



Rethinking the *Millennial Contradiction* in Educational Studies: Toward Epistemologies of Practice and Critically Reflexive Action Research on “Race”

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Abstract: There remains evidence of an age-old debate in educational studies regarding knowledge and its production. A disproportionate number of scholars of an older generation tend to privilege disciplinary knowledge, while a disproportionate number of scholars from a younger generation privilege knowledge based in identity. Previous scholarship has named this debate the “millennial contradiction” (Noblit, Hatt, & Hughes, 2003, p. 322). This article addresses a central question: upon what epistemological grounds and through what methodological means might we engage a critical rethinking of the millennial contradiction? The authors draw from critical “race” theory in education (Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995) and critical “race” methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) to address this question. Concluding thoughts suggest that a critical rethinking of the millennial contradiction in educational studies can be engaged and supported by (a) adapting “epistemologies of practice” (Weil, 1998, p. 42), (b) building upon Weil’s (1998) critically reflexive action research (CRAR) by infusing “race” into its seven cyclical processes and thereby rethinking curriculum as “racialized” text and (c) imagining the subsequent methodological possibilities of critically reflexive action research on “race” (CRAR-2).

Keywords: Race, Critical, Reflexive, Action Research, Teamwork Curriculum, Millennial Contradiction

Introduction

Educational studies research¹ contributes some of the most influential articles, book chapters, and books on the study of “race”² (e.g., Sleeter, 1996, Banks, 1993; Grant, 1994). A multiethnic group of scholars coming of age and popularity in the 1970s and 1980s (and their diverse students, coming of age in the 1990s and 2000s) tended to produce “race” research that centered identity (Noblit, Hatt, & Hughes, 2003). By centering identity, this type of “race” research began to reject the epistemology of disciplinarity, *per se* (Noblit, et al., 2003). In the 1990s, a backlash against scholarship centering identity (including racial identity) in educational studies surfaced disproportionately from an older and arguably less diverse (i.e., ethnically, linguistically, economically, ecumenically, and developmentally diverse) generation whose scholarship tended to reorient and de-center identity while centering

¹ Educational studies as discussed in this article intends to include publications and presentations from groups of educators, and researchers who tend to share their research, and who tend to become active members of one or more of the following national associations: the American Educational studies Association (AESA), the National Association of Multicultural Educators (NAME) and/or related special interest groups (SIGs) and Divisions within the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Scholars in NAME, AESA, and/or related AERA SIGs and Divisions do not necessarily identify themselves as “educational studies researchers.” Hence, this manuscript does not venture into labeling particular scholars as “educational studies researchers,” but to note particular pieces from their published works as contributing to the broader set of academic scholarship for which “educational studies” “multicultural education” and “critical multiculturalism” are central repositories.

² “Race” is written in quotation marks to (a) remind readers of the suspect nature of the term, and (b) to remind readers and ourselves that the term is part of an international dialogue; similar to how quotation marks are placed around words to denote a conversation in literature and ethnography. “Race” is conceptualized here as the cultural-political construction of affinity groups most often, emerging from long histories of geographic isolation and evolving within and between racialized groups to garner part-acceptance, part-imposition, part-power, and part-resistance; planned and unintentional misguidance, interpretations, misinterpretations, dysconsciousness, and interpenetrations; including interference by researchers attempting to describe human groups in terms of “race.” Moreover, “race” tends to characterize human groups connected to a socially constructed core system and systemic practices of verbal and nonverbal communication, power, privilege, penalty, values, beliefs, attitudes, and habits of thought and action, although this connection to such a core set promises neither consensus nor compatibility due to human agency.

disciplinary knowledge (Noblit, Hatt, & Hughes, 2003). In fact, many scholars of this generation dismiss the “new” identity-centered research from associations like AESA and NAME, convinced that the newer intellectual work was no longer rigorous (Noblit, et al., 2003). This generational debate is reminiscent of the age-old identity vs. knowledge politics that reflect the “millennial contradiction” (Noblit, Hatt, & Hughes, 2003, p. 322). It is a false binary and tension between one group that favors the depth of knowledge without the consideration of identities, contexts, or experiences versus another group that more closely attends to the degrees to which identities, contexts, and experiences shape one’s knowledge.

It is important to note that there has been and continues to be a long history of attending to race methodologically across the social sciences in nuanced and complex ways. For example, in no small part due to its complicated history in establishing race as a discursive and material object—and at least as importantly its accompanying othering, racialized narratives of non-Western ways of being and knowing as less than—contemporary anthropology and sociology of education continue to deal directly with questions of race, its construction, and impact in educational ecologies for students of color (e.g., Heath, 1983; Lipman, 1998; Hopson & Dixson, 2011; Varenne & McDermott, 1997).

Along similar lines, we recognize the continuing work in the field of curriculum studies, from foundational work by such scholars as Anna Julia Cooper (1892) and Carter G. Woodson (1933, as well as his series of textbooks), to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman’s (1995) discussion of “curriculum as racialized text,” to Tara J. Yosso’s (2002) move “towards a critical race curriculum.” Attention to questions of race is also evident in not only at least the past decade and a half of major journals in the field of curriculum studies but also in the occasional intersection of criticality, race, and method, as can be seen in Sofia Villenas and Donna Deyhle’s (1999)

Curriculum Inquiry article, “Critical Race Theory and Ethnographies Challenging the Stereotypes: Latino Families, Schoolings, Resilience and Resistance.”

Our point here is not to claim a fully novel positionality. Instead we seek to argue for further development of racially conscious and race-centric methodologies, understandings that consider and expand upon a particular methodological traditions while pressing at what we believe to be false or otherwise misconstrued binaries. Similarly, although this work is framed more in terms of educational foundations conversations, it is our belief that a parallel argument can be made for the field of curriculum studies.

To these ends, this manuscript addresses a central question: upon what epistemological grounds and through what methodological means might we engage a critical rethinking of the millennial contradiction? We draw from critical “race” theory in education (Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995), critical “race” methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and Weil’s (1998) epistemologies of practice and critically reflexive action research (CRAR) to address this central question. The remaining text (a) reviews literature supporting the theoretical foundation and related guiding methodology of the article, (b) discusses evidence of the millennial contradiction, (c) composes a counter-narrative to rethink the separation of disciplinary knowledge from knowledge based in “race” identity, (d) draws from CRT and CRM by adapting an “epistemologies of practice” approach (Weil, 1998, p. 42) to critically rethinking the millennial contradiction thereby, rethinking curriculum as “racialized” text (Pinar et al., 1995) and (e) builds upon Weil’s (1998) critically reflexive action research (CRAR) by infusing “race” into its seven cyclical processes. Subsequently, this infusion involves imagining the methodological possibilities of critically reflexive action research on “race” (CRAR-2).

Theoretical and Methodological Foundation

Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework of manuscript draws from the major tenets of critical “race” theory (CRT) to build the case for the existence of the millennial contradiction where identity meets disciplinary knowledge at the intersection of educational studies and “race.” This framework offers insight for a space to begin working through this contradiction. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) are credited for bringing CRT from Law to educational studies. Their work describes the following three tenets of CRT.

Tenet 1: Ingrained Nature of “Race” and Racism—“Race” and racism are so ingrained in the fabric of society that they become normalized (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Because they are prevalent in society, they are prevalent in education (Milner, 2007). This tenet of CRT is also in many ways the tip of the intellectual iceberg that is the African American intellectual tradition and, as such, can be understood as a reiteration of points raised by such scholars as Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carter G. Woodson.

Tenet 2: Importance of Narrative and Counter-Narrative--or the importance of “naming one’s own reality or voice” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In educational studies, it works to challenge dominant ideology and to center voices of marginalized communities as they differ from mainstream portrayals. Examples include but are not limited to the following types of educational studies described thoroughly by Milner (2007): oppositional scholarship (Lynn & Parker, 2006) as well as scholarship attacking Liberalism (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Here, it is also important to note that any narrative can be essentializing and that just as collective memory can be oppressive (Winfield, 2007), corrective memory can incidentally further marginalize or essentialize (Marable, 2000; Wozolek, this volume).

Tenet 3: Interest Convergence- Milner (2007) contends that “racism remains firmly in place” and social progress regarding “race” seems to advance at the pace that members of the dominant racial group “determine is reasonable and judicious” (Milner, 2007, p. 391). Members representing that group are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge its existence (Delpit, 1995). One factor that seems to initiate change among dominant group members and affiliates are issues, concepts, encounters, episodes, and events that provide nearly undeniable evidence for the necessity of interest convergence with the subaltern. For example, interest convergence

regarding the holiday celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the U.S. state of Arizona began when:

“the NBA All-Star Game and Super Bowl announced they wouldn’t be held in Arizona because of its failure to recognize the [Reverend Dr. Martin Luther] King, [Jr.] Holiday. This event seemed to provide a an integral part of the interest convergence necessary to compel the Arizona Court to reverse the previous decision not to celebrate what has now become the King National Day of Service” (Milner, 2007, p. 391).

Yet, even with the description above of “dominant” and “subaltern” racial groups, it is crucial to recognize that all people have some degree of agency (as demonstrated by activists for the King National Day of Service) and even the subaltern can enact available wiggle room, as others seek further to limit their mobility (see, Ortner, 2006; Tsing, 2005).

Critical Race Methodology

The core perspective of the theoretical foundation for this article offers a complex, agentic set of possibilities that simultaneously does not ignore the small to extreme ways in which dominant “race” groups seek to reinscribe and retain power and influence. Moreover, this perspective does not theoretically overlook subaltern “race” groups’ available resources irrespective of how minor they might seem from purviews within and outside the margins. As we began seeking ways to situate and activate our theoretical foundation, we found that we could draw from recent developments in Critical “Race” Methodology (CRM). CRM applies narratives from traditionally marginalized populations to interrupt or otherwise refute often oppressive dominant discourses. Building upon the work of Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Solorzano & Yosso (2002) offered major contributions to how scholars today consider the potential of CRM in educational studies research.

Solorzano & Yosso (2002) argue that CRM can “challenge racism with other forms of subordination and expose *deficit-informed research that silences and*

distorts epistemologies of people of color” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). Second, CRM helps us to challenge the notion of “objective research” with assumptions and narratives that tend to “uphold deficit, racialized notions about people of color” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). Third, CRM provides a tool to counter deficit narratives, the collision of dominant norms and values with non-dominant populations in which differences from implied ways of being and knowing are reconstructed as deficits (Valencia, 1997). Finally, CRM offers a space to conduct and present research that is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). CRT and CRM were selected for application in this article precisely because of the tools they offer scholars of color and their collaborators for critically rethinking the millennial contradiction regarding *whose knowledge* and *what knowledge* counts in the academy and in all of the communities touched by it.

The Millennial Contradiction

The identity vs. knowledge debate has specifically involved “race” related claims for at least two millennia. It is important here to respond to readers who may ponder, “I get the contradiction, but how is it millennial?” For at least two thousand years, humans have grappled with “race”-related contradictions at the intersection where identity meets knowledge. As early as 1350 BCE, there is early recognition of “race” differences in the portraits on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs. Decisions about what should count as knowledge and whose identity has legitimate authority “depended on which ethnic group held sway” (Gossett, 1963, p. 4). When the lighter-skinned Egyptians were dominant they degraded and underestimated the knowledge of the darker-skinned Egyptians. Though often a less attended to aspect of similar discussions, this question is also about ways of being and the ways in which dominant groups utilize ontological differences as tools for

marginalization (Gershon, 2012; Mills, 1998). Conversely, when the darker-skinned Egyptians were in power they degraded the identity and knowledge of their lighter-skinned counterparts referring to them as “the pale, degraded ‘race’ of Arvad” (Gossett, 1963, p. 4).³ The millennial contradiction here emerges with one additional key point—these ancient Egyptians acknowledged shared ancestry in their tomb art, distinguishing all Egyptians in “red” from their enemies and alliances, which were colored either yellow, white, or black (Gossett, 1963, p. 4). Hence, while denigrating the identity of the subaltern “race” group, they were also illustrating whose knowledge and what knowledge counted. Concomitantly, they were participating in systemic practices conducive to the future denigration of their own “race” group and the knowledge production therein.⁴

During the next millennium, 1928CE, the question of who has the right to represent a society and through what methodological means came to the forefront. The 1928 argument on this topic occurred between Jomo Kenyatta (first President of the independent Kenya) and Louis Leakey (acclaimed 20th century archeologist/anthropologist) during a public lecture in London (Elder et al., 2007). Kenyatta had centered identity in his graduate thesis on the native Kikuyu tribe of Kenya and Leakey challenged the subjectivity of Kenyatta’s work and ultimately dismissed Kenyatta’s thesis as lacking rigor and a disciplinary methodological base. Although Leakey was white, both he and Kenyatta were said to have claimed ‘insider’ knowledge of Kikuyu customs. Born in Kenya and educated abroad, both Kenyatta and Leakey were accepted as Kikuyu tribal men who earned doctoral degrees in anthropology. The central questions of their argument ask: (a) who has the

³ Some readers may be familiar with a similar argument about the degradation of the oppressed and related justification of their oppression in the seminal work of Paulo Freire (1970).

⁴ Jews were also considered a different “race” and had typologies (such as a typology of faces (Gossett, 1963). The U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling the Italians, the Irish and the Jews were “White” also points to the socially constructed nature of “race” and its use in inscribing us/them-superior/inferior binaries through its construction.

right to represent a society or cultural group? (Elder, Bremser, & Sheridan, 2007) and (b) through what methodological means does one have the right to represent a cultural group, traditional hypothesis-driven anthropology, or autoethnography? This dilemma where identity meets knowledge in the academy would emerge again in educational studies in the latter part of the twentieth century and it would continue into the next millennium.

The naming of the “millennial contradiction” in educational studies surfaced initially in a 2003 chapter written with the first author of this article and his colleagues for *The Future of Educational Studies* (Noblit, Hatt, & Hughes, 2003, p. 322-326). With the leadership of Dr. George Noblit and Dr. Beth Hatt, the writing team located a critical moment in the 1990s when the scholarship of a critical mass from an older generation retreated to the disciplines when the intellectual work of organizations like AESA and NAME took a turn toward emphasizing group identity. This backlash would bring “educational studies firmly into the culture wars” (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 322). The backlash also “exacerbated the misunderstandings taking place” whereby, the language of the disciplines was perceived “as impersonal and thus was seen by the newer generation as an attack on themselves as well as their work” (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 322). The disciplines became “a source of identity for the white males” and females (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 323) or at least a disproportionate amount of scholarship from the older generation. The irony is that many of the educational studies from white scholars retreated to the disciplines to avoid research that centered identity yet, each piece was evidently doing so precisely to reinscribe an integral part of the scholars’ own group identity. Many of this scholarship “used the disciplines as the source of status as well as knowledge” for white scholars (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 323). Similarly, a critical mass of scholarship from the younger, more diverse (“race,” gender, sexual orientation, nationality, language, etc.) generation began “engaging in [its] own identity politics, which in part [saw] the

disciplines as agents of oppression” (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 322). That scholarship began to view disciplines as suspect tools for identity construction and politics. Considered in tandem, “the identity constructions of both generations constitute the ‘millennial contradiction,’” (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 322) particularly with regards to issues of “race.”

In sum, what has been framed as a tension between disciplinarity and identity is in fact a tension between approaches to the consideration of knowledge and its production. As we outline below, what makes this framing particularly challenging and ironic is that the educational studies scholarship that was painted as the establishment was written by scholars who had once rallied for a pluralist, post-perspective against *their* intellectual elders. Their scholarship is now, in turn, being pressed by the identity scholarship from a younger generation, who themselves have now in many ways *become* the establishment. This tension within educational studies creates a context in which much can be missed on both sides, not the least of which are important discussions about what curriculum materials might remain valuable for some in disciplinarity (if anything) and how an overemphasis on “race” and other identities might also re-inscribe the very points against which some are fighting, (albeit from a perspective that educational studies scholar, Dr. Jenny Gordon (2005), might call *inadvertently complicit*). We turn back to CRT and CRM to engage a critical revisiting of the millennial contradiction in educational studies through counter-narrative.

Counter-Narrative: What If It’s not “Racial” Identity vs. Disciplinary Knowledge?

The millennial contradiction in educational studies involves at least two overarching aspects that warrant a critical re-visitation via counter-narrative.

1. The lingering conflict mis-specifies an opposition. The opposition is not identity vs. disciplinary knowledge. The current conflict is a conflict of ontology and of knowledge and its production.

Although considered suspect tools by the members of the newer, more diverse generation, the disciplines are still used by that generation to support scholarship that has been historically excluded from the academy in ways that ultimately position some with legitimate authority. The centering of identity marks the transition *from* (a) having disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge at the center and identities being dependent on that center *to* (b) having identities in the center and disciplinary knowledge being in service of that center.

2. Wherever identity meets knowledge, there is always contradiction. Too often, when we think we have won a new position through either identity-centered or disciplinary-centered knowledge claims, and thereby that we have posited a new intellectual conjunction in educational studies scholarship, we ignore the genealogy of conceptions and claim a novelty that does not exist (Foucault, 1972). Identity and disciplinary knowledge claims are not opposed but related,

both in past and present. This point is not a new one and it is in many ways, a pathway through discussions of representation of self in sociocultural contexts, often by female scholars of color (Cooper, 1892; hooks, 1994; Minh-Ha, 2009; Truth, 1851). Nevertheless, we often experience them as an opposition and act as if the opposition is real. When identity is asserted it cannot escape the silencing already historically accomplished by the disciplines (Gallegos, 1998). Centering identity does not eliminate disciplinarity or even interdisciplinarity but rather reinscribes it. The encounter is redefined, but remains (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 324). Moreover, the ironic, paradoxical, and contradictory nature of the identity vs. knowledge contradiction presents particular challenges for “race” identity scholarship by marginalized groups.

If the first author of this article and his colleagues were correct in 2003, that: (a) a disproportionately “older generation of scholars does not see...how demanding the centering of identity [including “race” identity] is, intellectually and personally” (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 324); (b) a disproportionately younger generation tends not to acknowledge its own complicity within the disciplines; and (c) this phenomena continues (and we believe it does), then marginalized groups may seek a different path than the one described at the end of the Noblit, Hatt and Hughes (2003). That chapter concluded by appreciating the millennial contradiction and by suggesting that an attempt to resolve the contradiction may be counter-productive. It suggested that there is strength in accepting such contradictions as a sign of our vibrancy.

Yet, as this manuscript emerged nearly twelve years later, Hughes began to revisit whether scholars of color whose work intends to infuse “racial” identity into an educational studies curriculum can rest assured that the disproportionately older and less diverse generation in the academy will consider our work alongside their own resolve to accept *our* contradictions as a sign of *our* vibrancy (particularly at the crucial moments when scholars of color at historically and predominantly white institutions are up for review, promotion and tenure). With the application of CRT and CRM to the millennial contradiction, Hughes was moved to consider alternatives to the aforementioned conclusion of Noblit, Hatt and Hughes (2003) chapter. Those alternatives slowly emerged from one central question: upon what epistemological grounds and through what methodological means might we engage a critical rethinking of the millennial contradiction?

Upon What Epistemological Grounds and through What Methodological Means Might We Engage a Critical Rethinking of the Millennial Contradiction?

Epistemologies of Practice

Scholars from marginalized groups and our collaborators continue to struggle to convince a critical mass of the predominantly white male, heterosexual, property owning global academic elite; the tenure- and promotion-granting, grant-giving and hiring/firing folks that our identity-explicit “race” research can be “rigorous beyond what was ever to be expected by the disciplines” (Noblit et al., 2003, p. 324). There is evidence that most scholars from marginalized populations can ill afford to pit our identity work vs. our disciplinary work; our subjectivity vs. our objectivity; and/or our post-positivist vs. our post-modernist tendencies. And we can ill afford to allow ourselves to be pitted against each other. Perhaps, scholars from marginalized groups may need to consider an alternative approach to address identity politics and to build a platform that avoids the dominant mainstream trappings of identity vs. knowledge en route to centering “epistemologies of practice” (Weil, 1998, p. 42; See Figure 1).

Unlike, the dominant epistemology, which relies heavily upon authority (Rodolfo, 1998, p. 60) Weil’s (1998) “epistemologies of practice” approach from the UK engages collaboration and seeks areas of convergence and compatibility when confronting dilemmas and building critiques. Previously, Bateson (1980) separated an epistemology as science approach to theorizing “the study of how particular organisms or aggregates know, think and decide,” from an epistemology of philosophy approach, “which studies the necessary limits and other characteristics of the processes of knowing, thinking and deciding” (p. 242). Weil (1998) explains that her “epistemologies of practice” as drawing from and building upon the postmodernity work of Patti Lather, (i.e, Lather, 1991) and the reflexive action research work of Donald Schon

(i.e., Schon, 1995; and Argyris & Schon, 1996). Weil’s (1998) connection to Lather and Schon is evident in the ten major components of her notion of “epistemologies of practice” detailed below (p. 42) with practical applications for rethinking the millennial contradiction.

Figure 1

Disciplinary Knowledge vs. Identity Debate Reframed as Epistemologies of Practice

Disciplinary Knowledge vs. Identity Epistemology Emphasis	Epistemologies of Practice Emphasis
Methodological affinity group identity drives research	Collaborative learning in/from actions of single and multiple Methodologies drive research
Solutions to problems with identifiable causes	Reflexivity about complicity in perpetuating problems and silencing discourses
Defining future or critiquing past research	Critiquing present, past, and anticipated future research as basis for nurturing identity, innovation, and shared purpose in research
Individual/dyadic competence	Capability and knowledge as involving individual, dyadic, small group, cultural, organizational, and institutional as contingent and contextualized
Getting research message across one-way; to academic audience-only	Multidirectional, transparent, and clear informational flows of research message.
Outputs, in an attempt to be accountable	Long-term and sustainable outcomes
Debate (the “attorney” approach) Fidelity approach to assessing data	Deliberate (the “juror” approach) Mutual Adaptation approach to assessing data, Co-generating problems, principles, values, conditions, and belief systems
Large-scale studies and Ethnographies multiple	Large-scale studies, auto/ethnographies as well as multiple small-scale studies as basis for systemic and individual contributions to the field

(Adapted from Weil, 1998, p. 44)

The Potential of Epistemologies of Practice for Rethinking the Millennial Contradiction

Different “epistemologies of practice” give rise to different emphases and choices in action (Weil, 1998, p. 43). With an “epistemologies of practice” focus, scholars of marginalized groups and our collaborators may justify our work to the older generation via interest convergence. If their major concern is knowledge production, then epistemologies of practice can build an intellectual bridge for responding to *whose knowledge* and *what knowledge* counts in a language that they tend to privilege. “Race” scholars can use this language to convey how in our work, we are beginning to consider how epistemologies are “lived out” in the behaviors and choices of people who see themselves as either “managing” learning and change or, alternatively, “working with learning and change” (Weil, 1998, p. 43). The notion of epistemologies of practice can render the distinction between theory and practice irrelevant by focusing our learning and being within and upon situations of action. For example, where Educational studies is concerned, its “implementation [does] not polarize [the journey toward disciplinary knowledge and the journey toward “racial” identity] as separate processes but opens a forum for deliberating how they might become elements of “integrated ongoing cycles of strategic learning” (Weil, 1998, p. 42). The epistemologies of practice approach involves exploration-in-action questions that are applicable to quantitative and qualitative, disciplinary-based and identity-based “race” research in educational studies. Such questions may ask: “What counts here as legitimate knowing, thinking, and deciding? What are the limitations and other characteristics of these processes of knowing, thinking, and deciding?” (Weil, 1998, p. 42).

The notion of epistemologies of practice questions the soundness of our action choices in relation to different dilemmas (Weil, 1998, p. 42), as it simultaneously notes the plurality of possibilities for both anything considered

as “epistemology” and “practice” while articulating that different contexts and situations most likely call for differing theories and actions. In fact, it is designed to invite scholars of marginalized groups as legitimate, co-equal partners in “race” research to voice their counter-narratives. It promotes the notion of collaborative learning and seeks to contemplate spaces safe for difference, for multiple “authorship,” and multiple subjectivities, where identity politics are no longer ignored or “managed out.” Instead, they are allowed to emerge, as sources of innovation and novel response to interaction with the environment, within mutually clarified parameters and anchored in shared values (Weil, 1998, p. 42-43).

Moreover, scholars of marginalized groups may identify with the way the “epistemologies of practice” approach promotes learning not as something people do as separate from their work or their lives; instead, it focuses on the complex ways in which learning, as both enabling and disabling, influences a system’s capacity to thrive in an ever-changing situation (Weil, 1998, p. 43). The epistemologies of practice approach may enable educational studies team members to examine the appropriateness of assumptions deriving from different paradigms of thought, and their influence on our choices of action and inquiry, our languages, and our metaphors (Weil, 1998, p. 43; See Figure 1) as we work through the millennial contradiction. Epistemologies of practice as a construct is based on a worldview that sees us as:

...Implicated and embedded in the realities we are creating, including through our rhetoric(s). It offers an alternative emergent worldview that shifts the emphasis from causes, effects, and linear change to seeing people as engaged, fallible “change agents” and organizations as living systems that are continuously learning and changing, coevolving through dynamic interactions within their environment (Weil, 1998, p. 43).

Furthermore, it is important to note that our point here is not that scholars from traditionally marginalized populations need to ascribe to the very norms

and values through which they are othered in order to gain legitimacy.

One need not don the cloak or tools of the oppressor in order to be valued. Rather, one can *both* work using existing tools *and* carve out space within, between, or around existing practices as called for by a given constellation of situation, context, and researcher. Similarly, while our emphasis here is on epistemologies, as this is often the site of contention and where there is pushback at the legitimacy of pluralities of perspectives, we understand that epistemological practices can also be expressed as in and through the ontogenic—the ever emergent is-ness of ontology (Massumi, 2002). Ontologies, social or otherwise, are inclusive of embodied ways of knowing and the foundation upon which epistemologies are built. Similar to Bakhtin’s (1982) discussion of polyphony, the continual unfolding of epistemologies of practice can also be understood to be epistemogenic in nature (Gershon, 2013; Gershon & Ben-Horin, 2014). Moreover, an epistemologies of practice emphasis, once engaged, opens the possibility for multi-methodological “critically reflexive action research” (CRAR) program of studies (Weil, 1998, p. 51; See Figure 2).

Methodological Means: Imagining Possibilities of the Seven Cyclical Processes of CRAR-2

One possibility for epistemologies of practice-centered methodological approach to research is what Hughes initiated and developed with the supportive critique of Gershon, as critically reflexive action research on “race” (CRAR-2). CRAR-2 is imagined as alternative inclusive methodological means that may be particularly useful for scholars of color and their collaborators (Figure 3) to launch research for rethinking the millennial contradiction. The signature, evidence-based seven cyclical processes borrowed from Weil (1998) and the specific imperative to focus upon addressing “race” related issues are the two main characteristics of CRAR-2 that separate it from other forms

action research, including Weil’s (1998) CRAR and collaborative action research.

We have adapted the work of Weil (1998) to translate her seven cyclical processes of CRAR into critically reflexive action research on “race” (CRAR-2). This adaptation provides a potentially useful tool for doing what Patricia Hill Collins (1990) once noted as *pivoting the center* of lived experience to address “race” without the social tendency to leap to centering gender, class, religion, etc., when the “race” issues becomes uncomfortable; and yet without avoiding the application of a “race” lens through which to view gender, class, religion, etc. as they may emerge as important intersections. As a manifestation of the link between Critical Race Studies, Critical Race Methodology and Weil’s (1998) initial work, CRAR-2 is imagined as (a) one possibility for critically rethinking the millennial contradiction in educational studies, and (b) one compatible methodological tool for applications of CRAR that can address explicitly, any “race” issues emerging from epistemologies of practice, including rethinking curriculum as “racialized” text (Pinar et al., 1995).

Figure 2: Seven Cyclical Processes of CRAR

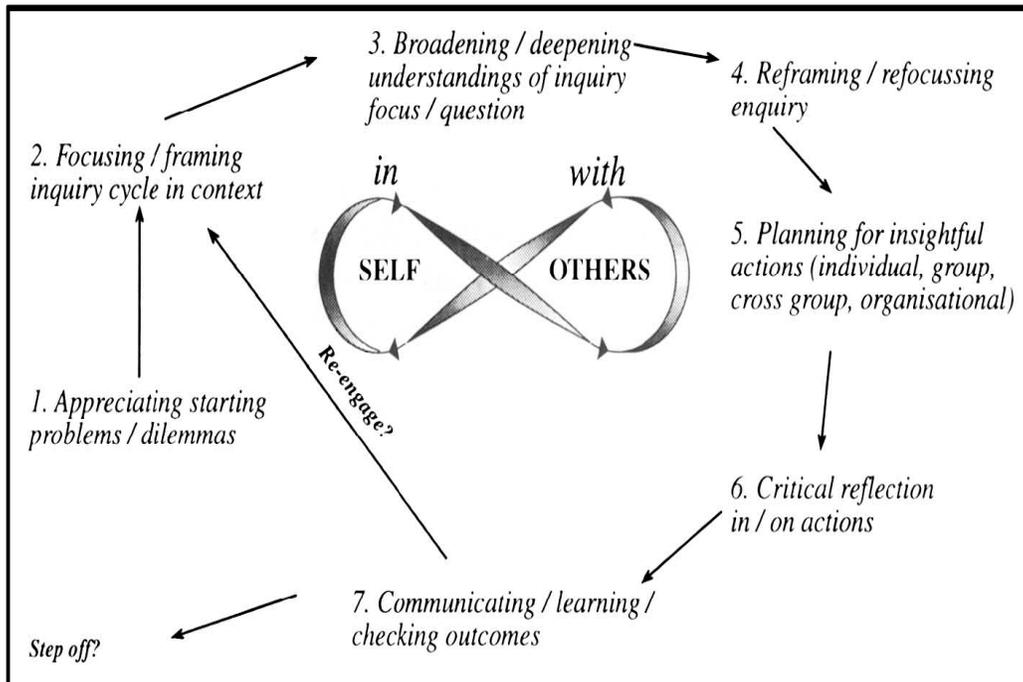
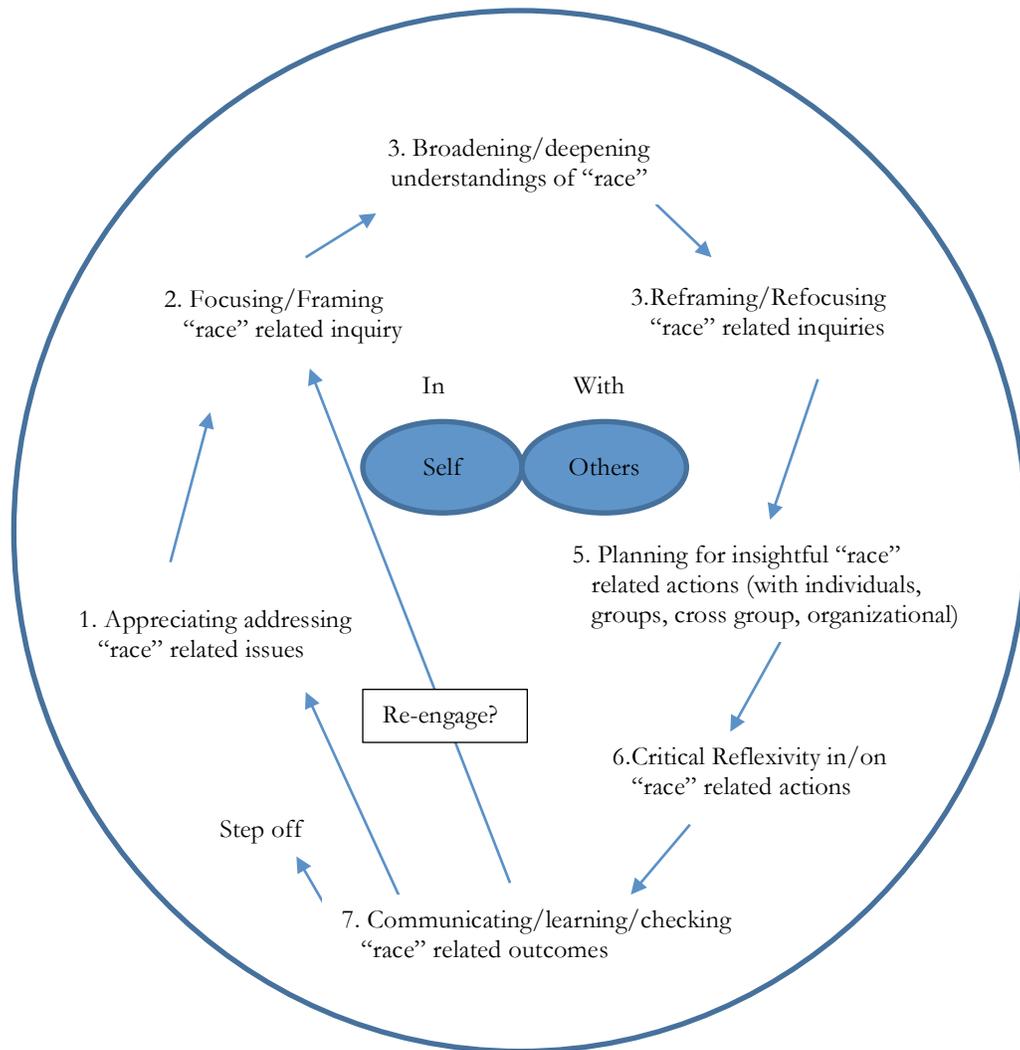


Figure 3: Seven Cyclical Processes of CRAR-2



1. Appreciating addressing “race” related problems/ dilemmas–on site and off-site

Unlike traditional action research’s focus upon identifying the problem(s) for linear problem-solving, CRAR-2 involves the appreciation of a range of possible starting dilemmas and questions approached through a particular CRAR-2 learning network process. For example educational studies teams via AESA, NAME or a related AERA-SIG, may be invited to identify a current “race” related "dilemma" on which they would like to work (thereby rendering the conference as an off-site CRAR-2 space). These are recorded on a flip chart. Each situation is clarified, and members vote for the two dilemmas with which they can currently identify, in terms of challenges in their own roles (Weil, 1998). Each team member’s home university becomes the center for on-site CRAR-2. In essence, off-site CRAR-2 provides an

opportunity to rehearse resonant action (Weil, 1998). Faculty may take more promising strategies for conveying “race” identity scholarship in the academy back to their home colleges and universities, each year that they continue learning from off-site CRAR-2 conference experiences. In another example, educators learning from off-site CRAR-2 encounters conferences dedicated to educational studies and action, may take promising strategies for addressing dilemmas of current educational studies back to their on-site space in the university classroom. The university classroom itself is rendered as an on-site CRAR-2 space for faculty members and yet, it can become an off-site CRAR-2 space for local educational community members; both hoping to inform and/or be informed by their crafts (Hughes, 2010).

2. Focusing / framing the “race” related inquiry cycle in context

Focusing/framing the inquiry cycle in context involves the time after the dilemma selection process, where one tries to understand the dilemmas within the circumstances and culture of a particular racialized educational setting. For example, educational studies faculty team members may question or open themselves to being questioned initially to clarify things that felt key in attuning to a “race” related dilemma or situation in their School or College of Education. Developing a new-normal mechanism for questioning through a cyclical and contextualized form that includes focusing/framing inquiry, can help team members prepare to convey and receive such key “felt dilemmas” of “race” and to transfer the most promising practices learned off-site.

3. Broadening/ deepening understandings of “race” related inquiry focus/ question

To begin to broaden and deepen understanding of a dilemma in systemic terms, Weil (1998) applies another layer of inquiry at this stage to support one in becoming more reflexive about what is emerging. Educational studies team members may be called upon to brief several people in the racialized on-site setting to attend to things that s/he sees as important here regarding evidence of how educational studies scholarship centering “race” identity vs. disciplinary knowledge should be valued. S/he may ask another team member present at the meeting to attend to issues of power. Another team member may be delegated to record key general issues throughout on an electronic white board. S/he may invite one person to listen (perhaps, as the head administrator). S/he may invite another to attend to her/his metaphors and language and to “blindnesses” and contradictions between her/his own espoused epistemologies of practice and what is being revealed in this “race” related situation of action. (This can be prompted by previous off-site CRAR-2 work in a group). In short, s/he wants to understand better how these persons and “race” related issues may be systemically restricting choices of action and inquiry with regard to annual reviews, promotion and tenure.

Weil (1998) suggests that the cycles of multilayered inquiry generate insight into systemic patterns and processes and hypotheses about enabling and disabling effects on group members. For example, some “race” affinity group members may recognize how they had absorbed traditional epistemologies that were incongruent with their values, roles/routines as formally defined without a mechanism for addressing emergent needs for infusing educational studies of “race” as crucial scholarship for the growth of the School/College of Education. In sum, they may begin to find that they have become “unreflexively” and inappropriately stuck in their traditional roles and routines with regard to “race.” They may find that work on future vision where “race” is concerned, too often either silenced or exaggerated faculty voices from the margins, and communication has largely been an exclusive one-way street concerned with getting the message across. A preferred CRAR-2 application is oriented toward processes of collaborative envisioning and participation to rethink critically the possibilities of racial identity and disciplinary knowledge (Weil, 1998).

4. Reframing/ refocusing “race” related inquiries

Weil (1998) suggests that to reflect from yet another angle, as part of the reframing and refocusing process is crucial. It can force one to become more reflexive about the limitations of her/his own constructions, and what contributed to these constructions within that particular context—and any systemic effects these constructions might have. This cog of the cycle is anticipated to be among the most challenging cogs to implement, because it involves critically examining “the systemic picture” for ways to begin understanding any emergent enabling and disabling patterns. Part of the challenge here is that several cycles of reframing/refocusing inquiry may be necessary, before the shift to insightful action can occur; all the “while under pressure to act.” For example, educational studies faculty working throughout this process must not privilege any single “race” related reality in order to begin either applying CRAR-2 in an on-site School/College of Education, or an off-site conference team role. Educational studies faculty are encouraged at this phase to begin making manifest some of the complex realities of racialization and exclusion off-site and then on-site. Through reframing/refocusing inquiry this way, an educational studies team member may begin to recognize and address important “race” related contradictions and disjunctions (Weil, 1998).

5. Planning for insightful “race” related actions

This involves a “private conversation” among colleagues who agree and disagree with the goal of locating disconfirming evidence and counter-narratives in order to consider what choices are being revealed for resonant

curricular action (Weil, 1998). Resonance here is an understanding that where consensus is a majority perspective, everything can resonate—ideas, feelings, objects, ecologies, personalities, and the like. This move creates a context in which counter-narratives at once can gain strength through their resonances but need not resonate with any other perspectives to be similarly felt by others.⁵ A private conversation is meant not to be an inversion of closed door racist, misogynist marginalizing networks, but is instead an opportunity to have one’s work critiqued by those who will not reject such work out of hand for its particular combination of content and context in on-site CRAR-2 and off-site CRAR-2 settings.

For discussions of “race” identity scholarship representing marginalized populations, this phase at best, opens possibilities to consider counter evidence, new challenges, and a new synthesis of ideas to check the desire to “pull back” to regurgitating words from the status quo, which can be an overwhelmingly tempting pull back (Weil, 1998). Insight from private conversations with critical peers, in itself, however, does not necessarily lead to more insightful action and choice. The real challenges lie in seeing and acting differently upon “race” related issues, and working with contradictions between the often clouded rhetoric of “race” identity vs. disciplinary knowledge, so problem and thereby ways to address it, can become clearer (Weil, 1998). For educational studies team members, private same-“race” off-site dialogues at annual conferences coupled with private intergroup dialogues at those annual conferences with trained moderators, are promising for planning insightful action. Such annual conferences (e.g., AESA, NAME and AERA) can become centers that serve as important off-site rehearsal space to empathize and work with one’s ambivalence and to see how we all potentially mute our own and others’ insight and wisdom on-site.

Weil (1998) contends that one’s entire view of the situation may be turned upside down at this stage.

At one level, off-site CRAR, which uses principles of critical learning theater and dialectical enquiry to create a complex improvisational environment, can feel quite detached from anything that learning network members might attempt in their own organizations. (p. 53)

Without it, contradictions between espoused and expressed values may

⁵ For example, where contemporary discussions of critical race feminisms can draw strength through their resonances with the works of Anna Julia Cooper, they need not attenuate with any specific voice or perspective in order to be either powerful in their narrative or given the dignity of their expression. Consider this point in contrast with discussions of expertise that undergird Tyler’s (1949) educational rationale and yet, in comparison with the central point of Kliebard’s (1975) critique that anyone can find an expert who agrees with one’s position.

intensify, thereby further disabling possibilities for learning, genuine communication, and inquiry. Cynicism may also increase without credible and thoughtful feedback and without planning for resonant, plausible on-site actions. Thereby, when a “race” –based issue of emerges in School/College of Education, rather than dismissing the problem as originally defined, the educational studies faculty can work with inter-epistemological and multi-methodological teams to facilitate planning for insightful actions (Weil, 1998). Questions that may emerge from the feedback at this stage include:

- How can I; as an educational studies faculty member, gain insight into “race” related issues and convey that insight to my colleagues and our students as it illuminates the racialized self-reinforcing nature of our scholarship?
- How can I; as an educational studies faculty member, model CRAR-2 in a way that promotes educational studies faculty members’ capacity to become more critically reflexive about our own “race” related scholarship?
- How can I; as an educational studies faculty member, build upon the responsibility for action with regard to “race” related scholarship issues, particularly where these issues emerge without reducing the experience into a “strategic planning exercise akin to another meaningless task with busy work” (Weil, 1998, 51-52)?

6. Critical reflection in/on “race” related actions

In this stage one can experiment with making explicit her/his own hypotheses about disabling patterns and competing epistemologies at play. For example, educational studies team members here, would need to rehearse off-site, ways of sustaining critical reflection in and on action within our own on-site settings. Teams may realize the importance of a stance as co-inquirer and co-learner in this situation, rather than all-knowing “change agent.” Although, there are likely to be initial concerns regarding trust and vulnerability for some team members, Weil (1998) suggests keeping one’s own “ear to the ground” in order to stimulate constructive risk-taking (Weil, 1998, 51-52).

7. Communicating/ learning/ checking “race” related outcomes

The process of communicating learning and checking outcomes is a stage to offer insight into how dominant epistemologies of practice were in fact restricting how educational studies teams use of their own differences within the team. This process also provides a platform for educational studies team members to share some of the ways in which they intend to use CRAR-2 processes to interrupt these “stucknesses” within their own courses. In our contemporary moment, this move also serves to underscore the deeply embedded racist structures that are reified and maintained through a measurable goals and objectives lens on education, a framing provided first by Franklin Bobbit, a father (white, male, upper class, Christian) of U.S.

education and an avowed eugenicist (see Winfield, 2007). Educational studies team members may envision a School/College of Education mission and/or vision that would have meaning and relevance in their own academic program environments, including possibilities for interweaving off-site and on-site CRAR-2 via inter-epistemological and multi-methodological teams. This stage involves communicating insights about collaborative inquiry generated in terms of the challenges and possibilities that any emergent narratives and counter-narratives engender. In Weil's example, "several...group members spoke at length about how they had realized their own complicity in some of their isolation in their organizational development roles and the more critically reflexive possibilities for action and enquiry that had been stimulated by Tessa's work dilemma" (Weil, 1998, p. 53). The seven (7) cyclical processes may help diverse teams to engage identity-centered and disciplinary knowledge-centered "race" discussions by representing more privileged and marginalized populations, to bring to the surface an "overabundance of reality and of systemic patterns that often remain un-discussable..." (Weil, 1998, p. 53). At the same time, Weil (1998) contends, "it is often the failure to recognize these, and to learn from the contradictions and disjunctions at play, that is often at the root of deep organizational 'stucknesses'" (p. 53).

Concluding Thoughts

We began this manuscript with a question, and provided evidence for a defensible response to it. Upon what epistemological grounds and through what methodological means might we engage a critical rethinking of the millennial contradiction? Educational studies work at the intersection of "race" identity, and disciplinary knowledge will require scholars willing to work as collaborative knowledge teams via off-site and on-site CRAR-2 to gain enough experiences to begin validating "race," thereby learning when to appropriately shift the center to address "race." It will require educational studies members (who are committed to studying evidence and counter-evidence of "race;" committed to maintaining the dignity of humanity and social justice; and understanding about the central role of "race" in society). It will require educational studies teams, who are committed to embracing an epistemologies of practice approach coupled with a subsequent fervor for critically reflexive action research on "race" to challenge dominant narratives

and counter-narratives, and to consider the potentiality of convergence. These are questions of awareness, attention, care, and dignity rather than a specific set of identities—for there is always tension between how one identifies and is identified by others that can operate in ways to invert the very practices we seek to enunciate leading to a similarly stultifying set of methodological parameters. In other words, this reason is less of a question about the identities of who can conduct research, as it is an articulation of the parameters under which that work can be and should be conducted from our purview.

Ultimately, critical “race” theory and methodology, coupled with an epistemologies of practice approach contributed to the development of CRAR-2 as a promising tool for educational studies teams to begin critically rethinking the millennial contradiction. This major point may be particularly important for scholars of marginalized groups to overcome the millennial trappings of the “race” game without inheriting an immutable identity vs. disciplinary knowledge debate standpoint. Furthermore, as we have occasionally interjected throughout this piece, it is important to note that our constructions of “subaltern” and “dominant” here is not necessarily racially bound. This statement is crucial, because elitism and dominance are questions of power that, while never *not* about “race,” do not excuse or overlook the possibility that members of non-dominant/subaltern groups can nonetheless engage in hegemonic practices, even over others within their same group.

In closing, we recognize that many people, even those who are oppressed by others, have privilege to be able to exist inside and outside of the academy. It is again important to underscore that because often greater within-group differences than between-group differences *how one is identified by others is not necessarily how they themselves identify*. Similarly, because positionalities are fluid, we would be wise to pay attention to ensure but not to the point of being antagonistic toward (a) in a position in power as a collaborator or (b) finding

comrades in common through an educational studies association en route to locating the off-site and on-site epistemological and methodological spaces for critically rethinking the millennial contradiction and thereby, rethinking curriculum as “racialized” text (Pinar et al., 1995).

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