Article

Shifting Positionalities: A Critical Discussion of a Duoethnographic Inquiry of a Personal Curriculum of Post/Colonialism

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Abstract

This article first presents a study of two educational researchers' history and curriculum of colonialism. Using a process of duoethnography, we engage in dialogic and collaborative personal ethnographies in which we contrast and analyze critical educational incidents and products (e.g., a high school report card, old personal photos, and current teaching lesson plans at the high school and college levels). We focus this process on the ideological scripts framing and informing our educational histories, as students and then as teachers, in order to unpack some of the cultural underpinnings of our views of teaching language arts for equity and diversity. Furthermore, in the article we critique the duoethnographic process, analyzing and discussing issues surrounding representation, trustworthiness, and self-reflexivity.

Keywords: postcolonialism, curriculum theory, qualitative research, duoethnography, English education, teacher thinking, queer theory

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Communities of Inquiry: Dialogic Duoethnography as Interactive Self-Reflection

Globally, school curriculum is becoming increasingly standardized around commercialism, competition, and the inequitable distribution of the Earth's political and material resources—often sliced along racial, class, and geographic lines (Alexander, 2001; Delgado-Ramos & Saxe-Fernández, 2005; Said, 1993; Spring, 1998). Many of us "progressive educators" are keenly aware of these patterns and our own inadequacies to disrupt such neo-liberal policy and pedagogy. Unfortunately, and ironically, the insidious nature of our socialization and engagement in Western culture (in our case, within the United States) grounds our experience and history in individual and national procolonial narratives that, instead, end up impeding our intentions to teach and work in postcolonial ways.

It is this topic of personal complicity with colonial pedagogy that we (Tonda and Rick) seek to examine in this study. In this article, we have two main goals. The first is to present a detailed, yet truncated duoethnographic study on postcolonialism and curriculum, as an illustration of a duoethnographic study. Given space limitations, we do not intend for this study to be a fully realized duoethnography. Instead, we write it as an example of such a study, as a partial context for our second goal. Our second goal is to discuss the methodological issues that we encountered in engaging in our duoethnography.

In this work, we seek to build on a new vision for research focused on meaning made (not found) within "contingent communities without consensus" (Miller, 2011). In these communities, people engage in "the ethics of self-accounting" by unpacking autobiographically interpreted stories (Miller, 2011). Through dialogue, one allows one's story to be "refracted through the story of the other, promoting new perceptions and a sense of praxis, the imagining of alternate versions of self and work" (Miller, 2011). Building on Miller's conception, we use the critical and dialogic method of duoethnography to reflect critically on the process of our early socialization around aspects of colonialism as children, students, and teachers. In this process, we unpack some of the social, cultural, and geographical underpinnings of our respective journeys of teaching language arts in postcolonial ways.

Duoethnography: An Embodied, Dialogic Methodology

As a research methodology, duoethnography engages the researcher in a multi-dialogic process that ideally supports a shattering of preconceived views about a particular theme or event and one's narrative relationship to that theme or event (Norris & Sawyer, 2004; Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2009; Sawyer & Norris, 2013). Duoethnography as a method is more conceptual than prescriptive. Its method is framed by a poststructuralist approach to research. Such an approach rejects the notion of a single, fixed, and absolute reality existing independently of human consciousness and imagination. Instead, meanings are constructed in the process of interpretation. Drawing from this philosophy, duoethnographers engage in multiple interpretations as they use self as a site of analysis of socio-cultural meanings and influences. Framed as a lived-curriculum, duoethnography is grounded in Pinar's (1975) concept of currere. Currere is a critical form of autobiography and curriculum studies in which inquirers examine the various dialectical relationships within the intertwined curriculums of lived experience. These dialectical relationships are regressive/progressive, as inquirers examine how they are situated to past and present events. They are also analytic/synthetic, as inquirers deconstruct and reconceptualize their narrative perceptions. Currere is premised on the recognition that conceptualization is transtemporal and changes over time (Norris, 2008; Sawyer & Norris, 2013). Focused around currere's dynamic transtemporal, spatial, and conceptual interplay, duoethnographers treat lived spaces as curricular text in order to evoke, interrupt, and create new

perceptions and meanings in the process of interrogating such spaces. Through dialogue, duoethnographers generate a process of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981)—of meaning generation occurring within dynamic, polyvocal texts.

Central to duoethnography is the concept of phenomenology and social constructionism. Described somewhat broadly, phenomenology is an interpretivist philosophy, which maintains that "meaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation; it is not simply discovered" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 195). Working together, duoethnographers intentionally engage in collaborative, intersubjective acts of interpretation in order to focus on "intersubjectivity, thereby [ideally] avoiding false claims to objectivity and failure-prone inner (hyper) subjectivity" (Roth, 2005, p. 3). Duoethnographers create intersubjectivity through dialogue with their co-inquirer, promoting a conscious awareness of new constructions of meaning within a social context. By critically juxtaposing their stories, duoethnographers engage in a form of autoethnography, a "radical suspension of judgment and submission to a systematic method of dealing with one's own prejudices and prejudgments" (Roth, 2005, p. 9). What distinguishes duoethnography from autoethnography, though, is that rather than contributing to a critical process of individual perspective (Chang, 2008), it provides multiple collective perspectives on phenomena. Instead of working individually, duoethnographers create dialogic transactions (between others and within themselves) in the pursuit of critical tensions, insights, and perspectives. The goal is to surface, critique, and reconceptualize our perceptions of the borders—the in-between spaces (Asher, 2007), we live in.

As an emic, interpretive method, duoethnography addresses two key issues found within qualitative research. First is the crisis of representation. As phenomenologists, we believe that knowledge formation is an intersubjective construction (Schwandt, 2000) and a dialogic transaction, in which perception is changed during the process of representation. As we engage in duoethnography, our perceptions, representations, and changing perceptions in the dialogic process are the objects of our research.

Second is the issue of inquiry trustworthiness. Often the trustworthiness of qualitative research depends on factors that both distance and alienate the inquirer from the inquiry, such as credibility, triangulation, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Duoethnography, in contrast, is part of an evolving tradition in qualitative research where the research process itself promotes researcher engagement in self-reflection and personal as well as social change. In the 1980s, for example, Patti Lather (1986) stated:

> My argument [for the value of reflexivity] is premised not only on a recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process itself, but also on the need to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination through research participation. (p. 67)

Inquirers in a range of methodologies, including arts-based research (e.g., Leavy, 2009; Sameshima & Irwin, 2008; Sullivan, 2005), autoethnography (e.g., Chang, 2008), and critical narrative research (e.g., Iannacci, 2007) contribute to scholarship in this area. In duoethnography, research becomes trustworthy when researcher reflexivity becomes apparent, when the research is explicitly tied to human life and researcher experience. Instead of "bracketing" themselves out of the method, duoethnographers situate themselves centrally within the meaning of the text they are creating, thus promoting the inquiry goal of researcher/reader self-reflexivity. As an aspect of social justice, reflexivity in this instance is a process of deep researcher reflection and conceptual and behavioral change. A goal in duoethnography is not to "uncover findings," but rather to

promote more complex and inclusive social constructions and re-conceptualizations of experience.

Duoethnography in Search of Postcolonial Pedagogy

With a focus on gaining critical insight into personal history in relation to a postcolonial framing, our duoethnography intersects with the vast amount of scholarly work done on identity (e.g., Helms, 1983; Liggett, 2009, 2010; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, among others). Postmodern theorists have problematized the notion of identity, arguing in particular that "it never comes in an easily defined package and it can never be adequately expressed through tidy categories of essentialist attributes" (Butler, 1990). This approach has led to the development of a linguistically sensitive, historically embedded, and textually oriented methodology for social scientific research (Foucault, 1972; Lyotard, 1979). Debates regarding selves and cultural identities have shifted considerably with the influence of poststructuralism (e.g., Foucault, Lacan, Deleuze, Guattari, Kristeva, and Derrida), which has undermined conventional understandings of identity by discounting the possibility of objective knowledge. Poststructuralists have argued that prevailing theories of identity lack the intellectual resources to distinguish between different kinds of identities. They have contended that a theory of identity is inadequate unless it allows an analysis of the epistemic status and political salience of any given identity and provides the individual with the resources to ascertain and evaluate the possibilities and limits of different identities.

Because subjects exist only in relation to ever-evolving webs of signification, and because these subjects constantly differ as time passes and meanings change, the self—as a unified, stable, and knowable entity existing prior to or outside language—is merely a fiction of language, an effect of discourse (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977; Foucault, 1972). Social and cultural identities, it is argued, are similarly fictitious because the selves they claim to designate cannot be pinned down, fixed, or definitively identified; in addition, to speak of identities as "real" is to naturalize them and disguise the structures of power involved in their production and maintenance (Ellsworth, 1992).

With this dialogic orientation, we acknowledge that our stories are dynamic, fluid, and redefined in relation to the dialogue we had about colonialism. This fluidity is evident in our dialogue throughout this article. By examining our own positions of power—as white, middle-class professors and researchers—we seek to understand better how our postcolonial context has influenced our teaching and pedagogy, so that we may continue to gain insight into fostering more equitable access for all students to learn.

The attempt to teach in ways that respect the voice and democratic inclusion of different cultures and people is not a simple process. As teachers, we are each positioned differently in relation to schools, subjects, students, and communities. Part of this process necessitates understanding and critiquing our own educational histories in an honest and complex way. To begin to engage in substantive teaching change, an initial step is working individually and communally in examining our cultural imprints.

In the next section of this article, we present a brief discussion of our methodology before presenting our duoethnography on our postcolonial curriculum.

Our Method as Lived

As we worked together, we sought to explore the differences, not the similarities, in our two perspectives. We worked to create dialectics—multi-voiced texts—as we explored contrasting and differing perspectives. We began by talking about our general topic—of teaching in postcolonial ways—and then doing an initial review of this discussion. We identified emergent themes and asked ourselves which ones seemed resonant enough to function as the basis of our study. At this point we selected tentative areas of discussion/exploration. These included early classroom experiences, artifacts of our early lives, and artifacts of our teaching.

Working together, we structured dialogue as a mediating device to promote our development of higher forms of consciousness. Drawing from critical pedagogy and the work of Freire (1970) and Bakhtin (1981), we promoted a process of heteroglossia—a critical tension found within a multi-voiced text—through a dialogic process. On one level, we viewed our conversations as curricular text, which helped us both to generate and to critique our unfolding narratives. As we examined our narrative understandings, we sought to identify their placement (a) within larger cultural discourses and (b) within narrative unities (MacIntyre, 1981), in order to critique and unpack them. Narrative unity is an impulse that generates narrative as people make sense of their lives and organize their perception of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As people live storied lives, they organize experience into story, which allows for coherence and unity. This unity lets people navigate lives without, in the extreme case, the existential randomness of chaos. As narrative inquiry is lived, the process of narrative unity underscores the organization and lived nature of such inquiry. We considered the identification of these narrative unities important as reflections of what we valued and how we were socialized. It was this notion of intuition—what made sense—that we sought to conceptualize and then reconceptualize in our study.

One way that we created tension within our perceptions of our narratives was through the use of aesthetic inquiry. Aesthetic inquiry is an arts-based research method, which subverts and transforms one's view of the normal and taken-for-granted, leading to new perspectives and deeper understandings of phenomena (Leavy, 2009; Sullivan, 2005). As part of this process, we examined old photos from our childhoods, childhood mementos, high school yearbooks, and our lesson plans and assignments as teachers (both high school and college). As we examined these, we attempted to place them back in the time period they were from, but not be engulfed by the logic and meaning of their narrative from that time. Rather, we sought to perceive them as nonromanticized curricular texts and—from a vantage point of a number of years—face them with "fresh eyes,'' decontextualized from their original story lines but still embedded within their cultural contexts. Examining these cultural artifacts, we sought to identify their cultural, historical, and political meanings, which framed our habits, beliefs, and perceptions.

We discussed these artifacts and our earlier and more current perceptions as text, to raise our level of consciousness around them. This process of "zooming in and zooming out" was recursive. First, we wrote an initial draft, which was the context for the analysis of the next draft. This initial analysis came from "presenting" our inquiry to each other in a room, where we summarized our perceptions. From this draft we identified emergent themes to explore in the next draft. These early themes were about childhood socialization in our respective public school experiences, our familial contexts, and our subsequent teaching experiences. After this initial discussion, we separated and began to write sections of the article—in parallel—which corresponded to the themes. We did not, however, seek to find and compare commonalities and similarities, but differences, in order to keep our text open and not reach definitive conclusions about our themes. Throughout—but especially after much of the study had emerged—we applied a theoretical lens related to postcolonialism, asking questions and making connections,

associations, and disconnections. We then went back and revised and repeated the process. In this process we explored how we had internalized and resisted aspects of our socialization. As we presented our dialogue in script format, we consolidated and refined the actual conversations. We sought to maintain the spontaneity and authenticity of our dialogues yet increase their thematic organization. In revising our conversations, we sacrificed some of the immediacy and moments of disorganized self-awareness for a "cleaner" and more concise prose.

A Duoethnography of Gender, Sexuality, and Postcolonial Pedagogy

In this section, we present a series of structured conversations between ourselves. We have organized these conversations thematically and have edited and, ideally, deepened them through successive reflections. We then follow these conversations with a critical summary discussion. We present these conversations not as a fully realized duoethnography, but rather as an illustrative excerpt from one duoethnography.

Part I. Shades of Blue, Pink, and Lavender: Resistance Within a Gendered Childhood

Tonda: As the first-born grand-daughter in a line of eight aunts and uncles on both my mother and father's side, the moment was not to be lost. My mother dressed me up in frilly frocks and bonnets until I was old enough to voice my dissent around age five or six. I reflect on a photo that shows me alongside my brother in front of Snow White's house.

Figure 1. Tonda at Snow White's House

It is a small, wooden A-frame about 4′ tall. A few of the dwarfs are behind me. My brother smiles shyly at the camera and I look uncomfortable in my bonnet.

Rick: You're mentioning many things about how your identity became gendered and also how within that process—you started to create a narrative of resistance.

Tonda: Right…Years later when I entered elementary school, I shed my bonnet and competed with the boys on the playground in football, running races, baseball, basketball, snow-ball throwing, etc. Being able to beat them was important to gaining acceptance in the many

new schools I entered during that time. In second grade, my mother, brother, and I lived in town, which meant in one of the Black neighborhoods of the city. This was my first exposure to African Americans. I don't remember it being something that was talked about or acknowledged in any way. The German neighbors seemed more remarkable as they spoke a different language, linguistic difference trumping any racial defining that took place for me then.

Rick: When you mention the picture of yourself in front of the Snow White house, I think about a photo of myself that gives clues about my gender identity also as a child.

Figure 2. Rick in Hollywood in the Alps

The year was about 1960 and my father was in the U.S. army. He moved us—his wife and two sons—to Germany where he was stationed shortly after I was born. In this picture we are in the Alps on a short vacation. It's odd, but I remember this vacation, which might be my earliest memory. Without looking at the photo, I return to an idealized bubble of sunlight and happiness. These remembered images have long formed my connections to this trip. But when I look at this photo—and it's amazing to me to look at it again—this disconnected and jarring photo forces me to decontextualize the moment from its unifying narrative. I am forced to see it from a different vantage point.

This is how I now interpret this photo: In my white sunglasses, which I chose on a lark with unthinking precision, I am curled up on a chaise lounge, looking a bit like the unlikely offspring of George Hamilton and Truman Capote. In this photo, I see for the first time a striking inconsistency between my desired and actual look. At the time, I was oblivious to what I now perceive to be an underlying tension between my self-expression (and I was trying hard to be the "perfect child") and notions of normativity back then.

As a child, I was drawn to the arts, dance, design, and the subtle nuances of color and sound. When I think back on being a "sensitive child," I don't gender this orientation. I was who I was. But as I look at myself in this photograph, I can now see how my

inclination was probably interpreted by my parents in a gendered way. And their interpretation was expressed indirectly, partly through silence (by never directly recognizing who I was), or seeing it as something not to be seen, or by trying to reshape me in more normative ways (for my own good, no doubt).

What stands out to me now in the photo, undeniably and profoundly, is its framing. Much of my body has been cut off—removed from the photo by my father who took the picture. I'm lounging but definitely not sitting the way an "all American" boy would. My lower legs have been cut off. Were they crossed? Curled beneath me? For me, right now, this—the shorts, the sunglasses, the posture, and the photo's framing—all create a tension within the picture. They break the narrative memory of the day—a pleasant relaxing day. They call for analysis and deconstruction of what I now perceive to be happening in relation to the narrowly (and self-servingly) normative notions of behavior in that Eisenhower era. Without knowing it, I was "queering" the space. Who I was or supposed to be was being shaped in ways that felt uncomfortable to me. I definitely did not intend to "resist"; rather, it was quite the opposite. In trying to please and be the perfect boy, I could only express myself in ways that broke the normativity of the moment.

Tonda: It looks somehow "campy." What do you think?

Rick: That's interesting. On one level, the photo asks me—actually creating a dialogue—to deconstruct the normative narrative from the vantage point of the subordinate narrative—to thus disrupt the narrative with new possibilities. On a more obvious level, it is also about being a young gay person and learning to read the signs that tell you to code switch. Everyone is different, but for me this was about learning both how to begin to maintain a gendered identity different from the norm and how to fit in. This gave me two lenses, often at odds. And the need as a human being was learning how to focus different lenses in a healthy way.

Tonda: Do you think this continued to play a role in your life as you grew up?

Rick: As I grew up, I think there was tension between the multiple perspectives with which I began to see the world and be seen by it. And these various perspectives were grounded in different and in many ways hostile narrative understandings of acceptable social discourse. For example, at the age of 10, I wished to study dance, but instead quickly found myself on a baseball field on a "little league" baseball team. I was a good player, but still I had my uniform altered to be more stylish.

Rick: We're talking about how we began to embody a critical perspective. You've been talking about an early experience that helped to shift how you saw the world, a trip to Kenya when you were in college. What was that all about?
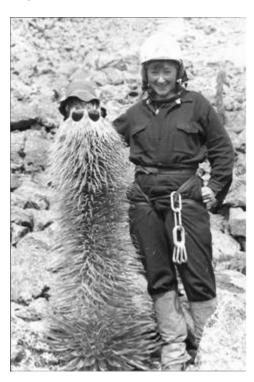
Tonda: During my junior year as an undergraduate, I spent a semester living and traveling throughout Kenya—my first minority experience—culturally, racially, and linguistically…. A lot of people had done semesters abroad and I wanted to do something that was a little bit less comfortable, I guess, or more adventurous.

I find it ironic, however, that one of my life changing events took place in the previously colonized country of Kenya; the British relinquishing their power the same year I was born, 1962. My awareness of race, culture, and linguistic difference was imprinted on me as I looked around Nairobi and realized that I was, for the first time, a minority. Walking

among the Maasai tribe on the edge of the Rift Valley as one of a small group of white people rearranged the colonial order that I had previously constructed. No longer could I rely on my background information to give me an advantage in this learning situation. In small villages, people came up to me and asked questions about my life, where I was from, what the United States was like. In answering, I was responding to and representing the whole of my country, redefining what people were like, deconstructing myths about the U.S. In speaking for my country, I was in a sense speaking, as racial minorities are often called upon to do, for my race and culture. How could my small experience speak to such a wide range of people? What did it mean to be white and middle-class? I probably didn't know, until I went there and was pressed to explain. At that time I probably couldn't have told you what it meant to be white and middle-class. These two pictures from Kenya capture some of my strongest impressions and reflections during that experience—one that was outside the norm for any of my friends and family at the time.

Rick: So…what is this, this picture?

Figure 3. Tonda Creates a New Vision on Mt. Kenya

Tonda: That's me…20 years old. We hiked up Mt. Kenya and were rock climbing, which is why I have on a helmet, and a harness with carabiners. We lived in tents along the way. Mt. Kenya is about 15,000 feet so it was freezing and this was one of the few things that grew there…this plant…I put my hat and sunglasses on it because I thought it was such an odd and interesting shape.

Rick: Was your trip challenging?

Tonda: Definitely, it was physically hard and it was difficult to live with people I didn't really know that well, who were of the same race, culture, language, so there were different obstacles.

Rick: So, physically and psychologically, it seems you are changing, trying to leave yourself as you knew it and embrace something new. With your helmet you seem to have entered a new sphere… It's almost a reflection of how the plant looks.

Tonda: Right…with sunglasses and a hat…there's a process of reflection that starts, because I'm in a different place. So, originally, it's looking at the culture of the Kenyan people, but going there and observing the culture, there's this reflection on my own culture in relation to it.

Rick: What do you think that you've taken from this that you've pulled forward in your work?

Tonda: This was the beginning of the development of a minority lens and what it feels like—the physical feeling of it, ways of thinking, alternative ways of knowing, really problematizing notions of the good… It was the realization…the seed…that started my work around not only race and whiteness but also language and culture and the intersections that occur. Along this journey, I incorporated gender as well.

Rick: Why the intersections? Why is that important?

Tonda: Because of the way they are foregrounded or backgrounded depending on the context. So in some instances, race was foregrounded and then gender. When I returned to the U.S., the cultural piece of it—of looking at myself and my own culture and language—was foregrounded. So, those intersections and the degree to which they play out and interact are really influential…Those intersections are where it gets to be very complex and dynamic and I think the dynamic piece of it and the shifting and changing nature of it is really informative because it helps us to be more accurate when we talk about issues of race, culture, and linguistic difference. In this way, we work towards deconstructing monolithic categories of identity.

Rick: Your mentioning culture and identity raises some interesting thoughts for me, too. Being in Kenya allowed you to begin to deconstruct your view of American culture. My living on a U.S. army base in Germany also was a cultural experience, but rather than offering a lens for critique, it gave me a bubble for security. When I now consider my "cultural experience" as a young child on a military base in Germany in the late 1950s, I think of three themes—rank commercialism, military rank and order, and manifest slogans—all intertwined in a seemingly natural way. American culture was something you bought at the local post exchange (the military store), which is where, I assume, I found my sunglasses. American culture for me was about products branded with corporate/nationalistic meanings (Coca Cola, large Detroit cars, blue jeans, and even Elvis Presley music).

Everything that I experienced reinforced, sometime subtly and other times explicitly, that we were the victors in the war and our world—of democracy and freedom—prevailed. While I was surrounded by slogans such as democracy and freedom, it seemed to me that the democracy was represented by the freedom to buy products "Made in America." And this world was neatly ordered and well defined. It offered a comforting level of definition based on rank and a complete amelioration of the messy inconsistencies of identity and

personal history. A powerful backdrop—perhaps the most important lesson I learned—was that this order was not only about people (e.g., soldiers), but also about countries. The photo of me with its repressed glamour and glorification of image (my wearing Hollywood sunglasses and being waited on) fits neatly into my cultural experience in Germany. As I lounged in the Alps, I felt very secure even as I problematized the landscape. For me, though from the vantage point of having been socialized on an American military base in Germany, my posture and behavior seemed consistent with an expression of power represented by white plastic sunglasses on a body "at ease."

Rick: Your experience, though, led to a more critical lens. Did you problematize anything that you saw, when you were in Kenya?

Tonda: All the time, especially the socio-economic level of the United States in comparison to Kenya. The economy and the way people lived as a result of it were striking. There was such poverty and I had never experienced it to that degree. It played out in bizarre ways during my difficult transition back to the U.S. After living in Kenya for four months, I remember coming back and standing in the cereal aisle at a grocery store, stunned, in disbelief, at the number of choices and excess. The aisle was about 50 feet long; in rural Kenyan grocery stores, food was sparse, with few items dotting the shelves and hardly any prepackaged food. Such disparity made me start to problematize inequity and privilege.

Rick: You make me wonder about how (and I suppose even if) I began to develop a critical lens myself. I always wanted to be a good child, but, as the photo of me suggests, doing so meant actually losing part of who I was. While maybe the socialization process was subtle before I started school, in school, it became explicit. The back of a report card I received in high school helps to illustrate the more explicit socialization process. It gives a grading rubric. To receive an "A superior" for initiative, a student "must work independently with initiative." Yet a student would receive an "E unsatisfactory" in the same category if he [sic] "does not follow suggestions, that is, works independently." Under "response," a student is "C average" if he requires "direction and stimulation" from the teacher. And finally, "A superior" for accomplishment is about a student "mastering the subject" and "cultivat[ing] highly desirable habits of work." In other words, cultivating behavior and thought valued by the teacher and school. And the report card presents a slightly bullying tone: "It may be observed that the qualities here indicated as entering into successful school work are also the qualities that make for success in adult life." So the question is, what qualities of life were valued by this high school? The answer to this question struck me in a visceral way in eleventh grade health class, when the White male teacher (a former marine), taught us that homosexuality was a sickness (in the early 1970s) and people who adopted such lifestyles had no place in civilized society. It was shortly after this, when I met gay people who were scarred by school and society yet defiant, that I began to develop a healthy critical lens (Norris & Sawyer, 2004).

Summary Discussion

From a young age we both began to develop a dual lens around the incongruence between the meanings within an emerging gender identity and those within a dominant normative discourse. In many ways, it slowly became physically impossible for us to assume the identity that had been cut out for us in the dominant normative narrative we were placed into. For both of us, but in differing ways, this normative discourse acted as a form of colonialism within our lives, exerting

a profound, and at times hostile, framing dominance. And at the same time, we internalized much of this discourse. We both initially thought that our emerging identities were congruent with the dominant culture and would lead to a level of acceptance within it. And then, at some point, we both realized that our emerging identities fit into what were at first counter narratives, which we slowly developed into narratives of resistance within subcultural groups. What has become clear to both of us through this discussion is the deeply embodied nature of our identities. Like a Kenyan plant with sunglasses, we are not who we appear to be, but have multiple identities.

This contrast created a dialectic within our lives. Perhaps seeking a level of productive integration—a healthy and productive way to proceed—we both began to recognize and find value in our complex positionality. We both, for different reasons, developed a dual lens. With this realization as at least a partial motivation, we chose to become teachers—in order to try to promote tolerance and equity for all. In the next section of this article, we examine our teaching in light of our early educational narratives as contexts of socialization.

Part II. Embodied Teaching Discourses

Tonda: One assignment that particularly stands out as I reflect on my own positionality, both in the curriculum and as a product of a procolonial curriculum, is a reading I assigned in one of my Social Foundations of Education courses as a teacher educator. As a class we read Ron Suskind's ethnography, *A Hope in the Unseen.* This is a true story of an inner-city high school student who was able to overcome racial, cultural, and economic barriers to get accepted into and graduate from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. The book details his difficult family situation: living in poverty with his mother, father in jail, moving from one apartment to another, and the constant struggle to maintain high grades among peers who reject his academic achievement. This story illuminates some important systemic barriers that block African-American student success in schools throughout the United States. My intent was for these students to develop a personal relationship with the main character, Cedric, as a way to identify how an individual experiences these barriers on a daily basis. The exclusion and marginalization of students of color, in this sense, could be internalized and connections between structural and individual could become more apparent.

While I believe it did serve this function for most students, I also realized that it worked to solidify some of the negative stereotypes about African-Americans in general. For example, many of the students in this class had had little exposure living among and interacting with people of color. This factor caused expansions of the main character's individual experience as representative of *all* Black student experience. The intra-group nuances that were considered in discussions among these white students' lives were, at key points of analysis, lost in comparisons to Cedric and his friends' experiences. Despite trying to qualify and raise awareness about contextuality, I reflect back on this classroom assignment and wonder about messages that were carried forward from this class and into these preservice teachers' own classrooms. How will they perceive and respond to the middle-class Black parents that come in for parent/teacher conferences? What will they do to academically challenge the students of color in their classrooms?

Rick: This is amazing to me, but exploring this topic of gender and sexuality resistance, I can see how my teaching is part of my identity. I taught high school in San Francisco for seven years. For most of that time, I worked at a school in the Southeast quadrant of the city. This school was established by a federal court order in response to a lawsuit brought

by primarily African-American residents of the area to improve the low opportunity-to-learn standards of their school.

As a teacher there, I tried to teach in ways that were noncolonial, culturally neutral yet inclusive, approaches that I had studied in my teacher preparation program at the local California State College. However, as I now examine my teaching in relation to my own history as a student, I see that I approached this goal with uneven results. A deconstruction of one of my assignments that I was proud of at the time shows the challenging nature of this process. I called the assignment a "Slang/Formal English Dictionary." Considering myself a bridge between the world of my students and that of "formal society," I had my students take their everyday language and translate it into formal, perhaps exaggerated Standard English and then use both forms in a story. For example, "get ghost" meant to vanish, the "rollers" were the police, and "tags" were personal identification symbols. Other terms were more graphic and connected to poverty, drug violence, and gender violence. One student wrote these stories:

Written as Informal English:
> *Yeah, homes, I was chilling with the beat, just kickin it down on two four when I seen Grizz from the crew. She said, "hey cuz, get a square?" I said, don't mess with it babe." Why don't we stop off at Mickey D's and get some grub? Asked Grizz. I said, Na, lets go score on some steers.*

Rewritten as Formal English:
> *Yes, my friend, I was calmly sitting listening to the radio, just relaxing down on twenty-fourth, when I saw Grizz from the gang. She said, "Hey, you got a cigarette?" I said, "I don't smoke." Why don't we go to McDonald's and get something to eat?" asked Grizz. I said, "Na, let's go get some beer."*

In some ways, what I did with this assignment represents a step up from the more decontextualized and test-framed curriculum found at this school. It also recognized students' more personal language and encouraged them to construct a story from it, possibly for the first time in their student lives.

The fact that I isolated the students' language with quotation marks and called it "slang" represented a privileging of "standard" English. And while the activity was fun to do in class, the not-so-hidden message suggests that that the students' language needed to be translated into formal English, not the other way around. I ask myself if this then becomes an act of colonialism. Another imbalance of privilege in this assignment may be found in the grading process. While all students who did this assignment received maximum points for doing it (an "A"), students who didn't do it were marked down. But can I really blame some of them for resisting what they may have considered an act of appropriation in the pairing of their personal language with formal English, a language that privileges some and condemns others? If I were to teach this lesson again, I would consider using this activity as a means to examine the overall framing of power and privilege in formal English. This concern is echoed by Christensen (2009) as she reflects on her own teaching: "Without examining the legacy of language supremacy, I maintain the old world order because I haven't explored why formal English is the standard and how it came to power, and how that power is wielded to make some people feel welcome and others feel like outsiders" (p. 209).

Tonda: So, knowing it on a certain level, you were playing with different frames here: informal/formal, micro/macro, and street/school.

Rick: I couldn't at the time analyze it on a critical level. I just thought—wow—have them write about their informal language and contrast it with more formal language and then to translate it into formal English—but it was exaggerated formal English.

Tonda: Yes…right!

Rick: So it was campy in a way. There was an element of camp and they had to play with that and then I realized that I took some of my own coping strategies and I brought them into my curriculum…and I'm not saying that it's good or bad, but it's just an aspect of my identity that I didn't see that was informing how I was teaching.…I am having them conform to my way of seeing and interacting with the world in some way.

In some ways, this process akin to camp—of exaggerating and mocking formal English—created a dilemma. While it objectified and thus closed formal English from the students, it also, in other ways—allowed us to see formal English as a construction. And this may have been the first step in our constructing a curriculum of deconstruction. But what we did was to create a structural process that contrasted the language forms—thus emphasizing differences (a form of othering), rather than our examining the creation of a new hybrid. As a postcolonial assignment, we could have, collectively as a class, gone back and discussed our constructions—why we made them, how they changed the language, and how they even related to informal English as well as our own lives. Thus we could have used the actual assignment as a context for analysis. I would now bring the discussion back to the rich, lived, and dynamic nature of informal English, using it as a context for the discussion of formal English. A statement by Asher illuminates what I did: "Is it a culture of fixating on the other or elsewhere in lieu of self-interrogation and the right here that shapes a multicultural practice that is limited to defining 'diverse others'" (Asher, 2007, p. 71).

And the other piece that is now hitting me so strongly and which is stemming from our earlier discussion of gender, is the way that I have not recognized gender in anyway in this assignment. It is as if in my mind the assignment is gender neutral. But nothing is gender neutral. By not recognizing it within the assignment, I am actually defaulting to a normalized view of gender within the curriculum, which is a colonial view of it. There were many rich and generative things that I could have done to recognize (not introduce—since it was already there in an unstated way) gender in the assignment, but I did none of these. There is a parallel here between what I did and how I was raised.

Tonda: I don't know if you would have had that realization if we hadn't been having all these conversations because this process has been so layered. And, it's interesting to make that link about the theme of campiness and a moveable sense of identity. And how that shifts, with time and over space in the picture of you as a kid and the assignment that you did with your students—twenty years ago—and here you are now, making new connections and revelations. It really shows the movement and dynamic reflection that artifacts inspire.

And since I'm a female, my window or box of possibilities was so much more open than yours—even now. It's wider now, but back then what it meant to be a boy or a man was more defined and you were pushing that definition. Camp pushes it. But for me, I could

be a so-called tomboy, and have more latitude, which gave me wider possibilities to express myself and to be seen within the realm of what it meant to be a girl. …I had the option to wear pants and skirts and once I didn't have to wear skirts anymore, I didn't. And I could be in plays and musicals or be a ballerina if I wanted.

Rick: I'm wondering how that relates to your perception of curriculum.

Tonda: Everything I do now in my assignments and in my classes when I talk about identity, it's all about widening students' lens of what is possible, what is accurate, and what really happens on the street, in real life. When I went to Kenya, that picture of me with the plant and the picture of me in downtown Nairobi—all of that opened my lens culturally and racially. With my teaching, I try to have students see things in new ways—to see themselves with new eyes and to see how their own teaching and pedagogy are culturally nuanced, gendered, and racialized. Looking at how these aspects can be obstacles to student academic achievement—especially when the student has an alternative perspective—are important to equitable access to curriculum. So the readings I select, the activities I use, all focus on trying to get students to think outside the norm and to problematize their own identity in relation to it, turning the gaze inward.

Summary Discussion

We now give a short discussion of Part II of our study. We wrote our first summary discussion after Part I in the first person plural to highlight shared understandings. In the following discussion we write in the first person to highlight differences in our perspectives.

Redefining Defining Life Elements (Tonda)

Both Rick and I have defining elements in our lives shaped by our participation in a culture other than the one of origin. Rick spent his first four years in Germany, and then moved to the U.S. where his lens is framed by his particular involvement with German culture and U.S. military culture, a straddling and reconfiguring of two worldviews. Similarly, my entry into Kenya caused a reordering of my own previously constructed notions of race, culture, gender, and language. My semester abroad represented a foundational shift in my worldview as a minority, surrounded by people living in abject poverty, immediately marked by race.

Writing this article, I have come to recognize how racial, cultural, and linguistic hierarchies have woven through all of my formative conceptualizations of self and my views of the world. And, even as I have constructed this way of ordering life, I work to deconstruct the categories and systems that are, by default, ingrained in my approach to teaching, curricula, and scholarly writing. How does such ordering play out in the everyday? How can I make the insidiousness of such constructs more apparent in my teaching? How can I use language that works to dismantle the "us versus them" model that is reinforced throughout the political arena, in multicultural policies, in English-Only initiatives, classroom texts, the media, newspapers, and advertising? This act of deconstruction is a constant thought process, a filter that needs to reorder what has previously been unjustly ordered. It is, seemingly, a necessary response to dismantling hierarchies that limit access and opportunity.

Breaking a Cover Story (Rick)

This study unfolded as a more complex and dangerous process than I had initially expected. In the first draft, I presented a cover story of my life. It was hard for me to problematize the initial

period of my life in Germany as an American. I wished to present it through the slogans of freedom, patriotism, and capitalism. While resisting the dominant narrative, I presented it. I liked telling the story and was caught up in it. As a young child, I lived a life with happiness, anxiety, and promise. The clichés and slogans decorating the backdrop to my life were not my life. Tonda's more analytical narrative helped me to recognize that these slogans were less important to me in the past than in the present.

The process of internalizing cultural norms is insidious. It does not take place only in the past (as if we are empty vessels), but is ongoing and recursive. I take the memories and inscriptions from the past and give them a new veneer of paint in the present. To understand how we have been indoctrinated into a cultural model in the past, we need to examine our lens from the present. I can raise questions about colonialism in my teaching: As members of a culture that is hegemonic by nature if not design, how do we study different cultures in ways that do not objectify members of the other cultures? Who gets and who loses cultural/gender voice in the classroom? Who decides this? Does only academic content involve culture, or is it also found in form (e.g., writing emphasizing a Western model)? These (and other) questions now frame my work.

A Critique of Duoethnography as Method

Duoethnographers have reported encountering a number of issues as they have engaged in this still emergent methodology. These issues have included age-based incongruous perceptions of experience (e.g., children doing collaborative research with an adult) (Ceglowski & Makovsky, 2012); an increase in shared, noncritical perspective (Breault, Hackler, & Bradley, 2012); and power imbalances in the research process (Lund & Nabavi, 2008). We may have indirectly encountered these issues, but their impact stayed relatively in the background as we adapted to their more contextual nature. What we found challenging was maintaining a dispositional focus to be critical and personally engaged in an existential way. Maxine Greene (1991) wrote:

> Human beings who lack an awareness of their own personal reality (which is futuring, questing) cannot exist in a "we-relation" with other human beings. They cannot know what it means to live through a vivid present in common with another, to share another's flux of experience in inner time. (p. 8)

These deeply moving words, while difficult to realize, form a foundation for duoethnography.

The need to be expansively (again, existentially) aware of our relationship to self and others in the inquiry process underscores the importance of a social phenomenological approach to research, to our making meaning in collaboration with others, in contrast to discovering fixed findings in reality independent of ourselves. In duoethnography, as in other forms of qualitative research, the inquiry process is the product, and the "findings" emerge as co-constructions within the various dialogic transactions. These transactions are not only between the inquirers (trans-narrative) but also between inquirers and their cultural artifacts (e.g., photos), which they interrogate in terms of personal relationships and larger sociocultural meanings.

We used aesthetic inquiry in this process as a conscious choice to interrogate and, at times, disrupt narrative experience. True to the autoethnographic tenet of researching one's self not as the topic, but rather as the site of a sociocultural investigation (Oberg & Wilson, 1992), we examined our artifacts not for what they told us about our narratives, but rather the meanings they held in relation to the time they were formed—as viewed from our current space. Perhaps, because of the age of the photographs and artifacts (as if from a previous life), we could pull these artifacts from the context of our lives. We were able to critique what had been normal

situations in the past from the margins of the present, thus breaking their normative storylines. This process of disrupting a storyline can be underscored by examining a photograph out of its narrative context (its inclusion with other photos from the same photo-session). Prikryl (2010) noted, "The way a photograph lops off a slice of reality, severing it from the narrative flow of time, is a seductive thing: it acts like a little hammer to the reflex in our brain that wants to tell stories" (p. 29).

We found that by examining old photos, we engaged in "a special kind of reflective experience …. [a] phenomenological investigation" (Noe, 2000, p. 123). Building on the notion of meaning creation as an act of intersubjective interpretation (Schwandt, 2000), visual phenomenology is an interactive tool for the investigation of visual and environmental spaces by emphasizing the unstable transaction (Eisner, 1991) that takes place between a viewer and art. This transaction promotes an intertextual construction of meaning because the meaning of the art is not contained within the form itself (Sullivan, 2005), but rather emerges through a transaction between the viewer and the artwork (Eisner, 1991). Sullivan (2005) describes this process:

> Meaning is not within a form itself, say a person, painting, or a poem, but exists within a network of social relations and discourse. This interpretive landscape of "intertextuality" serves as the means by which meanings become distributed and debated. (p. 43)

This transaction contributed to our work in a number of ways. We approached the meaning of the artifact as being in flux and coming into meaning. We also tried to keep the meanings open—generative—with double codings and conflicting meanings. For example, over a period of time, we examined Tonda's photograph of herself as a child in a variety of ways, including our perceptions of its initial meanings at the time it was taken, its intended framing of normativity, its embedded meanings about privilege, and its location as a marker of resistance. We also juxtaposed it with the photograph of Rick when he was the same age, to explore how contrasting gender, differing time periods (the two were taken ten years apart), and multiple locations generated new meanings.

As we worked with aesthetic inquiry, we consciously sought to present, not represent, our findings. In this process we foregrounded our awareness and reconceptualization of our narrative experiences. To do this, we tried to be aware of the new interpretations generated by dialogic tensions (the questions, new meanings, and double codings). The following conversation between us underscores some of the meaning of this process to us as we engaged in it:

Tonda: Our dialogue has made me realize the dynamic nature of this form of writing: remembering and researching are non-linear and circular, sometimes producing an abstract connection which is hard to determine even for myself, framed by a hint of memory, but still influential.

Rick: Yes…we sought dialectic tension within our conversations. For example, we contrasted the Snow White photo with the Hollywood in the Alps photo. The juxtaposed time periods created a sense of tension between them. In a way, these juxtaposed periods can be seen as frames in a film, contrasting and combining in new ways as they unfold, creating a restorying of experience.

Tonda: There's understanding as you go—new understanding through deliberation. Seyla Benhabib (2002) calls this process deliberate democracy. It's all about talking and how when you talk to somebody and go through this dialogic process you can gain different perspectives and you also try on different perspectives, too.

Rick: …and it's democratic because… we're doing it together.

Tonda: …and deliberative. The key to doing it is that you're reflecting in different ways and that it is a participatory reflection because you are situated within the method itself. And you are doing this with another person who can call you on your stuff!

Rick: And the trust is found within the multiple forms of reflection, not data collection.

Tonda: Yes…absolutely, and…because it's not a homogeneous sort of experience. It's also a way for different identity factors to come together.

Rick: That generational piece is interesting. It's both about the people who are engaged in this dialogue—if they represent different generations. And it's also about different generations within your own narrative because we are looking at our families. There are the trans-generational patterns that run through our lives. And I think that we are inscribed by our family narratives. We are going back and trying to unpack how we are inscribed by our family narratives.

Tonda: So I remember thinking that the experience that had a huge impact for me was when I was in college and I had my semester abroad. I considered that touch point—being plunked down in Kenya and no longer being part of the majority, the norm—from different perspectives, from back and forth and then forward back.

In terms of the methodology, we found it liberating not to have to represent our interpretation of meanings other people made. But the issue for us is that we are still representing other people, for example, our family members and students. To ourselves we might emphasize that we are examining our interpretations of these representations, but they are still representations. This issue is underscored by the porous nature of self-disclosure in qualitative inquiry and duoethnography, especially when you disclose the lives of others (Norris, Higgins, & Leggo, 2004).

We also tried to consciously explore the connection between presentation and trustworthiness. We maintain that trustworthiness is found in our level of engagement and meaningful reflexivity, that our "data" are believable because of their embodied nature. Yet, unresolved issues related to trustworthiness remain. For example, our definition of reflexivity has shifted during the course of this inquiry. Our view of it now includes examples of a change in thinking and intended action, as in the case of Rick discussing his classroom curriculum. It also includes our discussion about the meaning inherent in the embodied nature of placing a hat, sunglasses, and a muffler on a wild plant growing on the slopes of Mt. Kenya. We experienced reflexivity in our growing awareness and *conscientization* (Freire, 1970) of our actions, even if we could not always "represent" this awareness. We found reflexivity in our recognition of "the resurrection of submerged narratives" (Foucault, 1980), in the act of surfacing submerged aspects of our identity, which contrast to dominant notions of normativity. From our vantage point we are not "navel gazing" (Dimitriadis, 2008). Rather, we are establishing a richer capacity for imaginative responses and ways of being in the world. Our view of reflexivity now includes not only present changes in thought and presentation but also its embodied nature. Nevertheless, this is an issue still unresolved for us in duoethnography.

An additional challenge that we experienced was how to structure and write our inquiry. While we had hours of conversations, what we presented is a consolidation and a "refinement" of our spontaneous, fluid, messy, and immediate conversations. While our actual conversations show the

process of change in our thinking and discussion, they also show the painfully slow and rhizomatic (Wiebe et al., 2007) process of grappling with new perceptions and insights. At times these conversations churned forward slowly, and at other times with exceptional intuition. Often the greatest insights and epiphanies were found in the gaps between words or in our in-between locations (Asher, 2007). The at-times intuitive nature of the process, however, does reduce the accessibility and transparency of the text, making it perhaps more difficult for the reader to co-construct meaning and engage the text.

Again, to return to the words of Maxine Greene (1991), we tried to "live through a vivid present in common with another, to share another's flux of experience in inner time" (p. 8). This is an existential stance. We engaged it not by using narrative inquiry or duoethnography as a tool, but rather by engaging it as an ontological space, by living it (Clandinin, 2011). Duoethnography requires a heightened awareness of the dialogic process—not only as it unfolds in the present, but also as it transacts with the past and provides resonance for the future.

Conclusion: Within Us and Without Us

Certain questions can only be explored by inquiry in a new key. These new questions may involve, as in our study, subversive forms of colonialism and personal complicity with them. We are reminded that "the physical and psychic occupation and control of a people, a place, a person—happens at the individual and systemic levels and that the colonized/oppressed internalize the colonizer/oppressor. These relations of power are implicated in forces of capitalism and globalization" (Asher, Sawyer, Walker, 2006, p.1). And they play out in our work in classrooms, our engagement with our peers, and views of ourselves.

These are also questions that demand that the inquirer seek not a safe and self-serving objectivity, but rather engage in the "ethics of self-accountability" (Miller, 2011). It was this self-accountability that we sought in this article as we examined how our personal curriculum remained in the shadow of the colonial socialization of our lives. Duoethnography helped to provide us with a theoretical and methodological framing to remove meaning from the safety of story and examine it with a raw, existential lens. Such inquiry can subvert safe views and prompt the inquirer to consider the questions that Wineburg (2001) asked about the value of historical thinking:

> How do we navigate the tension between the familiar and the strange? How do we embrace what we share with the past but remain open to aspects that might startle us into reconsidering what it means to be human? … How do we approach this past so that it emerges as something more than a faded version of the present?" (p. 17)

As we raise destabilizing questions, we need to situate ourselves within them. This is not an abstract process, but one that is embodied, lived, and directly connected to our awareness of our subjectivities. As duoethnographers, we do not examine the "other." Rather, we examine ourselves, partly through the perspective of another person. When we think about our scholarly focus on curriculum theory, race, culture, and language, we are reminded of the long journey of deconstructing the knowledge frameworks that were set in place through schooling and socialization long ago. These frameworks retain a problematic normalizing force as part of their legacy of colonialism and, at least in the United States, slavery. As we have constructed our sense of the world, we now deconstruct and redefine it by looking at our work and lives through the mirror of colonialism, and colonialism through the mirror of our lives and work. And as the façade of our personal (cover) story is made more complex, we can begin to imagine a more diverse and complex way of being in the world and living with others.

As teachers who have grown up in a culture that privileges a particular worldview, we carry a special responsibility not to teach in ways that we have been taught. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we are teaching in "culturally neutral" ways. But of course we are not. The normativity of the dominant culture is nearly part of the air we breathe, making the process of deconstruction challenging, yet necessary.

To teach in ways that engage and captivate our students, we must co-create with them spaces within our classroom and our lessons to allow our students to expose and explore their cultural identities. The way we structure the interplay of educational form, content, and academic language, as well as the way we allow students ownership of the curriculum—all will impact how our students learn in the classroom. Without (and often even with) examining ourselves deeply and critiquing our own beliefs in relation to our educational histories, we can easily create classroom spaces with conflicting cultural meanings. By attempting to deconstruct and then reimagine our own educational histories—with our students—we can begin to construct new learning spaces for our students and ourselves that can create new ways of perceiving and working together.

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