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Dismantling the master's house: Epistemological tensions and revelatory interventions for reimagining a transformational family science

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Abstract

Using Audre Lorde's *The Master's Tools* as an epistemic guide, we propose two practice interventions for family science (FS) transformative praxes. The first, inspired by the thought of philosopher Charles Mills, challenges FS practitioners (research, practice, and policy) to explore differences in peripheral and positivist & post-positivist (P&PP) ideologies responsible for differences in beliefs regarding the salience or non-salience of power differentials within FS. The second, inspired by the thought of philosopher Rudolph Carnap, encourages FS practitioners to consider differences in peripheral and P&PP practitioners' understandings of what FS is at its core, and the beliefs and actions guided by their divergent core understandings. Both revelatory practices are intended to transform FS in such a way that its praxes are informed by these ways of practicing, and so that embodied understandings of the importance of pursuing anti-racist and social justice objectives within FS become manifest.

KEYWORDS

anti-racism, epistemic praxes, family science, racism, social justice, transformative praxes

Through special issues, the *Journal of Family Theory and Review* and the two other flagship journals of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR)—the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (JMF) and *Family Relations*—“seek to provide an opportunity to showcase cutting edge theory, research, and practices that engage the family science community with scholarship that promotes anti-racist and social justice efforts” (NCFR, 2021a, para 1). This unprecedented cross-journal collaboration is a response, in part, to the tragic murder of George Floyd at the knee of then-Minneapolis Police Detective Dennis Chauvin, to which we bore collective witness

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during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether we are at a moment of national reckoning on race may be arguable, but what did happen in the near stillness of quarantine, when we were aghast with the horror of it all, was a reflective pause, unlike anything since the contorted corpse of Emmett Till laid in state in 1955 (Tyson, 2017) flooded the Black press, or when in 1963 Bull Connor, the Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety, unleashed fire-hose water and Alsatian police dogs on protesting Black youth during the Children's Crusade. The special call also represents our discipline's awareness of its uneasy relation to race and social justice praxis (be it research, service, or advocacy/activism). This tension derives from ethical, epistemological, and disciplinary considerations.

Family science (FS) is the scientific study of families and close interpersonal relationships, whose founding and history has been an interdisciplinary one (NCFR, 1985; 2021b). The discipline, as noted by the NCFR, distinguishes itself in its strength-oriented emphasis on families within broader social systems, with attention to family diversity and dynamics across the life span. The knowledge foundation is based on rigorous scientific research that uses multiple methods and theories, including those distinctive for the discipline and applied evidence-based methodologies. The field's emphasis on application is evident in its focus on education, prevention, and translational efforts to strengthen and support healthy families (NCFR, 2021b). More muted is the positionality of individuals and families and the role of difference and structured inequality as the result of sociohistorical and systemic processes that are promotive or that undermine well-being (James et al., 2016). It is not that the pursuit of anti-racist and social justice efforts is incompatible with FS. However, questions remain as to how these aims are to be understood within paradigms of scientific inquiry.

We propose ways of *practicing* whose enactment by practitioners (inclusive of research, practice, and policy) is intended to transform FS in such a way that its praxes are informed by the ways of practicing so that embodied understandings of the importance of pursuing anti-racist and social justice objectives within FS become manifest. To move beyond visceral moments of reactive response to jarring moments of violence and injustice and to promote anti-racist and social justice efforts in FS, we must engage the epistemic praxes that inform knowledge production, theorizing, and application. Further, we presume that any conduct of social research has implications for equity, and for what is just. Thus, we challenge the FS community to do more than passively engage with this scholarship but rather to reflexively ask, "If *I* am to engage in work that promotes racial equity and social justice, what should *I* be thinking about and, ultimately, doing?" As a collective we should ask, "Should we engage work that promotes racial equity and social justice? If so, what should *we* be thinking about and, ultimately, doing?" And if we—or some of us—think that we should not engage with such work, why not?

We take up this charge as a transdisciplinary collaboration between FS, philosophy, and human service studies, and as African American women scholars with complementary areas of research and scholarship. For this exploration, we draw on feminist and Black feminist thought, and intersectionality, and engage in varied ways with the philosophical, theoretical, and practical traditions of our disciplines. The problem we address is transdisciplinary and occurs across disciplines. The uniting of disciplinary foci of the co-authors brings together interconnected knowledges that articulate epistemic and ontological tensions within FS, which give rise to oppositional praxes. We draw on African Americans as our exemplars, while seeing applications for intersectional identities and diverse racial and ethnic groups, and other critical theories (e.g., LatCrit, de-colonial, and queer theory) that engage social justice projects.

THE MASTERING TOOLS: WHOSE HOUSE IS THIS?

Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" provides our conceptual guiding frame (Lorde, 2007). This concept derives from comments Lorde delivered on September 29, 1979 in New York at "The Personal and the Political Panel" during the

Second Sex Conference. At the conference, Lorde raised a critical problem about difference. More specifically, she asked how *difference* is used to construct hierarchies of exclusion which, historically, have been a principle patriarchal tool of oppression. Eradicating such hierarchies and the tools that create them are key to eliminating social injustices. Eliminating hierarchical social injustices also provides a praxis for creating spaces of manifest social justice.

Lorde, who was found “at the last hour” (Lorde, 2007, 110) to present and who was one of only two Black women presenters, opened her talk with a point about difference in the lives of American women along the vectors of race, sexuality, class, and age. Lorde challenged the *vision* of the conference, held in “in a country where racism, sexism, and homophobia are inseparable” (p. 110), and in which the conference organizers themselves failed to invite those whose differences would had made a significant contribution to the topic of investigation. Lorde stated, “To read this program is to assume that lesbian and Black women have nothing to say about existentialism, the erotic, women’s culture and silence, developing feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power” (110). Lorde asked, “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?” (pp. 110–11). According to Lorde, such tools “may allow us temporarily to beat him [the master] at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (p. 112, parenthetical content added). Lorde makes clear that the exclusions based on differences used to create and maintain hierarchies of oppression are proprietary tools of patriarchy: They are the master’s tools. Ironically, the “fruit” to be examined at the conference presented itself in the very form that the conference took. That is, the quasi-absence of manifestations of some of the kinds of differences that *should have been* relevant to creating new knowledge through the conference. Lorde observed that “the absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political” (p. 110).

It is not clear that *the master* was beaten in the game of exclusion played at the feminist conference, even temporarily. Genuine change had been forestalled. Topics of inquiry, such as what Lorde had been tasked to do at the conference, impose certain considerations, without which the inquiry itself is seriously undermined. We believe that the same holds for FS. The discipline itself and its subjects and objects of inquiry *impose* certain considerations, without which the disciplines’ methodologies, and the actions and policies stemming from them, are seriously undermined. We focus on two such considerations. The first pertains to the problem of power differentials and their relation to the field. A second problem concerns the relationship between social justice and truth. Some factions within FS may hold a view (spoken or unspoken) that methodologies that aim for racial equity or social justice import ideologies that contaminate truth. Some further believe (either explicitly or tacitly) that truth—the domain of science—is value- and ideology-free.

Audre Lorde’s *Master’s Tools* serves as an epistemic guide to situate the two considerations mentioned above. We extrapolate from this guide a frame for exploring positivism/post-positivism (P&PP, discussed below) and peripheral practices in FS, and for imagining practices that engage transformation. Our use of the term “peripheral” throughout this paper pertains to thought, scholarship, epistemologies, experience (and ontologies), and praxes of individuals, groups, and communities that have been marginalized, subjugated, or silenced within disciplinary hegemonies and P&PP scientific inquiry, as well as to individuals and groups themselves working within FS. This binary articulation represents the oppositional tensions of FS practitioners. However, throughout the text we acknowledge differences among peripherals and P&PP practitioners, as well as commonalities across the two groups. To lay the foundations for the epistemic and revelatory practices to be proposed, we begin with an epistemological primer.

An Epistemological Primer

When Guba and Lincoln published their 1994 essay “Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research,” it was a watershed moment not only because of the increased deployment of

qualitative methods across social science disciplines but also due to the ever-louder critique of positivism and the infusion of alternative inquiry paradigms and critical perspectives to aid such methodological deployment. They focused on the fundamental question of paradigm, defining it as “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 105). Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* first articulated the import and shifts in scientific paradigms for received reality (ontology) and method, and the impacts on communications between scientists and the advancement of knowledge. Guba and Lincoln (1994) retained Kuhn’s concept of paradigm and the focus on reality and methods but added ethical and epistemological assumptions as paradigmatic suppositions that inform scientific inquiry (Mertens, 2012). Mertens (2012, p. 255) further noted “they set the stage for recognition of different paradigms that start with different philosophical assumptions and that lead to different methodological assumptions and methods choices,” which together lived within a broad terrain of inquiry rather than one falling away in paradigmatic obsolescence.

In the decades since the publication of Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) original essay, there has been an awareness, if not acceptance, of the multiplicity of paradigms and methodological approaches within and across disciplines. However, the epistemological and methodological tensions with “quantification and the conventional paradigm” (i.e., positivist inquiry) remain. The intraparadigm critiques include (a) context stripping via statistical and methodological design (controls and randomization), which undermines relevance (i.e., application and generalizability); (b) exclusion of meaning and purpose that informs human behavior through quantitatively focused methods; (c) disregarding the etic/emic dilemma, according to which the “etic (outsider) theory brought to bear on an inquiry by an investigator (or the hypotheses proposed to be tested) may have little or no meaning within the emic (insider) view of studied individuals, groups, societies, or cultures” (p. 106); (d) nonobservance or insouciance regarding the inapplicability of general data to individual cases. That is, generalizations based on statistical significance may be insufficient for understanding or explaining an individual’s case (biography or experience). Moreover, the emphasis on hypothesis testing (verification) precludes the opportunity for discovery. As Guba and Lincoln note, these intraparadigm problems “offer a weighty challenge to conventional methodology, but could be eliminated, or at least ameliorated, by greater use of qualitative data” (p. 107).

Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) external critiques of alternative paradigms aim at assumptions about the nature of theories. Firstly, the assumption of theoretical and observational languages is challenged by the view “which now seems established beyond objection that theories and facts are quite *interdependent*—that is, that facts are facts only within some theoretical framework” (p. 107). Secondly, insufficient attention is given to the problem of the underdetermination of theory, which understands that different theoretical perspectives may accommodate the same facts and observations and, therefore, the emphasis should be on theory falsification rather than verification. A reminder that sufficient attention must be paid to the underdetermination of theory serves to call attention to the fact that science, by its methods, does not ultimately “converge on the ‘real’ truth” (p. 107). Thirdly, insufficient attention may be given to the idea that observations or facts are always value-laden, just as facts and theories are. A reminder that this is the case brings to awareness that “putative ‘facts’ are viewed not only through a theory window but through a value window as well” (p. 107). And, finally, the sciences—perhaps especially the social sciences—are challenged to be more skeptical about the idea of objective recording of phenomena by scientific inquirers. A dyadic relationship exists between the inquirer and the individuals who are the “subject” of study. The researcher/scientist is not positioned outside the research process. An important question is how the critiques and tensions Guba and Lincoln highlight may be implicated in FS praxes that address racism and social justice.

Guba and Lincoln's critiques of P&PP focus the reader's attention on the idea that norms and values drive worldviews (i.e., ideologies) in all sciences, including FS. Understanding the relationship between norms, values, and science informs our proposed interventions. Practitioners are asked to interrogate how specific norms and values, which derive from their situated knowledge, inform their representations of FS. In particular, practitioners are asked to think about the following questions: How do their views of truth relate to their understanding of the salience or non-salience of power differentials and to the legitimacy of social justice aims within FS? What are the norms and values they possess that seem to ineluctably impel them to offer certain kinds of representations of FS?

FS and the Pull of Positivism

FS has been mostly responsive to the internal critiques (i.e., intraparadigms) of positivist inquiry, but the pull of positivism remains, as do the epistemological and ontological tensions Guba and Lincoln describe. Daly (2007) highlights Masterman's (1970) core framing of Thomas Kuhn's (1962) articulation of paradigms as (a) beliefs (what science is and what it is not); (b) habits (conventions and taken-for-granted assumptions, inherited social thought, recognized achievement); and (c) tools (instruments, methods, language, interpretive analytics). Although Daly described FS as largely post-positivist, he argued that the discipline had much in common with the habits and tools of positivism. The pull of positivism to which we refer are the beliefs, habits, and tools of positivism that hegemonically frame the discipline. However, FS has engaged in critical examination of alternative theories, multiple methodologies, praxes, and tools, as feminist theories made their way into the discipline (Few-Demo, 2014; Thompson & Walker, 1995; Walker & Thompson, 1984). Peripheral scholarship has also long created paradigmatic rifts within the disciplinary canon (Hunter, 2021). However, it remains important to explore key points of tension that are unreconciled between two types of paradigms, P&PP and peripheral praxes, which may "show up" in theories and praxes that take into account race, families, and social justice. Some of the tensions may speak to a difference in values, despite P&PP's understanding of itself as value-neutral. Here, we will also extend Guba and Lincoln's framing to interrogate whether P&PP practitioners consider the role that values play in understanding social justice praxis as outside legitimate scientific investigations of truth.

To begin with a moment of disciplinary reflexivity, we ask, "who owns the house of FS?" and "who is the presumptive master of the house that belongs to FS?" P&PP may be the presumptive master of FS, as interpretations of the work of Daly (2007) and others (Lavee & Dollahite, 1991; Walker, 2009) suggest. Difference is operative within FS. By capital-D Difference we mean differences that have been created through power differentials that hierarchically structure exclusion and inferiorization. Together, in dialogue, we may ask what some of the assumptions that traditional P&PP practitioners import into FS are. More specifically, what are some of the social assumptions that are enfolded within P&PP's paradigm and that live within the social habitus of its practitioners? If there are unspoken social assumptions and norms that impact how traditional P&PP practitioners understand the norms and objectives of FS's methodologies, mission, and vision, what might some of them be? More specifically, do P&PP practitioners practice the discipline's traditional methodologies as though they were value-neutral (hence, free of ideology), while understanding peripherals' social justice aims as carrying contaminating ideological-, truth-, and knowledge-corrupting biases into the realm of FS's search for scientific truth about families? Does ownership—or perhaps being the presumed master of FS—hold a difference that re-inscribes Difference? Thus the question, as it pertains to FS, is whether there are Differences between P&PP and peripheral praxes that forge an ongoing Difference between these two groups, and their members, as practitioners. If so, what are the impacts of Difference constructed within FS on the presumed norms and objectives of FS? We

work with the assumption that the master-for-the-moment *owns* the house of FS. However, we believe that masterhood and ownership can come apart. We are on the way to forging a separation between them by revealing how they have been linked through ideology.

Ontology, Ideology, and Power

The relationship between ideology, with respect to power differentials, and knowledge, truth, and ontology is a foundational consideration. Power differentials may be perceived as non-salient. That is, they may not be considered central to the workings of fields within the sciences, including the social sciences. Linguist and author of *Woke Racism* (McWhorter, 2021b), John McWhorter, expresses such a view in his discussion with former Democratic presidential candidate, Andrew Yang, when he states,

You're supposed to place battling power differentials at the center of any kind of endeavor ... it's one thing to want to battle differentials in power. Power corrupts, certainly. It does. But for that to be *the thing* ... All they know is that they think of the power differentials as central ... So, you say, "Why only this?" And for them you're asking them to question truth itself ... they think of the power differentials as what we must hold front and center all the time. *Most of us don't feel that way* (McWhorter, 2021a, 22:22, emphasis added).

McWhorter's "most of us" makes no reference to who *most of us* are. Moreover, what most of us *feel* about the matter is not what determines *the existence* of power differentials and their effects. Furthermore, that someone not affected by power differentials would not be able to *feel* them or think much about them may not be uncommon.

Power differentials may also be perceived as a force that contaminates knowledge, thereby corrupting truth and ontology. France's National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), recently accused of teaching Islamo-leftist ideology, was threatened with investigation. "The discipline that has been the most attacked at the CNRS by the adversaries of 'islamo-leftism' is decolonial studies, whose aim is to analyze and deconstruct relations of domination (allegedly) inherited from western colonization. Decolonial studies engage within a reflection on intersectionality, which explores intersections between various structures of domination..." (Philosophie Magazine, 2021, Le champ d'études le plus décrié par les adversaires de l' "islamo-gauchisme" est celui des études décoloniales, para 2) such as race, class, and gender. Within the context of this public contestation, Gisèle Sapiro—sociologist and Director of Research at the CNRS and Director of the Graduate School in Social Sciences (EHESS)—notes that Pierre Bourdieu's republished *Travail et Travailleurs en Algérie* (1963) (*Work and Workers in Algeria*) "serves to remind us, as we find ourselves in the middle of a debate about islamo-leftism, that an engaged social science does not express an ideology" (Sapiro, 2021, para 1, trans. Jones). Sapiro writes,

Sociology here develops a reflection upon its practice as investigator within a colonial context, demonstrating that sociologists and ethnologists are not working as spokespersons commissioned by the dominated or by the dominators. They collect their words, and as public writers, re-inscribe them within the context of an objective system of power relations (Sapiro, 2021, para 1, trans. Jones).

At issue are some of the CNRS's methodologies, such as intersectionality and objectives, that investigate power differentials and their effects on oppressed people. An underlying sentiment seems to be that the CNRS's objective is not to speak about truths discovered but rather to

speak *for* constituencies (group subjectivities), whose words are taken as the primary evidence for the truths advanced. On such a view, objective, scientific truth would be abandoned through its contamination by group identities and the alleged knowledge produced through and reduced to their subjectivities. Sapiro's understanding of the CNRS's work, in contrast to the perspective of its adversaries, indicate that two very different paradigms or worldviews are in disaccord. Power differentials and the relations or relationships that derive from them fall outside the limits of legitimate inquiry from the point of view of adversaries of the CNRS. But from the perspective of the CNRS's sociologists, ethnologists, decolonial theorists, and other researchers, power differentials are inextricably part of the context of investigation. Indeed, power differentials are foundational in creating the situational phenomena these researchers investigate. Therefore, it would be impossible for them to conduct their research without including power differentials in their investigations.

Recent attacks on critical race theory (CRT) in the United States provide an acute example of how an analytic framework can be charged with reducing truth and evidence for truths to the subjectivities of discrete identity groups—e.g., Black people—and deployed to advance the socio-political demands of that group. Such attacks, themselves political and ideological, have led some state legislation to ban not only CRT but its perceived application (Stout & Wilburn, 2022).

Understanding ideology differently from Sapiro's expression of this concept, we maintain that CRT indeed operates through ideology. We agree with Mills (2017) when he writes "all theorizing...takes place in an intellectual realm dominated by concepts, assumptions, norms, values, and framing perspectives that reflect the experience" of groups (p. 82). Thus, we understand that science expresses ideology, and hence *a fortiori* that P&PP and peripheral praxes derive from, express, and reflect ideology. This statement is in alignment with and relevant to how Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm and a field's *inquiry* paradigms; that is, as "the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). Basic belief systems and worldviews are ideologies. These do not just come from nowhere or from incontrovertible proven facts. As for research methods, ontology, and epistemology, they cannot but reflect the ideologies—the basic beliefs and worldviews—that invent them. Further, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a field's *inquiry* paradigms "define for the inquirer what it is they are about, and what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry" (p. 108). Here, what they are characterizing is a type of ideology and the work that ideology does. For example, FS may underestimate the salience of power differentials for families and their members and see them as falling outside the limits of legitimate inquiry (see Hunter et al., 2022). When certain considerations are excluded from legitimate inquiry, intentionally or otherwise, a master's tool is in effect being deployed to craft exclusion, and consequences will necessarily follow. To engage in transformative praxis, it is important to surface and reveal the epistemic tensions that derive from exclusions, whose construction engenders impoverished knowledge and constructs ignorance, and various forms of social injustice.

TRANSFORMED PRAXIS: EPISTEMIC TENSIONS AND PRACTICING REVELATORY INTERVENTIONS

Lorde's *The Master's Tools* is our conceptual guiding frame for exploring and deconstructing P&PP and peripheral praxes in FS, and for imagining *ways of practicing* capable of bringing about social transformation in FS. We deploy *The Master's Tools* as an epistemic and moral injunction to uncover and make explicit unformulated assumptions, norms, and values, and to interrogate assumptions centered within FS, which have pushed peripheral voices and methodologies—as well as the communities that FS purports to serve—to the margins. Through

the proposed epistemic interventions, epistemological tensions are revealed as we consider unspoken ideological differences in the relationship between ideology and power differentials and between ideologically constructed paradigms and truth and ontology. Following Lorde in "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (1984), we embrace "the revelatory distillation of experience" (p. 37) to uncover imagination-stoked insights for knowledge-creation and understanding. We, like Lorde, believe that "in a world of possibility for us all, our personal visions help lay the groundwork for political action" (p. 37) toward racial equity and social justice.

During a jazz masterclass in Paris in the 1990s, Herbie Hancock counseled a group of young musicians whom some audience members might have considered to have messed up. Hancock said something to this effect: "Miles Davis always told us, 'I don't pay you to *play*, during a performance. I pay you to *practice*.'" In a jazz masterclass at the University of Miami, bassist Christian McBride told a group he had observed that when a peer plays a solo, whether on stage or during practice, players should not stand against the wall looking bored until they play their own solo. They should be engaged the entire time, on the performance stage as in practice. Our understanding of Hancock's and McBride's statements, as uttered in those moments, is critical for comprehending our conceptualization of practice (or practicing) and its relation to FS praxis. We believe that practice can transform work or performance praxis when the latter is a continuation or an extension of the former. That is, when the former is embedded and enacted within the latter. In our opinion, McBride correctly conjectured that the bored players' postures in performance—which we will call his praxis on the stage—mirrored his offstage practice habits. McBride's recommendation did not go against performance praxis mirroring off-stage practice. Rather, it proposed that the player enact the right kind of thing *in practice* to mirror and bring onto and into the work–performance stage.

Literature on praxis often bears witness to concerns about gaps between theory and praxis. However, a concern so stated does not capture the problem we address in this paper. On the contrary, our provocation underscores how alignments between P&PP theory and P&PP praxes may work against serving peripheral families and communities. That is, what some praxes may be mirroring is problematic to begin with. The interventions we propose consist of practice sessions for the revelation of FS practitioners' understandings of what FS is, what FS's primary aims are, and its legitimate limits of inquiry, where these understandings are derived from practitioners' ideologies and situated knowledges. Awareness of contradictions, tensions, and incommensurables revealed in practice sessions may transform practitioners' action *in work* (i.e., their praxis), if reflected upon during practice sessions and individually (outside of it) and then brought into the workspace, where reflection upon them should continue. Therefore, it "is not performance, that endless dance of display" (Penney & Warelow, p. 266) but repetition *in work* of the kind of epistemic, somatic, inter- and intra-subjective and spiritual engagement that is mandatory in practice sessions. Repetition is never of the same thing because conditions change, both within and across practice and work sessions. Attention to conditions is always an imperative. We propose applying Hancock, Davis, and McBride's insights and wisdom to the realm of FS.

Thus, if a practitioner encounters a contradiction between P&PP and peripheral representations of FS (see below for examples of possible contradictions and tensions) in a practice session, the contradiction should be carried into one's work. Acknowledgment and awareness of the problem in work should mirror acknowledgment and awareness of the problem in practice. In the case of a research paper, for instance, the contradiction cannot be jettisoned away in a footnote or just completely omitted. If practitioners become aware in practice sessions of negative impacts on families from holding certain FS views, they should not simply proceed as though they have learned nothing new. An awareness of causing harm or possible harm should somehow register in the practitioner. Moreover, if tension is felt in a practice session then it ought to show up, somehow, in work sessions, too. Practice sessions are reiterative, with new questions, tensions, and knowledge arising from work sessions returned to practice sessions.

Following the work of Penney and Warelow (1999), we recommend that practitioners keep a journal narrating *what happened* when they brought practice session knowledge and tension into work session space, as well as what happened when they brought work session knowledge and tension back into practice session space. Such content should be used to (re)inform practice space and to structure habits of public practitioner accountability with respect to engaging learnings from practice space in praxis work space, and vice versa. “Narrative viewed from this perspective can be seen as transformative and connecting, providing opportunities to open further possibilities” (p. 264) in practice space and work space, and as providing an ongoing record of tensions within FS, which have a storied past in light of the paradigmatic rifts around race and family that are part of its history (Allen, 1978; Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993; Hunter, 2021; Nobles, 1978; Murry et al., 2001; Staples & Mirande, 1980) and given the work critical theorists have pursued to push the frontiers of the discipline (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Doherty et al., 1993; Few, 2007; Lloyd et al., 2009). Walker and Thompson (1984) pose the question: “Can one be both a scientist and a feminist?” We are not only concerned with the question, “Can one be both a scientist and an activist for social justice?” Our question is explicitly about the field of FS itself. Can FS provide a unified framework for a P&PP scientific worldview conjoined with a peripheral social justice worldview?

Transformative Praxis: Dialogic Process and the Co-Construction of FS

In the intervention we propose, which takes the form of an epistemic–revelatory practice, FS practitioners collectively engage a *what if* question as a prompt. What if P&PPs and peripherals had to co-reconstruct the field of FS together through a democratic process? What form could a democratic process for the co-reconstruction of FS take? We propose two approaches inspired by the works of philosophers Charles Mills (2017) and Rudolph Carnap (1950). The Millsian intervention enables a focus on discrepancies and tensions with respect to ways that P&PP and peripheral practitioners represent power differentials in the field of FS as a function of difference in group ideologies. The Carnapian intervention encourages awareness in practitioners of incommensurables, regarding P&PP and peripheral understandings of the core-constitutive statements that articulate what FS is and non-core-constitutive statements, which drive and reflect what practitioners take FS’s ontologies, epistemologies (including methodologies), and values to be.

The prospect of a transformed praxis emerges from P&PP practitioners working with newly discovered tensions and peripherals working with novel presentations and representations of FS tensions, and perhaps, also, newly discovered tensions. Such tensions may create, for all concerned, new intrapersonal and interpersonal crises. FS practitioner praxes are transformed through crises and awareness of crises, which (the hope is) continue under conditions of work (research and service). The transformed praxes of practitioners carry over into new practicing sessions. Ideally, a feedback loop develops between practicing FS exercises and enacting FS praxes, which would have to be reiterative and ongoing for the possible attainment of a transformational FS praxes (Hunter et al., 2021).

The Millsian and Carnapian interventions bring views and assumptions, with their attendant tensions, into plain view for consideration and debate. Exposed tensions cannot be easily denied, obfuscated, or eliminated. Both interventions require acknowledgment of what is going on, as represented or modeled by a framework. The interventions we propose seek to provide a dialogic space for discussion among diverse parties. By integrating three key features of democratic life—diversity, interaction, and dynamism—P&PP and peripheral practitioners conduct their attempts to co-reconstruct FS within the socio-epistemic constraints of what philosopher José Medina (2012) calls a resistance model. According to Medina, a resistance model enables “modes of relationality crucial for democratic sociability” (p. 2). We

propose Millsian and Carnapian interventions as *unmastering tools* not because they dismantle the master's *house* but, rather, because if used properly, they unmaster certain tools of mastery that reconstruct and maintain the master's house, as it has always been. These interventions reveal hierarchical superiorization–inferiorization processes (tools) enacted through certain exclusionary, inferiorization practices (e.g., making invisible, silencing, or making inaudible); through the use of unchallenged idealizations and presumed best practices in contrast to practices and goals presumed to be illegitimate; or through monopolization of truth, certified knowledge, knowledge production, and coherence with respect to pragmatic goals (Collins, 1992, 2017). Revelation generated through the interventions provides the possibility for inter- and intra-conscious awareness and inter- and intra-felt tension, both of which are necessary for transformation.

A Millsian Intervention: Who Abstracts Away Power Differentials and Why?

Figure I illustrates a Millsian approach that informs the proposed way of practicing, which examines attempts to align P&PP and peripheral practitioners' ideologies. Arguably, such attempts present a core disciplinary struggle or challenge as FS moves in new directions, as witnessed by the spate of special issues on race, ethnicity and culture, feminism, intersectionality, critical theory, LGBTQIA+ families and queer theory, and social justice, as well as the decennial reviews of these areas in *JMF* since the 1980s issue. Although we focus on the non-salience and salience of power differentials as critical to the social justice project in FS, there may be other divergent ideologies that lead to further important differences in P&PP and peripheral representations of FS. Such an intervention assumes that groups represent FS through ideology (not that one group has ideology and the other is ideology-free). Moreover, P&PP and peripherals share important FS ideological values. For example, the idea that the family is the "fundamental group unit of society" or that "families and family relationships are embedded within broader societal systems" (NCFR website) are values to which both P&PP and peripheral practitioners adhere. These ideological values are not disembodied. They are informed by situated knowledges, or knowledges that reflect the conditions, contexts, and social locations in which they are produced (Haraway, 1988) and that are shaped by sociocultural and ecological influences. There are also inherent tensions within P&PP and peripheral ideologies regarding disciplinary valuations, hegemonic standing, and knowledge credibility. Further, there are tensions in how the practitioners themselves are valued. Thus, these groups diverge when it comes to representing the role power differentials play in FS and the social worlds related interdependently to FS. Peripheral intra-group participants' ontologies and epistemologies have been shaped by structural power differentials that construct their socially located situations. Hence, it is not surprising that individuals within each group, not to mention the groups taken as a whole, would describe the actual practice of FS differently.

Mills (2005) theorized the benefits of comparing non-ideal and ideal representations (or models) for achieving social justice aims. According to Mills, ideal theory idealizes phenomena "to the exclusion, or at least marginalization of the actual" (p. 75). Aware that *any* theorizing of a phenomenon abstracts away from it, and thus results in idealization, Mills specifies a concept for a specific idealization relevant to the problem at hand. He writes that

an idealized social ontology of the modern type... will abstract *away* from *relations of structural domination*, exploitation, coercion, and oppression, which in reality, of course, will profoundly shape the ontology of those same individuals, locating them in superior and inferior positions in social hierarchies of various kinds (p. 75, emphasis added).

We use the language of *idealized and non-idealized representations/theory* rather than ideal and non-theory. We assume, as a starting point, that a P&PP worldview functions with an idealized social ontology *because* P&PP abstracts away the salience of power differentials and their impacts within FS. We maintain that peripheral practitioners (given the social situation of diverse members of this unified group) operate in a way that is antithetical to abstracting away power differentials inherent in their actual lived situations. As Mills (2017, pp. 77–78) wrote, “certainly Black Americans and others of the racially oppressed have always operated on the assumption that the natural and most illuminating starting point is the *actual* conditions of non-Whites *and the discrepancy between that and the vaunted American ideals*” (emphasis added).

FS’s alignment with P&PP as an organizing and central epistemology has been discussed elsewhere (Daly, 2007; Navee & Dollahite, 1991; Walker, 2009). As explained above, we maintain that the social locations of diverse members of peripheral practitioners are antithetical to abstracting away power differentials. We have seen, for example, the attempts of Black family and developmental scholars to center the actual conditions of Black people with respect to structural power differentials and cultural frameworks. The counter-theoretical narrative produced by peripheral practitioners, from which the discipline has significantly benefited (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993; Doherty et al., 1993; Hunter, 2021; McLoyd, 2006), strongly suggests that the social location (and attendant lived experiences) of diverse members of this group has pushed frameworks, methods, and applied practices antithetical to abstracting away power differentials. Thus, we contend that peripherals’ representations of FS are non-idealizing in this specific manner. That said, it would be revelatory to see which differences peripherals abstract away (i.e., how they idealize their representation) to provide a unified representation of FS. Likewise, the differences P&PPs abstract away to provide a unified description of FS would be of great interest.

Unmastering Tools I: Identification and Attempted Alignment

Based on a Millsian view, we advance an approach and strategies for a *revelatory intervention* capable of disclosing tensions and discrepancies between non-idealized and idealized representations of power differentials. As we consider transformations in approaches to race, families, and social justice, we focus particularly on *attempts* at alignment with respect to divergent ideologies pertaining to the salience or non-salience of power differentials. A core prompt for the thought experiment and dialogue is the following question: What are the norms and values that bring about a difference in the way that power differentials are understood and represented by P & PP as opposed to peripheral practitioners? Critical theory—coming from Black and white feminists, Latinx critical theory (LatCrit), CRT, and queer theory theoretical formulations—emerge out of positionalities of difference along axes of race, gender, class, and sexuality, on a *matrix of domination*, sometimes referred to as interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 1992). Further, any theorization of political economy that privileges the importance of class structures will necessarily be concerned with power differentials. In fact, these various formulations emphasize the importance of considering the role of power differentials and Difference within FS. The dialogic, epistemic, and revelatory intervention we propose for the Millsian phase of the practice session consists of two types of practice—an identificatory phase and an attempted realignment phase—and proceeds from two basic questions: (a) What is the *ideology* of P & PP practitioners that leads to a representation of FS that abstracts away the salience of power differentials? and (b) What is the *ideology* of peripheral practitioners that leads to a representation of FS that does not abstract away the importance of power differentials?”

The aim of the “identification phase” is to identify differences in ideology that result from oppositional starting points (P & PP and peripheral). In the second phase, practitioners attempt to bring divergent points of departure into alignment (Table 1), *with the aim of discovering the*

TABLE 1 *Co-constructions of FS by Positivists/Post-Positivists and peripheral Practitioners^a*

Unmastering Tools	Practicing Aim	Revelatory Intervention	Transformative Possibility
Unmastering Tool I	To articulate representation(s) of FS paradigm(s) and idealized vs. non-idealized representations with respect to power differentials, thereby exploring incommensurables.	What are the differences in P&PP idealized and peripheral non-idealized representations of FS with respect to power differentials? What are the ideological assumptions, driving the tensions, differences and disagreements revealed? What tensions, discrepancies, or questions arise with failures of attempted realignment, or successes in realignment?	Recognition within public FS space of incommensurables and the differences in ideology driving them. Acknowledgment within public FS space of problems that arise in attempting realignment. Possible individual, inter-group, and intra-group praxis changes due to awareness of incommensurables and discrepancies revealed.
Unmastering Tool II	To distinguish between core constituent statements, non-core-constitutive statements, and to discover and identify tensions, contradictions, and discrepancies between P&PP and peripheral core-constitutive statements, P&PP and peripheral non-core-constitutive statements, and between each group's core-constitutive statements and the other group's non-core-constitutive statements	P&PP and peripheral practitioners attempt to align their core-constitutive statements. They attempt to align their non-core-constitutive statements. They attempt to align their respective core-constitutive statements with the non-core-constitutive statements of the other group.	Possible individual, inter-group, and intra-group praxis changes due to awareness of incommensurables and discrepancies revealed.

^aThe possibility of transformational FS praxes must include practitioners bringing practice tensions and awareness of discrepancies and incommensurables into FS work (i.e., research, application, service). Working with and through tensions under the conditions of work should bring new questions, and possibly new tensions, with awareness of new problems. These are to be brought back into new Millsian and Carnapian practice sessions. It is difficult not to change *in some way* if a practitioner is aware of working with a tension that has repercussions for the work the practitioner is doing.

ideological differences that block alignment. The identification phase's guiding questions include the following: What are the differences in idealized and non-idealized theory within FS? What are the assumptions, tensions, and disagreements that block alignment? How may we best represent oppositional viewpoints? In which areas could we attempt realignment? Should such areas exist, and what makes them possible? Where are the areas of incommensurability? What makes such areas incommensurable and unreformable?

During the identification phase, P & PP and peripheral practitioners begin by engaging in dialogue in separate groups, where they articulate their representations of FS's paradigm, including FS's mission and vision. Pre-intervention preparation for this session is recommended. This requires working in groups or individually to conduct research that allows practitioners to track some of the key moments in the evolution of FS. A few suggestions regarding what practitioners should be on the lookout for include statements that articulate (1) how FS understands itself as a science, (2) how FS understands the significance of its name

“Family Science,” (3) how FS views families, and (4) how FS understands its impact on families, including how it seeks to impact families. The articles chosen by individuals and individuals within groups will themselves likely be revealing with respect to (a) what various practitioners *select* as significant for thinking about; (b) what FS has been and what it has done; (c) what FS seeks to be and seeks to do; (d) what FS thinks that families have been, actually are, or what they could be; and (e) how FS believes that it has impacted families and the ways it seeks to impact families in the future. If pre-intervention research cannot be conducted prior to the intervention then groups ought to build a group-research step into the first phase so that their discussion emerges not only through their stated opinions of FS but through literature that has, in part, constituted FS, and which can provide support for their views. Following intra-group discussion, P & PP and peripheral groups come together to participate in an open dialogue about their respective worldviews of FS and the significant differences between the two. The content of the discussion should be captured for further reflection and examination; for example, mind mapping or concept mapping (Davies, 2011; Rosas & Kane, 2012) are strategies that may be used to capture and compare emergent conceptualizations.

Another set of questions arises when considering the problem of idealization as a process during which power differentials may be abstracted away, making them unavailable for representation in the FS framework. The problem is that there are other ways that power differentials might be made unavailable for representation. Abstracting them away during idealization is just one way. Here, we consider another way the unavailability of power differentials for representation might occur. Regarding this other way of disappearing power differentials, we will use the expression “subtracted from conscious perception.”

Practitioners might fail to provide a representation of FS that includes power differentials because they would not be aware of having perceived them. In such a case, we say that power differentials have been subtracted from the practitioner’s conscious perceptual experience. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to in the philosophical literature as “gorilla blindness,” after the famous psychology experiment in which people were shown

a video and asked... to count how many times three basketball players wearing white shirts passed a ball. After about 30 seconds, a woman in a gorilla suit sauntered into the scene, faced the camera, thumped her chest and walked away. Half the viewers missed her. In fact, some people looked right at the gorilla and did not see it (Simons, para 1, 2012).

Gorilla blindness, also called inattentional blindness in some disciplinary contexts, should be given serious consideration when power differentials are at stake in FS. Gorilla blindness suggests the possibility that, in some cases, absent power differentials go much deeper than abstracting them away during an idealization process and may instead reflect a lack of conscious engagement with power differentials in the world. Different things account for this phenomenon, which some philosophers (Øyvind, 2019) call moral blindness, “when people develop routine ways of looking at things and gradually fail to see moral aspects of their own conduct” and may be “blind to their own moral blindness” (p. 133). Such people would not be reliable knowers with respect to the missing perceptual content in question. It is possible that when some FS practitioners fail to represent power differentials in the FS framework it is because they are not aware of having perceived them in the first place. Moreover, they do not know that they have failed to perceive them. We recommend engaging a cognitive psychologist to help determine questions that might reveal, during the practice session, the workings of gorilla blindness in relation to power differentials among FS practitioners.

During the second phase of the Millsian intervention—the “attempted alignment phase”—P & PP and peripherals attempt to co-reconstruct a unified worldview and mission for FS. Observation and acknowledgment of the discrepancies between non-idealized and peripheral understandings of FS and idealized P & PP understandings of FS should be used as points of departure for any attempt at co-reconstruction. In *attempting* to align idealized and non-idealized views of FS, values, norms, assumptions, tensions, and disagreements move into plain view where they cannot be easily ignored. Gaps—degrees of incommensurability—between non-idealized and idealized versions of FS will be of great interest as they provide a measure of the distance between peripherals’ and P & PPs’ ontologies, epistemologies, and expectations for FS. In fact, *the attempt to ignore them* might also move into plain view for consideration. We understand the Millsian approach as a *revelatory intervention* with the capacity to disclose tensions and discrepancies between non-idealized and idealized representations of power differentials (Figure 1). We emphasize that we are concerned with *attempts* at alignment with respect to divergent ideologies pertaining to power differentials. Awareness generated through tensions and discrepancies has the power to signal that something is at stake for FS and must receive attention.

Going from the Millsian practice into the Carnapian practice, practitioners may come to understand that they are facing problematic or impossible co-reconstructions of FS by P & PPs and peripherals. With realignment looking more and more like a losing battle, work toward unification may seem like a lost cause. The Carnapian intervention, with its anti-reformist stance, may only reinforce this feeling. As a preview of Carnap’s position, consider a statement made by philosopher Audrey Yap (2010), which encapsulates it:

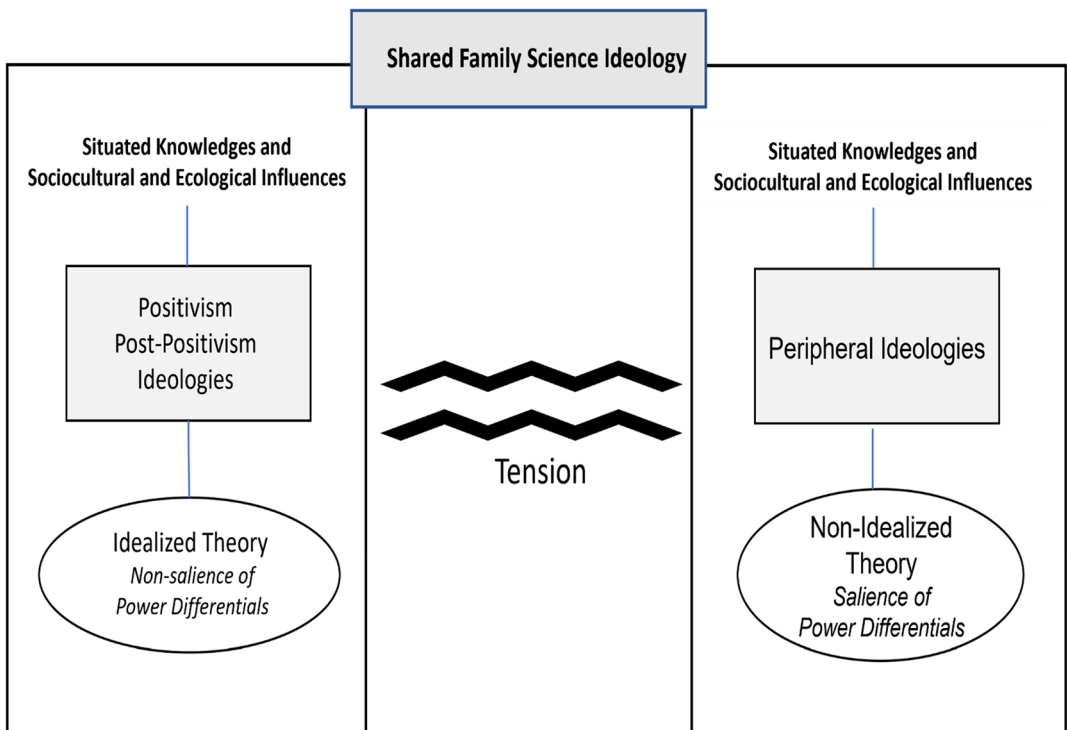


FIGURE 1 *A Millsian Intervention: Who Abstracts Away Power Differentials and Why?* [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

When we adopt certain frameworks or modes of thinking, we are also locked into using some terms of our language in a particular way. If this leads us to problematic conclusions, *then the framework itself needs to be changed; a more conservative revision will not do the trick* (p. 445, emphasis added).

From a Carnapian perspective, problematic alignments are not to be forced through reform. Contradictory statements cannot be fixed through reform. It is not possible to simply reform beliefs whose incompatibility has deleterious effects on families, even indirectly so.

Still, some—perhaps even many FS practitioners, P & PP and peripherals alike—may think that if reconciliation of differences is not forthcoming, we must seek reform. To this we would first reply that alignment through reform may very well reflect the achievement of a consensus rather than a genuine co-reconstruction of FS in which divergent representations have come to co-exist in the field. In laying out our recommendations for the form practice spaces might take, we drew on Patricia Hill Collins's (2017) discussion of how certain practices galvanize mechanisms that have the capacity to “control the narrative that enable some actors to endorse aspects of intersectionality that reinforce their own point of view while ignoring and suppressing alternative perspectives” (p. 121). These galvanizing mechanisms have the power to bring about consensuses that affect alignments. Consensus reached under such conditions may amount to little more than the establishment of another type of idealization, which could then be carried over into FS praxes in an equivocal and unspoken manner, thereby constructing new ignorance (and alleged knowledge) regarding divergences and tensions between P & PP and peripheral praxes and how FS is or should be represented. A Carnapian view would advise to take it all down and begin anew; however, this is not what we are advising, in general. The *goal* of our proposed intervention is not realignment. It is revelation, revelations that make possible the kind of transformation in FS praxes that aims for positive benefits to those whom FS serves.

We understand that in the real world of FS, and elsewhere, antagonists—even friendly antagonists—do not wage a revolution and rebuild together in solidarity. A complete overhaul of FS for its co-reconstruction is not practicable within the academy. The field of FS goes on, and asymmetrical power differentials will go on during any imaginative project in which P & PP and peripheral practitioners seek to co-reconstruct FS. That said, ignoring tensions that arise from awareness of incommensurable gaps between P & PP and peripheral representations of FS is not an option. Awareness of tension can be used as a tool for transformation, as Martin Luther King Jr. so well understood. In this praxis, we are reminded of King's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (April 1963), written in response to *A Call for Unity*, an open letter published by eight local white clergymen in Birmingham, Alabama to deter civil rights demonstrations. King Jr. (1963) wrote,

Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly opposed violent nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal... (p. 2).

Our intervention uses the tensions that arise from awareness of non-alignment and awareness of the impossibility (in some instances) of alignment as tools for generating creative analyses and objective appraisals required for achieving our goal: reimagining FS praxis.

Reimagining FS: What Do We Mean?

What are we proposing that practitioners do to reimagine FS? First, it should be noted what we do *not* mean. Reimagining FS does not mean reimaging a *representation of FS*. Therefore, if alignment is not forthcoming, that is not a problem. Our ultimate goal is not to re-represent FS in terms of stating what its ideologies and core and non-core values should be. Awareness of failed attempts at alignment, reasons for failed attempts, awareness of tensions created through non-alignment, and understanding failures to co-reconstruct alignment across FS fault lines are types of possible revelation that could be generative for the process we propose for reimaging FS. So, positively, what is it to reimagine FS in our proposal?

Reimagining FS is a process constituted by the following: (a) Creating tools for reimaging: actively, consciously, and continually creating praxes constructed from what practitioners learn from failed (and successful, if any) attempts at alignment when practicing. Revealed discrepancies, contradictions, incompatibilities, and awareness of these revelations produce tensions, and new questions are raised in the process. We call these *learnings* because they are what we have learned, most likely from failures of attempts at alignment. We understand such *learnings* as building blocks for a transformational praxis.

Learnings (tools) transform praxis in our approach by (b) being embedded within non-practice work (i.e., research, service, and application). From genuine embeddings, new questions and awareness of new discrepancies, incompatibilities, and possibly contradictions emerge as practitioners seek to work with and through these learnings in their research, service, and applications. Working with and through learning, rather than casting them aside or ignoring them, means that practitioners themselves must change somehow. Thus, such *learnings* are *building blocks for a transformational praxis*.

For this reiterative process, we envisage that (c) new learnings be brought back into future practice sessions. The return of learning may generate further questions (e.g., what practitioners have gleaned from trying to work with and through the practice learnings under the conditions of work), which may give rise to new discrepancies, contradictions, incompatibilities, and awareness of these, and hence, to an awareness of additional tensions, and the creation of more questions, all of which are brought, again, into work.

Equipped with the understanding that reimaging FS is a reiterative process that salvages revealed tensions, discrepancies, contradictions, incompatibilities, and incommensurables and converts them into building blocks for the benefit of the imaginative process, such tools should not be feared but actively and enthusiastically sought. We now turn to the Carnapian intervention.

UnMastering Tool II. Reimagining FS through a Transformative Revelatory Practice

Carnap was concerned with systems and frameworks of logic, which is not our primary interest. That said, the importance of P & PP statements about FS that stand in logical contradiction to peripheral statements about FS cannot be overstated, as it should be difficult for anyone who assumes a scientific viewpoint to embrace, happily or indifferently, an outright contradiction. "For Carnap, there are no absolutely unrevisable statements. It is simply that in order to revise something that follows logically from the rules of our framework, we need to adopt a different framework" (Yap, 2010, p. 445). For us, it is essential to reveal contradictions and discover what working with and through them *in work* means. How is a practitioner transformed by trying to hold onto a contradiction that cannot be explained away or ignored? How does a practitioner change by trying to hold onto a contradiction, or by letting it go? Contradictions are not the only type of problem for which practitioners are on the lookout. Incompatibilities, discrepancies, and other types of gaps are just as important. The significance of a contradiction is that it is a clear marker of a limit of inquiry and offers no relief through the adoption of ambivalent attitudes or by casting it as an ambiguity. The Carnapian Intervention (Practices III and IV), the deployment of our second unmastering tool, follows the Millsian Intervention (Practices I

and II). Participants remain together to practice the Carnapian Intervention (Table 1). The Carnapian Intervention requires that a distinction be made between core-constitutive statements of a paradigm's framework and non-core-constitutive statements.

Core-constitutive statements are statements that lie at the center of FS, and which (1) express a belief articulating what FS is as a field, and (2) drive and reflect what practitioners take FS's ontologies, epistemologies (including methodologies, and values to be. An example might be "One can *only* study families by studying the interaction of individuals within families (not by studying the relation between families and society)." (Walker, 2009, p.18, emphasis added). Observe that this statement articulates what FS is by stating what it *must* study. For illustration, we draw on Walker's formulations of foundational assumptions of FS.

Non-core-constitutive statements are statements that do not lie at the center of FS but do appear within the framework of FS and express beliefs that (1) do not articulate what FS is but which may (2) drive and reflect what practitioners take FS's ontologies, epistemologies (including methodologies), and values to be. Further, (3) non-core-constitutive statements are believed to be salient to families and to the study of families within FS. An example might be, "'The family' is the foundation of the social order, with role divisions that are both essential and universal" (Walker, 2009, p. 18). It should be noted that this statement does not articulate what FS is. However, at the very least, it reflects some practitioners' ontologies. For example, it articulates: a) that something is thought to exist—*the family*—which is thought to be the foundation of something else that exists—*the social order*; b) arguably, that some practitioners' epistemologies are reflected in this statement. Why? If the family's role divisions are thought to be essential and universal, then role divisions help delineate a methodology (an epistemology) for studying families. That is, for gaining knowledge about families; c) that arguably, universality is an expressed value (not to mention *essentiality*). This follows a certain western tradition according to which the universal and essentiality are hallmarks of truth. Thus, role divisions of the family may be thought to provide a mechanism for accessing truth. Some experiential statements of community members served by FS may also be part of a representation of an FS framework as non-core-constitutive statements. For example, "'play kin' (fictive) are family."

Equipped with the distinction between core-constitutive and non-core-constitutive statements, P & PP and peripheral practitioners discover new, more narrowly identified tensions, contradictions, and discrepancies when they attempt to create a unified framework. There may be different ways to create such a discovery space. In practice exercises III and IV, the Carnapian-inspired approach of attempting to align the frameworks, practitioners articulate and attempt to cross-align core and non-core constituent statements. The practice exercise III includes the following: (1) attempts to bring P&PP and peripheral core-constitutive statements into alignment; (2) attempts to align the core-constitutive statements of peripherals with the non-core-constitutive statements of P & PPs; (3) attempts to align the core-constitutive statements of P & PPs with non-core-constitutive statements of peripherals; and (4) attempts to bring non-core-constitutive statements of each group into alignment.

Examples of How to Complete Carnapian Practice Tasks

Task (1): Reconsider the P & PP core-constitutive statement, "One can *only* study the family by studying the interaction of individuals within families (not by studying the relation between families and society)." As a unified group (or, first in separate P & PP and peripheral groups, if preferred), the task is to search for a core-constitutive peripheral statement that is *in contradiction* with this statement. Such a statement might be, "Families can only be studied by studying the relation between families and the society and, in particular, how societal power differentials impact families." When possible, it is recommended that attempts be made to locate core-constitutive statements (P & PP and peripheral) in the literature so that discussion is informed and supported by FS documented research. Such research may be conducted before the intervention

or during the practice session, using laptops and online searches for relevant literature. Keep in mind that a contradiction is not a stumbling block for our purposes, but a building block.

Task 1a Consider another core-constitutive statement for P & PP's representation of FS. Such a statement might be, "Quantitative methods and scientific objectivity are the *sine qua non* of family studies" (Walker, 2009, p. 18). As a unified group (or, first in separate P & PP and peripheral groups, if preferred), the task is to search for a *core-constitutive statement* from the peripheral representation of FS that does not *contradict* the P & PP statement but, nevertheless, generates tension with respect to it. For example, the statement "Qualitative methods constitute a part of scientific objectivity and are necessary for FS" may be a candidate. This statement, which is supported by a critique of context stripping, reported in Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 106), is not in contradiction with the P & PP statement. But within FS, these two statements—and the practitioners that adhere to them—may live in an uneasy tension. Practitioners discuss this uneasy tension together (or first separately, if preferred) and ask "What is it?" "What does it derive from?" "What are the ways in which it shows up in FS?" "How does this uneasy tension impact the praxes and lives of peripheral practitioners" (and P & PP practitioners, if this is a relevant question to ask)?

Task 2 Practitioners reconsider some non-core-constitutive statements of P & PP's representation of FS. For example, "The family is the foundation of the social order, with role divisions that are both essential and universal" (Walker, 2009, p. 18). As a unified group (or, first in separate P & PP and peripheral groups, if preferred), the task is to search for a non-core-constitutive statement (or statements) in the peripheral representation of FS that is (or are) a) in contradiction with the P & PP statement; b) in tension but not contradiction with the P & PP statement; or c) both. Specifically in reference to Black families, African American activist and policy analysis, Joyce McMillan, a member of a peripheral community who reported on the policing of Black families in the United States at the 107th Session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), August 9, 2022, argues that what are commonly qualified as systems of welfare and care "don't support families; they just surveillance families" (McMillan, 2022, 6:13). This peripheral statement by a non-FS member controverts P&P-P constitutive statements (see Walker, 2009).

As before, if statements are in tension only (and not contradictory), practitioners explain what causes tension between the peripheral statement and the P & PP statement. Practitioners aim to elucidate what the tension is between the two statements in question and how or why it arises: e.g., *in which contexts* or kind of contexts does it arise? (See questions above). It is possible that a complex peripheral statement might be both in contradiction with a P & PP statement and raise tensions going beyond the contradiction. Consider, for example, the statement that "The very notion of 'family' has been historically defined and situated and carries powerful cultural meanings that often are unquestioned... That is, 'the family' is fundamentally complex, contested, and ever-changing in the context of historical times and cultures" (Russell, 2019, pp. 359–60). This statement is in contradiction with the preceding P & PP statement: "The family is the foundation of the social order, with role divisions that are both essential and universal." The statements are in contradiction because the P & PP statement is committed to the belief that the family is constituted by essential and universal role divisions, while the peripheral statement is committed to the belief that these role divisions are historically situated and (culturally) contingent. However, tension is also created between the two statements with respect to what constitutes the family in the social order. The P & PP statement implies the Standard North American Family (SNAF) code (Smith, 1993), which is an ideological code of a heteronormative family ideal (i.e., married couple, male as primary breadwinner, female with primary responsibility for care of husband, household, and family). The peripheral statement implicitly calls into question the validity of the SNAF code view of the family.

As discussed previously, failed attempts at alignment, which are to be expected, create spaces of discovery regarding the incommensurability of P & PP and peripheral practitioners'

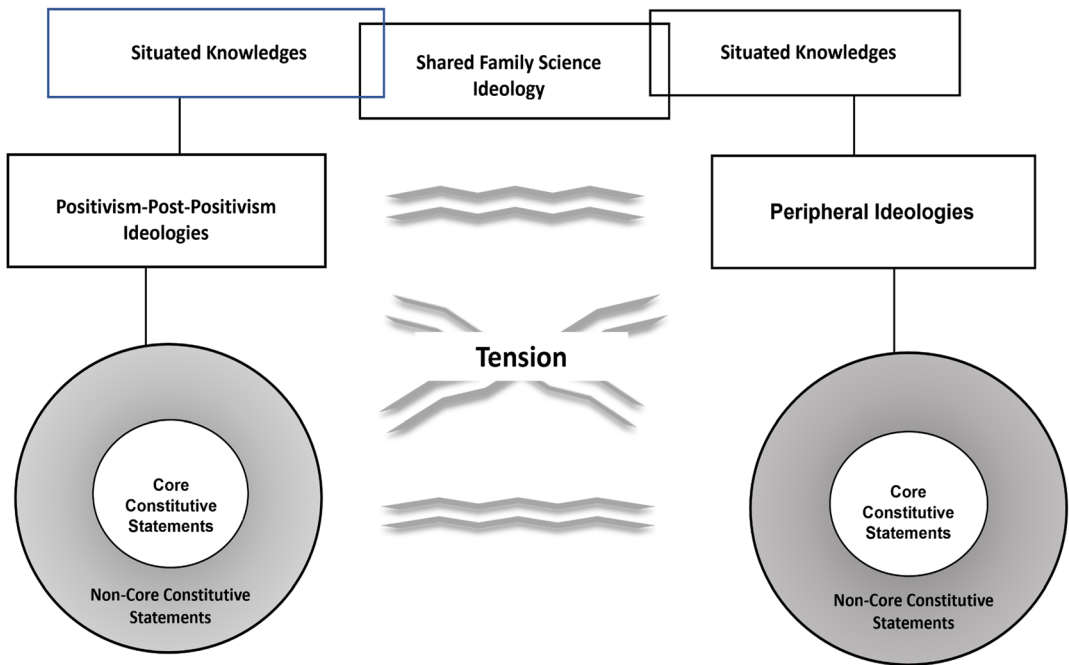


FIGURE 2 A Carnapian Intervention: Creating Tensions Across Representations of FS. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

frameworks. Discoveries lead to interrogation and to more revelatory tensions and contradictions. Peripherals may feel tension much of the time, well before the Millsian and Carnapian practice exercises have been introduced. Their positioning within FS—working on the periphery of FS and trying to navigate working with a P&PP core they find problematic in various ways—increases their awareness of tensions between P&PP core-constitutive beliefs and peripheral beliefs, core and non-core. Indeed, the tension peripherals feel trying to navigate the two frameworks may create a tension in them that acts as an instrument of awareness of the troubled situation within FS. Arguably, peripherals are well acquainted with life in the pain lane within FS. P&PP practitioners may not be. Moreover, through these co-practicing sessions, peripherals will have to navigate working with P&PP practitioners who have become newly aware of the tensions existing all over the field, which they may have come to feel. Thus, we might think of practicing the Carnapian (and the Millsian) exercises as ways of democratizing feelings of tension—of sharing the pain, an idea reflected upon by Black activist Kalonji Changa. With the sharing of pain comes the possibility of pain or tension as an instrument for awareness across the two groups of FS practitioners. However, we do not claim that members of the two groups would feel the same kind of pain or feel pain to the same degree. Their situatedness never becomes inactive. Power differentials are always operative, including during the interventions. (Figure 2).

Practice Tools: Summary Points

Attempting to co-reconstruct FS is a revelatory practice designed to make room for transforming FS praxes. Whether or not such attempts can transform FS praxes depends not on whether co-reconstructed alignment of FS between P&PP and peripheral practitioners occurs but rather on

whether practicing in dialogic space carries over into real FS disciplinary praxis—time and back over into practice time—space. The reiterative nature of the process is key. Through attempts at aligning non-idealized and idealized representations of FS, we can see how diversity and interaction necessarily intervene at this phase of engagement. P & PP and peripherals form diverse groups. Through an injunction of the exercise, they interact to attempt to bring idealized and non-idealized understandings of FS into alignment. With open observation and acknowledgment of tensions generated through failed attempts, we predict that dynamism would be a byproduct or a constituent of the epistemic tension that is thereby produced. Thus, a democratic-like process will be realized during this phase. However, it should be noted that we do not state that a democratic process would be realized. “Democracy,” following its etymology, combines two ancient Greek words: *demos*, meaning a “whole citizen living within a particular city-state,” and *kratos*, meaning power or rule (Museum of Australian Democracy and Old Parliament House, n.d., para 1). In his *New York Times* piece “The Great Erasure,” Charles Blow (2022) wrote,

In my life I have arrived at the conclusion that a change in the parameters of power—political, economic, and cultural, who has it and who gets to exercise it, who is benefited by it and who is harmed by it—can transform this country. (Blow, 2022, para 31).

We remain aware that the interventions we propose will be carried out under conditions of asymmetrical power between P & PP and peripheral practitioners, within FS and the university system, and the wider societal institutions in interdependent relations with the university system. That is, a symmetrical level of power or rule between P & PP and peripheral practitioners is unavailable for leveraging a genuine democratic process.

We do not offer specific examples of what may emerge from this collective work. The interventions we propose evoke the kind of intentional dialogue within FS that has historically been difficult to enact within its professional organization (James & McGeorge, 2019; James et al., 2016). However, we have argued that if the discipline is to engage in anti-racist approaches or social justice, the question of the salience of power differentials, revealed through comparing idealizations and non-idealizations of FS by P & PP and peripheral practitioners, must be addressed. Differences in understanding what FS is and what it does must be addressed. Our approach addresses the latter concerns through a Carnapian intervention. These revelations have relevance across categories of difference for social inequality and disparities, exposure to risk and protection, and what is just and unjust, which impact developmental outcomes and family well-being.

LESSONS FROM UNMASTERING PRACTICES: FINAL THOUGHTS

FS, as a multi- and interdisciplinary field, has staked out a singular identity. The discipline, to our minds, resembles interconnected families who share a house. Whatever our strengths or uniqueness, in multi-generation family households where each generation may even have its own floor, there may be the sense that the (grand)parents own the house if they bought it and pay for its upkeep. An open dispute might lead a parent to rhetorically ask recalcitrant children, “whose house is this anyway?” A response might include statements they have all heard before: “Yeah, we know you bought the house. But you couldn’t survive in it without us, or you would have to take in renters, which you did in the past and regretted! You say that you pay for the maintenance. But who takes care of the daily upkeep, now that you are older? In fact, who takes care of you now that you are older?” A response to this might be, “And who takes care of the grandchildren? Could you afford childcare and rent, and live in a place like this on your

own? You'd be living on top of each in a one-room flat next to a dump site." But then some words never before spoken—theretofore unspoken assumptions—might fill the space.

FS space may harbor ambivalently or clearly expressed antagonisms that may surface through the proposed interventions. Ambiguity may have gone unacknowledged or been actively hidden from view. However, some assumptions—for example, social assumptions about what FS excludes and includes *because* it is a *science*—might go not only unspoken but unthought. Such assumptions may be felt by practitioners even without their understanding of what they are feeling, and perhaps this is most acute among those being trained in the discipline. Antagonisms within an organization may be expressed less clearly and with more ambivalence. Further, the clear expression of certain types of conflict may be discouraged, resulting in an atmosphere of ambiguity over the desire for their resolution, as in family disputes.

In this paper we have challenged FS to bring to the surface hidden tensions that are already alive. We have used Lorde's *The Master's Tools* as a conceptual guiding frame for extrapolating an ethical and epistemic frame capable of exploring and deconstructing P & PP and peripheral praxes in FS, and for imagining *ways of practicing* for enacting FS praxes capable of bringing about social transformation. We seek to bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with, in order to develop FS praxes that are anti-racist and engage a social justice project. Moreover, we do not understand matters of social justice as pertaining to racial justice only. Matters of inequality and social justice extend to multiple social identities and locations, including intersectional ones (Few et al., 2022). Our framing of peripherals has sought to acknowledge that their critical perspectives and ideologies are situated within various types of Difference constructed within matrixes of domination.

The aims of the proposed practicing efforts—the Millsian and Carnapian interventions—were twofold: (1) to *identify* representation(s) of FS paradigm(s) and idealized and non-idealized ontologies/theory; to explore areas of incommensurability and to attempt alignment; and (2) to *distinguish* core constituent statements of P & PP and peripheral ideologies; and to *reveal* tensions, contradictions, and discrepancies between these statements to attempt *alignment*. Revelatory frameworks, including revelations of discrepancies afforded by contrasting non-ideal and idealized theoretical frameworks, including revelations of discrepancies forthcoming by contrasting the inner core-constitutive frameworks within each type of theory, encourage a kind of conscious awareness required for acknowledgment. However, acknowledgment in and of itself does not usher in transformation that impacts community. That said, the internal practices of FS might stand a chance of evolving in a transformational way as the collision of differently located voices are able to leverage methodologies that force open acknowledgment of disclosed discrepancies between P & PP's idealized version(s) of FS and peripherals' non-ideal (actual) theories of what is purportedly the same field and discipline.

It is through practice that P & PP and peripheral practitioners learn what to do with or about tensions that cannot be resolved. Genuinely *attempting* to co-reconstruct an FS framework by following Millsian and Carnapian protocols results in democratic-like processes by integrating diversity, interaction, and dynamism. In this way, the practice itself enables the transformation of FS's current praxes, even if a workable unified reconstruction is not forthcoming. That said, if transformation does not positively and significantly impact individuals, families, and communities burdened by structured inequality and racism/anti-Black racism (in intersections with other dominated/marginalized social locations), and injustice, then the fact (should it become one) of FS praxis transformation—interesting at best, and academic only at worst—may serve as an indicator that FS praxes have not been transformed in a *relevant* way. That is, in such a way as to align the search for truth with the search for social justice. In other words, accountability to the communities served must function as an important indicator of significant transformation.

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