

Research Methods/ Ethics

...ics have been a perennial concern of qualitative researchers. These concerns have intensified with the battles over human subjects regulations, the increased involvement with indigenous communities, the globalization of research practices, and the breakdown of barriers between researcher and subject. The original contributions to this volume highlight the topics that face contemporary qualitative researchers and those that will likely emerge in the near future. Written by many of the leading figures in the field, this book will help shape the ethical response of the field to the challenges presented by the contemporary research environment.

For orders and inquiries, please contact the publisher



**Left Coast
Press** inc.

1640 Walnut Creek, California
www.LCoastPress.com

Contributors

Marie Battiste
Arthur P. Bochner
Gaille S. Cannella
Julianne Cheek
Clifford G. Christians
Norman K. Denzin
Carolyn Ellis
Michelle Fine
Michael D. Giardina
Corrine Glesne
Sandy Grande
Yvonna S. Lincoln
Janice M. Morse
Ronald J. Pelias
Laurel Richardson
Thomas Schwandt
Eve Tuck

Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge

Denzin and Giardina



ISBN 978-1-59874-060-8



9 781598 740608

Cover design by Hannah Jennings

Edited by
Norman K. Denzin
and
Michael D. Giardina

Chapter 7

Inner Angles A Range of Ethical Responses to/with Indigenous and Decolonizing Theories

Eve Tuck

The Graduate Center, CUNY

In conversation with

Michelle Fine

The Graduate Center, CUNY

*It all started in Urbana-Champaign, 2006, or maybe
hundreds of years ago.*

For years, Eve Tuck and I have been working together, talking through our shared work on school drop-outs, how youth of color have been shredded by public education, converted into disposables by the economy, and criminalized even as they are denied access to meaningful public spaces. In the spring of 2006, Eve and I shared the keynote platform at the 2nd Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Speaking together, and separately, from the stage, we addressed questions of participatory methodology with youth, ethics, politics, and sovereignty.

The next day, Eve was pulled aside by a woman who wanted her to know that Eve's remarks on the implications of indigenous sovereignty on the praxes of participatory action research (PAR) were appreciated; however, clamping her hand onto Eve's arm she said, "I went home last night and looked up the word sovereignty after your talk. I didn't really find anything in the definition that I could apply to me, so I am going to instead carry with me the word autonomy." Eve says she let herself think for a moment and responded, "Sovereignty resonates with me in a way that autonomy doesn't; a dictionary might not be the best place to get at that resonance." The woman told her that she had looked in several different dictionaries. "Sovereignty feels different to me

than autonomy," Eve repeated. "Of course it would, *for you*," the woman said, and then offered another thanks and hurried away. Eve says of the rest of the story, "A few minutes later she touched my arm again, 'I didn't mean anything by that you know.' I let her know that I did."

Eve and I have talked then, and since, with friends and colleagues, about this incident and what it embodied. We've tried to think through critical and indigenous theory and ethics, trying to surface, analyze, and reimagine what happens politically, intellectually, emotionally, and in the body when indigenous knowledge, history, theory, and methods are tossed into the room. The naming of and calling for sovereignty, from the podium at a major conference on indigenous thought and qualitative methods, is enough to induce a linguistic "correction." We tried to understand this woman and this moment of "contact" as iconic; her desire to connect, and in so doing, to erase. We know that indigenous history and knowledge are not news; that intense social and psychic labors are at work, keeping the stories of blood, greed, and genocide silent, suppressed, or gated in the bodies of some. But we know, too, that these stories float through all of us, just beneath that unstable but ever-hegemonic story about U.S. history, prosperity, and progress, civilizing institutions, and democracy. An already disciplined and petrified conversation systematically annihilates the story(ies) that yearn/deserve to be told.

Eve has written this chapter to engage an analysis of the social dynamics unleashed when the official national amnesia is pierced by indigenous memory and knowledge. These dynamics are aged, living in the bodies of those who have survived and those who have been sacrificed; these dynamics also careen through the bodies of those who believe themselves unaffected. In the academy, social policy, and community life these dynamics obstruct most of us from knowing, seeing, researching, and speaking, and they keep some of us gated actively at the margins of social thought. These dynamics may perform what David Eng calls racial melancholia for white people, but/and they function as an ideological/intellectual stranglehold on the throats of those who dare to speak. That is, they have everything to do with social theory, method, and ethics.

This chapter is rooted in the deep particularities of history, colonized spaces, and minds, yet it also seeks to recognize a solidarity of structural violence in the United States and globally by the United States that cuts deep across time, place, and community. That is, the conversation opened (again) with this chapter begins with the recognition that some groups, some communities, and some institutions have long suffered from the same sword of state-sponsored exclusion and violence launched by the U.S. government in the name of democracy, accountability, citizenship, and nation building.

—Michelle Fine



This chapter is organized around four corners. Not the four opposing corners of a square, but a circle in quadrants, and in the center, an inner circle made by the corners of the perpendicular lines. Let's not mistake these angles as opposite angles of a square, but read them as the intimately bound corners of a circle—not too much travel between them, like standing on the four corners of the U.S. states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona that meet on the lands of Navajo and Ute nations.

Rather than a series of sequential recommendations, this chapter seeks to move—no, grapple—through the four corners, not as a progression, but as an assemblage, an accumulation of offerings. These inner angles are in balance, linked, not linear, and this chapter pauses in each of their territories: (1) the hegemonic voice-over of colonization; (2) that which is obscured by colonizers' guilt; (3) how indigenous and decolonizing theories might/already inform an epistemological shift; and (4) PAR praxes participatory action research praxes as praxes of self-determination. These inner angles represent a range of ethical responses to/with indigenous and decolonizing theories. They are not in a fixed order as it is only a single footstep, or a shift in weight between New Mexico and Arizona or New Mexico and Utah, all afforded by the hospitality of Ute and Dine people.

Much can be learned about popular ideology and commitments by looking at how the U.S. government has treated/treated

indigenous people. Sorting and resorting tribal nations onto parcels of land reservations reveals a fetishizing of the notion of private property. The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that broke Alaskan Natives into thirteen regional and approximately 220 village corporations reveals a worship of the corporate model and belief in the balancing power of the market.

In a chapter I wrote with Michelle Fine and Sarah Zeller-Berkman, "Do You Believe in Geneva? Methods and Ethics at the Global Local Nexus" (Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman, forthcoming), we wondered aloud how an overemphasis on a global audience (that is, the Human Rights Convention in Geneva) might undermine the desires, needs, and demands of the local and were moved by the comments of Aliou, a researcher from Cameroon in the project *Global Rights: Partners for Justice-Sponsored Amplifying Youth Voices*, "I don't know that I believe in Geneva" (Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman, forthcoming). This chapter, in many ways a coda on that chapter, a coda on our disbelief, tries to take up the challenge to "detach and dethink the notion of sovereignty from its connection to western understandings of power and relationships and base it on indigenous notions of power" (Grande, 2004, p. 53) by articulating the methodological and ethical dynamics of what happens when indigenous epistemologies are at the center of praxes of qualitative inquiry.

This chapter takes up theories and theorists who emphasize decolonization as a central project, not only for indigenous communities but also non-indigenous communities: for indigenous sovereignty to be taken seriously as a prerequisite to democracy, decolonization must be a common project on multiple social justice agendas. The rights of indigenous and disenfranchised people to claim a right to self-determination, complex personhood, and sovereignty have been erroneously cast as property rights, "even though notions of sovereignty and equality are personal rights" (G. H. Smith, 2000, p. 219).

Because decolonization is political and disruptive (L. T. Smith, 1999), those of us who are engaging in decolonizing theories often find ourselves, as Marker suggests of the indigenous perspective, "up against the wall" (2006, p. 6). However, as Alfred reminds us, "the time has come for people who are from someplace

Indian to take back the discourse on Indians" (1999, p. 143), and I add that it is time to take back the discourse on knowing. The inner angles of each of the corners that follow sort through the range of ethical responses that make up a disbelief in dominant beliefs of entitlement, power, research, and knowing.

Corner One

This corner critiques the hegemonic voice-over from the false perspectives of a colonization that is over, as distraction buffered by patriotism and blind nationalism, and as ignorant of an already ongoing conversation across indigenous spaces.

The hegemonic voice-over of indigenous experiences of colonization worships artificial timeness of social/cultural development. "(I)t presumes the cultural neutrality of science and technology, indigenous ecological understandings are dismissed as exotic, but irrelevant, distraction" (Marker, 2006, p. 2). All of this as if colonization could ever be over. Reducing the violences of first contacts to the birth pangs of a nation or new order contains them to a delineated time and place. Indeed, it justifies these violences by that very fixed moment in history: colonization that is over can popularly be forgiven as the sins of our fathers; colonization that is ongoing and under constant renovation and normalized as everyday practice is in no position to be forgiven but warred on. It is strikingly similar to the predicament of Mrs. Winchester, the widow of the inventor of the Winchester rifle, who, to keep the souls of those killed by her husband's invention from tormenting her, kept her mansion in San Jose, California, under 24/7 construction for thirty-eight years until her death. Her home, steeped in superstition, a maze of stairs and doors to nowhere, and windows without purpose, stands much like the contraptions of dominant infrastructure and rhetoric that distract and postpone full admission and reparation of colonization and occupation.

"Science," at the will of scientists who as Vine Deloria 1994 writes, "hold in great disdain all traditions except the one in which they have grown up and received rewards" (quoted in Marker, 2006, p. 8), has systematically worked similarly to bookend indig-

enous colonization: pathologizing and criminalizing those who haven't assimilated or who ask questions. Artificially bookending indigenous experiences falsely distills colonization as an event relegating contemporary Native poverty, illness, and depression as an "Indian problem." Actually, "the Indian problem" is not a problem of children and families but rather, first and foremost, a problem that has been consciously and historically produced by and through the systems of colonization: a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism" (Grande, 2004, p. 19). The question at heart: what could have ever been expected to happen from this except for this?

Further, the hegemonic voice overlubricates the distracting engines of patriotism and blind nationalism away from the U.S. export of globalized oppression.

Culture, underpinned as usual by faith, law, and revisionary history, has proven only too capable of doing what main force could not, which is to make the colonizer capable of sleeping at night or reaching across the dinner or communion table without recoiling from the sense of the blood of the "Other" on his hands. [Findlay, 2000, p. x]

This same hegemonic voice was at work when George W. Bush declared the war in Iraq over in the spring of 2003: to bookend something when it is so painfully untrue, a strong-arm-induced tipping point itself an act of aggression.

A critique of the hegemonic voice-over is threatening in the United States; as Sandy Grande notes, it is only recognized by the "whitestream" as an

inherent threat to the nation, poised to expose the great lies of U.S. democracy: that we are a nation of laws and not random power; that we are guided by reason and not faith; that we are governed by representation and not executive order; and finally, that we stand as a self-determined citizenry and not a kingdom of blood or aristocracy. [Grande, 2004, p. 32]

What exactly is voiced over? The question is, why not acknowledge indigenous sovereignty? What does indigenous sovereignty have to do with current unilateral decisions to occupy?

What keeps superpower nations from recognizing the sovereignty of other nations? Is it fear of retribution? Scarlet letters that spell out unpatriotic? A map of an empire that shrinks rather than spreads over time? A disillusionment with global development?

I contrast this fear by turning to indigenous representations of sovereignty. In a recent National Indian Education Association conference presentation, Roberta Tayah-Yazzie (2006) used an image of a sixteenth-century beaded treaty belt that features two black lines on a background of white to describe sovereignty as paths that flow peacefully in the same direction, but do not intersect. Indigenous visions of sovereignty can be interpreted by the historical and contemporary high participation of Native people in the U.S. military; the high regard with which Native veterans are received in their communities; the display of the U.S. flag flying alongside tribal emblems carried by color guards into opening circles, songs, and ceremony dances; anthems sung side by side; stars and stripes incorporated into the skins and cloths of traditional Native regalia—all of this to designate the discourse of sovereignty not as a separatist discourse, but a discourse of acknowledgment, a "restorative process" (Grande, 2004, p. 54). It is not unpatriotic to demand a reorienting of history and acknowledgment of sovereignty. But this, too, yields too much power to a discourse that seeks to silence dissent.



In a crowded session on schooling and dropping out that the First Alaskans' Institute is facilitating during their Elders and Youth Conference, Alaska Native young people and Elders are talking about what school feels like. Several presentations by young adult college students illustrate the pitfalls of being a young person in rural Alaska and how they were admirably able to overcome them. Stories of neglect, abuse, self-hatred, and loss, both in and out of school are swapped and the room feels full with the stories that number too many to be just a fluke. In this fullness, an Elder stands, telling us that he remembers to this day the hatred that his last

teacher had for him—he speaks as though the teacher still hates him, though he left school before graduating over sixty years ago. He addresses the young people there, “Maybe this is what it feels like for you? Can you tell me if you feel this hate?” We are in a contemplative quiet, breathing before one of the youth responds, willing to go wherever this question will take us, knowing that we had come to hear this question, to ask this question, to let this question ring in our ears, and to listen to what this question stirs up in the youth.

Like a party that has accidentally opened on a place of healing, a new white teacher in the bush takes up the pause: “But what am I supposed to do when I can’t even get them to pick up their pencils?”



And this is a violence, too. A violence, but also evidence of an important attempt at contact; no more violent than those in the room who gawk but do not contribute, those who take but do not replenish, those who deny their solidarity.

The element of the hegemonic voice-over that affords both this discussion and the ignorance toward already ongoing conversations is entitlement, the felt impetus to ask about the pencils. The hegemonic voice-over blankets but cannot undermine the discourses, the blankets that we are building. I don’t mean to dismiss or demonize the teacher who worries about the pencils. I don’t mean to discourage her from bringing her whole self to her students in rural Alaska. But I would ask her to ask herself where her ears were—to ask herself what was happening in that room, our room, that compelled her to speak at that moment. How did it feel like the appropriate moment to assert that we were a they to her?

There is a legacy of polyvocal conversation about how indigenous people would like to be read and listened to, how we would like to be recognized, how we would like to research ourselves, educate our children, and maintain and rebuild our subsistence lifestyles. Indigenous people are already self-determined, and yet

at the same time live the reality of the ditch that Fannie Lou Hamer spoke of, “What you don’t understand is that as long as you stand with your feet on my neck, you got to stand in a ditch, too. But if you move, I’m coming out. I want to get us both out of the ditch” (as quoted by Fine, 2006, p. 12). The hegemonic voice-over that claims “You got the casinos, what more do you want?” “They can’t be raised in their homes” “Kill the native, save the man” “Maybe you were Native, but you’re not anymore!” “You’re on the verge of extinction” “I’m just a dumb Native,” is keeping us all in the ditch (Grande, 2004; Marker, 2006).

Corner Two

In this section, I discuss that which is cloaked, overshadowed by colonizer’s guilt—the acknowledgment of oppression and the simultaneous retreat from responsibility for change.



And then a well-meaning member of the mostly white¹ audience asks, “What can I possibly do?”

This is the windexed window that discussions hosted by indigenous theorists for academic audiences at national and local conferences, brown bag lunches, community forums, and other presentations around decolonizing projects often careen into. It has happened to me and has happened in almost every Q & A discussion with other indigenous scholars I can recall. There is a moment and a string of moments when members of the audience begin to feel implicated, personally responsible for the ongoing colonization of indigenous peoples. And so one person stands and says, “What can I possibly do?” And that response, although frustrating (because it echoes of asking about the pencils, because it is so quick to get that big guilt off its back, to shift from being under the eye of scrutiny) is understandable only if because it is so typical. Understandable if the audience misunderstands/takes the indigenous project as swapping one agenda for another, as if merely sliding a new checklist beneath the academy’s waiting pen: “A

new site to be eyed/I-ed" (Fines, 2006, personal communication).

Recently, while preparing for a conference presentation, two young women of color who work with me as researchers, worried aloud how to respond to questions during the Q & A session that might be ageist, racist, and misogynist. Already having had a taste of others' patronizing surprise that they might be able to discuss their own work with sophistication and credibility, and in an academic tongue at that, my coresearchers anticipated that folks' first remarks often are dressed up as heralds, but betray the questioner's assumptions about what young women of color are and are not capable of. Not wanting to betray their own disgust with eye rolling and an undignified reply, we devised a simple phrase to disengage and refocus the discussion, "That's not what we're talking about here."

I'm locating that same courage to say, "That's not what I'm talking about," when confronted by the question, "What can I possibly do?" because this question, steeped in the privilege of white ideology, reeking of false generosity, asks me to do the work of the question poser. An element of white privilege is to reduce someone's theoretical work to a honey-do list for white people. Or perhaps a more effective response would be, "This is not the time for that discussion," because the time would be when we are both prepared to speak to one another in ways that are mutually beneficial, where I am not expected to reveal more of myself than you for your learning, where I will not take on more of the residue of the conversation than you will when we part, when we speak with equal thoughtfulness, and we both feel that enough is at stake to let our talking together have resonance and meaning in our work and lives.

Gloria Anzaldúa wrote a letter to Third World women writers in the spring of 1980, a letter that has been very important and educational to me. Because it continues to be so personally resonant, I have shared it in many different circles and circumstances to disrupt the silence that secures white privilege:

The Third World woman revolts: *We revoke, we erase your white male imprint. When you come knocking on our doors with your rubber stamps to brand our faces with DUMB, HYSTERICAL, PASSIVE PUTA, PERVERT, when come with your branding irons to burn MY*

PROPERTY on our buttocks, we will vomit the guilt, self-denial and race-hatred you have force fed into us right back into your mouth. We are done being cushions for your projected fears. We are tired of becoming your sacrificial lambs and scapegoats. [Anzaldúa, 2002, 167; italics in the original]

This letter, in my experiences, evokes responses of alarm, indignation, and distress in white women and white men. "I didn't know." "I didn't mean it." "I don't know how to stop it." "What can I possibly do?" These questions freeze, petrify. These responses of white guilt and colonizers' guilt distract from what a real/an ethical conversation about ongoing colonization and ongoing decolonization requires: preparedness, listening, reflection, and reparation.

Preparedness involves an intimate epistemological shift, thoughtfulness, and anticipation; listening; humility; and respect. Reflection, an attention that circles back and forward. Reparation requires coming clean, coming out, investing in infrastructure, honoring sovereignty, *unforgetting*. *Unforgetting* can happen within an epistemological frame that rejects individualism, and so doing, occupation.

This epistemological shift might be described as one in which, as scholar Graham Smith (2000) writes of Maori culture, "Individuals do not hold knowledge for themselves they hold it for the benefit of the whole group" (p. 218). The Aleut/Unangax approach to knowing is an approach of *praxis*: learn and do, think and be, respect and be, all are comprised in knowing our family, our history, our land, sea, nature, our subsistence-sustenance, our language-definition. It is a praxis of IXin achigalix angagigummin anuxtanatxin aṣsaasaduukuṣtin²/always learning and maintaining a balance (Unangam tunuu, eastern dialect).

There is an ugly underbelly to what I am suggesting, an epistemological shift in the footsteps of indigenous theory. It is very important to consider these matters with a complex and critical eye and voice. I intentionally write of footsteps, both to attend to and reprove that romanticized vision of the Indian guide, that noble savage leading the white folks to the clearing, the earth and brook that will make real again the sterility of modernity (V. Deloria, 1970). This is a new old kind of footsteps, footsteps that

are *kadalliġin maqaxtakan txichin aguqangin*/the way of our beginning, our ancestors (Ungam tunuu, eastern dialect).

The appropriation of indigenous knowledge, images, and meanings has been long accepted among the “whitestream” of the United States—from colonial protests against England such as the Boston Tea Party; to the literary misrepresentations for an audience that cares little about such minor matters as cultural and historical accuracy, the relationships of the authors to the tribes they do or do not represent, or sacred materials; to the outright invention of the Indian and his symbols of the New Age movement—that which is indigenous in the United States is up for grabs to be stretched and strangled, divvied up and burned, decentered, and possessed (P. Deloria, 1998).

Sherman Alexie has written, “In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written, all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts” (1996, p. 95). Indeed, indigenous materials “become fair game to anyone seeking to pilfer, copy, and re-create such goods and practices, reaping considerable profits in a capitalist marketplace that craves the exotic and authentic” (Grande, 2004, p. 111). This tradition of pilfering is combined with what Daes (2000) calls “a fundamental weapon used by most colonizers against colonized peoples,” which serves “to isolate the colonized from all outside sources of information and knowledge and then to bombard them with propaganda carefully aimed at convincing them that they are backward, ignorant, weak, insignificant, and very very fortunate to have been colonized!” (p. 7). Marie Battiste (2000) has called this *cognitive imperialism*.

Without careful treading while drawing comparisons across indigenous and non-indigenous spaces, we can inadvertently smooth over the tangled relationships of exploitation and pain that indigenous peoples and nations have with colonizing peoples and nations and their collaborators.

Being Indigenous, the Indigena are not metaphors. Those of us who are Indigenous have experienced the everyday realities of continued colonization which has shaped the ways in which we think of ourselves, one another and the ‘whitestream’ and the ways in which we write, speak, and come to research. Those of us who are

not Indigenous have been profoundly shaped by our witnessing of colonization, by our roles as accomplices, abettors, exploiters, romanticizers, pacifiers, assimilators, inculcators, forgetters, and democratizers. [Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman, forthcoming]

Still, without making connections between indigenous experiences and the experiences of politically disenfranchised non-indigenous experiences in the United States, we quite simply let the power elite get away with far too much. Further, without lifting up and connecting the instances and legacies of domination that take place *across* indigenous and non-indigenous spaces, we run the risk of undermining or submerging crucial structural analyses without which individuals and communities are often pathologized as lazy, ignorant, soulless, savage, pathetic, uninspired, unmotivated, and destined for failure.

Corner Three

With all of this as a context, the question I am going to address in corner three is “How might indigenous and decolonizing theories inform a crucial epistemological shift?” I begin with three calls toward revisioning made by indigenous theorists for qualitative researchers. The first is a call to both forge new spaces of inquiry and to interrupt/intervene on existing theory (Battiste, 2000; V. Deloria, 1988; Grande, 2004; G. Smith, 2000; L. T. Smith, 1999; Tuck, forthcoming). The second is a call to reframe democracy, to resist the prevailing undefined version of democracy that has historically and even now been employed in the United States as a cover for domination, occupation, and assimilation (Grande, 2004; L. T. Smith, 1999; Tuck, forthcoming). This is a challenge for critical theorists, critical pedagogues, and participatory action researchers: there can not be democracy without indigenous sovereignty.

Finally, indigenous theorists encourage us to reclaim spaces and narratives that have been used against us. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2005) work teaches us that, “Research, like schooling, once the tool for colonization and oppression is very gradually coming to be seen as a potential means to reclaim languages, histories and knowledge, to find solutions to the negative impacts of

colonialism and to give voice to an alternative way of knowing and of being" (p. 10). What Smith has called "researching back"—a decolonizing project of recovery, knowing, analysis, and struggle—can also be practiced as what I have called *theorizing back*—a practice of close description and analysis of education and social policy through theory with urban, Native, and disenfranchised youth (L. Smith, 1999; Tuck, forthcoming; Tuck and the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire, forthcoming).

◇◇◇◇◇

I am Navajo. But I am a researcher. What has happened to me?

—Tim Begaye, 2006

In the remainder of this section, I will discuss the ongoingness of a conversation, that conversation that has been voiced over, obscured by colonizers' guilt, but is always already ongoing. As long as there has been colonization, there has been decolonization, territorialization, deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Further, I will describe how indigenous experiences as the research subject have crafted indigenous research methodologies and a decolonizing ethic(s).

My grandmother, Masura, had a beautiful home, no matter where. Clean and bright and clean. One part of the clean was that her home was filled with lovely things from her travels all over the world—her house was always filled with guests, who enjoyed her good food and laughter, and they were invited to take up space there, to admire her collections with both their eyes and hands, and there was no dust, no cobwebs, every possible path and route cleared and welcoming to her guests. The other part of the clean, the part I understand better now, was that her childhood home on St. Paul of the Pribilof Islands on the Aleutian Chain could be split open at the whim of the white government officials that "kept order" on the island for a white-glove inspection. A trace of dirt brought punishment. These are only two of the many parts of the clean.

Research has been waged on indigenous communities in the

United States, much of it not dissimilar from white-glove inspection. Stories of teeth counting, rib counting, head measuring, blood drawn, bones dug up, medical treatment withheld, erroneous or fabricated ethnography, unsanctioned camera lenses, out-and-out lies, empty promises, cover ups, betrayals; these are the stories of our kitchen tables. Graham Smith (2000) writes, "The distrust of academics, research, and institutions by indigenous peoples is well founded and relates to a history of hurt, humiliation, and exploitation that has been perpetrated by some institutions and academics, with disastrous outcomes for some people" (p. 213).

Decolonizing theory and research methodologies offer analyses. Better yet, they offer a framework of ethical responses to forced removal, dispossession, invisibility, and dual status nature of disenfranchised people within systems of domination, especially useful in the United States as in other governments in which colonization has been the primary relationship to its people.

As indigenous researchers, the very nexus spun by our experiences and the experiences of our relatives and ancestors as the object/subject of the outside researcher and our own coming to a counterhegemonic approach to research necessitates a departed ethic. "This, I think, is one of the ironies of indigenous struggle: it is the actual process of struggle that makes us strong and committed and that helps us to consolidate why we are struggling. That is, struggle constantly forces us to identify and review what we stand for and what we stand against" (G. Smith, 2000, p. 210). It is through this struggled ethic that indigenous people have long engaged in rehistoricizing the future. Thus,

Decolonizing research is not simply then about challenging or making refinements to qualitative research. It is much a broader but still purposeful agenda for transforming the institutions of research, the deep underlying structures and taken for granted ways of organizing, conducting and disseminating research and knowledge. [L. T. Smith, 2005, p. 6]

There/here is an explicit need to construct a critique of colonizing, imperialist, racist, classist social structures across indigenous and non-indigenous spaces without zero-summing indigenous and non-indigenous experiences. Across the waters of the Bering Sea or the waters that broke the levees in New Orleans, across the sands of

the Southwest or Iraq, across the snows, across the winds, across the blood and bones, this linked analysis is central to any work toward systematic social justice, sovereignty, and freedom.

I offer here four ongoing analyses—of forced removal, dispossession, invisibility, and dual status—cultivated in the work of indigenous scholars. I do so by offering an example/engagement with an element of my own research that details the patterns of domination that have encroached on indigenous communities and urban youth of color and urban poor youth, focusing on those who have been implicitly and explicitly pushed out from school. These groups, of course, are not mutually exclusive. Across the globe and across the United States, from New York to, and especially in, urban Alaska, Native youth are pushed out from schools at alarming rates, denied access to the primary route to individual and community sustainability and self-reliance.

The data I use here have come from my work with CREDD, the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire, a PAR collective I cofounded with a group of New York City youth aged sixteen–twenty-two. In 2006, my coresearchers and I mounted a comprehensive study, *The Gateways and Getaways Project*, that interrogates the abuse of the GED as a cover for removing unwanted students in New York City public high schools.

In urban cities across the United States, indigenous youth, youth of color, working-class and poor youth, queer youth, homeless youth, and other disenfranchised youth know implicitly and explicitly that their schools have not been intended for them and that they are not welcome. Often, this is translated to us in the field of education but also popular audiences as a “drop-out problem.” In New York City, for instance, figures of those who do not graduate in four years range between 30 and 70%, a range so huge it’s almost not useful, except to say that 30% is too high anyway, and this percentage disproportionately includes indigenous youth, youth of color, and poor youth. CREDD’s work aligns itself with a newer legacy of describing these “drop-out” youth rather as those pushed out of schools, shifting the gaze from youth’s bodies onto the school policies and practices that implicitly and explicitly push students out.

The first critique is a critique against forced removal: implicit and explicit push-out practices are bound to notions of forced removal. Further, New York City youth of color and poor youth are often forced to attend schools outside of their communities, and, being at the whim of ever-changing school policies, might attend a different school each school year. Some youth in our research have reported changing schools more than six times before being pushed out. Having to travel for up to two hours to attend schools in wealthier communities that see them as infiltrators discourages these youth from ever taking root in these schools.

A second critique aims itself against the dispossession of youth of color and poor youth and their families and communities in regard to the curriculum and instruction they receive. Out of local hands, government-mandated testing–based curricula are most severely imposed on poor schools, reducing learning and teaching to test preparation, disgruntling both students and educators. Part of a nationwide trend toward mandatory state exit exams, in New York State, as of 2001, all students are required to pass five state Regents’ exams in addition to their coursework to graduate.

These exams, which in most years are subject to scandals because of racist and misogynist questions, dominate the classroom experience, and youth are encouraged by teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors to pursue a GED if these power players determine that they will not pass these exams. This is compounded by young people’s perceptions that by pursuing a GED they are swapping one series of tests for another, without all the hassle of sitting in a classroom where the teacher has little hope for them and resents their being there to drag down test scores, and where there aren’t enough seats for them anyway. Some of the youth who have participated in our study report that they first had a sense that they were not cut out for school as early as the fifth grade, and that a teacher or administrator had suggested that they attain a GED rather than a high school diploma as early as the seventh grade, two years before they ever set foot in a high school. This is a serious violation of students’ rights to attend public high school until the age of twenty-one in New York State.

A third critique interrogates the invisibility of pushed-out

youth. As I have described earlier, the ambiguity with which student completion rates are reported, along with the fact that many students report being pushed out between ninth and tenth grade with the anticipation that they would not pass the tests three years later and that this issue has been constructed as a drop-out problem, has made this population of students invisible, uncounted, and pathologized as lazy, crazy, unteachable troublemakers.

A quality of this invisibility is that youth take the blame, both in the media and in their own imaginations of themselves, for what, by uncloaking this silence and invisibility, would be better described as a systematic problem. This silence guarantees those who benefit by denying youth of color and poor youth their rightly access to free quality schooling freedom from worrying that these youth will ever appreciate their critical mass and demand reparation.

Finally, a fourth critique offers insight into the dual status nature of pushed-out youth: both bound up in schooling but ousted, self-blaming yet powerful, these youth have a wealth of wisdom on the institutions that have shut them out. Michelle Fine writes, "Critical perspectives on social institutions are often best obtained from exiles, that is, persons who leave those institutions. This is perhaps why exiles' views are frequently disparaged as deviant and in some cases, conspicuously silenced" (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983, p. 257). Taking up this claim, I have elsewhere theorized the experiences of pushed-out urban youth as the experiences of *present exiles*—those who are both not there but there, rejected but resisting, choked but speaking (Tuck, forthcoming).

There is no other body of theory that can better address the experiences of forced removal, dispossession, invisibility, and the dual status of present exiles than indigenous and decolonizing theory.

Corner Four

In this fourth corner, I will discuss PAR as a praxis of self-determination, a key ingredient toward praxes of (indigenous) sovereignty. This corner, the seedling of the four, has hopes for continued and increased mutually beneficial, ethical collaboration

between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers, and a deeper acknowledgment of what might be learned and achieved within the footsteps of indigenous theory. Further, I offer to and from my indigenous colleagues, the radical possibilities of PAR spaces as spaces in which sovereignty can be recognized, practiced, theorized, and cultivated. The following list, adapted from a prior list (Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman, forthcoming), pulls material from across conversations of indigenous theorists to describe what sovereignty within praxes of inquiry might look like, not only for indigenous participants but also, without zero summing, other disenfranchised participants.

Sovereignty as a prerequisite to democracy involves the cease and desist of Eurocentric, colonizing power formations. This includes the rights to:

- resist or reject Eurocentric theory (Battiste, 2000)
- resist or reject versions of ourselves that are fantasies of the power elite (Miheuah, 1998)
- resist or reject cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000)
- explore epistemological differences (Marker, 2006)
- reclaim that which has been stolen from us (Marker, 2006)
- question democratic models of one person, one vote, and majority rule, or the Westminster model of democracy, which reifies the goals of dominant groups and squashes the rights of those in numeric minority (G. Smith, 2000)

Sovereignty as a prerequisite to democracy also calls for us to mind what is sacred. This includes the rights to:

- keep what is sacred sacred, and to make/mark new spaces and knowledges as sacred
- choose what is and what is not on the table for documentation
- seek the blessings or permission of our own communities of peers and elders to reveal significant information

Finally, sovereignty as a prerequisite to democracy involves what Avery Gordon (1997) has called the right to complex personhood, including the rights to:

- work and learn and exist in wholeness and to thrive in our relations with other peoples (Grande, 2004, p. 171)
- be the sources of our own healing and renewal (Daes, 2000, p. 5)
- work, learn, and exist in ways that are proactive, not only reactive
- resist or reject propaganda carefully aimed at convincing us that we are backward, ignorant, weak, insignificant (Daes, 2000, p. 7)
- make together a research community that “provides stable institutions and policies, fair and effective processes of dispute resolution, effective separation of politics from business management, a competent bureaucracy, and cultural match (Grande, 2004, p. 54)

Contrasting what might be understood as a methodology and ethic of assimilation to a methodology and ethic that honors indigenous sovereignty, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) writes,

The desires for “pure” uncontaminated and simple definitions of the native by the settler is often a desire to continue to know and define the Other whereas the desires by the native to be self-defining and self naming can be read as desires to be free, to escape definition, to be complicated, to develop and changes and be regarded as fully human. In between such desires however are multiple and shifting identities and hybridities with much more nuanced positions about what constitutes native identities, native communities and native knowledge in the anti/post colonial times. [p. 3]

In my experiences with the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire and other participatory research spaces, the approach afforded through PAR can initiate/encourage sites of self-definition and self-determination, nuanced and multiplied, and like the image of the treaty belt, made of many paths that do not choke one another.

Rather than a fixed methodology, PAR is a politic, an epistemology (Fine & Torre, 2004, 2006; Torre & Fine, 2003, 2006; Tuck, forthcoming; Tuck and the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire, forthcoming). Elsewhere, my coresearchers and I have written about PAR as including the

following characteristics which differentiate it from other methodologies and approaches: the design is collaboratively negotiated and co-constructed; research questions are co-constructed; there is transparency on all matters of the research, from administrative details like institutional review board approval to the budget to the theory and reasoning behind practice; analysis is co-constructed; research products are collaboratively crafted (Tuck, forthcoming; Tuck and the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire, forthcoming).

Concerning these elements, PAR spaces are definitionally and intentionally self-determined spaces. PAR demands that researchers untangle otherwise jumbled ethics, make transparent otherwise inaccessible practice, and speak what is otherwise silenced. Further, for these reasons, I contend that PAR collectives are prime sites to explore what it might mean to praxis sovereignty. The experience of struggle and possibility that is inherent to working out how to create within a working space that which has been systematically denied to us, the power of arrival of it, and the long-lasting body and spirit memory that is taken away from a PAR collective can be revisited and rearticulated as part of an otherwise unacknowledged legacy of indigenous struggles for sovereignty worldwide.

I close this corner with an invitation to indigenous researchers working across many sites to consider how participatory action research that takes sovereignty as a prerequisite to democracy seriously might open up new possibilities for our theoretical work and for our sovereign approaches to education, subsistence, wellness, and knowledge in our communities, both for our ancestors and Aniqdun ngiin aqaagan agnangin qulingjin akuꜛ gumalgaku/ here (Unangam tunuu, eastern dialect).

Intimately Bound Corners of a Circle

The inner angles of our praxes as researchers, writers, and fighters for social justice take up space and negotiate each of the four corners I have described here—the hegemonic voice-over; that

which is blanketed by colonizers' guilt; that necessary epistemological shift and ever reshift; possibilities for sovereignty and self-determination—and beyond those territories to corners forgotten and corners now forming. The make and magnetism of these arriving corners will depend on our ongoing ethical responses to colonization and occupation and to the significance we attribute to preparedness, listening, reflection, and reparation in our work and everyday lives.

Notes

1. A note on whiteness: I contend that it is most useful to talk about whiteness as those experiences that are fixed to a white ideology; it is an ideology that is self-serving, self-supremacist, self-norming, but not self-reflective. When I speak and write of whiteness, this is what I think I mean. Ideology is malleable, it can be informed and reformed, and there is much possibility in this quality. But it is not only about ideology, it is about skin, too: as a white-skinned Aleut woman, I benefit by and negotiate white privilege daily, although I operate within a different ideology.
2. All Unangan tunuu translations by Moses L. Dirks and Illidor Philemonoff in "The Right Way to Live as an Unanga&," by Ada Michael Lestenkoff, distributed by the Unangan Elders Academy, the Association of Unangan Educations, and the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association, Inc.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Michelle Fine, Sarah Zeller-Berkman, The Aleut Foundation and Tara Bourdukofsky, Jovanne Allen, Alexis Morales, Maria Bacha, Jodi-Ann Gayle, Sarah Quinter, Jamila Thompson, Melody Tuck, Caitlin Cahill, Brett Stoudt, Maria Torre, and Algie Frisbey.

References

- Alexis, S. (1996). How to write the great American Indian novel. In *The summer of black widows* (pp. 94–95). Brooklyn, NY: Hanging Loose Press.
- Alfred, T. (1999). *Peace, power, righteousness: An indigenous manifesto*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (2002). Speaking in tongues: A letter to 3rd World women writers. In C. Moraga & G. Anzaldúa (Eds.), *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color* (pp. 165–180). Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press.
- Battiste, M. (2000). Introduction: Unfolding the lessons of colonization. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voices and vision* (pp. xvi–xxx). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Begaye, T. (2006). Complicating decolonizing research, a grounding conversation. Paper presented at the 2nd Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, Urbana, Illinois, May 3–5.
- Daes, E. I. (2000). Prologue: *The experience of colonization around the world*. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voices and vision* (pp. 3–8). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deloria, P. J. (1998). *Playing Indian*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Deloria, V., Jr. (1970). *We talk, you listen: New tribes, new turf*. New York: Macmillan.
- Deloria, V., Jr. (1988). *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Deloria, V., Jr. (1994). *God is red: A native view of religion*. Golden, CO: North American Press.
- Findlay, L. M. (2000). Foreword. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voices and vision* (pp. 1–2). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Fine, M. (2006). Repertoires of privatization: Critically theorizing the gating of public education. Paper presented at the 105th American Anthropological Association Conference, San Jose, California, November 15–19.
- Fine, M., & Rosenberg, P. (1983). Dropping out of high school: The ideology of school and work. *Journal of Education*, 165(3), 257.
- Fine, M., & Torre, M. E. (2004). Re-membering exclusions: Participatory action research in public institutions. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1(1), 15–37.

- Fine, M., & Torre, M. E. (2006). Intimate details: Participatory action research in prison. *Action Research*, 4(3), 253–269.
- Fine, M., Tuck, E., & Zeller-Berkman, S. (Forthcoming). Do you believe in Geneva? Methods and ethics and the global local nexus. In N. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook on critical and indigenous methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gordon, A. (1997). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Grande, S. (2004). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Marker, M. (2006). After the Makah whalehunt: Indigenous knowledge and limits to multicultural discourse. *Urban Education*, 41(5), 482–505.
- Mihesuah, D. (1998). Introduction to *Natives and academics: Researching and writing about American Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Smith, G. H. (2000). Protecting and respecting indigenous knowledge. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voices and vision* (pp. 209–224). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Smith, L. T. (2005). *On tricky grounds: Researching the native in an age of uncertainty*. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. (pp. 85–107). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Tayah-Yazzie, R. (2006). Using historical information to create contemporary understanding of the Navajo Nation sovereignty in the Education Act of 2005. Paper presented at the 37th annual National Indian Education Association Conference, Anchorage, Alaska, October 19–22.
- Torre, M. E., & Fine, M. (2003). Youth researchers critically reframe questions of educational justice. *Evaluation Exchange*, 9(2), 6, 22.
- Torre, M. E., & Fine, M. (2006). Researching and resisting: Democratic policy research by and for youth. In S. Ginwright, J. Cammarota, & P. Noguera (Eds.), *Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change: New democratic possibilities for policy and practice for America's youth* (pp. 269–285). New York: Routledge.
- Tuck, E. (Forthcoming). Trajectories for theory in the rhizome of researching back. In J. Anyon (Ed.), *Critical social theory and research in urban education* (in preparation).
- Tuck, E., and the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire (Forthcoming). PAR praxes for now and future change. In J. Cammarota & M. Fine (Eds.), *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion*. New York: Routledge.

Chapter 8

Research as Solidarity

Corrine Glesne
Independent Scholar

Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person and learns from the other. I have a lot to learn from other people.

—Galeano, 1999

Oaxaca, Mexico, 2006

I was told to hold the candle with both hands at eye level. Nine more candles flickered on the altar. The *curandera*, the healer, was behind me, an unembodied voice that said, “The flames are moving, the soul is here. Whom have you called?”

“My brother,” I answered.

“He is here. What do you want to tell him?” she continued. “Tell him that...”

She interrupted, “You tell him. I am leaving the room so you can talk.”

Tears streamed down my face as I held a conversation of sorts with my brother who had died over twenty years ago. At the point when I felt peace, the *curandera* returned and filled my hands with smoke from incense of copal and motioned for me to wash it over my head, neck, and shoulders, pushing what remained toward my feet.

“This life,” she said, “is but a dream. When we grow up, we know this. We know we dream the dream.”