

## *Grounded and Indigenous Theories and the Politics of Pragmatism\**

---

**Norman K. Denzin, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign***

Grounded theory (GT): the writing is direct, and immediate, subversive, no big words. To wit: The grounded theorist thinks abstractly, critically, flexibly ... Theory is the basis for social action. (Strauss and Corbin 1998:7, 9–11)

The special emphasis is on how to develop theory through qualitative analysis, through codes, memos, sequences, theoretical sampling, comparative analysis, and diagrams (Strauss 1987:iii).

I call here for a dialog between grounded, critical, pragmatic, and indigenous theories of social structure. I seek a form of sociological theorizing and practice that advances the goals of justice and equity. I locate my arguments in a decolonizing, post-colonial, performance space that draws inspiration from the just ended Decade of Indigenous Peoples (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). I begin with GT, arguably the most influential model of theory construction used by qualitative researchers in the social sciences today (Charmaz 2005).

Who could disagree with the aforementioned descriptions of grounded theory (GT)? And subversive: there is no grand or middle or formal theory here, no formal propositions, no testable hypotheses, no link to an existing theory. No wonder it is so popular. It is all grounded. It is two things at the same time, a verb, a method of inquiry, and a noun, a product of inquiry (Charmaz 2005; Glaser and Strauss 1967). It is intuitive. You let the obdurate empirical world speak to you, you listen, take notes, write memos to yourself, form writing groups. No hierarchy, the social theorists are not privileged. In the world of GT anybody can be a theorist.

GT is not a unified framework. There are multiple versions: positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, objectivist, post-modern, situational, and computer-assisted (Charmaz 2006; Clarke 2005). For example, traditional positivist GT stresses the importance of correspondence theories of truth, objective inquirers, and processes of discovery. Post-modern versions, in contrast, endorse constructivist models of truth, and reject objectivist views of the inquirer, privilege Foucault over Mead, emphasize situational, discursive, social arena approaches to interpretation (Clarke 2005). Yet underneath, there

are commonalities: flexible guidelines for data collection and data analysis, commitments to remain close to the world being studied, and the development of integrated theoretical concepts grounded in data that show process, relationship, and social world connectedness (Charmaz 2005; Clarke 2005). Now a new generation seeks to “reclaim the tools of the method, to form a revised, more open-ended practice ... that stresses its emergent, constructivist elements” (Clarke 2005:xxiii), “for advancing social justice studies” (Charmaz 2005:507; Charmaz and Bryant 2007).

I want to extend that project, by aligning it with Cornel West’s prophetic pragmatism, Patricia Hill Collin’s epistemology of empowerment, and Pelias’ (2004) methodology of the heart. These versions of pragmatism’s GT offer interpretive leverage for those who use moral inquiry for social justice ends. This is the space I enter in this essay (see Denzin 2004, 2005, 2007a; Denzin and Giardina 2006; Denzin, Lincoln, and Giardina 2006); I offer a reading of the method, including its appeals, strengths, and what I perceive as its limitations. In my discussion, I emphasize the politics of interpretation, contending that nothing speaks for itself and there are only performances. Indigenous participatory theater, which nurtures a critical self-consciousness, is central to my argument (Denzin 2005). I respond to the call by indigenous scholars to develop new interpretive approaches to inquiry (Bishop 2005; Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

Such approaches privilege indigenous voices. They are committed to the principles of performance, resistance, and political integrity (see next; also Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Smith 2005:89). A post-colonial, indigenous participatory theater is central to this performance discourse. Indigenous performance is a means of political representation, a form of resistance and critique, and a way of addressing issues of equity, healing, and social justice.

### **The Appeal of GT**

GT’s appeals, in its constructivist, objectivist, and situational forms are many (Charmaz 2006; Clarke 2005). It provides a set of steps and procedures any researcher can follow in the construction of a theory fitted to a particular problem. It reaffirms the need for and the place of theory in social inquiry. For some, in its post-modern turn, it offers a situational, cartographic approach to the study of social structure, social action, and infrastructure (Clarke 2005). GT offers guidelines for doing fieldwork, for doing interviewing, and for the analysis of qualitative materials, including ethnographic, interview, “narrative, visual and historical discourse materials” (Clarke 2005:xxiii). It offers a way of addressing issues of voice, discourse, texts, the materiality of power, thick analyses of complex social processes (Clarke 2005). Its goals clearly resonate with the post-positivist program in the human disciplines, especially the emphasis on the importance of induction and deduction, generalizability, com-

parisons between cases, and the systematic relating of concepts grounded in data.

At the same time its theory of action celebrates pragmatism's unique contribution to American sociology, a linguistically based theory of mind, self, and action. This can be seen in Clarke's (2005) and Charmaz's (2005) focus on post-modern deconstructions, on interconnecting social worlds, on arenas, matrices of structure, trajectories of action, resources, hierarchies of power and influence, social policies, hierarchies of suffering, situated, and local readings of ordinary people and their lives (Charmaz 2005).

### *GT and Indigenous Discourse*

The Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1994–2004) has ended. There is a great desire by indigenous scholars to decolonize Western epistemologies, to open up the academy to non-Western forms of wisdom, knowing, knowledge, and knowledge production (Bishop 2005; Smith 2005). GT, with its commitment to critical, open-ended inquiry can be a decolonizing tool for indigenous and non-indigenous scholars alike. A performance-based GT using indigenous epistemologies and methodologies is one way to do this.

In proposing a conversation between critical GT and indigenous discourses, I am mindful of several difficulties. First, the legacy of the helping Western colonizing other must be resisted. As Smith (1999:80) observes, "They came, They saw, They named, They Claimed." This means, as Bishop (2005) argues, that indigenous persons are excluded from discussions concerning who has control over the initiation, the methodologies, evaluations, assessments, representations, and distribution of the newly defined knowledge. The decolonization project challenges these practices.

Second, critical theory, and GT, without modification, will not work within indigenous settings. The criticisms of Bishop (1994, 1998, 2005), Smith (1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2005), and others make this very clear. There must be a commitment to transforming the institutions, machineries, and practices of research. GTs' concerns for data, basic underlying social processes, and causal narratives may not accord with the pressing social justice concerns of indigenous persons. Critical theory's criteria for self-determination and empowerment may perpetuate neo-colonial sentiments, while turning indigenous persons into essentialized "others" who are spoken for and theorized about (Bishop 2005). Taking a lesson from GT, critical theory must be localized, grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting. Localized, grounded critical theory can work if the goals of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation are not treated as if they have "universal characteristics that are independent of history, context, and agency" (Smith 2000b:229).

Third, there is a pressing need to decolonize and deconstruct those structures within the Western academy that privilege Western knowledge systems and their epistemologies and social theories (Mutua and Blue Swadner 2004; Semaili and Kincheloe 1999). Indigenous knowledge systems are too frequently turned into objects of study, treated as if they were instances of quaint folk theory held by the members of a primitive culture. The decolonizing project reverses this equation, making Western systems of knowledge the object of inquiry.

Fourth, and paraphrasing Smith (2005), the spaces between decolonizing research practices and indigenous communities must be carefully and cautiously articulated. They are fraught with uncertainty. Neo-liberal and neo-conservative political economies turn knowledge about indigenous peoples into a commodity. There are conflicts between competing epistemological and ethical frameworks, including institutional human subject research regulations. Research is regulated by positivist epistemologies. Indigenous scholars and native intellectuals are pressed to produce technical knowledge that conforms to Western standards of truth and validity. Conflicts over who initiates and who benefits from such research are especially problematic (Bishop 2005). Culturally responsive research practices must be developed. Such practices locate power within the indigenous community. What is acceptable and not acceptable research is determined and defined from within the community. Such work encourages self-determination and empowerment (Bishop 2005).

Fifth, in proposing an alignment between grounded, critical, and indigenous theories, I recognize that I am an outsider to the indigenous colonized experience. I write as a privileged Westerner. At the same time I seek to be an “allied other” (Kaomea 2004:32), a fellow-traveler, of sorts, an antipositivist, an insider who wishes to deconstruct from within the Western academy and its positivist epistemologies.

### *Indigenous GT as Performance, as Pedagogy*

Indigenous GT inquiry is performative. It connects research to struggles for liberation, to struggles which empower, which challenge the status quo, rebuild leadership, restore environments, and revitalize language, culture, and community (Smith 2005). “Indigenous grounded theory research is performative research carried out by indigenous scholars, in and for indigenous communities, using the principles of indigenous grounded theory inquiry” (Smith 2005:89). This form of theoretical inquiry is collaborative and participatory and is characterized by the absence of a need to be in control, by a desire to be connected to and to be a part of a moral community where a primary goal is the compassionate understanding of another’s moral position (Bishop 1998).

The indigenist researcher-as-theorist wants to participate in a collaborative, altruistic relationship, where nothing “is desired for the self” (Bishop 1998:207), where research is evaluated by participant-driven criteria, by the cultural values and practices that circulate, for example, in indigenist culture, including metaphors stressing self-determination, the sacredness of relationships, embodied understanding, and the priority of community over self.

### *Indigenous Pedagogy*

Researchers are led to develop new story lines and criteria of evaluation reflecting these understandings. These participant-driven criteria function as resources for resisting positivist and neo-conservative desires to “establish and maintain control of the criteria for evaluating indigenous experience” (Bishop 1998:212). They privilege a spoken, indigenous epistemology which emphasizes indigenous knowledge, and indigenous, traditional ways of knowing. The earth is regarded as the spiritual center of the universe. There is a commitment to dismantle and resist global capitalism. Positivist forms of knowing, educating, and of doing science and research are contested (Grande 2000; Meyer 2003).

Indigenist pedagogy moves epistemology out of a methodological framework, into the spaces of indigenous culture. Akin to GT, specific indigenist ways of knowing and being in the world are emphasized. For Meyer (2003) this epistemology is organized around the themes of spirituality, physical space, the cultural nature of the senses, relational knowing, practical knowing, language as being, and the unity of mind and body. This framework stresses the performative place of culture and morality in knowledge production. Spirituality is basic to culture. It is sensuous and embodied, involving the senses: taste, sight, smell, hearing, and touch. Knowledge is relational, experienced, and expressed in sensuous terms, in stories, and critical personal narratives that locate the person in moral relations with others (Meyer 2003).

### *GT on Tricky Ground*

Paraphrasing Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005:85), the ground on which GT stands is tricky. It is tricky because it is “complicated, and changeable, and it is tricky also because it can play tricks on research and on the researcher.” GT’s ground, and the spaces it encompasses, are always constructed, never bedrock solid, always nuanced, and potentially dangerous. The ground itself is a function of the researcher’s shifting relationship to the world. And always “lurking around the corners are countervailing conservative forces that seek to disrupt any agenda of social justice that may form on such tricky ground” (Smith 2005:85). These forces may seek to derail the project. They may have little tolerance for public debate, alternative views, GT methodology, and even

distain for projects espousing social justice (Smith 2005). Under such circumstances, interpretive GT is stripped of its radical politics. It is returned “to a positivist research paradigm that, like life in general, should be simple” (Smith 2005:85).

### *The Politics of Interpretation*

Interpretation is always performative, a performance event involving actors, purposes, scripts, stories, stages, and interactions. Performance is an act of intervention, a method of resistance, a form of criticism, and a way of revealing agency and presence in the world. Is this true always? Performance can certainly be routine. Performances foreground the intersection of politics, institutional sites, and embodied experience. The performative is always (or perhaps intended to be?) pedagogical, and the pedagogical is always political. A politics of representation shapes the interpretive process. The practices of interpretation involve story telling, different ways of organizing and representing the world, and different ways of making the world appear real.

GT is a performance, a set of performative and interpretive practices, and ways of making the world visible. This commitment to visibility is anchored in the belief that the world, at some level, is orderly, patterned, and understandable. The world of social interaction and social experience can be theoretically sampled, saturated, located in situational social world, arena mapped, coded, fitted into conceptual categories, diagrammed, placed in conditional and consequential matrices, and represented in narrative, visual, and historical discourses. These discourses, in turn, can be analyzed in terms of social relationships, identities, and intersecting arenas and social worlds.

In contrast, the performance ethnographer is a troublemaker. The practices of ethnography are not tools for creating order out of chaos. Instead ethnographies are for creating chaos, ways of disrupting the world and its representations. Performance ethnographers see disorder in the world, reading orderliness as a dramaturgical production (Goffman 1959; Kincheloe and McLaren 2000). Politics of representation suggest that the world’s orderliness is imposed through a political, pedagogical, and interpretive process. These pedagogies of order reinforce the belief and the appearance that the world is in fact orderly. But order is an ideological concept, a fiction, a sometimes shameless concept that justifies the interpretive practices of science and GT. Order may be partial, provisional, and temporary.

The differences here are foundational; they are about more than causing trouble. They are about how the world is represented so that social justice interventions can be produced. They are about not seeing the world in terms of disciplinary conceptual categories. Taken to its logical extension, GT is not about seeing the world in these ways either. These differences are about

writing the world in this historical moment where the personal and the political intersect, in this space which is already deeply moral, critical, and interpretive. Grounded, indigenous inquiry, folded into performance, [auto]ethnography searches for ways of disrupting the smooth structures of everyday colonial and post-colonial life. Performance GT sees disorder and unruliness where others see patterns, processes, and interconnections. This focus on disorder and illusion is intended to illuminate the arbitrary and unjust, the unfair practices that operate in daily life.

The ways in which the world is not a stage are not easy to specify. Today everything is already performative, staged, commodified, and dramaturgical. The dividing line between performer and actor, stage and setting, script and text, performance and reality, disappears. As this disappearance occurs, illusion and make-believe prevail. In this space, where the hyperreal appears more real than the real, pragmatists and cultural critics require apparatuses of resistance and critique, methodologies and pedagogies of truth, ways of making real realities that envision and enact pedagogies of hope.

### **Critical Pedagogy, Ethics, and Prophetic Pragmatism**

When the divisions between reality and its appearances disappear, critical indigenous GT inquiry necessarily becomes disruptive, explicitly pedagogical, and radically democratic. We need a new politics of truth. We must embrace the justice of our rage. June Jordan and Patricia Hill Collins remind us (paraphrase):

We must reclaim the neglected legacy of the Sixties, an unabashed moral certainty, an incredible outgoing energy of righteous rage. We cannot restore and expand the forms of justice that our lives require until and unless we change the language of current political and methodological discourse. If we do not reintroduce our concepts of Right and Wrong, of Truth and Evidence, then how shall we finally argue for our cause (Collins 1998:250; Jordan 1998:178).

I answer the call of Jordan and Collins by turning to the post-pragmatists and the social justice-based grounded theorists (see Denzin 1996 for a review; also Charmaz 2005; Seigfried 1996). For the post-pragmatist grounded theorist there is no neutral standpoint, no objective God's eye view of the world. The meaning of a concept, or line of action, or a representation, lies in the practical, political, moral, and social consequences it produces for an actor or collectivity. The meanings of these consequences are not objectively given. They are established through social interaction and the politics of representation. All representations are historically situated, shaped by the intersecting contingencies of power, gender, race, and class (Collins 2000; Seigfried 1996). Representations are performance events.

Shaped by the sociological imagination, building on George Herbert Mead's discursive, performative model of the act, critical pragmatic qualitative research imagines and explores the multiple ways in which performance can be understood, including: as imitation, or *mimesis*; as *poiesis*, or construction; as *kinesis*, or movement, gendered bodies in motion (Conquergood 1998). The researcher-as-performer moves from a view of performance as imitation, or dramaturgical staging, to an emphasis on performance as liminality, construction, to a view of performance as embodied struggle, as an intervention, as breaking and remaking, as kinesis, and as a socio-political act.

Viewed as struggles and interventions, performances and performance events become gendered transgressive achievements, political accomplishments which break through "sedimented meanings and normative traditions" (Conquergood 1998:32). This model presumes a performative politics of resistance. Extending indigenous initiatives, this model is committed to a form of revolutionary, catalytic political theater, a project that provokes and enacts pedagogies of dissent for the new millennium. Consider the following:

In *House Arrest and Piano* (2003), Anna Deavere Smith offers 'an epic view of slavery, sexual misconduct, and the American presidency.' Twelve actors, some in blackface, 'play across lines of race, age and gender to "become" Bill Clinton, Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings ... and a vast array of historical and contemporary figures'. (Kondo 2000:81)

In Native Canadian Bill Moses' play *Almighty Voice and His Wife* (1993), Native performers, wearing whiteface minstrel masks, mock such historical figures as Wild Bill Cody, Sitting Bull, and young Indian maidens called Sweet Sioux. (Gilbert 2003:692)

### ***Grounded Critical Theory and Epistemologies of Resistance***

We are in the midst of global social movement of involving anticolonialist discourse. This movement is evident in the emergence and proliferation of critically grounded indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. These epistemologies are forms of critical pedagogy; they embody a critical politics of representation. They fold theory, epistemology, methodology, and praxis into strategies of resistance unique to each indigenous community. Within each indigenous pedagogy there is a commitment to an indigenism, to an indigenist outlook which, after Churchill (1996:509), assigns the highest priority to the rights of indigenous peoples, to the traditions, bodies of knowledge and values that have "evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over."

Indigenist pedagogies resist the positivist and post-positivist methodologies of Western science because these formations, for example standardized achievement tests, are too frequently used to validate colonizing knowledge about indigenous peoples. Indigenists deploy, instead, interpretive strategies



and skills fitted to and grounded in the needs, language, and traditions of their respective indigenous community (Bishop 2005). These strategies emphasize personal performance narratives, collaborative research relationships, compassionate understanding, self-determination, and the sacredness of community relationships. Researchers develop participant-driven criteria of evaluation reflecting these understandings. Grounded critical pedagogy respects indigenous epistemologies, and encourages interpretive, first-person methodologies. It honors different versions of science and empirical activity, and values cultural criticism in the name of social justice. It seeks models of human subject research that are not constrained by biomedical positivist assumptions. It turns the academy and its classrooms into sacred spaces where indigenous and non-indigenous scholars interact, share experiences, take risks, explore alternative modes of interpretation, participate in a shared agenda, and come together in a spirit of hope, love, and shared community.

Theory, method, and epistemology are aligned in this project, anchored in the moral philosophies that are taken for granted in indigenous cultures and language communities (Smith 2000b). Pedagogy of emancipation and empowerment is endorsed, a pedagogy that encourages struggles for autonomy, cultural well-being, cooperation, and collective responsibility. This pedagogy demands that indigenous groups own the research process. It speaks the truth “to people about the reality of their lives” (Collins 1998:198). It equips them with the tools to resist oppression, and it moves them to struggle, to search for justice (Collins 1998:198–99). This truth, sometimes unwelcome, is situated in the indigenous life-world. Some individuals or groups, for example, may not wish to affirm the oppression that researchers may define and oppose.

### *Indigenous Research as Localized Critical Theory*

In these commitments, indigenous epistemologies overlap with critical GT. Indeed, Smith (2000b) connects her version of indigenous inquiry, Kaupapa Maori research, with critical theory, suggesting, with Smith (2000a), that Kaupapa Maori research is a “local theoretical position that is the modality through which the emancipatory goal of critical theory, in a specific historical, political and social context is practised” (Smith 2000b:229; also Bishop 2005). Critical theory, like pragmatism, presumes that individuals are influenced by social and historical forces. Educational and everyday realities “are constructed in and through people’s linguistic, cultural, social, and behavioral interactions which both shape and are shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural forces” (Fishman and McLaren 2005:1). It is not enough to understand any given reality. There is a need to “transform it with the goal of radically democratizing educational sites and societies” (Fishman and

McLaren 2005:1). Critical scholars as transformative intellectuals actively shape and lead this project.

Critical pedagogy disrupts those hegemonic cultural and educational practices that reproduce the logics of neo-liberal conservatism (Giroux and Giroux 2005). Critical pedagogy subjects structures of power, knowledge, and practice to GT inquiry, demanding that they be evaluated “in terms of how they might open up or close down democratic experiences” (Giroux and Giroux 2005:1). Critical pedagogy holds systems of authority accountable through the critical reading of texts, the creation of radical educational practices, and the promotion of critical literacy (Giroux and Giroux 2005). Concretely, these practices help to implement the goals of critical pedagogy. In a GT context, they anchor lofty goals to specific actions, patterns, arenas, and meanings.

In turn, critical pedagogy encourages resistance to the “discourses of privatization, consumerism, the methodologies of standardization and accountability, and the new disciplinary techniques of surveillance” (Giroux and Giroux 2005:3). Resistance takes many interpretive forms, including calling for fair labor and non-destructive environmental practices, and endorsing organic or green consumer ideologies. Critical pedagogy provides the tools, linking discourses to practices, for understanding how cultural and educational practices contribute to the construction of neo-liberal conceptions of identity, citizenship, and agency. Critical pedagogy, as critical discourse, operates in the classrooms of daily life, in the media, in schools, in offices, and in the workplace. Informed citizens model for one another alternative ways of responding to the meanings that circulate in daily life. Critical understanding is achieved when citizens understand that things are not, nor do they need to be, as they appear in the media.

Critical, pedagogical GT offers the scholar a set of interpretive procedures for locating analysis in the worlds of social experience. It encourages processual thinking, requires a comparative focus, examines *how*, not *why* questions, demands intimate familiarity with a setting, values observations that challenge current ideas, draws links between the local and the institutional, and, using strategies of saturation and situational maps and analyses, suggests avenues for pursuing social justice concerns (Charmaz 2005; Clarke 2005).

GT thus merges with critical pedagogy. The local which localizes and grounds indigenous critical GT is always historically specific. The local is grounded in the politics, circumstances, and economies of a particular moment, a particular time and place, and a particular set of problems, struggles, and desires. A politics of resistance and possibility (Madison 1998; Pollock 1998) is embedded in the local. This is a politics that confronts and breaks through local structures of resistance and oppression. This is a politics that asks “Who writes for whom? Who is representing indigenous peoples,

how, for what purposes, for which audiences, who is doing science for whom?" (Smith 1999:37). Whose theory is it, anyway?

This politics seeks its external grounding in a commitment to a post-Marxism and communitarian feminism with hope but no guarantees. It seeks to understand how power and ideology operate through and across systems of discourse. It understands that moral and esthetic criteria are always fitted to the contingencies of concrete circumstances, assessed in terms of local understandings that flow from a feminist moral ethic (Christians 2005). This ethic calls for dialogical inquiry rooted in the concepts of care, and shared governance. How this ethic works in any specific situation cannot be predicted in advance. It has not been done before. Hence, for example, an Afrocentric feminist esthetic (and epistemology) stresses the importance of truth, knowledge, and beauty (Black is Beautiful), and a notion of wisdom that is experiential and shared. Wisdom so conceived is derived from local, lived experience, and expresses lore, folktale, and myth (Collins 2000). This esthetic asks that art (and ethnography) be politically committed.

A critical politics of interpretation leads the indigenous scholar to ask eight questions about any research project, including those projects guided by grounded critical theory:

- (1) What research do we want done?
- (2) Who is it for?
- (3) What difference will it make?
- (4) Who will carry it out?
- (5) How do we want the research done?
- (6) How will we know it is worthwhile?
- (7) Who will own the research?
- (8) Who will benefit? (Smith 2000b).

These questions are addressed to indigenous and non-indigenous scholars alike. They must be answered in the affirmative; that is, indigenists must conduct, own, and benefit from any research that is done on or for them.

### ***Criteria for GT Studies in Social Justice Inquiry***

Charmaz outlines four criteria which merge GT studies with social justice inquiry. Her terms include credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Inquiry has credibility when it is anchored in the languages, values, and politics of the local. Inquiry must resonate with the local. It should be shaped by local needs. It should make a positive difference in that world. Findings should be owned by the local community. Her interpretive criteria can be read back through Smith's eight questions; that is, we want locally grounded

critical inquiry that advances social justice issues for persons in indigenous communities.

These eight questions and four criteria serve to interpret critical theory through a moral lens. They shape the moral space that aligns indigenous research with grounded critical theory. Thus, both formations are situated within the antipositivist debate. They both rest on antifoundational epistemologies. Each privileges performative issues of gender, race, class, equity, and social justice. Each develops its own understandings of community, critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation (Smith 2000b). Each understands that the outcome of a struggle can never be predicted in advance, and that struggle is always local and contingent. It is never final (Smith 2000b).

By localizing discourses of resistance, and by connecting these discourses to performance ethnography and critical pedagogy, indigenous research enacts what grounded critical theory “actually offers to oppressed, marginalized and silenced groups ... [that is] through emancipation groups such as the Maori would take greater control of their own lives and humanity” (Smith 2000b:229). This requires that indigenous groups “take hold of the project of emancipation and attempt to make it a reality on their own terms” (Smith 2000b:229). This means that inquiry is always political and moral, grounded in principles centered on autonomy, home, family, kinship, on a collective community vision that requires that research not be a “purchased product ... owned by the state” (Smith 2000b:231). Localized critical indigenous theory, folded into GT, encourages indigenists and non-indigenists to confront key challenges connected to the meanings of science, community, and democracy. In proactively framing participatory views of science, empirical research, democracy, and community, persons take control of their own fate. They refuse to be sidetracked into always responding to the attempts by the state to define their life situations (Smith 2000a). This means that persons and communities craft their own version of science and empirical activity. They are challenged to develop a participatory model of democracy that goes beyond the “Westminster ‘one person, one vote, majority rule’ ” (Smith 2000a:212). They learn how to use grounded critical theory proactively as an agent of change. They learn how to act in ways that are accountable to the indigenous and non-indigenous communities, and not just the academy and its scholarly standards.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) offers four criteria—primacy of lived experience, dialog, an ethics of care, an ethics of responsibility—for interpreting truth and knowledge claims. This framework privileges lived experience, emotion, empathy, and values rooted in personal expressiveness (Edwards and Mauthner 2002). The moral inquirer—whether a politician or a social scientist—builds a collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, mutually accountable relationship with those studied. This feminist ethical framework is care- and justice-based. It seeks to

contextualize shared values and norms. It privileges the sacredness of life, human dignity, non-violence, care, solidarity, love, community, empowerment, and civic transformation. It demands of any action that it positively contribute to a politics of resistance, hope, and freedom (Denzin 2003).

For the prophetic post-pragmatists there are no absolute truths, no absolute principles, and no faith-based beliefs in what is true or false. At the level of politics and ideology, the post-pragmatist, following West (1989:234, 1991:36) acts as a critical moral agent, one whose political goal is the creation of greater individual freedom in the broader social order. Paraphrasing West (1991:35–36), prophetic pragmatists as moral agents understand that the consequences of their interventions into the world are exclusively political, judged always in terms of their contributions to a politics of liberation, love, caring, and freedom. Following Collins (2000), Pelias (2004:163), and Freire (1999), the moral inquirer enacts a politics of love and care, an ethic of hope and forgiveness. Love, here, to borrow from Darder and Mirón (2006):

means to comprehend that the moral and the material are inextricably linked. And, as such, [we] must recognize love as an essential ingredient of a just society. Eagleton (2003) defines this concept of love as a political principle through which we struggle to create mutually life-enhancing opportunities for all people. It is grounded in the mutuality and interdependence of our human existence—that which we share, as much as that which we do not. This is a love nurtured by the act of relationship itself. It cultivates relationships with the freedom to be at one's best without undue fear. Such an emancipatory love allows us to realize our nature in a way that allows others to do so as well. Inherent in such a love is the understanding that we are not at liberty to be violent, authoritarian, or self-seeking (p. 150).

Materially, actions are thus judged in terms of moral consequences and the meanings people bring to them. Consequences are not self-evident. They are socially constructed through the politics of representation. The concept of truth is thus replaced with a consequential theory of meaning. Experience, folded through what Stuart Hall (1996) calls the politics of representation, becomes the site of meaning and truth.

Facts about the world are treated as lived experiences. The pragmatist examines the effects, or consequences, of any line of action on existing structures of domination. The pragmatist asks, what are the moral and ethical consequences of these effects for lived human experience? Do they contribute to an ethical self-consciousness that is critical and reflexive, empowering people with a language and a set of pedagogical practices that turn oppression into freedom, despair into hope, hatred into love, and doubt into trust? Do they engender a critical racial self-awareness that contributes to utopian dreams of racial equality and racial justice? If people are being oppressed, denied freedom, or dying because of these effects, then the action, of course, is morally indefensible.

I am calling for an engagement with and a promotion of a GT research paradigm that imagines creative and critical responses to the feminist, indigenous, and post-pragmatic efforts outlined before. This paradigm is forthright in its belief that the personal is political, and that the political is pedagogical. It shares in experiences, problems, and hopes concerning the conduct of critical, qualitative inquiry in this time of global uncertainty. The values of progressive democracy must be at the forefront when scientific advice is used for policy-making decisions. The pragmatic consequences for a radical democracy must be taken into account when scientific recommendations for social action are implemented.

This is a gendered project, a project where feminist, post-colonial, queer, and indigenous theorists question the logic of the heterosexual ethnographic narrative. It is a moral, allegorical, and therapeutic project, one in which the researcher's own self is inscribed in the text as a prop to help men and women endure and prevail in the opening years of the twenty-first century. And it is avowed in its commitment to a project of social justice and radical progressive democracy. But there are no absolute truths and no absolute principles. The moral inquirer enacts a politics of love and care, an ethic of hope and forgiveness. As Ron Pelias (2004) suggests (paraphrased):

The heart learns that stories are truths that won't keep still. The heart learns that facts are the possibilities we pretend we trust. The heart's method of pumping, loving and forgiving encourages us to proceed with our hearts first. What matters most is that we learn how to use our rage in positive ways, to love, to struggle to forgive. We have little other choice (pp. 162–63, 171).

West (1989:234, 1991:36, paraphrased) is instructive:

At the level of politics and ideology, the post-pragmatist acts as a critical moral agent, one whose political goal is the creation of greater individual freedom in the broader social order. Prophetic pragmatists as moral agents understand that the consequences of their interventions into the world are exclusively political, judged always in terms their contributions to a politics of liberation, love, caring and freedom.

A critically, grounded pragmatism embraces an ethics of truth, love, care, hope, and forgiveness. Collins (2000:251, paraphrased) provides direction:

This moral vision relies on a righteous rage to spur us on, to keep us headed in the right direction, to point the way, to move people toward justice. If it does this then it has made a very important difference in the lives of people.

We demand that history's actors use models of evidence that answer to these moral truths. An indigenous, performative, GT inquiry helps us get to these truths and these spaces.

## ENDNOTE

\*This essay extends and reworks Denzin (2007b). The author thanks Kathy Charmaz and Tony Bryant for their insightful and critical comments on earlier versions of this chapter, sections of which draw from arguments in Denzin (2003, 2005, 2007b), Denzin and Lincoln (2005, 2008), Denzin and Giardina (2006), and Denzin, Lincoln, and Giardina (2006). Please direct correspondence to Norman K. Denzin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 3305 S. Pine Circle, Urbana, IL 61802, USA; e-mail: n-denzin@uiuc.edu.

## REFERENCES

- Bishop, Russell. 1994. "Initiating Empowering Research." *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 29(1):175–88.
- . 1998. "Freeing Ourselves from Neo-Colonial Domination in Research: A Maori Approach to Creating Knowledge." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11: 199–219.
- . 2005. "Freeing Ourselves from Neocolonial Domination in Research: A Kaupapa Maori Approach to Creating Knowledge." Pp. 109–38 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2005. "Grounded Theory in the 21st century: A Qualitative Method for Advancing Social Justice Research." Pp. 507–35 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- . 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, Kathy and Tony Bryant, eds. 2007. *Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks and London: Sage.
- Christians, Clifford. 2005. "Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research." Pp. 139–64 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Churchill, Ward. 1996. "I am an Indigenist: Notes on the Ideology of the Fourth World." Pp. 509–46 in *From a Native Son: Selected Essays in Indigenism, 1985–1995*, edited by Ward Churchill. Boston: South End Press.
- Clarke, Adele E. 2005. *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1998. *Fighting Words: Black Women & the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 2000. *Black Feminist Thought*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Conquergood, Dwight. 1998. "Beyond the Text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics." Pp. 25–36 in *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*, edited by Sheron J. Dailey. Annandale, VA: National Communication Association.
- Darder, A. and L. F. Mirón. 2006. "Critical Pedagogy in a Time of Uncertainty: A Call to Action." Pp. 136–51 in *Contesting Empire/Globalizing Dissent: Cultural Studies after 9/11*, edited by N. K. Denzin and M. D. Giardina. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press.
- Denzin, Norman K. 1996. "Post-Pragmatism." *Symbolic Interaction* 19(1):61–75.
- . 2003. *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- . 2004. "Remembering to Forget: Lewis and Clark and Native Americans in Yellowstone." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 1(September):219–49.
- . 2005. "Emancipatory Discourses and the Ethics and Politics of Interpretation." Pp. 933–58 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- . 2007a "Sacagawea's Nickname, or the Sacagawea Problem." *Qualitative Research* 7(1):103–33.
- . 2007b. "Grounded Theory and the Politics of Grounded Theory." Pp. 98–127 in *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*, edited by K. Charmaz and T. Bryant. Thousand Oaks and London: Sage.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Michael Giardina. 2006. "Introduction: Qualitative Inquiry and the Conservative Challenge." Pp. ix–xxxi in *Qualitative Inquiry and the Conservative Challenge*, edited by N. K. Denzin and M. Giardina. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2005. "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research." Pp. 1–32 in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- eds. 2008. "Critical Methodologies and Indigenous Inquiry." Pp. 1–30 in *Sage Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, edited by Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, Norman K., Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Michael Giardina. 2006. "Disciplining Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 6:122–44.
- Edwards, Rosalind and Melanie Mauthner. 2002. "Ethics and Feminist Research: Theory and Practice." Pp. 14–31 in *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, edited by Melanie Mauthner, Maxine Birch, Julie Jessop, and Tina Miller. London: Sage.
- Fishman, Gustavo E. and Peter McLaren. 2005. "Rethinking Critical Pedagogy and the Gramscian Legacy: From Organic to Committed Intellectuals." *Cultural Studies—Critical Methodologies* 5(1):126–40.
- Freire, Paulo. 1999. *Pedagogy of Hope*. Translated by Robert R. Barr. New York: Continuum (originally published in 1992).
- Gilbert, Helen. 2003. "Black and White and Re(a)d All Over Again: Indigenous Minstrelsy in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 55:679–98.
- Giroux, Henry and Susan Searls Giroux. 2005. "Challenging Neoliberalism's New World Order: The Promise of Critical Pedagogy." *Cultural Studies—Critical Methodologies* 5(1):14–25.
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Grande, Sandy. 2000. "American Indian Identity and Intellectualism: The Quest for a New Red Pedagogy." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13:343–60.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "What Is this 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" Pp. 465–75 in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. London: Routledge.
- Jordan, June. 1998. *Affirmative Acts*. New York: Anchor.
- Kaomea, Julie. 2004. "Dilemmas of an Indigenous Academic: A Native Hawaiian Story." Pp. 27–44 in *Decolonizing Research in Cross-Cultural Contexts: Critical Personal Narratives*, edited by Kagendo Mutua and Beth Blue Swadener. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Kincheloe, Joe L. and Peter McLaren. 2000. "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research." Pp. 279–314 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



- Kondo, Dorine. 2000. "(Re) Visions of Race: Contemporary Race Theory and the Cultural Politics of Racial Crossover in Documentary Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 52:81–107.
- Madison, D. Soyini. 1998. "Performances, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility." Pp. 276–86 in *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*, edited by Sheron J. Dailey. Annadale, VA: National Communication Association.
- Meyer, Manulani Aluli. 2003. *Ho'oulu: Our Time of Becoming: Hawaiian Epistemology and Early Writings*. Honolulu: 'Ai Pohaku Press Native Books.
- Mutua, Kagendo and Beth Blue Swadner. 2004. "Introduction." Pp. 1–23 in *Decolonizing Research in Cross-Contexts: Critical Personal Narratives*, edited by Kagendo Mutua and Beth Blue Swadener. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Pelias, Ronald J. 2004. *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic & Daily Life*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira.
- Pollock, Della. 1998. "A Response to Dwight Conquergood's Essay: 'Beyond the Text: Towards a Performative Cultural Politics'." Pp. 37–46 in *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*, edited by Sheron J. Dailey. Annadale, VA: National Communication Association.
- Seigfried, Charlene Haddock. 1996. *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Semali, Ladislaus M. and Joe L. Kincheloe. 1999. "Introduction: What Is Indigenous Knowledge and Why Should We Study It?" Pp. 3–57 in *What Is Indigenous Knowledge? Voices from the Academy*, edited by Ladislaus M. Semali and Joe L. Kincheloe. New York: Falmer Press.
- Smith, Graham. 2000a. "Protecting and Respecting Indigenous Knowledge." Pp. 209–24 in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- . 2000b. "Kupapa Maori Research." Pp. 225–47 in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- . 2005. "On Tricky Ground: Researching the Native in the Age of Uncertainty." Pp. 85–108 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, Anselm. 1987. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- West, Cornel. 1989. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- . 1991. "Theory, Pragmatism and Politics." Pp. 22–38 in *Consequences of Theory*, edited by Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Copyright of Sociological Inquiry is the property of Wiley-Blackwell and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.