CREATING SPACES FOR JUSTICE-ORIENTED RESEARCH:

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS OF A RESEARCHER/TEACHER AND HER ADVISOR

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Abstract

This article explores the critical reflections of a doctoral candidate and her advisor on the design and implementation of the candidate's study, how space was created for such scholarship, and the challenges and catalysts for successfully navigating and shifting trenchant epistemological and methodological positions. Adopting an autoethnographic stance, we examine our navigation of the conceptual, structural and interpersonal tensions of doing critical research in a mainstream institution. The results highlight our experiences in a) re-conceptualizing the purpose of research by moving beyond doing "hit-and-run" research to research as praxis in marginalized communities, b) re-conceptualizing data gathering and analysis as justice-oriented rather than as "methodolatry" and c) understanding reflexively the tensions caused in the final stages of the dissertation as the novice advisor privileged a product-orientation over a person-orientation in her mentoring stance. This study underscores the importance of ensuring that humanizing pedagogy is employed consistently and unambiguously through the doctoral advising process.

Keywords: doctoral advising, justice-oriented research, critical doctoral research, critical reflection, critical pedagogy/advising

Reconceptualizing research as a moral commitment to the public good, framed within concerns of equity, social justice and the democratizing possibilities of education (Bogotch & Shields, 2014; Ladson Billings, 2005), requires educators to re-examine their own practice as researchers and as advisors and teachers of future researchers and scholars, thereby making research both investigative *and* pedagogical praxis (Schoorman, 2014). This study of the pursuit of critical doctoral research in an epistemologically 'mainstream' institutional context extends the curricular and pedagogical work of critical multicultural educators to educational research (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010; Schoorman, 2016). Co-authored by a doctoral candidate and her advisor, this critical reflection on the way such a process could occur, will have a split focus. The specific dissertation study serves as a backdrop to the more explicit focus on the dialogical relationship between the advisee/ advisor in creating and navigating a space for critical approaches to research within a mainstream institutional research culture.

The dissertation focused on the impact of media literacy instruction on Black adolescents' identity development which comprised a twelve-week course in media literacy designed and taught by the doctoral candidate according to the principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2018; Kincheloe, 2008). The course was offered at an accredited religious Prekindergarten through 12th grade academy located in the southeast region of the United States. The study/course emerged from concerns about students' ability to confront negative images of Black people in the media, and the need for critical media literacy in the school curriculum. The dissertation was undertaken within a doctoral program in a university in southeast USA where there was a strong commitment to multicultural education at the master's and undergraduate level, though relatively absent from coursework at the doctoral level. For the advisor, this was only her second doctoral student. For the advisee, the choice of the advisor came after all coursework had been completed, when a previous advisor could no longer serve due to structural and program changes.

This autoethnographic study is guided by the following questions:

1. How did the design process and implementation of this dissertation study exemplify (or not) the principles of critical pedagogy in the relationship between the advisee and advisor?

2. What conceptual, structural and interpersonal challenges did the advisee and advisor experience in the completion of this project?

3. What are the epistemological challenges and/ or catalysts for creating spaces for engaging in critical research in traditionally-oriented research programs?

Both the advisee and the advisor are women of color from different cultural backgrounds, each committed to the principles of critical pedagogy as instructors and researchers. They each experienced education, especially in the context of the education of researchers, from a predominantly mainstream, patriarchal perspective, while simultaneously being steeped in the teacher education /curriculum courses in multicultural education. Highlighted in this paper are their experiences navigating these epistemological borders.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by the literature on critical pedagogy and critical approaches to research. The dissertation study, as a process and a product, drew on the principles of Freire's (2018) critical pedagogy exemplifying a critical awareness of power dynamics in pedagogy, where traditional "banking" approaches to education that frame students as passive recipients of knowledge are interrupted in favor of transformative approaches that value education as dialogic, humanizing and emancipatory praxis through problem-posing pedagogy.

Similarly, critical researchers committed to social justice call for the interrogation of mainstream approaches to educational research and their capacity to interrupt or perpetuate social inequalities (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). As Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011) note, "Mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression" (p. 164). Underscoring the academy as a site for this continued intellectual oppression, Carter (2003), cites

Stanfield who notes, "The exclusionary practices of academic social sciences along racial lines have maintained a cultural hegemony that has monopolized the construction and legitimation of methodological perspectives" (p. 29). Critical scholars caution against the invisibility of the entrenched imprint of positivism termed "crypto-positivism" by Kincheloe and Tobin (2015, p. 27) as "the epistemologies and 'ways of white folks' – mores and practices – that have been institutionalized throughout our history" (Tyson, 2003, p. 23).

Although emerging researchers, such as doctoral students, need education on critical approaches to research, many doctoral programs in education are largely grounded in "positivist approaches to both quantitative and qualitative research" (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011, p. 173). The methodologies advocated by critical researchers are rarely taught in doctoral courses, and –within some circles – not accepted as a research design in a dissertation proposal. Program structures and requirements frequently preclude opportunities for courses linked to critical methodologies.

Critical scholars critique positivism as the dominant model in educational research, including concepts of researcher neutrality and objectivity, where the researcher leaves the research site exactly as it was found. In contrast, they affirm the transformative potential of research in contexts of social inequality that privileges the well-being of participants. Central to critical research is the shift in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, where research is undertaken with not on participants, that parallels Freire's (2018) dialogic approach to pedagogy (Schoorman, 2014; Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010; Torres & Reyes, 2011).

The principles of Freire's (2018) critical pedagogy operated on multiple levels in this study of our relationship as we pursued critical research in an epistemologically 'mainstream' institutional context. As instructors committed to critical pedagogy in the classroom, we were conscious of forging a transformative and dialogic relationship in our advisor-advisee relationship that would interrupt received power dynamics more typical of hierarchically oriented doctoral advising. Given that this was the first dissertation in the program explicitly grounded in a critical perspective, per Freire, our dialogic relationship

became an engagement in praxis by which both participants endeavored to engage in the 'practice of freedom' in our individual and collective roles. We also recognized that we operated within institutional structures that had socialized neither one of us on what this alternative relationship would look like. As Harding-DeKam, Hamilton and Loyd (2012) report, "doctoral advisors typically receive no training, practice or mentoring" (p. 6). This was new terrain for both advisor and advisee. Consequently, it was important for us to heed the advice of Harding-DeKam et al. (2012) to undertake a post-degree debriefing "to reflect on positive aspects of their efforts and areas that needed improvement" (p. 5). In this autoethnographic study, we see how such a process facilitated dialogue, conscientization and humanization, all tenets central to critical pedagogy (Freire, 2018; Kincheloe, 2008).

The dissertation itself was grounded in the history of advocacy for critical media literacy, where the Frankfurt School scholars' alarm about media proliferation and its uncritical consumption by the public (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944) is re-echoed in contemporary times (Cortes, 2001; Kellner, 1995; Gibson, 1986; Giroux, 2011). This is especially pertinent given findings that: a) Black people have been negatively portrayed in the media, further extending societal racism through the shaping of public attitudes and opinions about this group (Cortes, 2001; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Ward, 2004) and b) Black youth consume media at a higher rate than their White counterparts (Kellner & Share, 2009; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2005). The dissertation examined how Black youth perceived these portrayals and the portrayals impact on their identity construction and their place in the world.

MODES OF INQUIRY

In this study of the advisor-advisee relationship we extend the principles of critical pedagogy to our research undertakings. Like many critical scholars, we recognize that inquiry itself is a political act, framing what we want to study, how and why (Kincheloe, McLaren and Stenberg, 2011; Torres and Reyes, 2011). Following the conclusion of the dissertation, our aim was to engage in a dialogue about the advising process to review what we experienced individually

and collectively in developing and completing this study. The writing of this article represented a process for each participant to outline our perspectives and - through the writing – engage in dialogue with one another. As such, this study emerged at the intersection of research as praxis (Torres and Reyes, 2011) and analytical autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) in that, as a student and advisor, we examined our experiences in the advising relationship in a process that was dialogic, humanizing, and raised critical consciousness. Freire (2018) defines praxis as reflection and action, paralleling research as praxis advocated by Torres and Reyes (2011) who advocated more democratic processes and outcomes in our scholarly inquiry. Analytic autoethnography, unlike evocative approaches, allowed for the researchers to become the researched while maintaining a commitment to analytic reflexivity (Anderson, 2006).

Praxis operated at multiple levels of the dissertation: in the purpose of the dissertation itself in its commitment to students' critical consciousness in the context of negative media representations as well as in the development of curriculum and a research design that optimized the voices of the student participants. Our autoethnography also represents praxis in our commitment to critical reflection on our relationship, particularly as we sought to examine and understand how we navigated the process of designing and implementing research within a critical paradigm, and to review tensions that emerged at the end of the dissertation process. Committing to writing about it offered an opportunity for dialogue through emails, phone conversations and numerous drafts in which we presented, reviewed and responded to each other's perspective.

This dialogic process spanned a period of 4.5 years, emerging in three phases involving multiple data sources:

Phase 1: Submission of a proposal to a national conference in the year prior to the dissertation defense in which we identified the desired focus of our inquiry as being the process of navigating our advisor/ advisee roles as emerging critical scholars.

Phase 2: The final stages of the dissertation comprising approximately four months of analyzing and writing towards the completion of the

dissertation, defense, and revisions and submission for institutional review.

Phase 3: This paper was developed, for a conference and then for publication. Following the acceptance of the proposal to a national conference, we integrated discussions of the interpersonal tensions we experienced. Giving ourselves the space to write our "versions" of what transpired allowed us to dialogue through these difficulties. Salient data sources were our own drafts of the paper and PowerPoint presentation, for the conference and journal reviews.

In this paper, the voices of both participants often emerge separately and dialectically, as we each navigate the tension we jointly encountered within institutional contexts, as well as in our own relationship. We refer to ourselves as "advisor" and "advisee" and use the first person singular to present our individual voice, where needed. Consequently, this autoethnography exemplifies dialogue in terms of a process and a product. Our standpoint entering this relationship was that of emerging critical researchers committed to equity, particularly among under-represented groups in our communities. The advisee is an African American woman and an alumna of the school at which the study was conducted. She saw her commitment to critical research and positive identity development of Black youth as an opportunity to "give back" to her alma mater. Her advisor, a first-generation Asian immigrant, and at the time the only (emerging) critical scholar in the doctoral program, viewed dissertation advisement as critical praxis in the forging of spaces for critical work. An added facet of the institutional context that framed the reflective analysis presented in this paper was an intense scrutiny of dissertations at the levels of the department chair, college dean and university graduate college for editorial precision and accuracy; a process that typically engendered positive or negative assessments of the dissertation chair by his/her superiors based on the number of errors in a dissertation.

RESULTS

The results highlight three dimensions – epistemological, methodological and pedagogical - that capture our experiences doing critical research in a mainstream institution. Cognizant of the lack of

explicit mentoring for doctoral advisors in general (Harding-DeKam, Hamilton & Loyd, 2012), but in particular for those committed to operating from a critical paradigm in positivist-leaning institutional contexts, we hope that discussing our struggles openly serves as a catalyst for productive mentoring relationships.

MOVING BEYOND "HIT AND RUN" RESEARCH TOWARDS PRAXIS

The commitment to design the dissertation study as counter-hegemonic praxis (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011; Torres & Reyes, 2011), moving away from "hit and run" research (Carter, 2003, p. 33) placed us as advisor and advisee in hitherto uncharted territory in terms of research conceptualization and design in our college. Reciprocal community partnership was central to the study's design. The media literacy curriculum developed for the study departed from subject-object relationships of "banking" to a dialogic approach that exemplified Freire's commitment to problem posing and conscientization. The curriculum was informed by the literature on media literacy (Center for Media Literacy; Share, Jolls and Thoman, 2007), that focuses on understanding the role media play in society and one's ability to consume media critically. Respectful of the school's prescribed courses of study, the curriculum developed for the dissertation study was inclusive of the school's unique curriculum framework and standards. The study's duration was also crucial to adequately assessing the impact of meaningful critical media literacy education.

From the onset, the dissertation was grounded in a commitment to address concerns of students' well-being, rather than merely serve as a "product" that allowed for a doctoral credential. The dissertation's catalytic potential was revealed in the increased critical consciousness among the students evident in multiple data sources of data, including t-tests that revealed a statistically significant increase in participants' media literacy, and their attitudes towards the uniqueness of being of African ancestry. The study results confirmed heightened critical awareness of the role media play in shaping society's knowledge about Black people, and revealed concerns about the impact of the negative media portrayals of Black people on society. Interestingly, the study

also revealed that although students perceived that these portrayals gravely impacted Black society, they did not perceive that the media gravely impacted their own self-identities.

These findings yielded several insights: (a) A discourse of action emerged as a result of participants' critical awareness; (b) Participants' positive sense of self acted as a buffer to potentially harmful or negative media portrayals of Black people; (c), Data suggested that there was an acceptance of normalized media messages about Black people; and (d) Participants identified media practices that marginalized Black people; however the problematization of their own views of society based on the metastereotypes was a concern. The study highlighted the need for discursive spaces for Black adolescents to deconstruct media master narratives in order for them to problematize the role of media in their lives, and opportunities for them to develop counter messages offered to society about Black people (Waldon, 2015).

For the advisor, there were conceptual and process tensions to be managed in achieving the goals of the dissertation, particularly as a novice dissertation chair .While deeply supportive of the study's commitment to reciprocity and praxis and design that included curriculum development, implementation and student evaluation, I worried about guiding a study of this scope, which I described as "a project more typical of a grant-funded collaboration." Daunted by the challenge to ensure unquestioned success of the department's first critical dissertation, it became crucial to assemble a talented committee that would support the study and its social justice purpose without truncating its focus to a more instrumental design. The committee comprised an Assistant Professor from the department who supported critical pedagogy and Black epistemology, a professor in critical media literacy from outside the college and a senior statistician in the college, each who supported all elements of the design.

METICULOUS ANALYSIS AS JUSTICE NOT METHODOLATRY

Yanchar, Gantt and Clay (2005), who advocated methodological pluralism where "methods become practical extensions of the researcher's theories and assumptions" (p. 35), cautioned against

methodological rigidity or "methodolatry" where, "good" research was defined solely in terms of methodological rigor rather than in terms of human well-being (Hostetler, 2005). Understanding students' constructions of Black identity, their readings of the media's constructions and their impact, the nature of students' critical awareness, as well as the researcher's critical reflection on her praxis necessitated a level of meticulous quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This was achieved through a skillful and thoughtful design of instruments as well as analytical techniques.

Drawing on critical theorists' notion of bricolage, we wove together the methods currently supported through coursework in a mixed methods design to engage in critical research. Creating opportunities for the voices of the participants to be heard through instruments and methods understood by more traditional researchers required that the advisee demonstrate prowess with both statistical and qualitative analysis, triangulation and integration of a number of data sources (158 surveys, 468 student journals, 15 sets of fieldnotes, and 15 interviews). This comprised multiple levels of coding, including adept use of SPSS, Atlas.ti software, and data management tools, that offered building blocks, not end points, in a multilayered nuanced analysis that revealed the uniqueness of individuals rather than simplistic generalizations. Furthermore, in order to ensure that she navigated the roles of researcher and teacher with integrity, the advisee videotaped herself throughout and reviewed this 15-session documentation for potential bias The design and analysis exemplified a skilled balance between the dual purposes of ensuring a research process that met the needs of the community, while mirroring the established protocols typical of interventionist designs.

TENSION POINTS IN THE PROCESS

Despite the laudable achievements of this study, there were points of conceptual, procedural and/or interpersonal tension experienced individually, together and between the advisor and advisee which have served as catalysts for deeper reflection on our roles as researchers, teachers and advisors. While many of these tensions arose as a function of our roles as emerging critical researchers within an institutional environment that had inadequately prepared us for what

we were to encounter, we acknowledge that these tensions were also fueled by our own choices, blind spots, personalities and expectations of what this process should be.

Unravelling the Role of the Advisor. A key tension point for the advisor was a clash in the [perceived] expectations of this role as it related to her diverse audiences; the student and the advisor's supervisors (i.e. the department chair, college dean and graduate college dean). While as advisor I was committed to advocate and create space for the advisee to succeed in a restrictive institutional context, I also faced parallel pressures to comply with administrative structures and expectations in order to ensure the student's success. Two pressures were paramount in this experience. The dissertation had been conceptualized at a point when critical approaches to scholarship were relatively rare in student work, so it had been important to design, conduct and write a study that would be supported by reviewers representing many epistemological perspectives. My perspectives as an advisor became truncated by the perceived pressure to have to gain the support of all parties.

A second pressure point was that the advisor's supervisor had expressed concern about the editorial quality of dissertations. Consequently, one of the new roles of the dissertation chair was to ensure that the document defended was "in pristine shape" to move through the approval process. It was the first year that the doctoral chair also served as an additional copy editor, expanding one's attention from matters of substance to form and formatting. These pressures were exacerbated by a time crunch which resulted in a frenzy of collective reviewing and editing that drained the joy out of a process that should have been celebratory.

Unravelling the Teacher/Researcher Roles. One of the tensions for the advisee was the management of the simultaneously occurring roles of the researcher and the teacher in the implementation of the study. While those of traditional research backgrounds would see these roles as distinct and having little room being conflated in a dissertation, the commitment to "make a difference" in a study of media literacy seemed to make the teacher-researcher role a necessary path to take. The assumption in this study was that the well-being of

the students came first. Thus, the advisee was advised to teach in an authentic manner as she would typically. "Do what a good teacher would/ should do. In this phase you are teacher first." As it turned out, this was difficult.

From the advisee's perspective, I learned that the role of teacher-researcher was not an easy enterprise. As I navigated through the teaching and research process, my role as researcher became subordinate to the role of teacher. The utmost responsibility was to ensure that the curriculum standards were taught with fidelity. There were points where I questioned if my "teaching hard" or "passion" for the content and teaching would skew the data in any way. This fear caused me at times to shy away from asking critical questions and from lingering on a concept longer- something that I would do in my own classroom. The question that arose frequently in my mind was, where did the role of teacher end and researcher begin?

Despite the conflict in roles experienced intellectually at different points during the study, there were several benefits to serving as a critical participatory researcher. The first benefit was that the research added to the gap in the literature on the perspectives of Black youth on their media experiences. It afforded the opportunity for the advisee to "get it right" in her telling of the participants' understandings of how media impacted their identity construction. This role also provided opportunity to forge professional collaborations with the host school that would allow for continued work in other areas and to inform future instruction based on the results of the study.

A structural disadvantage that faced us in the context of this tension was that the course work in the program precluded any attention to emancipatory research methodologies, particularly courses such as action research that have since become mainstays of the program. There is no doubt that had the advisee been exposed to critical epistemologies and methodologies throughout the doctoral program – as is the case now, a consequence of her own success as our first critical doctoral scholar – this tension might have been minimized, if not eliminated.

Product-orientation v. Person-orientation. Despite a reasonably smooth-sailing interpersonal relationship, a tension emerged at the point of data analysis, clouding the final stages of the process. From the advisor's perspective, there were several contributing factors. First, this is the typical stress point for students as they begin to deal with the data they have gathered. The sheer volume of data made this a particularly difficult venture with an initial full draft of the results being quite voluminous with just a month left before the end of the semester. Second, the added stress of meeting deadlines for dissertation defense also truncated the time required for the multiple levels of analysis that the advisor pushes for – moving from the voices of the participants to the identification of themes and findings that speak to broader, structural-level analyses revealed through the data

This resulted in several frustrating meetings over the analysis and the write up of the analysis, and then numerous revisions leading up to and following the successful dissertation defense. Significant tensions surfaced with the advisor's calling for "multiple levels of analysis" before discussions of more macro level analyses. A recurring theme in our discussions was the advice to "get out of the weeds" in the coding of the data to move to the next stages of analysis. While the advisor assumed that part of the difficulty was the amount of data being handled, and advised limiting the data set, there were two major concerns for the advisee. First, a reduction in the volume of data would likely lose the voices of the students and the authentic capturing of the content in which critical media literacy emerges. Capturing the voices of students was a central facet of the advisee's interpretation of the justice orientation of this study. In contrast, the move to the "upper levels" of analysis would, for the advisor, highlight the justice-oriented implications at the structural levels. Second, the criticisms of "being in the weeds" seemed unfounded given that this was an outcome of intensive coding and analysis. In part, in the advisee's view, understanding what the data "said" was central to "getting it right," which conflicted with the "outside voice" that called for "getting out of the weeds." Space was needed to read, digest, and interpret the data. The advisee grappled with the recommendations from the advisor while trying to understanding what was going on in her own head.

The back and forth around the analysis leading up to and beyond the dissertation was "ground zero" of the tensions between us.

This also reflected a third facet of tension for the advisor in navigating her role as an unseasoned advisor. The deadlines and timelines further compounded by a renewed level of scrutiny resulted in my focus becoming consumed with the dissertation as a product as opposed to focusing on the relational aspect of the advisor role. This bias was exacerbated by my memory of the advisee stating she wanted to compete for dissertation of the year, and my commitment to support that aspiration. I then fell prey to identifying all potential criticisms from a wide range of upcoming reviewers and clung to the belief that we should slow down, diminish the stress, and take our time to complete a product that would "be the best representation of [advisee's] scholarly potential." Ironically, my [blinding?] commitment to challenge structures that disadvantage under-represented research epistemologies within the institution, caused me to miss the recognition that the advisee needed to be done. Although I saw myself as doing this together *with* rather than *to* my advisee, what she felt was relentless pressure/lack of understanding rather than support.

Cultural values also likely played a role. The advisor's experiences were in a different country as a student and teacher (and daughter of a teacher in an extended family of teachers) where it was the teacher's responsibility to provide as much detailed feedback as was needed to ensure that students had every opportunity to succeed in a system where tracking and high stakes examinations determined who would go to college. She attributes her own success to her teachers who provided this intensive feedback. The advisee's cultural values took root in a culture of care and support from both family and other support systems she was surrounded with- home, church, school. Her family's work ethic and religious upbringing greatly impacted her strong sense of purpose and desire to pursue any goal "with all of her might." This is what she contributes to her success today.

For the advisor, everything that occurred in those final stages were, in her view, part of the obligation to ensure the student's success at achieving the best of which she was capable. In contrast, however, the advisee needed to be recognized as a human being, rather than

solely in terms of her dissertation, especially as the focus continued to be on what was "to be done" instead of the enormous amount of exceptionally high-quality work that had already been done. As such, a situation was created that generated internal conflict for the advisee who wondered whether the dissertation would ever be "good enough" or "critical enough." I did not have an opportunity to celebrate this accomplishment, even at graduation, because of the tension that remained post-defense. One example of this was being told, in the graduation procession, "we should have never gone to the dissertation defense." While I knew this likely would have lessened the stress of the post-defense process, this was the polar opposite sentiment expressed by other dissertation committee members who shared overwhelming support and congratulatory praise following the successful dissertation defense. This was a wakeup call for the advisor to more intentionally wrestle with/for the humanizing potential of education in the quest for broader aspirations towards equity and justice.

Emotional Language. One of the insights generated for the advisor was the observation by the advisee that she "spoke a different emotional language." This clearly meant that the primary focus of the advisor's discourse was task-oriented rather than reflecting a concern with the socio-emotional side of the advisee. Although self-confessed to "not being the 'mother hen' type" in describing her style as an advisor, and worrying that her feedback could be "chemotherapy rather than antibiotics" for what 'ails' a student's writing, this observation was catalytic in considering more carefully what is said to students or how it is said. The need to clearly establish a thoughtful relationship, where the student/advisee feels consistently and unambiguously cared for is crucial throughout the advisor-advisee relationship.

Such a consideration about the emotional language is particularly important in contexts where mediums such as e-mail play an increasingly significant role in mentoring relationships. It is more difficult to convey emotional support via email, as was experienced in a significant portion of the period of tension when the advisor was overseas. While there is also evidence that email could also mediate potential tensions of face-to-face meetings, it was important

to recognize that it was following such a meeting that the advisee indicated "I was able to once again see that you genuinely care[d] about my success as a doctoral student." There were several parts of this note that are insightful, albeit in retrospect for the advisor. That reference to "once again" is an indication for a need for consistency in demonstrating genuine care. In retrospect, some of the emails exchanged should have been taken as red flags for the need for a more humanizing relationship, which at that time was not perceived.

The advisee appreciated the time and effort the advisor invested in her study and the feedback provided. From the beginning of the journey to the end, the advisee viewed the advisor as an "intellectual and scholar" who knew how to navigate very well the "worlds" she worked within and beyond and who was committed to her work. Critical reflection on the entire process generated thoughts of dehumanization during the latter part of the process; however, it also provided opportunities for the advisee to problematize her role in contributing to the tensions that both she and the advisor experienced. Those reflections have been the source of rich conversations with other doctoral students on how to best navigate their own dissertation process.

These stylistic distinctions of the advisor lie in stark contrast to another committee member who served as a critical friend to both the advisee and advisor and who assisted the advisor in understanding how the advisee was faring while she was overseas. This faculty member, who frames herself as the "other mother" for her students, is clearly recognized as a nurturer, a descriptor hardly likely to be associated with the advisor. Part of the nurturing that the advisee enjoyed with this mentor was participation in a "Sister Circle," a supportive network of Black doctoral students where the advisee has played a lead role in mentoring her colleagues. Members of the "Sister Circle" were crucial in supporting the advisee post-defense. This faculty member, whom the advisor serves on many doctoral committees with, continues to serve as a critical guide and filter of perspectives so that each can play to their strengths without adversely impacting the progress of the student.

IMPLICATIONS/ SIGNIFICANCE

This dissertation has been catalytic in shifting the epistemological and methodological rigidity that characterized this program when this study was initially conceptualized. The successful completion of a study grounded in critical perspectives has demonstrated the possibilities of such work within the academy that still privileges crypto-positivism. The dissertation's successful passage through multiple reviews demonstrates the pathway beyond "hit-and-run" research and methodolatry. This is especially important for students of marginalized backgrounds, for whom the presence of active critical scholars and appropriate curriculum expands opportunities to develop researcher double consciousness (Carter, 2003) and/or forge epistemologies of emancipation (Tyson, 2003), particularly in institutional contexts where critical research is still marginalized within epistemological borderlands. Now more students and faculty in the program have adopted critical epistemologies. Furthermore, this work is being recognized as high quality and valuable. Several students, including the advisee, have won both the department's "Graduate Student of the Year" award and the College of Education's "Outstanding Dissertation of the Year" award. A course on critical approaches to research – initially designed as an elective based on our directed independent study - is now offered as a requirement. Compelling dissertation studies (such as this) and the caliber of students who took the new course as an elective were instrumental in this shift to research oriented towards the public good. This study highlights the early steps in the institutional transformation needed to achieve this goal.

This autoethnography also highlights the struggles entailed in achieving the goal of reconceptualizing research as a moral commitment to the public good and doing critical research in a mainstream institution. While revealing the ups and downs of the advising relationship, a process that typically occurs in private with little opportunity to learn from these experiences (Harding-DeKam et al, 2012), this study revealed the potential for autoethnography to be liberating rather than domesticating as it challenges hierarchies and makes us better teachers (Ali-Khan, 2015). From the perspective of

the advisor, it is crucial to keep the balance between the institutional realities and tensions and human realities and resources of the student. This critical, dialectical reflection highlights how, despite good intentions, the positive and constructive partnership between advisor and advisee could suffer under institutional pressures as well as interpersonal blind spots. This study and reflective experience have already initiated several new practices intended to scaffold the learning experience, to make the dissertation - as a product and process - a more fulfilling experience for both the advisee and advisor. As an advisor, I have begun to tell students when their work is "good enough" for the institution, even if they may have more to accomplish to achieve their full potential. It then becomes the student's choice about how much more they want to work. My students and I continue to lean on key committee members intentionally and explicitly to help ensure students are supported emotionally, even as I guide them intellectually.

Recognizing the time-consuming nature of data analysis, I have completely re-structured how I mentor students through the analysis process. Acknowledging the meticulous process of data management and analysis required in this dissertation, we build in time for multiple drafts of the analysis into their timelines towards graduation, working collaboratively through different stages, and developing outlines before extensive writing is undertaken. I have also developed analysis workshops for students, particularly to support them at this (often frustrating) stage of the dissertation. These workshops address what was missing or seemed less relevant in coursework: the differences between reporting the data and analyzing it, stages of data analysis, tensions in data reduction, and addressing the distinction between the voice of participants and that of the researcher.

Since the institution holds dissertation chairs responsible for all editing, I continue to use the "track changes" feature to provide substantive feedback as well as flag editorial changes. However, if a document has too many of these comments, I now send students a summary of the key observations in my feedback and provide feedback in stages. I have begun to think more judiciously about the balance among opportunities for face to face vs. e-mail, phone, Skype,

Zoom-based feedback based on the purpose of the meeting and the student's preferences. I do not accept a student's request to chair their dissertation unless they have spoken with other advisees to become familiar with my advising style and we have had explicit discussions about our hopes and expectations. I continue to work closely with other members of the committee, especially when I have dilemmas in the advising process, ensuring a team-based support structure on emerging concerns.

As a graduate of the program and current adjunct instructor, I, the advisee, now serve as a member on two dissertation committees and have coached several doctoral students through the data analysis process. Through my reflexivity on the doctoral journey, I am now able to share both my woes and joys of the process in an effort to help other doctoral students navigate the process and to make what is a stressful time for most more enjoyable. I am very engaged in the "Sister Circle," as a graduate, as I believe it is a much-needed support system, especially for Black women aspiring to become a part of the academy.

As critical pedagogues we both take pride in ensuring that our students in our courses enjoy the experience as much as they learn substantively from it. This is a lesson that needs to be translated into the doctoral experience. This is a path that we need to forge in the absence of significant models for how this gets done. This is particularly problematic when institutional culture and practice also pressure dissertation chairs towards a more dehumanized role as quality controller. We must re-commit to helping students look back on their doctoral experiences as a high point in their academic *experiences*, not just in their achievement. In these contexts, the role of critical friends who support both advisor and advisee in the process becomes crucial. Doctoral programs that have support structures aid both students and advisors as a community of learners.

Finally, as critical pedagogues we were also fortunate to recognize the importance of this reflexivity in our own process. It is a process we strongly recommend for all doctoral chairs and their students. The dissertation should be a process where both the advisor and the advisee grow as critical scholars. Indeed, the forging of intellectual spaces for

critical work must be accompanied by concomitant spaces of safety and nurturance for emerging scholars. There is no doubt that the learning outcomes for which this study was a catalyst will make the advisor better at advancing the principles of social justice and critical praxis both in product and in process in future dissertations. The learning outcomes of this study also position the advisee to extend the support she received through the process to others who are engaged in critical work and to continue to infuse the principles of social justice and critical praxis in her work as an emerging scholar.

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