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Katharine Sprecher

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Preparing Teacher-Researchers for Local-Global, Multicultural Classrooms: Prospects for Postcritical and Feminist Qualitative Methodologies

Katharine Sprecher

Student populations in the U.S. are becoming increasingly diverse, as global migration and immigration bring greater numbers of people from around the world to our already multicultural communities and schools (Banks, 2008, 2009; Brown & Kysilka, 2002; Spring, 2008a). In this sense, U.S. classrooms are local-global environments, in which children from widely varied ethnic, socio-cultural, national, and linguistic backgrounds interact daily. Such student interactions mirror the local-global dynamics of a world in transition, in which globalization rapidly instigates myriad interconnections among peoples and systems—economic, environmental, cultural, epistemological, and political—on local and global levels (De Lissovoy, 2010; Spariosu, 2004). The local-global microcosms of classrooms, schools, and communities therefore serve as preparatory environments, in which students learn and practice the art of intercultural communications, understanding, and co-existence.

Nevertheless, the local-global introduces new complexities to social environments that, if not addressed with appropriate praxes, may exacerbate tensions and misunderstandings among students from different backgrounds (Banks, 2008). Such learning outcomes could radically under-prepare students for futures in local-global societies marred by inequities, exploitations, and social and ecological crises. Additionally, diverse student bodies bring multiple epistemologies, communication styles, and cultural assumptions, experiences, and expectations to teaching and learning that must be attended to pedagogically (Nieto, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). These circumstances are further complicated by the disconnection between student positionalities and those of the majority of U.S. teachers, who are predominantly White and middle-class (Brown & Kysilka, 2002).

These realities beg changes in educational policy, practice, and teacher preparation that prioritize social justice-oriented, local-global learning. This includes a re-emphasis on multicultural educations that are adaptive to the unique and evolving dynamics of classroom environments. Sprecher (2011) argued that the demands

of contemporary schooling call for reflexive frameworks that draw from inclusive, social reconstructionist (Banks & Banks, 2005; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 2003) and critical multiculturalism (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995) and global (Banks, 2008, 2009; Hicks & Holden, 2007; Noddings, 2005; Spariosu, 2004) and decolonial educational approaches (Canella & Viruru, 2004; De Lissovoy, 2009, 2010; Tejeda, Espinoza, & Gutierrez, 2003; Villenas, 2006).¹ In this article, I argue that such a framework would greatly benefit from targeted skill-building among educators in qualitative methodologies that embrace postcritical and feminist philosophical insights for emancipatory learning (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lather, 1991, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004; Oleson, 2011; Weiner, 1994).

I therefore propose a post/critical, local-global educational framework that integrates elements of the aforementioned theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological approaches. This framework would recognize and re-emphasize the role of teacher-researcher to inform both localized practices and cross-regional considerations. Due to the complex nature of student learning, the multiplicity and reflexivity inherent in local-global classrooms, and the potential interference of hegemonic power and inequities, I believe postcritical ethnography and feminist praxis-based methodologies may offer especially useful tools for post/critical, local-global schooling. As I will demonstrate, these approaches integrate emancipatory epistemological orientations with methods for knowledge production that embrace and respond to diversity.

For too long, educational research has been shaped by political trends rooted in positivism and conservatism that exclude teachers from the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Furthermore, an over-emphasis on quantitative studies has oriented research as a tool for comparison, reward, and punishment rather than as a means to assess and immediately inform future directions and strategies for pedagogy in various and unique locales (Darling-Hammond, 2007b; Karp, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Neill, 2006). Teachers are logically situated as trained observers and first responders in their classrooms. Thus, the role of teacher-researcher is wasted if policymakers fail to see the value in teachers' work as they observe, interact with, and report on their students on both daily and long-term bases (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

In the following pages, I use a methodological bricolage to present a description of these research approaches and the ways in which they may be especially useful tools for teachers utilizing post/critical, local-global frameworks. This includes an examination of conceptual elements employed by these approaches in attempts to conscientiously avoid practices that may inadvertently objectify, exoticize, marginalize, or oppress students. I begin this discussion with an explanation of my methodology and its relevance for this work, followed by a more thorough definition of the local-global and an outline of my proposed framework.

Bricolage

Kincheloe and Berry (2004) advocated bricolage as a methodology of rigor suited to the complexity, multiplicity, and reflexivity of educational research contexts. Bricolage employs a form of *tinkering*—that is, drawing from or developing research methods as they are needed—so as not to restrict knowledge production to the confines or dictates of any technique or model (Berry, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe, 2005). A bricoleur examines many dimensions that affect educational contexts that may include the socio-historical, political, cultural, epistemological, material, and local-global (Berry, 2006). In addition, bricolage is oftentimes interdisciplinary, allowing processes of knowledge production to transcend disciplinary boundaries. Rather, bricoleurs seek a dialectical relationship among disciplines, in which overlaps and liminal spaces lead to new understandings (Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). For this article, I conduct a literary conversation to examine relationality among theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological discourses, as well as geopolitical events and circumstances. Thus, my dialectic goes well beyond a simple literature review to analyze the interrelationships of multiple modalities and what they may mean for education. My goal is to explore ways in which certain discourses and strategies might be integrated in local-global contexts to become useful tools for teacher-researchers and teacher educators.

Like the other discourses I discuss in this article, bricolage takes an emancipatory standpoint, and sets researchers to the task of promoting social justice through their work. Rather than simply describing, bricoleurs seek to innovate; imbuing their research with creativity and imagination for what could be (Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). This mirrors my own strategy, as I attempt to develop new approaches to schooling, the professional role of teaching, and teacher education that I believe are more conducive to equity and excellence in local-global learning environments. Additionally, I adopt the bricoleur's commitment to anti-reductionism, in which the researcher makes no claims to final or universal truths. Rather, as a bricoleur, I offer my naturally partial interpretations to ongoing, collaborative conversations (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004).

Bricoleurs inform their research with theoretical and philosophical insights on human conditions, such as power, the nature of knowing, and hierarchical relations. Thus, bricolage is heavily informed by discourses such as critical theory, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and hermeneutics in order to check dominant assumptions and linguistic frameworks that shape hegemonic worldviews, including those of the researcher (Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Researcher positionality is under constant self examination, and bricoleurs acknowledge that they, and their understandings of the world, are always embedded in the process of knowledge production (Berry, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). While bricolage embraces complex theoretical explorations, bricoleurs inform their projects with lived experiences, recognizing that

discourses cannot ever fully describe or contain the dynamic and multi-dimensional realities of the lived world (Kincheloe, 2005; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). My own work is responsive to and inspired by my experiences as a mentor, tutor, and teacher with children from international backgrounds and subjugated group identities.

The following section begins my dialectical exploration by discussing a synergistic educational framework for post/critical, local-global multiculturalism, to be followed by a section on postcritical ethnography and feminist praxis-based methodologies as potential tools for teacher-researchers employing such a framework.

Defining the Local-Global

Far from a binary construct, the local-global implies complex interrelationships in which the attitudes and actions of peoples in diverse locations affect and are affected by each other (De Lissoy, 2009, 2010; Spariosu, 2004). Examples abound. The export of jobs from the U.S. has contributed to higher national unemployment and incarceration, while overseas labor exploitation of unprotected workers has been fed by consumerism without conscience (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; De Lissoy, 2009; The National Labor Committee, n.d.; 2003). Uninformed U.S. citizens have supported or ignored aggressive U.S. military activities in South America and the Middle East, resulting in hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths in these regions (Chomsky, 2004, 2006, 2007; Pitt with Scott, 2002). Coal, oil, and chemical industrial pollution have contributed to climate change, severe weather, species extinction, and toxic living environments leading to increased disease and respiratory illness around the planet (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2012). As citizens, consumers, students, and future voters, activists, workers, and/or prisoners, children and youth are inextricably linked to local-global dynamics.

Furthermore, the local-global crises of the twenty-first century call for an educated citizenry capable of collaborating with others across the world to address these problems (Banks, 2008, 2009; De Lissoy, 2009, 2010; Noddings, 2005; Spariosu, 2004). Yet these crises cannot be explained in simplistic terms, as they are often rooted in historically embedded attitudes about other human beings, the earth, and self in relation to both. While this article cannot thoroughly address the ecological dimensions of global crises, the environmental is also a key element of the human. The theft, destruction, and willful pollution of people's home environments and resources are often directly related to racist and neo-imperial attitudes of development that privilege the economic desires of mostly (but not entirely, such as in the case of China and Japan) Euro-Western multinational corporations over the health and human rights of indigenous and racially minoritized peoples (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002). The racist attitudes and misguided assumptions of social Darwinism that perpetuate the travesties of internal neocolonialism in the U.S.—such as disproportionate impoverishment, incarceration, and wage exploitation (Tejeda et al., 2003)—mirror global institutional policies that perpetuate

global apartheid (Alexander, 1996; Marable & Agard-Jones, 2008; Richmond, 1994) through actions such as structural adjustment lending, unfettered free trade laws, and military action in favor of corporate interests (Abouharb & Cingranelli, 2008; Chomsky, 2004, 2006, 2007; Cobb & Diaz, 2008; Shah, 2010). At the heart of these attitudes and behaviors is a belief system guided by Eurocentric ideologies that promote market fundamentalism and a racialized hierarchy in which certain people, cultures, values, and knowledges are viewed as superior, while others are viewed as deficient and disposable.

Contemporary education can no longer ignore the complexities and imperatives of our local-global era. Though I believe the development of any framework must be a collaborative and continuous process that addresses the unique and changing contexts of any place and locale, I would like to briefly offer considerations for such an endeavor (Sprecher, 2011). This would involve drawing from social reconstructionist and critical multiculturalisms, global and decolonial educational praxes, and postcritical and feminist qualitative methodologies. I refer to the framework as post/critical, local-global multiculturalism in order to highlight the epistemological bases of my approach. In past writings I referred to this framework as *decolonial multicultural education*. I now employ the terms *post/critical* and *local-global* to better highlight the global justice aspects of my approach and to avoid confusion with existing decolonial pedagogies that emphasize the experiences of border and indigenous communities. Though such works are of crucial importance, I believe my own standpoint as a white woman better positions me to assist dominant group members with the process of deconstructing their own neocolonial worldviews and behaviors, reconstructing alternative possibilities, and learning how to listen to and collaborate with subjugated groups towards a more just and balanced world.

An Adaptive Framework for Post/critical, Local-Global Multiculturalism

A post/critical, local-global multiculturalism would incorporate culturally relevant pedagogies and pluralism throughout curricula, assessments, and the physical school environment in order to provide equitable educational opportunities that avoid the Eurocentric marginalization of non-dominant groups (Banks & Banks, 2005; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). In addition, intergroup or human relations educational techniques could assist students' intercultural relational learning. By explicitly exploring and teaching against bigotries and intergroup conflicts, schools might reduce negative interactions and improve and expand their sense of community, while preparing students for futures in a globalized multicultural world (Banks, 2005; Sleeter & Grant, 2003; Stephan & Vogt, 2004). I also advocate social reconstructionist multicultural education, which incorporates the previous approaches, as a tool to integrate social justice throughout practices and resist assimilationist and deficit-oriented multiculturalisms that disserve minori-

tized students (Nieto, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Such an approach, however, calls for the application of sophisticated theoretical critiques to counter hegemonic narratives that silently reify inequity.

Critical multicultural education (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995), in particular, offers useful tools to reveal and oppose unconscious assumptions that contribute to oppressive human relations. Exploring the socio-historical dynamics that have stratified peoples according to socially constructed concepts such as race, gender, and class, critical multiculturalism challenges the dominant narratives that privilege some people over others. This includes thorough critiques of the hegemony of *Whiteness* as a normalized status by which all other identities are measured. Employing critical theory and philosophical tools such as postmodernism and poststructuralism, critical multiculturalism seeks to deconstruct the systems of language and knowledge that perpetuate colonial domination through patriarchal, Eurocentric ideologies and discourses. This includes resistance to capitalist exploitations and material dominations of the majority of the world's peoples by an elite minority (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995).

Critical multiculturalism can be especially useful to teachers on multiple accounts. First, it can help teachers to examine their own embedded worldviews and perspectives, while providing tools to transform understandings that might be harmful or oppressive to students. Second, critical multiculturalism can enrich the social justice pedagogies teachers employ in their classrooms with deeper understandings of the complexity of human relations. This can assist attempts to avoid assimilating or marginalizing practices. It can also bolster classroom relationships by revealing the complex dynamics that imbue bigotries and hegemonic assumptions (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995).

In addition, the multiplicity of local-global classrooms requires approaches that acknowledge the interrelationship of the local and global in children's lives. Teachers can draw from global education frameworks (Banks, 2008, 2009; Hicks & Holden, 2007; Noddings, 2005) that integrate global dimensions and teach students about the interconnected world in which we live. This includes extending concepts of social justice and responsibility to issues like global poverty, international development, war, and ecological sustainability. Future generations need to be educated to participate as local-global citizens (Banks, 2008, 2009; Hicks & Holden, 2007; Noddings, 2005; Spariosu, 2004; Spring, 2008b), and students can better engage their intercultural learning processes with their classmates if they are taught relevant local-global contextual information. Like multicultural education, global education frameworks can benefit from critical explorations, since some models have promoted Eurocentric ideologies concerning international development and relations that beg critique and analysis. This includes, for example, market-based assumptions that business leaders from wealthy countries can "save" people in impoverished countries through high-tech development projects that primarily benefit those who are wealthy (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Escobar, 1995).

I believe global and multicultural frameworks should be informed by decolonial approaches to education, which draw from critical and postcolonial theories to analyze the socio-historical contexts that shape human relationships, including knowledge production and educational paradigms. Expanding critique to the local-global, decolonial education explores the continuing exploitations and inequalities perpetuated by neocolonial practices that include the material and epistemological subjugation of peoples originating in projects of colonialism, imperialism, and the expansion of neoliberal global capitalism (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; De Lissovoy, 2008, 2009, 2010; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Tejeda et al., 2003; Villenas, 2006). Decolonial pedagogies resist internal neocolonialism by rejecting education that imposes colonial knowledge systems on minoritized students, promoting instead educational practices shaped and guided by community members and knowledge systems (Tejeda et al., 2003).

Like critical multiculturalism, decolonial education resists the categorization of the world's peoples into a hierarchy of races that serves to privilege Euro-Western knowledges, languages, and values and justify the exploitation and impoverishment of indigenous and racially minoritized peoples. Among many White people, the pervading myth of Euro-Western culture as the epitome of human civilization engenders racial prejudices imbued with nationalism. According to this ideology, the nonwhite peoples of Other/ed countries and cultures struggle—often unsuccessfully—to mimic and achieve the “successes” of their White counterparts. This worldview blames impoverished people for their own supposed failures—or accepts such “failures” as a natural outcome for certain racial groups—while omitting all socio-historical context regarding the devastating and enduring consequences of colonialism, imperialism, and predatory global capitalism in people's lives (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; De Lissovoy, 2009, 2010; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Tejeda et al., 2003). Rather, powerful international actors such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have proposed—and imposed—continued economic, social, and environmental exploitations as “solutions” to profound poverty and stratification, further exacerbating cycles of appropriation and impoverishment (Abouharb & Cingranelli, 2008; Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; Cobb & Diaz, 2008; Shah, 2010).

Anti-racist pedagogies must not omit these complex and evolving dynamics, which inform our understandings of race and racism. This is especially true in the United States, where histories of subjugation blend with globalization ideologies that stratify the world's peoples according to dualistic hierarchies of *White/nonWhite*, *civilized/primitive*, *rich/poor*, *developed/developing*, and *First/Third World* (Alexander, 1996; Marable & Agard-Jones, 2008; Willinsky, 1998). This ideology of the Americas includes a rampant and hostile geopolitics that defines some people as *illegal* when they enter certain areas of their ancestral territories that have been redefined by national borders. A growing percentage of the U.S. population—people from or descended from citizens of Mexico and Central and

South American countries—is faced with border prejudices associated more with their racial and linguistic identities than their actual “legal” status (Nevins, 2002; Santa Ana, 1999).

Such hierarchies and dynamic bigotries play out in school relationships among teachers, staff, students, and families. Thus, relational learning happens, whether facilitated or not, among individuals as worldviews integrate and sometimes oppress. As students engage with teachers and other students, their subjectivities continuously reflect new relational understandings of themselves and others (De Lissovoy, 2010; Tejeda et al., 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 2003).

Decolonial (De Lissovoy, 2010; Tejeda et al., 2003), global (Banks, 2008; Spariosu, 2004), and critical multicultural (McLaren, 1995) education theorists have argued that student relationships are dynamic learning processes in which participants can co-construct emancipatory knowledges. Spariosu (2004) asserted that global crises such as war, genocide, nuclear proliferation, and ecological devastation require the collaboration of intercultural actors to develop new paradigms for problem-solving and for sustainable and peaceful coexistence. De Lissovoy (2010) promoted similar co-constructions of knowledge that decenter hegemonic narratives, while recentering subjugated epistemologies and perspectives more conducive to local-global kindredness. As students participate in relational learning, teachers can help to facilitate environments that foster positive interactions, in which students co-construct valuable skills and knowledges for intercultural competence and local-global agency. Conversely, unattended student relationships could potentially devolve into stratified interactions that mirror the bigotries and inequities of the larger social world (Banks, 2008; Cohen, 2004).

While the models described may contribute to such goals, they naturally present limitations. Inclusive, social reconstructionist, multicultural education places an emphasis on gender equity, yet lacks strong critical feminist and queer theory elements to deconstruct and challenge heteronormative and androcentric epistemologies, curricula, pedagogies, and school relationships. Though some critical multicultural scholars have incorporated feminist theories (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997), many have alluded to critical feminisms while not actually writing extensively about them. Global education proponents have generally relied on gender-blind analyses,² which is not surprising considering the invisibility of feminism and feminist activists in the global justice movement (Eschle & Maignashca, 2010). Decolonial education, on the other hand, has more thoroughly explored critical feminist and queer/sexuality theories, thanks to the work of border, transnational, postcolonial, and decolonial feminist theorizers both within and beyond the discipline of education. The following sections exploring postcritical and feminist methodologies will examine their and other feminists’ work—and why it is an important component of any liberatory pedagogy—in greater depth.

Teacher-Researchers for Local-Global Classrooms

The deployment of critical, local-global multiculturalism calls for teachers who embody the tenets of multicultural education and social learning approaches, which require teachers to learn about and get to know their students (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Moore, 2004). Such pedagogical orientations serve multiple purposes. This includes scaffolding, or building bridges, between classroom lessons and students' lives and prior knowledge to inspire and improve learning (Ladson-Billings, 1992). In addition, teachers can develop caring relationships with students (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Noddings, 1992; Thompson, 2003) and build strong classroom communities by modeling and promoting intercultural awareness and respect and by creating inclusive learning environments that reflect the experiences and perspectives of all students.

Differences in a stratified society are complicated by social inequities and injustices, power, and privilege. Teachers who seek to know their students must necessarily delve into the complex socio-political circumstances that imbue their students' material and epistemological realities (De Lissoy, 2010; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995). This necessity is exacerbated by the disconnection between teacher and student demographics. As student populations in the United States become increasingly representative of minoritized and poor children, the teaching force remains composed primarily of white, middle-class individuals (Brown & Kysilka, 2002). Thus, a gap exists between the positionalities of many teachers, who enjoy intersecting identity privileges associated with race and class, and those of their students. Such a gap may result in teachers having limited understandings of their students' lives and experiences, potentially leading to miscommunications, misguided educational approaches, and possibly even distrust between teacher and student.

The dangers imposed by teacher-student disconnects are exacerbated by the power inherent in the teacher's role over students in traditional schools. Teachers are given authority to control children's behaviors and, to some extent, what and how they learn. Though public schoolteachers have been afforded little decision-making power concerning curricula and assessment, the absence of any requirements concerning multiculturalism allows teachers to choose whether or not to employ inclusive curricula or pedagogies. In addition, the implementation of tracking systems and strict regulation of student behaviors in many schools conveys a hidden curriculum that teaches students obedience, passivity, and conformity often in accordance to class and racial distinctions (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu, 1973).

The complex dynamics of difference highlight the need for teachers capable of analyzing their own positionalities and those of their students. Such reflections should encompass the power inherent in teachers' identities and goals as authorities, both individually and as representatives/reinforcers of social authority, over children. Moreover, as frequent group facilitators, classroom community builders, and keepers of the peace, teachers can greatly benefit from better understandings of

the relationships and interactions among their students that take into consideration power disparities among children. This calls for sophisticated research skills involving observation and analysis of complex and dynamic human environments.

The following section describes postcritical ethnography and feminist praxis-based methods, which I assert provide excellent tools for teacher-researchers employing emancipatory, local-global pedagogies.

Postcritical Ethnography and Feminist Praxis-Based Methods

Noblit, Flores, and Murillo (2004) presented postcritical ethnography as an integration of theoretically based methods, derived from interpretive ethnography and critical theory, that are infused with postmodernist and poststructuralist insights. Critical theory provides language and analyses that critique human relations based in power, privilege, and oppression. Originating in Marxist, class-based analyses of economic stratification, critical theory expanded social critiques to encompass other categorical discriminations such as racism, patriarchy, and homophobia. Critical ethnography is committed to emancipatory intentions and the advancement of social justice, and employs critical epistemologies to actively reveal, oppose, and change social oppressions. Recognizing that the act of research and knowledge production is a political one that usually reifies inequities and those in power, critical ethnographers seek to give voice to those who are typically excluded from representation. Nevertheless, the critical ethnographer remains ever conscious of the unavoidable power relations between researcher and research subjects, and recognizes the control and privilege embodied in “appropriating the rights of representation even as [the researcher] seeks to emancipate” (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004, p. 2).

Interpretive ethnography is based on the theoretical assumption that all knowledge systems are socially constructed, and offers tools for ideological introspection regarding one’s research methods. Interpretive ethnography rejects positivist claims to objectivity and generalizable truths to be discovered through empirical research, and asserts that methodologies must address the complex, subjective, and socially constructed quality of human experiences (Noblit, 2004, p. 186). Such claims have been applied to educational evaluation, and criticized positivism as inappropriate for real world decision-making. Critical ethnographers echo this critique of positivism’s over-simplistic analyses, while seeking to employ educational research to highlight students’ subjugated knowledges and lived experiences (Noblit, 2004; Noblit et al., 2004). Interpretive ethnography’s attendance to one’s own assumed truths, sense of objectivity, and tendencies to generalize may be helpful for teachers who strive to be respectfully inclusive and avoid student objectification.

Interpretive ethnography’s contributions include examinations of poststructuralism, semiotics, and the *linguistic turn* (Toews, 1987, p. 879), leading to the perception of ethnographies as “interpretations of interpretations” (Noblit, 2004, p. 191). These new cross-disciplinary analyses of meaning-making led to a *crisis*

of representation (Lather, 2004; Noblit, 2004), in which ethnographers abandoned claims that their research presented objective truths about their research subjects. Rather, such ethnographers embrace the understanding that ethnography consists of “partial attempts to understand what others believe and do” (Noblit, 2004, p. 191).

Despite the emancipatory intentions of many of its practitioners, ethnography remains a methodology rooted in colonial origins. Thus, ethnographers must remain cognizant of the earlier purposes of their method to serve as a tool of the colonizer to study, objectify, and inform strategies to subjugate the colonized (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Noblit et al., 2004; Willinsky, 1998). Teacher-researchers must also remain conscious of the potential for their tools to objectify, marginalize, and colonize students (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Richardson & Villenas, 2000). Critical ethnography assists this endeavor by providing tools for critique of power and oppression, including those that may exist within its own framework. Nevertheless, in certain cases, critical ethnography has been canonized within its own discipline and touted as the legitimate framework. In such instances, Critical ethnography has promoted universalized ideological positions “that reified structure, materialism, realism, and rationalism” (Noblit, 2004, p. 192).

Such ideological limitations inspired critiques from poststructuralists, anti-rationalists, and feminists, who reinscribed interpretist approaches to counter disciplinary hegemonies such as the privileging of “patriarchal, Eurocentric, individualistic, and white” (Noblit, 2004, p. 191) ideologies. Understandings of the socially constructed nature of knowledge were employed to re-emphasize the need to include multiple voices in research, particularly those from marginalized and oppressed groups such as minoritized people, women, and students (Noblit, 2004). Postmodernist and poststructuralist insights further unsettled the canonization of critical ethnography into a foundationalist ideology that promotes hierarchies linked to colonialism and modality. Postmodernism’s rejection of objective truths instigated new approaches to ethnography that included postcolonial, feminist, and critical race theories, among others. By embracing such epistemological orientations and techniques, postcritical ethnography offers an approach that “redefines knowledge as a product of a dynamic, relational process (Noblit, 2004), and in so doing, challenges Western, patriarchal hegemony over the production, presentation, and privileging of knowledge inside and outside academia (Maher with Tearteault, 1996)” (Sprecher, 2011, p. 125). As individuals who work daily in environments shaped by top-down hierarchies and discourses that reify the canonization of knowledge and certain knowers, teacher-researchers may benefit from theoretical challenges to such practices. Moreover, teacher-researchers can use postmodernist, poststructuralist, and feminist tools to address their own internalization or resistance to both dominant and oppositional discourses that become hegemonic.

Researchers may implement postcritical ethnography in a variety of ways. However, common methodological considerations include attendance to “positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation” (Noblit, 2004, p. 198). The

concept of positionality describes the researcher's careful consideration of her own situated knowledges, identities, experiences, biases, assumptions, and interests, and the impact these have on her research and her perceptions of other research actors. Exploring elements of her own biography—such as her political beliefs, gender, race, class, and personal experiences—may assist researcher reflections on possible power disparities between her and research participants/students. This includes the ways her positionality influences her intentions for her research and how she collects, interprets, and represents her data (Noblit, 2004; Noblit et al., 2004). For many teachers in the U.S., this will mean deeply exploring positionalities of whiteness and middle-class socio-economic status in relation to the social stratifications in which their intersecting identities are embedded. Teacher identities and positionalities are relational and frequently contrast those of the many students living with poverty or subjugated identities. Teachers who do not engage in deep explorations of power and positionality will not be well informed or prepared for working with and relating to children from diverse backgrounds.

Postcritical ethnographers employ reflexivity to remain conscious that people's identities are ever-changing, rather than static, and social interactions are experiences contextualized by the fluidity of time, history, and identity. Objectivity extends this concept to trouble notions of deobjectification, since the postcritical ethnographer makes interactions and occurrences static—and hence objects—by writing about them (Noblit, 2004; Noblit et al., 2004). Thus, the postcritical author explicitly offers written representations of others that are her “partial and positional” (Noblit, 2004, p. 199) interpretation of what is, rather than an objective claim to totality or reality. Representation is of particular importance to postcritical ethnographers, as the manner in which authors choose to express their findings and describe research subjects has the potential to misrepresent others and may inform social and political actions that affect those she describes. Postcritical ethnography therefore promotes critical reflection and decision-making during the writing process in order to trouble potentially harmful avenues of representation. Displaying research subjects as *exotic others* for curious consumption (Noblit, 2004), or adopting deficit oriented or ethnocentric perspectives, no matter how subtle, should be avoided (Berry, 2006). Such tools may prove helpful for teacher-researchers to avoid static, essentializing, and objectifying interpretations and representations of their individual students and classroom communities.

Lather (1991, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007) advocated feminist ethnography that is post-critical, stressing the value of postmodern and poststructural tools applied to critical ethnography's use of “feminisms, post-colonialisms and critical race theories” (2001, p. 479) to explore normalized inequities and power relations. Lather (2003) advocated research that is openly ideological, critiquing positivist claims to objectivity and neutrality. Since all research is value-based, postmodernism and poststructuralism can be applied as a means of deconstruction. Poststructuralism can be used to explore the historical and cultural embeddedness of language and

the ways language affects individuals' perceptions of reality (Lather, 2001). This can assist research that includes numerous voices and interpretations to avoid producing knowledge mired in power-saturated discourses (Lather, 1991). Lather's (1991) proposition for "deconstructing/ deconstructive inquiry" (p. 154) employs postmodernism as a tool to enable researchers to continuously "think about how we think" (p. 154) in ways that explore the often hegemonic nature of our knowledges and assumptions. Lather (2007) proposed "getting lost as a way of knowing" (p. 4) as a research method that rejects the authoritative voice and embraces continuous self critique. Such critique may be applied to tools such as reflexivity to avoid the potential for overconfidence and the reauthorization of researcher voice (Lather, 2007; Pillow, 2003). Deconstruction, on the other hand, can allow researchers to embrace not knowing in order to produce research that provides one perspective among many in a conversation in which no participant has absolute knowledge (Lather, 2001, 2007).

Feminist Praxis-Based Methods

While feminist methodologies are vast and diverse (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Weiner, 1994), I briefly introduce and discuss some of the approaches that mirror and inform postcritical ethnography and provide pertinent considerations for post/critical, local-global educational contexts. Weiner (1994) proposed feminist methodologies for educational research, asserting that feminisms can combine critical elements with praxis to integrate theory and "everyday realities" (p. 122). Thus, an emphasis on praxis attends to the daily lived experiences and interactions that compose teaching and learning. Like postcritical approaches, some feminist methodologies have emphasized the research process, or the *how*, as much as the findings, that is, the *what*. This has called for careful examination of researcher positionality, as well as methodological considerations, throughout the knowledge production process (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Weiner, 1994). Weiner (1994) wrote:

...feminism has played a vanguard role in challenging science's epistemological foundations which are rooted in modernity by anticipating (and engaging with) many of the recent debates arising from poststructuralism and postmodernism. Thus challenges have been made to universal, patriarchal research paradigms, i.e. the study of 'man' (e.g. Stanley and Wise 1983); positivism's claim to neutrality and objectivity (e.g. Harding 1987); the distortion and invisibility of the female experience (Smith 1978); the notion of the autonomous and rational individual as the main goal of education (Walkerdine 1990); [and] the extent to which educational research itself can challenge inequality. (Weiner, 1990)

Feminist researchers have also promoted "interactive, contextualized methods" (Weiner, 1994, p. 128) that seek "...pattern and meaning rather than... prediction and control" (Lather, 1991, p. 72). This research approach seeks to improve circumstances for research subjects, and is rooted in commitments to social justice

that are embedded in process, praxis, and practice. Such feminist methods employ reflexivity, attendance to researcher subjectivity, and critiques of power relations both in the larger society and between researcher and researched (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Weiner, 1994). Seeking to dislocate the authoritative power of the researcher, feminist methods seek reciprocity and empowerment, in which “a fusion of values, theoretical perspectives and practice” (Weiner, 1994, p. 129) involve research subjects in knowledge production (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Weiner, 1994). In the realm of education, this means students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other educational actors participate in the co-construction of research, knowledge, and pedagogy (Weiner, 1994).

Teacher-researchers who take up such approaches may benefit from allowing the collaborative, contextual process of teaching and learning to inform their understandings, rather than trying to force rigid techniques and systematic inquiries onto the organic complexities of living and learning. Such an approach bears particular significance for spaces that seek to facilitate local-global, relational learning, since teacher-facilitators must actively assess and respond to dynamic and unpredictable processes as they occur. Emphasizing interactive contexts and reflexivity in reciprocal meaning-making, feminist teacher-researchers could challenge machinations of power and control through methodologies that prioritize students’ perspectives, needs, and understandings over the production of rationalist, universalizing, and publishable research. Within such a framework, teaching and research become a single, unified endeavor, no longer separated into binary constructs.

Moreover, feminist methodologies offer a wealth of theoretical orientations that may inform and improve teacher-researchers’ post/critical, local-global understandings and practices. In addition to challenging androcentric biases in research, feminist methodologies seek to re-center the experiences and perspectives of those who are marginalized, and who have often been eclipsed, made peripheral, or objectified in traditional research (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Hesse-Biber (2007) explained that feminist research emphasizes the importance of difference to improving understanding and knowledge production. By attending to intersecting identities—such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability (Collins, 1990)—feminist researchers seek to avoid making universalizing claims that normalize the experiences of dominant group members and exclude those of minoritized people.

Pivotal works by postcolonial, transnational, third world, Chicana, and Black feminist theorists such as Mohanty (1988, 2003), Anzaldúa (1987), hooks (1984), and Collins (1990) have highlighted the plurality and intersectionality of human experiences while focusing critique on feminism’s own Western- and White-centric shortcomings (Hesse-Biber, 2007). For example, hooks (1984) Collins (1990) stressed the knowledge gained by Black women through their uniquely gendered and raced positionalities in White supremacist societies. Collins (1986) argued that knowledge shared from these standpoints greatly enriches scholastic understandings by highlighting the complexities undertaken by those who must navigate multiple

terrains of insider/outsider status.³ Chicana feminist theorists have explored the uniquely situated experiences of Chicana women living in the borderlands of different nations, cultures, and languages, while asserting the intellectual value of Chicana women's everyday, embodied actions, interactions, and relationships (Anzaldua, 1987; Galvan, 2001; Villenas, 2006). Additionally, Chicana feminist scholars such as Anzaldua (1987), Moraga (1983) and Perez (1993, 2003) have explored their own positionalities as lesbian and queer to examine and challenge the oppressive impact of heteronormativity and homophobia in their lives. Linking their experiences and interpretations to larger social paradigms of marginalization and oppression, these scholars have further demonstrated the interconnectedness of Otherizing ideologies rooted in Euro-Western, male superiority (Hurtado, 1998).

Moreover, postcolonial, transnational, and third world feminisms have directed concepts of marginalization and oppression toward the local-global. Thus, women's experiences according to nationality, geographic region, and the context of imperialism, colonialism, and transnational capitalist exploitation are key considerations. This both expands knowledge possibilities and increases the necessity for caution among researchers who may "attempt to speak for 'the other/s' in a global context" (Hesse-Biber, p. 13) shaped by extreme power disparities. Drawing from and inclusive of scholars of decolonizing, indigenizing, and endarkening methodologies—such as Smith (1997), Cannella and Manuelito (2008), Saavedra & Nymark (2008), and Dillard and Okpalaoka (2011), to name a few—globally conscious feminist methodologies may further inform teacher-researchers' post/critical, local-global approaches. Gained insights include respect for indigenous knowledge, self-determination, and linguistic rights throughout research (and educative) processes (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008; Smith, 1997); the myriad, complex, and fluctuating possibilities of borderland experiences (Anzaldua, 1987; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008); and the spiritual potential of reciprocal, relational qualitative research through endarkening feminist methodologies (Dillard and Okpalaoka, 2011). Taking holistic, reflexive, and collaborative approaches to understanding the complexities and multiplicities of human experiences, such scholarship resides at the vanguard of social research and offers highly pertinent theoretical and methodological insights for post/critical, local-global classrooms.⁴

Further Implications for Schooling and Teacher Training

Postcritical ethnography and feminist praxis-based methods share commitments with critical multiculturalism and decolonial education to decentering hegemonic knowledge systems, while analyzing the power disparities that validate or invalidate different people's knowledges. These tools can be especially helpful for teachers when deciding what to teach and how to teach it and how to analyze, represent to others, and respond to students' progress and needs. For example, informed educators might reject traditional history curricula that uncritically describe early American

colonizers in heroic terms and omit other voices, teacher-centered pedagogies that exclude alternative learning styles, and high-stakes, test-based representations of students that label, categorize, and often track them according to perceived abilities and deficits. Rather, practitioners would participate in the continuous development of curricula, pedagogies, and assessments informed by their own research, adapted to their students' demonstrated contexts and needs, and guided by parental and community member input.

Moreover, critiques of power relations may help teachers better analyze the stratifications that imbue schooling processes. Top-down hierarchies ensure that a small minority controls educational practices that are often shaped by the political ideologies of those in power. Oftentimes, the ideologies of the powerful reinforce the status quo through tools of social reproduction such as tracking or Eurocentric curricula, pedagogies, and assessments that privilege dominant-group students and marginalize others (Anyon, 1980, Bourdieu, 1973; Tyack, 2003). Additionally, traditional schooling bestows powers to teachers over students and principals over teachers and students to strictly regulate behaviors toward conformity, obedience, and efficiency of management. Efficiency schooling practices require the rigid regulation of student behavior (Tyack, 1974), and teachers are commonly appointed as policing agents (Denzin, 2003) who teach children they must sit at desks, walk in lines, and speak only when called on to be considered "good."

Furthermore, students rarely have any say in how they are educated, or how they are represented in a field that frequently imposes deficiency oriented labels to rate and categorize children. Titles such as *ESL/ELL*, *learning disabled*, and *emotionally disturbed* commonly essentialize and define children according to deficit discourses in which those who speak English and think and act in predictable, dominant culture ways are the norm by which others are measured (Corker & French, 1999; Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; Lester, 2011; Nieto, 1996; Roey, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011). The issue of representation is of highest pertinence because most teachers in the United States are members of dominant racial and class groups, yet are in the position of representing children from subjugated and marginalized groups through grades, reports, and assessments.

Postcritical ethnography and feminist methodologies may also provide insights regarding the larger social disparities—such as racism, sexism, classism, nationalism, and linguistic chauvinism—that often infest relationships among students, teachers, administrators, staff and parents, and community members. Such disparities exist not only as interpersonal prejudices, but as normalized assumptions about who has the right of decision-making and authority over others, who is respected, and whose knowledge, perspectives, and ways of communicating are valued and acknowledged. Such assumptions are often woven into structures of schooling, such as professional hierarchies and classroom rules. Parent-school communications may also be imbued with exclusionary, patronizing, and deficit discourses and practices when under-prepared staff from dominant social groups interact with

parents from marginalized or subjugated groups. For example, culturally incompetent professionals may assume an essentializing stance to explain marginalized parents' behaviors, attributing individual actions to ethnocentric cultural generalizations. Such perspectives simplify and dehumanize the individuals to which they are directed, while misinforming well-intentioned professionals and their subsequent responses (Sprecher, 2011).

Teacher-researcher methods might include participatory observations that are documented at the end of each day, informal interviews with students and parents, and portfolio analyses of students' schoolwork. Thus, postcritical feminist methodologies could be implemented as forms of authentic assessment that analyze students' educational processes in order to adjust pedagogies and better support future learning, rather than as a way to simply grade and stratify students after the fact. Such assessments would be well informed by frequent re-examination of the role teacher positionality may play in interpretations of student activities and interactions, as well as conscious commitment to resisting essentializing, hegemonic, and otherizing impulses.

Moreover, such research need not be limited to systematic inquiry,⁵ but rather, exist as ongoing and integral aspects of teaching and learning. This is not to reject calls for rigor. On the contrary, I am calling for research as daily practice informed by continuous explorations of theoretical and empirical literatures, professional development, and collaborations and critiques among professional colleagues (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004), community organizations, parents, and students. By combining such practices with regular documentation, teacher-researchers may be able to coproduce bodies of knowledge with their school communities to inform not only their own practices, but broader educational considerations as well.

Conclusion

I believe postcritical ethnography and feminist, praxis-based methodologies offer tools that can better serve a more holistic and context-based approach to students, both as individual learners and as members of classroom communities. Teachers may use them to observe, assess, record, and respond to the reflexivity, multiplicity, and complexity of local-global classrooms. Such methods may be especially conducive to post/critical, local-global multiculturalisms, due to shared conceptual elements such as critical and decolonial theories and philosophical challenges to hegemonic and universal knowledge systems. Relational learning, in particular, may be bolstered by teacher facilitation supported by advanced intergroup assessment skills that acknowledge the roles of power, entitlement, and marginalization in social processes and schooling.

The proposals I have discussed in this article would only be viable with a shift in teacher professional role that explicitly acknowledges and makes time and space for the observations and analyses that many teachers already conduct but

haven't the support to fully realize. This means a change in schooling structures to provide teachers with both the time and resources to train for, conduct, and share their research, and the decision-making capacities and authority to implement their responsive pedagogies.

Darling-Hammond (2008) noted that multiple countries with reputations for educational excellence allot much more time in teachers' schedules for assessment, planning, preparation, and development than currently allowed in U.S. schools. In the United States, public school teachers are generally allotted six to ten hours beyond their in-class teaching time to perform additional duties, while in Singapore, teachers are afforded twenty hours a week to engage in non-instructional tasks such as observing and collaborating with other educators (Darling-Hammond, 2008). In Finland, teachers are regarded as highly trained professionals whose responsibilities include collaborative decision-making regarding their school's curricula, pedagogies, and practices (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Lombardi, 2005). The current overload of in-class teaching time common in U.S. schools, as well as the top-down hierarchies in which teachers remain relatively powerless, would not be conducive to professional roles as teacher-researchers.

Nevertheless, I believe the potential benefits of highly trained teacher-researchers for local-global schooling merit the changes that would be necessary for implementation. In addition to increased authority and non-instructional time, this would mean a shift in teacher training and professional development. Teacher education would need to convey a framework for post/critical, local-global multiculturalism; namely, elements of social reconstructionist and critical multiculturalism and global and decolonial educational approaches. Such training would also emphasize qualitative research methodologies that embrace postcritical and feminist praxis-based approaches. While I cannot dedicate time in this article to discuss the logistics of extended mentorships and paid internships for future teachers, such approaches could potentially equalize costs by providing additional in-class support and reducing teacher turnover rates.⁶ Meeting the challenges and opportunities of local-global classrooms and societies need not require an excess of funding or sacrifice. Rather, these seemingly radical changes in the way we educate may only require the creativity, the will, and the courage to rise to the occasion.

Notes

This article is a revised version of a chapter from my doctoral dissertation. My dissertation is currently posted as an unpublished work on the University of Tennessee's TRACE (Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange) digital archive. I am grateful to my dissertation chair, Dr. Allison Anders, for her careful review. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Katharine Sprecher, 22 Sundance Drive, Weaverville, NC 28787. Phone: 503-490-7615. Email: kmsprecher@gmail.com

¹ For an in-depth discussion outlining my proposed educational framework for post/critical, local-global multiculturalism, see Sprecher (2011).

² For an introduction to some of the existing, but rare, feminist treatments of global education, see Goodman (2004) and Reilly (1997).

³ See Olesen (2011) for further discussions and citations of works that both trouble and assert the value of methodological tools such as standpoint epistemology, intersectionality, difference, experience, and gender.

⁴ The space limitations of this article allow only a brief introduction to this scholarship, and readers are strongly encouraged to pursue independent research in these areas.

⁵ Here, I am diverging from the assertion that teacher-research should be limited to systematic inquiry as a characteristic of rigor. See Lankshear and Knobel (2004) for their argument in favor of systematic inquiry that includes theoretical and empirical study, as well as peer review through observation and publication.

⁶ See L. Darling-Hammond's (2007a) "A Marshall Plan for Teaching" for a comparative analysis of costs and investments concerning proposed teacher education reforms.

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Katharine Sprecher recently received her doctoral degree in cultural studies of educational foundations from the Learning Environments and Educational Studies Doctoral Program in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling of the College of Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.