealing thoughtfully with race in 21(st) century America.


To date, research on racial identity formation among youth in school context has neglected discussion and analysis of whiteness as a racialized identity production. Through qualitative, ethnographic methods of data collection, this discussion directs attention to the social construction of white racial identity among a group of adolescent girls attending a largely white, historically elite: private, independent, single-sex high school. Their voices provide insight into the ways ill which liberal discourses work to position youth, and how white youth, in turn, actively remake themselves in relation to prevailing meanings and practices institutionalized in a largely white, upper-middle-class school setting. The study examines the intersections of race and class discourses in private school culture as they combine to create the conditions for meaning-making.

Based on a two-year ethnographic study at an urban middle school, this article describes the power that images created by and about Puerto Rican girls hold in shaping their schooling experiences. Using a black, critical,feminist framework, I show how dichotomizing the sexuality of Puerto Rican females against their intellectual development obscures the complex ways that identities are co-constructed and then affirmed, appropriated, or resisted within their school site. I conclude that to resist the reproduction of educational inequality in the lives of Puerto Rican females, we must explore and seek to transform the influential ways that identities are mediated and educational outcomes are produced within the school contexts where Puerto Rican females are educated.


Despite heated debate over detracking, little research exists on bow the reform plays out in the classroom. This article, based on a year-long interpretive study of a detracked ninth-grade program at a diverse urban high school, focuses on the encounter between the "official" practices of the detracked classrooms understudy and the "unofficial" social worlds of the students taking part in those practices. ne author describes bow aspects of the overall school context framed and permeated students' interactions in their detracked classes, at times leading to a reiteration of the very inequalities that detracking was designed to address.


This article explores the concept of dialectical contradictions as it relates to individual understandings of intergroup relations in the United States. The ways that working-class white youth and adults combine contradictory experience and ideology in their behavior and belief systems regarding foreign-born residents and people of color are detailed. By describing conflict and cooperation among youth from different races and nationalities, the discussion shows the
relationship between the concept of dialectics and race relations as they are played out in day-to-day interactions in a Philadelphia neighborhood and Polish nationalities parish school.


Although there is extensive documentation of minority overrepresentation in special education, knowledge of the factors that create the context within which disproportionality occurs is limited. To gain an understanding of the local processes that may contribute to special education disproportionality, we interviewed 66 educators about their perspectives on urban education, special education, available and needed resources, and the specific topics of diversity and disproportionality. A number of clear themes emerged. Teachers and schools feel unprepared to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students. Classroom behavior appears to be an especially challenging issue for many teachers, and cultural gaps and misunderstandings may intensify behavioral challenges. Special education is perceived by many teachers as the only resource available for helping students who are not succeeding. Finally, there was a surprising reticence among many respondents to discuss issues of race. These results paint a surprisingly complex picture of the factors that may cause and maintain minority disproportionality in special education. Together, they suggest that successful remediation efforts will avoid simplistic or linear solutions, increase resources to address learning and behavior problems in general education, and seek methods to use data on racial disparity as a stimulus toward reflection and action.


This study uses data from a 10-year longitudinal study to explore how women graduates of a liberal arts college experience the gendered construction of teachers and teaching as they make life and career choices. These women respond to the expectations and pressures of families and teachers, renegotiate their own definitions of success and achievement, and reconstruct definitions of teaching and themselves as teachers. Despite their understanding of the status of other possible career choices, and their resistance of gendered frameworks of career and success,
the women in this study ignore the rhetoric of teacher professionalization that might provide them with an alternative definition of teaching. Instead, they reframe teaching as a political act, one through which they can address issues of social inequality and social injustice.


Using critical race theory and Latina/Latino critical race theory as a framework, this article utilizes the methods of qualitative inquiry and counterstorytelling to examine the construct of student resistance. The authors use two events in Chicana/Chicano student history—the 1968 East Los Angeles school walkouts and the 1993 UCLA student strike for Chicana and Chicano studies. Using these two methods and events, the authors extend the concept of resistance to focus on its transformative potential and its internal and external dimensions. The authors describe and analyze a series of individual and focus group interviews with women who participated in the 1968 East Los Angeles high school walkouts. The article then introduces a counterstory that briefly listens in on a dialogue between two data-driven composite characters, the professor and an undergraduate student named Gloria. These characters' experiences further illuminate the concepts of internal and external transformational resistance.


The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school-wide gender equity efforts and seventh grade girls' and boys' educational outcomes and psychological functioning. In this paper, we detail the components of the study, which included documenting that this school did in fact have a gender equitable environment; measuring students' Perceptions of gender equity in their school experience, academic achievement, self-esteem, and gender ideologies; and conducting classroom observations, focus groups, and individual interviews with a subset of this sample. Our findings from these efforts yielded an unexpected and intriguing contradiction. Overwhelmingly, teachers and students reported in surveys that they perceived their school to be gender fair. Yet classroom observations and interviews with students bring into view serious
differentials in how boys and girls experienced, behaved and were treated in their classrooms. The students read these differences in classroom behaviors as reflecting inherent or natural differences between boys and girls; thus, these differences were experienced as equitable. The article concludes with a discussion of how these findings raise questions about, and issue challenges for, current conceptions of gender equity in schools.


This article examines the written language of student resistance to feminism in teacher education. Inductive textual analysis of data in the form of standardized student narrative evaluations of teaching and course content uncovers students' situated conceptions of women's subordination, ranging from complete denial of its existence to confused despair over an absence of definitive solutions. Implications for pedagogy of these student postures are discussed, and strategies are offered for engaging students in assessing the coherence of their own positions.


This article examines common teacher practices and black elementary-age students' responses to these practices in considering processes of social reproduction in schools. In an ethnographic study of two all-black schools, the author found that both schools expressed a strong commitment to creating a positive and self-affirming learning environment for black students, with an explicit emphasis on building self-esteem as a means of enhancing academic performance. However, both schools also unwittingly undermined that commitment by suppressing what were deemed inappropriate behaviors and conveying messages of black cultural deviance to students in the interest of discipline and conformity to particular "mainstream" cultural norms.

This article analyses one urban high school's initiative to create a multicultural program for its predominantly African American and Hispanic students. It describes intergroup tensions within the newly created multicultural program, which had not been as apparent in the school's more traditional comprehensive program. It offers an explanation for the increased tension based on students' concepts of culture and race. It also offers suggestions for ensuring positive experiences for all students within a multicultural initiative.


Within the context of relatively new immigration and settlement in North Carolina, this ethnographic study highlights Latina mothers' narratives and conversations about a moral family education. Their narratives involved the claiming of el hogar (the home space) in the midst of the English-speaking community's attempts to define their families and childrearing practices as "problem." With a race-based feminist perspective, this article examines the role of the mothers' counternarratives in contesting their deficit framing, producing "educated" identities, and creating community in the rural South.


This qualitative study explored the perceptions of knowledge regarding, and preparation for standardized college admissions exams of 227 urban African American and Latino high school students. Findings include the students' lack of information about the test and their reliance on their relatively uninformed and, officials for information, preparation strategies, strategies for unavailable school of achieving high scores, stress level due to the necessity of high test scores, and beliefs that the tests are an unfair obstacle. Students' knowledge of and strategies for preparing and taking the tests are conceptualized as cultural capital and habitus utilizing a Bourdieuan framework.

This article explores race and gender work done under the auspices of an abstinence based education program in an urban magnet school. While it is generally acknowledged that there is not nearly enough sexuality education in schools, that which does exist leaves much to be desired. In these curricula young men are painted as biologically programmed sexual aggressors while women are scripted as passive victim whose only subject position is that of not provoking easily sexually aroused males. In addition, research shows that compulsory heterosexuality is inscribed throughout the school curriculum. Here the author enters as a participant in one such sexuality program and works ethnographically with a voluntarily constituted girls group in an urban magnet school. As part of a larger look at "sites of hope" in urban America, the author focuses specifically on the ways in which this group offers a space within which personal and collective identity work takes place and assesses the extent to which such a space offers a "home" within which social stereotypes are contested and new identities tried err. The implications of such spaces for far reaching social change are explored.


The debate on segregated and desegregated schools generally has been framed as an either-or matter, and in fact, legally, this has been the case. What we have not investigated to any great extent are programs within already desegregated schools that serve an identifiable population of students for the express purpose of cultural affirmation and advancement of the targeted group. In this article we provide data that attest to the potential power of such spaces, investigating a girls' group in an urban magnet school and a homeroom set aside for Vietnamese students in a neighborhood-based urban comprehensive school. Using ethnographic data, we articulate both the power of such spaces and the contradictory impulses within such arrangements.

This article evaluates the efforts of three teachers at a predominantly white middle school to create a multicultural U.S. history curriculum by focusing on the experiences of enslaved African Americans during the Civil War. I argue that this focus unintentionally undermines students' ability to use history as a resource for thinking about contemporary race relations. I conclude with some suggestions for creating a multicultural history curriculum that will benefit both white students and students of color.


In this article, we discuss how and why educators' attempts at detracking by providing students and parents with greater freedom of choice" in track placement often result in little movement of low- and middle-track students into high-track classes. Using data from six racially mixed high schools undergoing detracking reform, the authors contend that these schools' low- and middle-track students, most of whom were African American and Latino, resisted entering high-track classes because the relationship between their places in the tracking hierarchy and their evolving identities and ideologies shaped the way such options were presented to and perceived by them. The authors conclude that the hidden institutional barriers within schools, the students' tracked aspirations, and the desire of students to learn in "places of respect" thwarted reformers' efforts to detrack through the mechanism of choice.


The purpose of this study was to describe, interpret, and explain the changes in four young adolescent boys' awareness of how masculinity constructs and is constructed by texts, both written and spoken. Specifically, the research question was: How do the critical literacy activities within a homeschooling setting sustain or transform the boys' awareness of gendered identities and inequities in texts? I used Fairclough's (1989, 1995) critical discourse analysis as the Framework in which to analyze the boys' participation in critical literacy activities within a homeschooling setting. The boys and I participated in critical literacy activities that focused on masculinity, a topic that they had not talked much about before the study began. As the boys
talked, they became more aware of the practices of masculinity and of how masculinities were portrayed in a variety of texts. They began to question the rigidity of these practices. However, as this analysis demonstrated, the boys' awareness of gendered identities and inequities was unstable and was at times, uncertain. Highlighted in this study were two themes: (a) the instability and uncertainty of the boys' awareness of gendered identities, and (b) the impact of power relations within and among the local, institutional, and societal contexts on the boys' participation in the critical literacy activities. These themes were discussed in relation to Bakhtin's (1984) notions of word with a loophole and dialogism.
REFERENCES


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