

**Along a Möbius strip: A journey into  
postcolonial theory, decolonization, and social  
studies with/in Indigenous contexts**

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Along a Möbius strip: A journey into postcolonial theory, decolonization, and social studies with/in Indigenous contexts

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“One who studies should never stop being curious about other people and reality.  
There are those who ask, those who try to find answers and those who keep on  
searching.”

~ Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education*

This dissertation is dedicated to

Mom and Dad, for always believing in me and for your steadfast love as I sought  
new worlds, new souls, new selves

Teri and Sonya, for all the laughs, love, and margaritas

Candace, for being my inspiration and for your unceasing support of my work

Jason, for your generous spirit and friendship

The teachers, administrators, and community members I met along the way, thank  
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**Preface**  
**Destinations unknown**

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*Why are you leaving?*

They say you live your whole life

searching

learning

longing

*What are you taking with you?*

Opening backpack to find

histories

memories

expectations

*Perhaps you should stay.*

No, I have to go.

Walking out the door

the ground beneath me **shakes**

my feet **falter**

**BRAIN: GO BACK.**

*Heart: Keep going.*

Eyes gaze the paths

*winding*

*twisting*

*Why are you leaving?*

To question

To learn

To grow

To change



## Chapter One

### Along the Möbius strip: On history, childhood, and the start of a journey

“First, I found I could not write a proper introduction to this dissertation since I could find no beginning to describe; later, I resisted writing an ending, since I did not know how to end something that had had no beginning.”

~ Elizabeth St. Pierre, 2000, p. 261

### History is never history: On learning to listen

#### Hollywood<sup>1</sup>

“My mother was raised in the 1930s **boarding schools**. She was **left there** by her family, and so really my mother has no connection to any of her family at all. She is very ... all of that part of her life is very **private**, and so anything we find out is always like a mystery. My mother is really a **mystery**. We do find out things here and there, but she gets very **upset** if we try to **probe** into that area.”

*The soft intensity of Hollywood’s voice echoes in my<sup>2</sup> head. I asked her (I can hear the caution in my own voice) about her mother’s experiences at the boarding school. Hollywood’s openness to share her experiences with me both*

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<sup>1</sup> Participant voices appear in **Helvetica** and ahead of all other text throughout the dissertation. Bolded text serve as triggers for entering the threshold, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> Reflexive writing appears in italicized Times New Roman throughout the dissertation.

*inside and outside the classroom shed a tremendous amount of light on my understanding of the impact U.S. policies had and continue to have on Indigenous education. I think it impossible to talk about social studies with/in Indigenous contexts without seeking to understand (as much as any person can understand histories and experiences not her own) the why the United States fought so hard to control the lives of Indigenous peoples on this continent. My own search for understanding of the boarding school histories and Indigenous education in the U.S. started long before I sat with Hollywood in the quiet conference room in the back corridors of Central Office, and I suspect my search to understand will continue long after the final period is placed on this dissertation. In my search to understand, I have come also to listen, as Vine Deloria, Jr. (2007) urged, to those histories and experiences shared with me through the stories of my friends and the writings of survivors and scholars. The journey to come explores my search for understanding. I ask that you travel with me, between the past and present, across the American landscape, and into an uncertain future.*

**Preservation through assimilation: Attempting to understand the U.S. genocide of Indigenous children**

“It<sup>3</sup> is worth pondering why native origins should constitute a ‘great problem’ for Americans. The answer seems to lie in the search for a distinctive national identity. The Indian, as the First American, was necessary to any such attempt at self-definition. He was the American past” (Dippie, emphasis in

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<sup>3</sup> The presentation of literature and theory appear in Times New Roman throughout the dissertation.

original, 1982, p. 16). Assimilating Indigenous peoples into White-American culture presented itself as the perfect solution to a *problem*. If Indigenous peoples could be turned into Americans than the past could be washed away and the myth of our progression as a united nation of one people would be legitimized. As such, the U.S. government instituted a number of programs, including funding within the *Indian Civilization Act* (1818) to pay for mission schools, and by 1824 there were 21 boarding schools across the United States. Indian education became a central component of the post-Civil War peace process, and in 1870 Congress allocated nearly \$100,000 to the goal of assimilating Indigenous children into White culture (Adams, 1995; Benson, 2001; Fear-Segal, 2007; Szasz, 1999; Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006).

The dramatic changes occurring in the United States between 1818 and 1870 intensified anxiety about how best to deal with the thousands of Indigenous peoples still living throughout the American territories. The Civil War, completion of the transcontinental railroad and telegraph, decimation of the buffalo herds, along with multiple U.S. military victories over Indigenous peoples that resulted in landmark documents like the Fort Laramie Treaty were some of the most profound developments in solidifying American dominance over the landscape. Indigenous peoples continued, for the most part unsuccessfully, to push back American advancement, thus ushering in a new wave of American policies towards Indigenous peoples—the reservation system. Numerous debates ensued within the dominant American culture as to how to manage the reservations in the decade spanning 1870 to 1880. President Grant's Peace Policy

conflicted with Reconstruction efforts and continued military actions were drawing criticism from both federal policy makers and prominent members of society (Adams, 1995; Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006). In addition, corruption within the system, especially by reservation agents, made headlines. White America's desire to save Indigenous peoples hit a high note by the time Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* went to press in 1881. Jackson's book, which chronicled the "plight" of Indigenous peoples (specifically the Delaware and Cheyenne) in the United States, galvanized philanthropic circles of American society to pressure government to end the Indian Wars peacefully. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Lucius Q. Lamar commented in 1881, the "only alternative now presented to the American Indian race is speedy entrance into the pale of American civilization, or absolute extinction" (Adams, 1995, p. 15). The only way to be saved, Jackson and other philanthropists argued, was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into American society.

With a new reverence towards civilizing the Indian, White Americans turned to philanthropy as the new means of influencing federal Indian policy. The fervor for a philanthropic answer to the Indian problem culminated in the Lake Mohonk Conference of 1883 and included well-connected members of society, elected officials, military officers, and church leaders. The Lake Mohonk Conference would meet annually for the next 30 years and were unwavering in their belief that their "effort to uplift Indians was a fulfillment of their Christian obligation" (Adams, 1995, p. 11). This core belief was enthusiastically welcomed by the majority of Americans, including President Andrew Jackson, who agreed

not only with the Protestant-Republican ethic of these organizations, but also with the fundamental idea that civilization through proper education was the key to ending the Indian problem once and for all (Adams, 1995).

Civilization through the education was supported for a number of reasons including: 1) the belief that Indigenous elders were incapable of being civilized, 2) that educating Indigenous children would “quicken the process of cultural evolution” (p. 19), and 3) that once educated these assimilated children would become self-sufficient, thus relieving the government of the burden of caring for Indigenous peoples (Adams, 1995). A fourth argument was made during this time period—that educating Indigenous peoples was cheaper than killing them as former Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Schurz estimated that “it cost nearly a million dollars to kill an Indian in warfare, whereas it cost only \$1,200 to give an Indian child eight years of schooling” (Adams, 1995, p. 20). Compelled by both religion and economics, the members of the philanthropic community set out to establish schools that would teach Indigenous students to value individualism, gain skills to contribute to the economy, and embrace Christianity because to place the needs of one’s community over the needs of the individual (as has always been the practice of Indigenous peoples) was, quite simply, un-American.

Dozens of reservation day schools were already in operation by the time the assimilation plan took full effect. The day schools, as many American believed early on, would not only provide children with education into White society, but also provide a means for those teachings to reach parents and tribal

elders. The belief that that, in time, all Indigenous peoples would learn from young children the proper American ways of living. Day schools, however, had the exact opposite effect. The very fact that children were able to return to their homes impeded the ability of teachers to fully assimilate them because traditional tribal beliefs, languages, and customs were still paramount in these children's lives. Parents, too, were not happy with the education their children were receiving, and soon absenteeism was seen at reservation day schools across the country (Adams, 1995; Szasz, 1999; Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006).

With day schools failing to assimilate Indigenous children into the ways of White America, policy makers took to implementing reservation boarding schools. Requiring students to live at school nine months out of the year would provide teachers and administrators the time and space away from children's families to *properly* educate them. Children were able to visit their parents and vice versa, but school administrators soon realized that the attachments to traditional ways of knowing and living was not so easily removed from children or their families. Reservation agents looked for new ways to isolate children from their families, including canceling all holiday breaks and building tall fences so that children could not see out and parents could not see in. The only viable solution, in the end, was to use the full force of American law to remove the children from their reservation communities entirely (Adams, 1995; Szasz, 1999; Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006).

One of the most famous boarding schools, Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, opened during this time period under the guidance of

Captain Richard Henry Pratt. In developing the philosophy of Carlisle, Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc (2006) noted that Pratt “planned to destroy what he termed ‘savage languages,’ ‘primitive superstitions,’ and ‘uncivilized cultures,’ replacing them with work ethics, Christian values, and the white man’s civilization. In sum, Pratt created Carlisle as a space to take ‘the savage-born infant to the surrounding of civilization’” (p. 13). Ultimately, Pratt planned for the students of Carlisle (as did many of the administrators of other boarding schools) a curriculum of assimilation that would strip them of their Indigenous identities and, in turn, fill the void with a carefully calculated White identity. The curriculum included not only the adoption of English, but also physical transformations as described by Trafzer, Keller, and Sisquoc (2006):

School superintendents, teachers, matrons, and disciplinarians often stripped the children of their clothing, blankets, ornaments, and jewelry. School official bathed the children and cut their hair “to kill the bugs.” If this did not work, school officials used pesticides to kill lice. This began the process of taking away the child’s outward appearance as an Indian person... School officials attempted to peel away layers of Indian identity, working from the outside into the hearts and minds of Native American children (p. 17).

This method was quickly adopted by boarding schools across the country, and thousands upon thousands of innocent children, who were taken by force if necessary, came face to face with a country determined to massacre of their identities (Adams, 1995; Benson, 2001; Fear-Segal, 2007; Pewewardy, 2002;

Szasz, 1999; Trafzer et al., 2006). With the boarding school system now well established, the business of assimilating Indigenous children into White society could begin without interference.

### **Americanization is the only way: Social studies' endless war for identity**

Indigenous boarding schools were not the only physical locations where the United States government drilled Americanization into the minds of children. Social studies classrooms, too, have served as a means by which the ends are found, and the process by which children are indoctrinated has been a war waged on many fronts for well over a century. Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977), Evans (2004, 2011a, 2011b), Saxe (1991) and Symcox (2002) wrote extensively on the history and influence of the various factions of social studies educators—camps—who have fought to shape the identity/ies of the field from the 1880s to present day. These camps had various amounts of power on defining the curriculum of the social studies at different times in the field's history. I argue here that controlling curriculum—the standards and content texts used in classrooms—is central to this war. While the struggle for control of the social studies is by no means a simple matter, the camps outlined below represent the largest camps that have endured tests of time, politics, and global events that have shaped the continued struggle to define American society and our individual places within it.

While historians of the social studies disagree on the exact origin of the field, there is little doubt that history, and the tenets of the “traditional



historian” camp that favored content acquisition over critical thinking skills played a pivotal part in launching the field into prominent debates over school curriculum (Evans, 2004; Saxe, 1991). Traditional history, however, was not the only camp at the birth of the social studies. Another prominent camp, the “social scientists” advocated for the field to encompass more social science disciplines such as geography, political science, and economics. This large and diverse camp predates the first formal meeting to standardize social studies curriculum, and thusly contained twenty-some areas of history, almost a dozen geographies, half a dozen civics courses, and various other social science fields (Evans, 2004). Likewise, this camp’s philosophy of education, as Evans (2004) and Saxe (1991) discuss in great detail, was a promotion of societal welfare, to provide students with a basis for civic responsibility, and to “understand the sacred antiquities and to appreciate classical literature” (Evans, 2004, p. 5). In effect, prior to the first meeting of the Committee of Ten in the 1890s, social studies education was tasked to promote patriotism and a sense of duty that was not without its ties to Christian teachings.

The rise of the traditional historians, in looking more closely at social studies education at the time, came not out of a sense to restore history education to the central tenets of morality-based patriotism (as will be their central purpose in later years), but rather out of a sense that history had “great pedagogical value for school students” and value to “educators not only for its mental discipline but also a source of useful facts” (Saxe, 1991, p. 30). The usefulness of facts and the mental workout studying the past provided students

could serve the nation better than the education espoused by the social scientists. To these historians, social studies education had the “potential to be the premier discipline of the school” (Saxe, 1991, p. 30). At the time this camp came into fashion, too, education was fraught with internal and external battles over preparing students for university work.

The argument that traditional history education came at just the right time when, in the 1880s-1890s, the National Education Association (NEA) began organizing committees, including the Committee of Ten and its subcommittees (i.e. History Ten/Madison Conference), to clarify and refine a vision for social studies education (Evans, 2004; Saxe, 1991; Whelan, 1997). Formulating a coherent high school curriculum was the chief aim of the NEA when it formed the Committee of Ten and its subsequent subcommittees, and appointment to the various committees was just one in a tidal wave of moments that sparked the 120-year-old social studies wars (Evans, 2004).

One of the most critical times in the history of the social studies came in 1916 when the Social Studies Committee of the NEA issued a report that set into motion a standard of courses that would last for almost a century. The 1916 report was also a departure from the history-heavy curriculum previously adopted by the Committee of Ten and its counterparts (Saxe, 1991). While history was still a primary area of the social studies, a more progressive view of having students consider societal issues took precedence over content acquisition. This shift, according to Evans (2004) focused on modernizing the social studies as an area dedicated to training members of the

larger society based on the writings of John Dewey. In other words, the social studies would become more efficient, and thus create more efficient U.S. citizens. Social efficiency would allow for schools to train students in order to both support and maintain a developing nation (Evans, 2004).

Debates over the 1916 social studies program intensified well into the 1920s and offered no decisive victory to any of the social studies camps. It was in this time period that the National Council for the Social Studies was founded (Evans, 2004). It was this very shift that ignited the creation of the “social reconstructionist” camp that included more radical social change-agents like Harold Ruggs and George Counts. This camp wanted social studies curriculum to provide more space for students to tackle social problems. Their work would further enflame the social studies wars heading into the mid-1900s (Evans, 2004). Like Evans (2006), the issues outlined in Ross (2000) illustrated where some of these divisions have occurred and how they continue to impact the social studies today. Both highlight the efforts of Dewey, Counts, and others in the shaping of social studies education from both the liberal and conservative angles.

The social studies wars were greatly impacted by national and global events between the 1930s and 1960s. It was within the depths of the Depression that the social reconstructionists, made popular by Deweyan principals and by the publication of *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (Counts, 1932), brought the social studies to bear on the idea that teachers and schools should play a significant role in social change. While the

writings of this camp were popular and drew support at the national level from the left and right, the central tenets of the social reconstructionists were not widely adopted in U.S. schools. Furthermore, support for Rugg's progressive, problem-centered textbooks waned by the late 1930s because of its seeming subversive nature (Evans, 2004). One could argue that the loss of support came mainly from the intensifying world war and heightened American patriotism.

Progressive education continued to face fierce criticism through the war period and into the Cold War era. United States history in particular was attacked in the 1940s and early 1950s because of progressive notions of critical inquiry. Coupled with criticism of Rugg's popular textbooks, "these controversies combined to stir the passions of educational critics of various stripes, but especially those who wanted a stronger focus on the disciplines and a traditional view of the American way" (Evans, 2011a). The Cold War and McCarthyism added more fuel to the fire, and progressive social studies bore the brunt of the attacks by those who saw problem-posing education as un-American and inefficient (Evans, 2011a). Conferences in Woods Hole, Massachusetts and Endicott House in Dedham, Massachusetts were held in the late 1950s and early 1960s to transform not only science education, but also the social studies into a more scientific program of study.

The ensuing reports transformed the social studies into a "weapons system that could further the nation's strategic interests by developing scientists, engineers, and regular citizens who could think scientifically and

who had the right commitments” (Evans, 2011a, p. 98). The new social studies, while popular among politicians and the public throughout the 1960s and 1970s was not without criticism. In summation of the various critiques of the new social studies, Evans (2011a) noted “as a movement to change the curriculum, it aimed, largely, to shape the mindset of a generation into rational, structuralist, and scientific ways of seeing, and subtly away from moral questions, social issues, and social problems” (p. 206). It is from this fear-filled time in U.S. history that a slurry of reports were published that further shaped modern American social studies in the 1980s. The 1983 reports, including *A Nation at Risk* and *Action for Excellence*, called for more rigorous skill-based standards, longer school days, and more highly qualified teachers. These and other solutions were not cost-effective and were criticized from the Left and the Right. The war for the control of Americanization continues today.

### **The Captain, his bandstand, and a family legacy: Coming face-to-face with evil on the grounds of Carlisle**

*“Do you want me to take a picture of you sitting on the bandstand?” I can remember my mom’s question as clearly as if she were sitting next to me asking as I type the words. I remember shaking my head. No. “He sat there. I don’t want to sit there.” My voice, I remember it, was hard. My mom put her hand on my shoulder. She did not need to say anything. Her motherly intuition knew. I saw a picture once of Captain Pratt sitting on the bandstand behind a group of Navajo children. The caption offered words of encouragement on the students’ first day of*

*school. All I can remember of the photo is the smug look on Pratt's face. Smug. He always looked smug to me. I travelled to Carlisle in the summer of 2010 at the end of my first year of doctoral studies, and I wanted to understand, to see first hand what I had only just begun reading about: the history of Indigenous education in the United States. What I found on that hot afternoon continues to haunt me.*

*The drive to Carlisle Indian Industrial School did not take as long I had hoped. I think deep down in the back of my mind I was hoping to delay the experience. Perhaps I did not want to come face-to-face with the histories I had only recently read. I am sure that is part of it—that rumbling feeling in the pit of your stomach because your eyes are finally going to see what you've only imagined from the writings of survivors and historians. The grounds of Carlisle, now home to the U.S. Army War College, were lush and green despite the dry heat Pennsylvania had been experiencing. The buildings left much to be desired architecturally. They were militaristic through and through. White. Rectangular. The only thing welcoming about Carlisle were the flowers surrounding the small, quaint bandstand. Fear-Segal (2007) noted that Pratt was very often referred to as the "Man-on-the-bandstand" by Carlisle's school newspaper, *Indian Helper*, because its position gave Pratt "panoramic views of the whole school," and that the bandstand's "full potential for voyeurism was realized only when it was made the permanent 'home' of an invisible, vigilant observer" (p. 106). In reflecting on Fear-Segal's synopsis of the bandstand and my own personal encounter with it, I cannot help but equate Pratt's bandstand to Bentham's (1995) panopticon, a*

*prison where guards have a 360-degree view of every movement of every prisoner at every moment. This revelation comes three years after my visit to Carlisle, and it is only now that I have a deeper understanding of the carefully coordinated efforts of Americans to, as Pratt said in an 1892 speech, “kill the Indian and save the man.”*

*I continued on walk around the grounds of Carlisle, pausing for a moment on the grass in front of the main building where I knew thousands of children had once posed for a photograph. We passed by a barracks that once served as a girls’ dormitory. We came upon a smallish building, much older than the others. It was built during the American Revolution to house artillery, but it became a more foreboding structure during the Carlisle years. Children who misbehaved were put in the dark, cold cells. There is heaviness in those cells that words cannot describe. The building also serves as a museum, highlighting the great American victory over the British, the founding and growth of our nation. A picture jumped out at me that stopped me dead in my tracks. The picture was of Meriwether Lewis, my uncle. I had always known my family’s legacy took us to the heart of the American colonial experience, but to see his portrait at Carlisle was like a knife to my side. I am a part of this story. I would find out later, nearly three years later, that my family’s connection to these histories goes much deeper. A Lewis by birth, my family’s history can be traced to some of the first White settlers in Virginia. My uncle (many, many great) married President George Washington’s older sister, and my great-grandfather (again, many greats) was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson to lead a trio to Orleans to pick up*

*a bill of sale from the French. The United States had recently purchased the Louisiana Territory.*

*I share with you this personal history in the hopes that we can begin a conversation about the complexities of engaging in a journey such as this. I am a direct beneficiary of the very policies I critique. I cannot change what my ancestors did. All I can change is how I respond to their actions and the legacy they left for all of us. The process of decolonization is not easy, and it begins, as it should, in my own self. Decolonization “signifies action, movement, process, dialogue, and the space between colonial and postcolonial” (Diversi and Moreira, 2009, p. 207). Engaging decolonization in scholarship exists in the struggle between “being and being more human, between being conditionally free and being free...between visceral knowledge of subjugation and theories of oppression” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 207). Engaging in a journey to learn about social studies education with/in Indigenous contexts requires I seek a space in-between my ancestry and a future free of the oppressive and dehumanizing policies. Brenton (2008) wrote eloquently on this struggle:*

I know that decolonization necessarily challenges my privileged treatment, and I also know that I and my fellow colonizers have vested material interests in keeping things “as is.” But more than that, I know that my social conditioning and the socially constructed sense of who I am—all the mental, emotional, and material habits that I have been raised to accept—support oppression in a thousand subtle and blatant ways. These dynamics of oppression have been rendered invisible to me, however



painfully visible they are to others. The decolonizing work begins here with naming these dynamics, so that I can engage the lifelong work of breaking their hold (McCaslin and Brenton, 2008, p. 519).

*This tension of being both a colonizer and an advocate of decolonization calls for me to take on the lifetime commitment of engaging my research reflexively in order to prevent, as much as possible, the reinforcement of hegemony in communities with whom I work (Swadener & Mutua, 2008).*

*My struggle with coming face-to-face with my own family weighed heavily on me as our tour of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School drew to a close. We had one last part of the grounds to visit—the cemetery where nearly 200 Indigenous children are buried. The cemetery lies in plain view of a busy highway and is protected by tall, black iron gates. The headstones are as militaristic as the rest of the school: white, rounded at the top, very similar to the headstones at Arlington National Cemetery. I do not know if I will ever forget that afternoon. The air was thick, and I had trouble breathing. My head pounded. I walked the rows, noting the Christian first names and Indigenous last names, the date of each child's passing etched perfectly into the stone. No birth dates. Some headstones were marked "unknown." There was one grave in particular that remains an ever-present image in my mind. What stood out in my mind most about this particular grave was the tattered teddy bear resting neatly by its side. I knelt down, my fingers gripping the dirt and grass. I could feel the beads of sweat stinging my cheeks, but it was not sweat. I was crying. This was a child. It would be a lie if I told you that in that moment I did not feel guilty that my ancestors played a part*

*in this child's death. I did, and I still struggle with benefiting from these horrific policies and actions. But more than guilt, I felt, and still feel, a tremendous amount of anger. Genocide happened here, and from what I had come to know at that point in 2010, it was still happening.*

***What are the implications of the visit to Carlisle on this dissertation work?***

### Hollywood

“Were more **sad** for me because I think my students felt **pain** anytime they talk about their own community and about their cultural **stereotypes**... [They need] to feel **safe** to take **risks** and **share** or students will go into **survival** mode and protect themselves from that pain. Teachers need to create the **community of learners** where they feel safe to talk about any of kind of issue, to **cry** if they need to, to be **angry**, and to **laugh** about things.”

*And so I return to Hollywood's own personal and professional experiences with the legacies of Indigenous education policies in the United States. We talked for a long while about growing up Indigenous and the impact boarding school assimilation had on her and her siblings—Hollywood speaks openly about not fully knowing her native language and how it took attending an Ivy League university to finally learn much of the history of her people and neighboring Native Nations. But what stuck me most in listening to my*

*conversations with Hollywood was her dedication to creating spaces in her elementary classroom where students could talk about what it is like to be Indigenous.*

*Her students, Hollywood commented, always had more questions about race, about history, about their communities than there were answers. I include Hollywood's experiences here because I believe they are a symbol of hope in this journey. In order for Indigenous children—and all children for that matter—to have spaces where they can unpack the complexities of the world in which they live, we must understand the implications of the curriculum we ask them to learn. This understanding will inevitably lead us to ask tough questions about social studies curriculum (textbooks and standards) and the ways in which we engage curriculum at the classroom level. These questions, I argue, have many answers. The pages that follow seek to unpack my own journey into the complex relationship between social studies education research and practices with/in Indigenous contexts.*

### **Along a Möbius strip: On growing up American**

*The United States has always been afraid. First, the U.S. was afraid of losing its foothold on the American continent. We were a new country, and Indigenous peoples, as I discussed in the Preface, posed a problem to our expansion. Later, we were afraid of each other. Much later still we were afraid of an idea—communism. Communism would be the downfall of American democracy. Communism would be the downfall of the American*

*economic juggernaut. But you cannot kill an idea. You can kill people who follow an ideology different from your own—the U.S. is certainly guilty of that many times over. The only way to win a war of ideology is to indoctrinate the most innocent into the dominant belief system. The U.S. is most certainly guilty as charged in seeking to bend the minds of children to the traditions of the American sensibility. Education was and always will be the U.S. weapon of choice in this war to control the hearts and minds of its citizens. I grew up in this war.*

*I was taught in school that science could prove just about anything. I was taught democracy was the only form of government that guaranteed freedom. I was taught that the United States was a great country. My teachers told me so. My textbooks told me so. I only had one social studies teacher—my eighth grade U.S. history teacher—that ever exposed us to ideas contradictory to the great American narrative. My education within the walls of the schools I attended was simple and clean. Messiness and complexity was reserved for my life at home where my parents afforded me resources to think about and speak about other worlds, other people, other ideas. It was at home that I first learned about Chief Joseph, Sitting Bull, Black Elk, and Chief Seattle. I grew up near two reservations, but I never learned about them in school. When I was going through a difficult period during my adolescence, it was the teachings of Chief Seattle that helped keep the darkness at bay. My parents encouraged me to delve into my innocent curiosity of Indigenous peoples in order to help me heal. Only now do I truly see the profound impact that time had on the person I am becoming.*

*As a child I never felt comfortable with what my teachers were teaching me, but I could never put my finger on what it was that bothered me so much. My parents could certainly share many a tale of my run-ins with teachers and my inability to follow the rules. When we moved from Pennsylvania to Connecticut, my parents decided to put me in public school in the hopes I would cause less trouble than I had in my parochial years. Mind you, we moved to Connecticut when I was in the fifth grade. I was always a curious child, and my parents did all they could to create space/s for me to daydream and learn. My classroom experiences, however, were far from encouraging. Spelling lists, math worksheets, multiple choice tests, and reading lists—I always wanted more. I remember my teachers balking at my choices of controversial topics for research projects. I remember they did not want me to cause trouble in class, and so I was bored and disconnected. If it weren't for my parents engaging in difficult dialogues and encouraging me to seek out information and perspectives, I do not think I would have become the person I am today.*

*Some of you<sup>4</sup> may recoil in Western academic horror at the sight of a long block quote, but it is necessary as I transition the discussion towards theoretical foundations for this work. Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) wrote:*

If children learn, even before words, that the unfamiliar is inimical, this will affect their approach to differences of all kinds, even those

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<sup>4</sup> I was taught to always be conscious of my reading audience, and so I will occasionally make use of the phrase “you” to denote my understanding that I am not alone in this writing space.

forays into the unfamiliar that we take when walking into a forest or a meadow, and they will never be comfortable in unfamiliar social worlds. If they learn that their way—or any single way—is always best, they will never see, and use, the alternatives, however widely they travel. To get outside of the imprisoning framework of assumptions learned within a single tradition, habits of attention and interpretation need to be stretched and pulled and folded back upon themselves, life lived along a Möbius strip. These are lessons too complex for a single encounter... When the strange becomes familiar, what was once obvious may become obscure. The goal is to build a complex structure in which both sets of ideas are intelligible, a double helix of tradition and personal growth (p. 43-44).

*Bateson, like many others, believed we never step into the same river twice, but that each return to the river can teach us something new. Living—and dissertating—along a Möbius strip, which is a non-orientable mathematical surface that can be twisted in a variety of ways with sides folding in on themselves depending on space (3-dimensional or otherwise). Ultimately, travelling along a Möbius strip returns the traveller to his or her starting point (Weisstein, 2014).*

*As such, engaging dissertation work in this way allowed me to re/engage my memories, the writings of other scholars, and the experiences of my participants simultaneously as I twisted the space of learning about social studies with/in Indigenous contexts. We cannot learn all there is to learn from*

*a single encounter or a single way of knowing. Growing up American instilled in me traditions of logic and linear thinking that I will spend the rest of my life trying to break. This tradition, though, is one side on a Möbius strip. I did not know this until now because I am writing this introduction at the end of the dissertation journey. The other side continues to evolve, turning and twisting as I revisit the rivers of my life and learning. No doubt I could return to this months from now and see this journey in an entirely different way. This is the point. People change and as such we are multiple within a singular body. We learn through interaction and reflection so that the unfamiliar becomes familiar and the familiar becomes unfamiliar. Learning is messy.*

**Packing my bags and heading to the District: Outlining the intentions of this dissertation work**

*Growing up without exposure to Indigenous peoples and histories in my formal education and my visit to Carlisle led me to ask difficult questions in my first year of doctoral studies about social studies in Indigenous contexts. I combed the literature and found very little about the planning for and teaching of social studies to/for Indigenous students. I remember learning about social studies education in other populations during a semester-long class on multicultural and global education. It infuriated me that Indigenous peoples were not included in the majority of our readings. I wanted to learn how teachers and school districts where the majority of students were identified as Indigenous planned for and taught social studies curriculum. My dissertation, therefore, is a journey into*

*these contexts. I spent, as you will come to learn, two years visiting with current and former teachers in one school district in the American Southwest. My participants always referred to the district as “the District,” and so it retains that name throughout the writing of the dissertation. I have read many publications and dissertations that use fancy pseudonyms, but I wanted to honor the voices of my participants, so I used the name we used most often in our conversations.*

*In honoring the voices of my participants and remaining true to my intentions for this work: to begin a life-long journey into learning about social studies in Indigenous contexts. Learning about the impact research has had and continues to have in these contexts was also fundamental to this dissertation. A number of questions guided the development of this dissertation:*

- 1. Why do teachers choose social studies as their profession?*
- 2. How do teachers use state-mandated and district-wide social studies curriculum to create meaningful learning for their students?*
- 3. How do teachers view their role in creating/modifying district-wide social studies curriculum to meet the needs of their students?*
- 4. How do personal and professional experiences of teachers and administrators shape their views of social studies curriculum/standards?*
- 5. How do my own personal and professional experience influence my understanding of teaching social studies in Indigenous contexts?*

*These questions were immense and spoke to my want for multiplicity. The dissertation, therefore, has many facets.*



*The chapters to come reflect the many twists of a Möbius strip that began a 30 years ago, 3 years ago, 3 months ago, 3 minutes ago, or even 3 minutes from now depending on the space in which the twist engages. The five questions previously posed were part of my original thinking for what directions my dissertation could take, and ultimately the text to come to focus a good deal on the last question in order to force a constant reflection on my positionality to the experiences of my participants and social studies in the District. Much as Brenton engaged her own struggle to name the forces of oppression that are embedded in our daily lives as colonizers, I sought throughout this dissertation to shine light on the dark places of my own positionality in order to, in the future, become a better ally in creating change/s for social studies with/in Indigenous contexts. As such, the writing journeys a great deal into the past, as well as the present, and an unforeseeable future. In its basic form, the chapters are the following:*

- Chapter Two: Discussion of Western ways of knowing and the history of Western research in Indigenous communities; I lay out my process of conducting research with/in Indigenous contexts and outline methodological considerations for decolonization;
- Chapter Three: Provide a foundation for thinking multilogically and discuss theoretical perspectives that appear throughout the dissertation;
- Chapter Four: The first of three “findings” chapters; participants share their perspectives on the value of social studies in the District; I engage the discourse of epistemic violence and the marginalization of social studies using postcolonial theory;

- Chapter Five: The second “findings” chapter; participants share their experiences with social studies curriculum development and implementation in the District; I consider social studies’ curriculum as an enforcer of American hegemony, and the impact for Indigenous education;
- Chapter Six: A hybrid final chapter engages the third “findings” section for what participants would like to see changed for social studies in the District, as well as my own reflections on theory, research, and the life-long process of decolonization.

## Chapter Two

### **Two roads: On the challenges of an un/methodology**

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“Right or wrong; validity; statistically significant; worthy or unworthy: value judgments lose their meaning. What is important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship—that is, being accountable to your relations.”

~ Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*

#### **The hegemony of Western research: On being accountable to/for history**

“*Research* is a dirty word among many Native communities” (Tuck & Yang, emphasis in original, 2014, p. 223). Simply stated, yet deeply meaningful, Tuck and Yang’s words reminded me of one of the first books I read at the start of my doctoral program. Vine Deloria, Jr.’s seminal text, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, dedicated an entire chapter to the history of anthropological research in/on Indigenous peoples. Deloria, Jr. (1969) wrote:

The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects for observation; people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. The anthropologist thus furnishes the justification for treating Indian people like so many chessmen available for anyone to play with (p. 81).

Bear in mind Deloria, Jr. wrote from a very specific time period in American history deeply divided along racial, cultural, and political lines. His admonishment of the field of anthropology left an indelible mark on me, and

while I understand that not all anthropologists worked—or continue to work—in the ways Deloria, Jr. described, his critique does lend to the larger conversation about the impact Western research has had—and still has—on framing the way/s Indigenous peoples are re/presented in a variety of fields. The 20<sup>th</sup> century’s tradition of ethnographic research with/in a positivist paradigm made it possible to objectively study others. “Ethnographies of the ‘other’ in the Americas usually meant depictions of ‘exotic’ Indigenous cultures” (Ladson-Billings in Kovatch, 2009, p. 27). Raheja (2010) noted that anthropologists and ethnographers have implemented “more self-reflexive and sensitive research methodologies” because of these criticisms, but even still, Indigenous peoples are “positioned between complicity with and resistance to” the standing definitions, re/presentations, and research standards still embedded with/in these new methods (p. 206). Understanding this tradition and the critique of such practices are vital to my work here, and I would like to explore this history as a foundation for the development of my dissertation’s un/methodology.

Returning, then, to Deloria, Jr., his critique of anthropologists also made a larger connection for me to Smith’s writings on colonialism and imperialism. As a citizen of a settler-nation, I think it important to consider and be responsible for/to the history of the colonial-imperial project with/in my geographic borders (both physical and mental), which makes colonialism an important term to unpack. Colonialism, according to Smith (1999) is just one expression of a larger imperial project birthed during the Enlightenment that permanently changed the economic, political, and cultural landscapes of Europe into a competition for empire.

Colonialism “facilitated this expansion [of imperialism’s system markets and capital investments] by ensuring that there was European control, which necessarily meant securing and subjugating the indigenous populations” (Smith, 1999, p. 21). To re/identify Indigenous peoples as less than human provided Europeans the justification they wanted to implement policies for assimilation and extermination. This control extended beyond Indigenous peoples in the colonies. Smith argued that all peoples—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—were controlled within the colonial-imperial project. Europeans living in colonies around the world had to be controlled (physically and mentally) because they were the image/s European powers wanted to exploit as the only *true* civilization (Smith, 1999). The creation of the West—or the Occident as I discuss in Chapter Three—was fundamental to the success of the colonial-imperial project.

By extension, then, to the idea of research as an arm of the colonial-imperial project can be seen through Smith’s (1999) use of Stuart Hall.

Hall suggests that the concept of the West functions in ways which (1) allow ‘us’ to characterize and *classify* societies into categories, (2) condense complex images of other societies through a *system of representation*, (3) provide a standard *model of comparison*, and (4) provide *criteria of evaluation* against which other societies can be ranked (emphasis in original, 1999, p. 42-43).

These functions allowed, according to Smith, Indigenous peoples to be codified into Western thought. Like Deloria, Jr.’s (1969) critique of researchers’ visits to reservations, Smith’s use of Hall extends the argument that a long history exists in

the West's creation of identity and that the creation research that allows us to *know* further subjugates Indigenous peoples.

Kovatch (2009) also wrote extensively on the West's examination of Indigenous peoples from the point of view of the constant re/production of the West-Other relationship inside the academy. This re/production, according to Kovatch (2009), "manifests itself in a variety of ways, most noticeably through Western-based policies and practices that govern research... The result has been, and continues to be, that Indigenous communities are being examined by non-Indigenous academics who pursue Western research on Western terms" (Kovatch, 2009, p. 28). Smith (1999) argued a similar point in that Indigenous peoples have "experienced unrelenting research of a profoundly exploitative nature" (p. 42). This history is extremely important, especially for my work, because acknowledging this history and being responsible for/to it is one step in my own decolonization and being, as Wilson (2008) noted, responsible to my relations—who I consider to be the participants of my dissertation.

In keeping with Wilson's theme of responsibility and accountability, I want to consider Kovatch's (2009) writing on Denzin and Lincoln's conception of a verging seventh movement in qualitative research—a movement that would challenge the more essentialist traditions of qualitative research, especially with regards to non-Western ways of knowing. She found that there are two challenges for such a movement to come about: 1) locating and making use of a research methodology that is "not extractive" and that honors local Indigenous ways of knowing; and 2) "dealing with the undeniable" difference between Western and

Indigenous thought (Kovatch, 2009, p. 29). *As a non-Indigenous woman, I must wrestle with Kovatch's argument because it goes to the heart of my dissertation's decolonizing goal. I do not seek to extract a singular knowledge from my participants, nor do I seek to define or codify what the social studies is as an academic discipline based on my participants' experiences. Instead, my approach, as will be discussed throughout this chapter, seeks to think on the margins of Western research traditions, engage in reflexive self-study of my own shifting identities of researcher/researched/insider/outsider, and consider multiple possibilities for addressing the research questions. Ultimately, I am responsible to my relationship with my participants and the school district that allowed me access for engaging in this inquiry. As such, my un/methodology seeks honor my participants, the community in which they teach, and the history that shapes my own critical position.*

### **Honoring relationships: Engaging in reflexivity as critical practice**

*Honoring relationships is at the forefront of remaining cognizant of my position as an outsider to the Indigenous communities with whom I work while also being an insider to the academic structure/s I wish to challenge. This tension of being both a colonizer and an advocate of decolonization calls for me to take on the lifetime commitment of engaging my research reflexively in order to prevent, as much as possible, the reinforcement of hegemony as previously discussed. While establishing close relationships with participants is essential to the decolonization process, my research should first and foremost honor the*

*histories and cultures of Indigenous histories and communities with whom I work* (Wilson, 2008).

Vine Deloria, Jr. (1988) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) wrote extensively, as I discussed in the previous section, on the imperialistic and colonialist nature of research, especially with regards to Indigenous peoples. I agree with Smith (1999) that much of Western research has been on Indigenous communities rather than for or in allegiance with Indigenous wishes. As such, research for too long has been dehumanizing and objectifying. Unpacking our own positionality and power as researcher—learning how to un/see—is paramount to honoring the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and building alliances. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) noted that “nonindigenous scholars are building these connections, learning how to dismantle, deconstruct, and decolonize traditional ways of doing science, learning that research is always already both moral and political, learning how to let go” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3). There is much to talk about when, as Glesne (2007) pointed out, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples come together to overcome the same struggle/s rather than further reifying the damage research has done in the past (and in some instances, continues to do).

Along these same lines, reflexivity “is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing—spaces of constructed visibility and incitements to see which constitute power/knowledge ... [of] seeing what frames our seeing” (Lather quoted in Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan, Laws, Mueller-Rockstroh, & Petersen, 2004, p. 364). The hegemonic traditions



inherent in Western research can be dismantled by opening space/s for turning the gaze on our/selves, our memories, languages, histories, and hopes (to name a few) to be heard with/in research and with/in relation to our participants. So, too, opening space/s for Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants space/s to re/construct their self/ves in relation to me, has the potential to blur the traditional structures that separate the research from the researcher. Davies et. al (2004) noted: “At this end of the spectrum of reflexive work, the subject is deconstructed in such a way that it can no longer be read as a fixed object to be read or as a superior transcendental consciousness that can engage in objective readings” (p. 362). Obscuring the traditional re/presentations of researcher and researched and the power structure that normally exists between them in Western research allows for constant vigilance of the relationship as it develops throughout the research journey.

As such, the fluidity of identities, especially for myself as I consider the possibilities and pitfalls of reflexive work, are always in flux, but still dependent on my reading of them (Davies et. al, 2004). As such, it is important to remember that honoring and being responsible to my participants (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) requires an appreciation of and support for an ontology that recognizes multiple realities (Wilson, 2008). Developing an understanding that identities and realities are multiple must accompany an understanding, therefore, that truths are multiple. Engaging multiplicity demanded two critical elements for this dissertation: 1) that participants have space to speak their truths about issues surrounding social studies in the District and 2) that I disrupt the traditional role

of the researcher by thinking about the participants' truths as informing my own learning about social studies and various theories rather than having theories and the history of social studies inform my learning about the participants. My relationships with participants, therefore, developed on a foundation of learning and collaboration.

*By extension of my need to be vigilant of the power I have in the reading of not only my identity/ies and knowledge/s and the identity/ies and knowledge/s of my participants, I find I must also embrace, as discussed in Chapter Three, that multiplicity begets ambiguity in as much as my research. Ultimately, my research produced no one answer to any one question. In this way, then, using a multilogical approach to examine social studies with/in Indigenous contexts provided space/s for these realities and truths to unfold. In my work to be respectful and responsible to my participants, I must not fall back into the comfort of a Western worldview that more often than not speaks about Indigenous peoples (or, as Smith argued, all peoples living in settler nations) as singular cultural groups rather than in multiplicity (Dei, 2011). I recognize, too, that my work to honor the perspectives of Indigenous peoples could simultaneously constitute a re/colonization of those perspectives (Dei, 2011). Thus, I struggled with how to avoid this possibility as much as I could in my own work.*

Reflexivity is my greatest tool to constantly and consistently challenge my own position/ality of researcher-researched Marshall (1998) argued that Foucault “lamented” (p. 74) the shift of caring for the self to knowing the self as part of the research process because to know the self is to disrupt the fluid nature of identity

re/creation based on circumstance/s. To know is to define, which goes against the aims of deconstruction. To know is to know absolutely. Caring for the self implies an appreciation for the fluidity of ever-evolving identities depending on circumstance. The same tension is also found in the re/presentation of others. The challenge, then, is to work within those tensions. I find Marshall's (1998) reading of Foucault pertinent because of his focus on education. He argued that, for Foucault, education "must be nonmanipulative and must permit us to change at will. To do that we must be able to disassociate ourselves from the regimes of truth that have classified, objectified, normalized, and constituted our identity as beings of a particular kind" (p. 77). In working within the tensions of identity/ies for my/self as researcher and participant for education research, I must be mindful to work against the trap/s of tradition that reify hegemony.

**Breaking the ties that bind?: Thinking about theory and decolonization as the start of an un/method**

*Tradition is a comfortable tie that binds me as a doctoral candidate to the academy. The dissertation itself is, arguably, tradition in carnet—proof of my worthiness to enter the Ivory Tower. I would be a hypocrite to, on the one hand attempt to skirt the margins with a dissertation that challenges the Western research tradition while simultaneously asking for entry into the academy upon completion? There is no comfort to be found in such a position. The need to explain, to define, to write in the accepted language and structure of Western research is incredibly frustrating. I find myself constantly negotiating with myself*

*the following scenario: write the way they want, pass the written and oral defense, graduate, and then I can write and think the way that feels most natural. I return to the question of my hypocrisy. As part of my dissertation journey I kept a journal--indeed I began scribbling notes to myself long before I formally set on the path, and I include the sentiments of those writings throughout this dissertation. What I found, ultimately, are that most of my frustrations are with the very process I now engage—the final write-up of my dissertation journey.*

*Writing a methodology chapter is the ultimate paradox of this journey, but alas, I swallow the bitter pill so that you all can come (hopefully) to an understanding of what I have been working on these last two years. In thinking about the best way to approach not only the writing, but also the doing of my dissertation work, I return to my multilogical frame. I agree with postcolonial theory's central tenets of struggling against colonization and Eurocentric worldviews, but I also agree with the critics who argue that postcolonial thinking can fall too easily into simplistic dichotomies. I am also troubled by the criticism that postcolonial theorists create space/s for historically marginalized groups to speak rather than working alongside these groups as allies in the struggle to create such space/s (Cary, 2004). I do not seek to give voice to the voiceless. I have never sought nor do I seek such power. That, I feel, is a critical point in my dissertation journey because it challenges me to remain ever vigilant and reflexive to my own privilege with/in the academy. In thinking of ways to work with and against postcolonial theory, I recall Spivak's own struggle to re/make space/s for/with the voice/s of the subaltern/s and Bhabha's call for extending*

*postcolonial thinking into a state of hybridity where issues of race, culture, and difference are muddied.*

*This thinking inspired me to seek out a methodology that would act like an un/methodology in that, on the one hand I could utilize postcolonial theory to unpack hegemony in social studies, while also on the other hand, think critically about the theory itself, thus breaking the ties that bind theory to a singular identity (of the analytical lens). Allowing myself to enter an uncomfortable space where I constantly questioned whether my thinking with theory and with the words of my participants reinforced hegemony or whether I created new space/s for me to decolonize my work was paramount. Shultz (2012) drew on Said and Fanon to extend her own work with/in postcolonial theory into the concept of decolonization, which she contended*

Is a process of justice and transformation that, if it is to actually occur, will need to build on justice, compassion, and a relational creativity that is lacking in current public spheres. Because those in every society who are marginalized suffer daily humiliation, the beginning point for education as a decolonizing project must be that processes of colonization exist on every level (p. 31).

*For me, then, I see my uncomfortableness with/in my dissertation journey as a way to decolonize. As a form of action, decolonialists serve as hybrids, navigating the margins with/in theory and the academic tradition to challenge and deconstruct hegemonic structure/s as they currently exist in their research context/s, in their work space/s, and in their own minds.*

Along these same lines, I agree with Swadener and Mutua (2007) who commented, “unlike postcolonial theory, decolonizing research goes beyond the mires/lures of defining *colonialism* solely in terms of spatial or temporal dimensions, often ignoring the brutality of the material consequences of coloniality” (p. 37-38, emphasis authors’ own). My understanding of Swadener’s and Matua’s use of postcolonial theory as a springboard to examine current, tangible implications of colonial thinking on marginalized groups is supported by the work of Diversi and Moreira (2009) who see decolonizing research as action-oriented. This action by no means assures an answer/s to any given question/s asked by researchers, but it does seek to open new space/s for dialogue about the historical role of hegemony in such places as classrooms and the implications such structures have on, for example, learning for non-dominant groups. These dialogues have a humanizing potential to make movements towards addressing injustice and silencing, which is so often talked about in postcolonial theory but never acted upon (Diversi & Moreira, 2009).

While still within thinking with theories, decolonization takes on issues in power and knowledge, which are more closely associated with the likes of Foucault and Derrida. Knowledge, according to Mignolo (2007), is also central to colonization and the continuation of Western hegemony. It is a central goal of decolonization, therefore, to de-link the haves and have-nots in the power/knowledge struggle. Mignolo (2009) wrote extensively on the de-linking of historical dichotomies of knowledge/s such as the West “having science” and Indigenous peoples “having wisdom” (p. 160). For Mignolo (2007),

decolonization works to actively de-link knowledge and power with/in society whereas postcolonial theory seeks only a transformation with/in the academy. I wish to learn and write about the potential for both. To this end, “decolonial thinking and the decolonial option place human lives and life in general first rather than making claims for the ‘transformation of the disciplines’” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 178). Mignolo (2011) further extends the relationship between de-linking and decolonization to include border thinking—an/other way of considering hybridity—because, in his words, “decoloniality focuses on changing the terms of the conversation and not only its content” (p. 275). Within border thinking/hybridity that multilogicality can, arguably, overcome the stranglehold of hegemony. In other words, if Said’s *Orientalism* helped create the binary of Occident and Orient, then decolonization can help unmake that binary because border thinking/hybridity changes the rules of the colonial-imperial game to make the margins, the borders, the definitions less clear.

Border thinking and hybridity as states of being and working have consequences. Mignolo (2011) in particular points to consequences with/in the academy because the very nature of decolonization challenges long-held Western ways of knowing, researching, and writing. *This dis/obedience is something I have struggled with as I discussed at the start of this section, especially as I work to produce a dissertation that proves I am worthy (for lack of a better word) of entrance into academy. My privilege affords me the space/s to wrestle with the re/creation of my/self as an ally of decolonization with/for Indigenous education, but I will always have privilege and will always be seen with critical eyes because*

*of it. I also run the risk that my work could have the reverse effect of my original intentions. I am reminded of Swadener and Mutua (2008) who wrote: “These recent moves in decolonizing illustrate ways in which scholars engaged in decolonizing research remain constantly mindful of the ways in which the process or outcomes of their research endeavors might reify hegemonic power structures, thereby creating marginality” (p. 33). Reflexivity and self-criticality about my position as authority figure in the academy is non-negotiable. As such, this dissertation spends a great deal looking backward in order to think and speak honestly about the struggles to overcome the hegemonic status quo that has, for too long, allowed the colonizer mentality to flourish. The last consequence of working within an un/methodology that seeks decolonization, and arguably the most beneficial to my growth as an ally, is that I am perpetually changing.*

### **Un/methodology: Thinking about the connections between decolonization and deconstruction**

Derrida argued we should start “wherever we are, in the middle of the fix we find ourselves in” (Caputo quoted in Mazzei, 2007, p. 6). I was, no doubt, in a fix. I embraced the history of academic research and goals of multilogicality as a means to decolonize my own thinking about social studies in/for Indigenous contexts, but I must tell the whole of my truth. *There were times when I longed for a checklist so I could prove what I did was right. I think that you, my reader, can understand this given my previous discussion. In addition, though, I think fear drove most of those nights—fear that I would never finish my dissertation, fear*



*that I was doing it wrong, and fear that I missed something. Fear, like the lofty goals discussed in the previous chapter, are good. Fear kept me—and keeps me—engaged in a rigorous internal debate about how I read not only theory, but also the words of my participants, and the methodological process I use to engage my work. The methodological considerations of decolonization as a means to deconstruct research demanded nothing less than my full engagement in thinking and then rethinking every step of this journey.*

*It is not without irony, too, that I wrestle with methodology. There are no clear paths to the doing of decolonization. It is very personal. This is what I have found from reading methodology books that speak to decolonization. I turned, then, to looking at the connections between decolonization and deconstruction as a means to dismantle Western research traditions, especially with regards methodology and essentialist thinking (Jankie, 2004). Derrida argued that deconstruction has no methodology (Mazzei, 2007). This begs the question: How then does one conduct “research” within/for the “academy”? For me, the answer is this: listen, think, reflect. My understanding of Derrida challenged—and continues to challenge—my thinking of the inherent structure/s embedded in any prescribed methodology and the ways in which my longing for a checklist was a direct violation of a goal of deconstruction—and indeed my own decolonization process—which is to breakdown Western hegemony in social studies, in research, and in my/self.*

*I cannot, nor do I want to, disengage myself from the history I spoke to the start of this chapter. Indeed, I need to understand my role as a Western*

*researcher comes with history, and it because of this that I actively engage in the rigorous looking backward and forward simultaneously.* In thinking about the usefulness of deconstruction as a partner to decolonization, it is helpful to use Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) reading of Derrida who "demonstrate that deconstruction is not just about unsettling texts, but can be put to use to unsettle institutions in many different ways" (p. 15). *This challenged—and continues to challenge—my thinking about the process in which I engaged my dissertation, but also the process in which I undertook writing it and presenting it with/in the academy. These tensions are undoubtedly a silently screaming theme of my dissertation. It should go without saying that I did not (even though my subconscious sometimes yearned for it) want a prescribed coding mechanism by which I could locate the answer to a series of research questions. I wanted to be surprised. I wanted a way to think about theory as not just theory, but also as data alongside traditional data (read here: participant interviews).*

There is, arguably, a strong connection between decolonization and the work to engage the absent presence. "The absent presence is that which has been ignored in an attempt to preserve the illusion of truth as a perfectly self-contained and self-sufficient present" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 18). Regularly associated with the idea of the trace, the absent presence cannot be seen or heard in physical manifestation of a singular reality, but which nonetheless is ever present in other realities. Deconstruction, and arguably decolonization, seeks to be mindful of the absent present—traces of voices, experiences, writings, and other realities that are normally missed (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

*I keep going back to thinking about the absent presence as those voices, experiences, feelings, and/or other aspects of humanity that have been marginalized in the endeavor to create the master narrative that now dominates social studies education, especially in Indigenous contexts (and for which we will discuss in Chapters Four and Five). Likewise, using an un/methodology that thinks with theory rather than codes with theory allowed me to remain watchful of my own privilege and potential to reify Western hegemony (Cary, 2004).*

### **Detour: Voice of opposition**

*It was a cool, autumn morning in early October when I left the comfort of my doctoral home and traveled east to a conference on Indigenous studies. Having only just begun my second year, I was still seeking out readings, perspectives, ideas, and my own questions related to the study of Indigeneity in social studies education. It was my hope in traveling to the conference to make connections with scholars and fellow doctoral students who were doing work in the field that could inspire me and provide me directions to consider in my own journey. One of the most inspiring and heart crushing conversations of my life happened during the first coffee break—a conversation I can still recall with raw clarity even now. My coffee mug clinked against the saucer, my nerves getting the best of me as I sat next to a scholar who I thought at the time—and still think—very highly of. As we sipped coffee, I answered as best I could the questions posed to me about my want to work with social studies teachers in Indigenous contexts. “I wish you the best of luck,” the scholar said. “But it’s probably never going to*

*happen for you.” The reason? I am White. I was heart broken, not able to articulate a response. It felt as if my academic dream was being crushed before it could even be fully realized. I sat on the edge of my hotel bed later that night and cried. I didn’t know what to do next.*

*I honestly did not know what to do when I returned to campus, so I sought the advice of various faculty members. They each empathized with my story and told me to stay the course. I did not really know what that meant either, to be honest. How can one stay the course when the course had not really developed? As timing would have it, I needed to put aside the crisis and prepare for another, much larger conference. In preparing for the conference, I realized that an opportunity to discuss my dilemma was possible if I made contact with the chair of a teaching Indigenous-related content group at the conference. I would attend the business meeting s a member of that particular group, so I contacted the chair and we met for coffee to talk about the work I hoped to do in a school district where the vast majority of the student body were identified as Indigenous. The chair was very welcoming to my ideas for how this work could help inform the future of social studies, so he gave me a few minutes at the meeting to make a pitch. In my mind, this was the last chance I would have to make connections because of the conference’s size and the cliff that I was swiftly approaching in solidifying a research agenda.*

*I think I was about as nervous I had ever been in my life going into that meeting. There was a lot at stake. I introduced myself and launched into a five-minute narrative of what I was hoping to do and why I was hoping to do it. I was*

*a doctoral student and former social studies teacher. I had been puzzled by the lack of literature in our field about the re/presentations of Indigenous peoples in social studies curriculum and an even greater lack of literature on the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous social studies teachers at schools where the majority of students are Indigenous. My goal, I articulated, was to learn about the experiences of teachers in these schools about the planning and implementation of social studies curriculum for/to Indigenous students. As I continued to speak, my eyes caught the attention of a woman sitting across the room from me, and I noticed she was giving me thumbs up. She then pointed to herself as she mouthed the words “come talk to me.” I went up to her at the end of the meeting and introduced myself again. This woman who gave me the thumbs up is known here, for the purposes of the dissertation, as Lindsey Waite. That chance meeting, as it turns out, was a critical turning point in my life.*

### **Seeking multilogicality: Building relationships with participants in the District**

I emailed with Lindsey a few times to collaborate about the goals of my dissertation work to ensure my intentions were clear. I wanted to talk to social studies educators in a school district where the majority of students are identified as Indigenous. The history of social studies’ inaccurate re/presentations of Indigenous cultures spurred me to seek out the experiences of teachers with/in Indigenous contexts to see how social studies curriculum is engaged. Lindsey put me in touch with the appropriate district-level administrators to get permission to

proceed with my dissertation journey. Over the course of the next two and a half years, I visited the District on **five separate occasions**<sup>5</sup> to speak with current and former social studies teachers: 1) Two weeklong visits to collect interviews with each participant; 2) Two weeklong visits to be a part of the community who had generously opened their homes and hearts to me; and 3) One weeklong visit to conduct member checks. During the first four visits, I spoke with **ten current and former teachers** (most of whom now work in administration) as part of the formal visits. Despite the District being one of the largest school districts geographically, it was—and still is—a rather close-knit community. As such, Lindsey was fundamental in introducing me to people who volunteered to participate in my dissertation work.

Ultimately, **seven out of the 10 participants** were included in my dissertation. The voices of the seven participants, two of whom you have already met in previous chapters (Hollywood and Amy), are central to the unpacking of social studies curriculum in the District as will be discussed in future chapters. The seven educators are current or former social studies teachers in the District. The decades of teaching experiences contributed to rich conversations about social studies and the struggle to meet the needs of Indigenous students in the District. The participants sharing of their individual experiences and cultural, spiritual, educational, and linguistic identities contributed to the multiplicity of the thinking of this dissertation that goes beyond the written word. Unfortunately, the need to keep my dissertation manageable in the timeframe needed for completion

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<sup>5</sup> I bold key phrases throughout the next two sections to elements of the methodology as I (attempt) to write about it unmethodologically.

prevented me from including everything the participants shared, but I hope future collaborations will be possible. Additional context is provided at the end of this chapter.

It is important to note here before we go any further that I did not **transcribe** participants' transcripts until after I had listened to them each four times and felt comfortable, at that point, using software to put their words on paper. I used **semi-structured interview protocols** during my two formal visits to the District to gain participants' perspectives on the role/s of social studies in the District and state and district-level curriculum (including standards and textbooks).<sup>6</sup> Interview time was also used to establish background understanding about the participants' identities, experiences learning social studies, and reasons for becoming teachers. It was my goal to learn as much I could from my participants' lives in the time I was able to spend with them given their busy schedules. As such, I asked participants to choose locations for our meetings that best fit their needs. I felt it appropriate in keeping with my goal to honor my participants and their individual identities to ask have them choose their own **pseudonym** for the final write-up of the dissertation. Their chosen names were not shared with others, nor were the reasons they chose their names shared with anyone other than me. Many of the participants commented that picking their own names for the final write-up was their "favorite part" of the entire process.

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<sup>6</sup> I chose to use a different font here to highlight the central puzzle of my dissertation work.

My experiences during those visits, as well as the **two informal trips** to the District informed my own personal and professional development, but the specifics of those will not be shared. Much of what was shared with me was for my eyes and ears only. Tuck and Yang (2014) would concur: “Not everything, or even most things, uncovered in a research process need to be reported in academic journals or settings” (p. 233). The relationships I developed as part of my visits to the District provided me insights that go well beyond the pages of a dissertation. Indeed, I am profoundly changed as a person by these experiences, and words cannot do justice for the gratitude I have for the friendships and alliances built with my dissertation’s participants and the larger community.

In reflecting on the time I spent with my participants, I find one of the more profound moments for me came during the week I visited to conduct **member checks**. I thought it was important for me to visit with my participants, transcripts in hand, to talk about what I was coming to understand about social studies in the District. It was important to meet with the participants before the final writing stage of the dissertation for two reasons: 1) I wanted to give them printed copies of their interview transcripts so that they could provide feedback on any sections they wanted to clarify and/or emphasize, and 2) I wanted to talk to them about the direction the dissertation was taking and the topics of focus. I thought it important we engage in conversation about the “findings” before I shared the dissertation with anyone else because it was their willingness to talk to me that allowed the dissertation to come to fruition. I was struck most by how excited they were to see me—the excitement was mutual. We shared many



laughs, caught up on the latest in a string of staff changes, and talked about next steps in the dissertation. I left copies of the transcripts with each participant after these talks and asked if they would read through them and comment, reflect, pose questions, or provide any other thoughts they may have. My participants expressed their gratitude for being able to provide feedback, but ultimately what I received were messages of thanks for asking the questions I asked, verification that the transcripts were accurate to what each participant wanted to say, and support and encouragement for me to push on with my writing.

### **Creating my hybrid space: Using storyboards to visualize thinking with theory as an un/methodology**

Returning, again, to the idea of honoring the multiple voices within my dissertation work, I sought a strategy that would optimize the time I spent with these voices in relationship with my thinking of theory. How to go about doing that, however, was a challenge, as has been previously discussed. Bateson (1994) wrote:

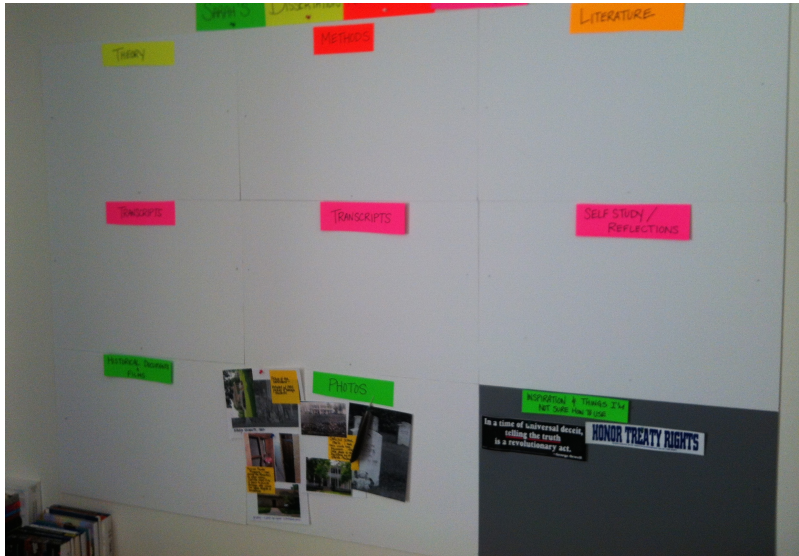
Rarely is it possible to study all the instructions to a game before beginning to play... The excitement of improvisation lies not only in the risk involved but in the new ideas...that seem to come from nowhere. We carry on the process of learning in everything we do (p. 9).

I am reminded of my previous discussion of Derrida when I consider Bateson's writing in *Learning Along the Way*. I had a plethora of voices to consider: the

experiences of my participants, the writings of scholars in both social studies and the various theoretical perspectives I was attuned to, and my own reflections.

In creating a space where I could constantly and simultaneously engage postcoloniality and critical pedagogy as theories and data in conversation with the participant interviews. I turned to the idea of Deleuze's **assemblage** and **threshold**. If you recall from Chapter Two, the assemblage is "creation from chaos"—the plugging in of theories and data that connect with/in a passageway (threshold) to create new possibilities and/or new knowledge/s (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 2). I distinctly remember sitting in a chair, staring at the blank wall in my apartment thinking about how to physically manifest a space where I could arrange, rearrange, make connections, break connections, and engage in a **rigorous internal debate** about what was being said to me and what I was saying in reply.

I was reminded, in that moment, of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) writings on **narrative space/s** and the living of life through the telling of stories. It came to me, then, to create a **storyboard** where all of these voices could live with me for the duration of this work. The storyboard, constructed of foam tiles, ended up being seven feet wide and six feet tall. With my storyboard ready, I went about the task of filling it. I created headlines such as "transcripts" and "literature" early in the process to help me make sense of where voices should *go*, but I quickly became frustrated with having structure in my hybrid space. Having all of the literature in one space and all of the theory in another seemed too disconnected. The picture below is the board as originally conceived:

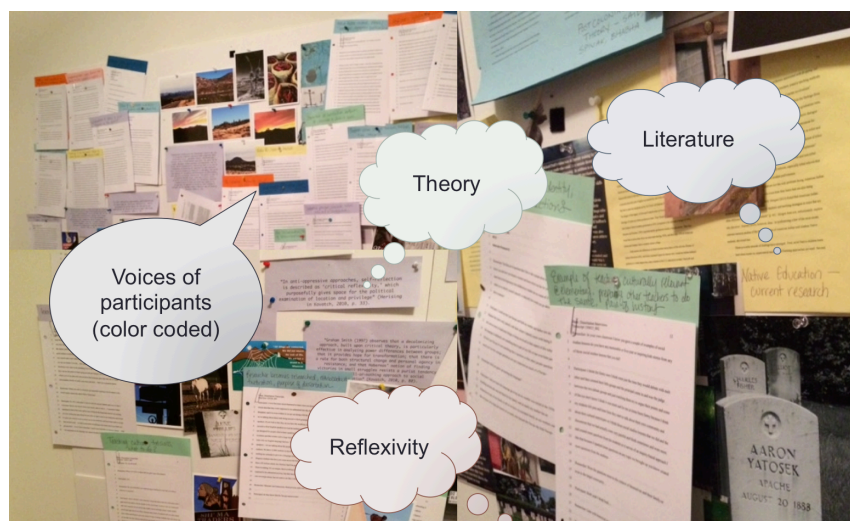


The next picture, below, is of the board as it currently stands. Getting rid of the labels as seen in the first picture opened **new and constantly evolving spaces** for me to think about how the voices of my participants informed my thinking about literature and theory and vice versa.



In keeping with describing my work with the voices of the participants, it is important to note that I did not **separate and pin transcripts** to the board until I had **listened** to them each an additional four times (which brings listening total to eight) and **read** through them twice (separate from the listening exercises). At that point, I felt comfortable giving each participant a color, as can be seen in pictures of the storyboard, so that I could easily identify them. It is difficult, you can imagine, to make sense of pieces of white paper strewn about on such a large storyboard. The color paper allowed me to **visualize** where participants were **speaking** to each other and to literature and theory (also printed on color paper). My own **personal notes** and **reactions** to key elements of each transcript (or literature or theory passage) were included before being pinned to the board.

In addition, pictures and **reflexive writings** were pinned to the board so I could visualize where my voice was entering and exiting different parts of the story. The image below demonstrates this.



As voices of participants met each other, and as those voices intermixed with those of the various theories and scholarly literature, **themes**—for lack of a better term—began to emerge. These themes, however, were not—and are still not—answers to any particular set of questions. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) write about their use of the **threshold**—a passageway that has “no function, purpose, or meaning until it is connected to other spaces” (p. 6). Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) writing about the **threshold as a way to think with theory** (or multiple theories in my work), literature, and the voices of participants makes it possible for surprises to happen, for new connections to be made that may not have been possible using traditional research methods. I did not know what I was looking for when I began listening and reading, so the findings—for lack of a better term—were not even close to what I could have imagined.

**The validity question: Always having to prove in a worldview that cannot *know* proof**

The complex webs that emerged from my work with/in the storyboard revealed that it is im/possible for me to answer to this fundamental question: how does a school district where the majority of students are Indigenous plan for and implement social studies curriculum that addresses/challenges known mis/representations and inaccuracies of Indigenous histories and cultures? In thinking about theory, literature, and the experiences of participants within a multilogical approach, I was able to see—because ultimately the findings of this work are still told through my voice—no clear path/s for how to address cultural

accuracy and relevance for social studies in/for Indigenous contexts. The complexities of this issue take precedence over any possible solutions, and I take great pause in thinking I have the knowledge necessary to make such a judgment at this time. The chapters to come will unpack this thinking multilogically within each of the three themes identified for this dissertation.

I think those of us engaged in the debate/s surrounding decolonization and deconstruction could go round and round with merit given to every voice who offers an opinion on how to best re/create methodology as an un/methodology, but as I discovered in my poststructural theory and research course, the doing and writing of this type of work varies greatly. In other words, the process by which I went about my dissertation journey and the way in which I write about it cannot be replicated, nor can it be validated or triangulated in the traditional sense because its personal nature. Some could see this as a limitation, which Kincheloe (2005) challenged.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) and Mazzei (2007) also challenged the need to validate and triangulate in the traditional ways of Western research. They wrote of these terms as a way to make “easy sense” of research in that it privileges “experience as truth, assume voice to be transparent, and resist the hard work that thinking with theory requires. It is work that assumes fallibility and a willingness to declare publicly that we might not, or cannot, know anything with certainty (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 31). I argue that my in/ability to *know with certainty* are a benefit to working within a multilogical approach because the foundation of my thinking with theory as un/methodology allows me to continually learn, to

continue travelling the Möbius strip (Bateson, 1994). My process sought to honor the tenets of my theoretical approach and to continue challenging Western research traditions.

### **On the paths taken and not taken: Learning to love ambiguity**

*Before we leave these foundational chapters of the dissertation to journey into the threshold, I want to reflect on the paths taken and not taken. It would be dishonest of me not to state that I am still, to a small degree, heartbroken from that moment almost three years ago when my journey almost ended before it began. I feel stronger now to keep pressing on, having made alliances not only in the District but also in other parts of the world and dedicated my work and life to life-long learning about the histories, contexts, current presents, and uncertain futures that face my field and the communities we work with. I sometimes think about the paths not taken and whether my life would have been easier had I chosen another way to conduct my dissertation work. I think that perhaps, yes, my life would have been easier, but it would not have been a reflection of who I am in this moment and the scholar I strive to become. I joke with colleagues who also use poststructural, decolonizing, deconstructing (or chose a term that is most comfortable for you) methods (there's that word again!) in their work about whether we can ever go back to what our fields see as traditional ways of doing research. The answer, unequivocally, is no, we cannot. I have come to love living and working in ambiguous space/s. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote about narrative inquirers falling in love with their participants because of the prolonged*

*time they spend with them. I understand now, how right they are, but also that by putting myself in my work and thinking about ways to decolonize my own processes of inquiry have made me fall in love with the messy complexities of education.*



Table 1. Visual structure of participants (descriptors based on interview data)

<p>Hollywood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Grew up in district</li> <li>• 10+ years elementary experience in district</li> <li>• Current district staff</li> </ul>	<p>Amy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Grew up outside district</li> <li>• 10+ years high school social studies experience in district</li> <li>• Current building administrator</li> </ul>
<p>Ms. Arc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Grew up in district</li> <li>• 10+ years middle school social studies experience (7-8) in district</li> <li>• Current middle school social studies</li> </ul>	<p>Sean White</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Grew up in district</li> <li>• 10+ years middle school social studies experience (6-8) in district</li> <li>• Current middle school social studies</li> </ul>
<p>Maria Theresa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latina</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Grew up in district</li> <li>• 10+ years high school social studies experience in district</li> <li>• Current high school social studies teacher</li> </ul>	<p>Lindsey Waite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Grew up near district</li> <li>• 10+ years middle school social studies experience in district</li> <li>• Current district staff</li> </ul>
<p>Estaban Catastrophe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Grew up outside district</li> <li>• 10+ years high school social studies experience in district</li> <li>• Current building administrator</li> </ul>	<p>Sarah (I, Me, My)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Grew up outside district</li> <li>• 7 years combined high school and university teaching in social studies</li> </ul>

Table 2. Visual structure of research design

Site selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful</li> <li>• Two formal interview visits</li> <li>• Two informal community visits</li> <li>• One formal member-checking visit</li> </ul>
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowball sampling</li> <li>• Participants chose their own pseudonyms</li> <li>• Provided time and space outside of our meetings to read and comment on their interviews</li> </ul>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two interview protocols</li> <li>• Semi-structured</li> <li>• Approximately 1 hour per interview</li> </ul>
Self study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflexive journaling</li> </ul>
Transcription process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listened to each interview 4 times before transcribing using Dragon Dictate</li> </ul>
Data coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formulaic coding mechanism used</li> <li>• Listened to each transcript 4 more times</li> <li>• Read each transcript 2 more times</li> <li>• Noted in journal where voices were speaking to each other to derive “themes”</li> <li>• Noted in journal where voices of participants connected my thinking with a theory or theories (postcolonial and critical pedagogy)</li> </ul>
Data “analysis” and validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refute the term analysis as it implies my authority over the voices of both my participants and theory</li> <li>• Instead sought to convey what I learned during these listening and reading exercises to problematize my own thinking</li> </ul>

### Chapter Three

#### **In search of multiplicity: My Journey Into Dissertation Dis/Obedience**

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“I have often chosen to go into unfamiliar settings in spite of the discomfort involved, gaining a sense of perspective in my life that has a very different kind of value from the production of books and articles.”

~ Mary Catherine Bateson, 1994, p. 27

#### **What do you hope to do with your dissertation?**

*Amy, a self-identified White social studies teacher turned administrator, asked me this question towards the end of the first of two formal conversations we had about the state of social studies in the district in which my dissertation study is situated. I did not quite know how to answer her question. I suppose there were at the time a number of hopes, and I inarticulately rambled my way through some of them: 1) I wanted to understand of how social studies is planned for and talked about in a school district where the overwhelming majority of students are Indigenous, 2) I wanted to open a space in social studies education to talk about all that we still need to address when it comes to Indigenous contents and contexts in curriculum (standards and textbooks), and 3) I wanted to address cultural relevance and accuracy in the doing of social studies teaching for Indigenous students. These were lofty hopes for a dissertation now that I reflect on my conversation with Amy, but I think lofty was good. Lofty kept me (and continues to keep me) honest about my intentions. Lofty kept (and continues to keep) me searching for deeper conversations about who we are as educators (and even*

*loftier... human beings) and the work we do. The dissertation—the culminating event at the end of a young scholar’s doctoral program—is a lofty enterprise. It becomes even loftier when it is approached as the start of a very long journey.*

*The pages within a dissertation such as this are mere snapshots, promises of questions and discourses to come, and a journey towards an unknown destination. I promise you no answers. I present only the learning that has come to pass during my time with the teachers, staff, and administrators in the District. I return, then, to Amy’s question and Bateson’s insight that usher in this short introduction to my wrestling with theory. My hope is that this dissertation propels us into more unfamiliar settings with unfamiliar voices so that discourses on the role of social studies with/in Indigenous contexts builds alliances just familiar enough that they provide perspectives about our histories, our presents, and our futures that go well beyond the confines of the page.*

### **In search of multiplicity: Choosing many theories over one**

*To be honest I still wrestle with whether or not it would have been easier to choose one theoretical lens to consider the implications of my participants’ perspectives on social studies in Indigenous contexts rather than using many theories. A classmate asked me once, “do you feel your theoretical perspective found you or did you find it?” I think it has taken me quite a long time to arrive at my current stance on theory: that the work I do is far too complex for one theoretical lens. In my learning of postcolonial theory, which serves as a launching point for thinking about social studies in the District, I came to feel*

*uneasiness with its tenets. While there was so much to embrace with/in postcoloniality, there was something else I could not until now put my finger on that made me uneasy about using it as my only lens.*

*In thinking about this uneasiness, I asked myself the following questions:*

- 1. Is it possible for my dissertation to serve as a space for my own struggles with theory?*
- 2. How can I not fall into the trappings of Western research hegemony when working with/in Indigenous contexts?*
- 3. What does it mean to be dis/obedient to academic research traditions while writing as an academic?*

*I do not believe there are any easy answers to these questions, and the journey into theory is a complex one fraught with potholes and forks in the road. I am still traveling, still asking these questions. A journey such as this one, which twists and turns on itself, provided space/s for me to challenge my own conceptions of postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy in practice. Having space/s to struggle allowed me to think more deeply about research theories and methodologies so that my own decolonization process could continue beyond the pages of this work. Dis/obedience, then, is an act of working within and against the traditions that bind me to my chosen profession.*

*I have learned along the way that many theories work better for me, and allowing my work to live with/in multiple theoretical lenses provides me the space to think more complexly. I agree with Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) who wrote that the more they understood about the world, “the more complex it appears to*

be. In this recognition of complexity, we begin to see multiple causations and the possibility of differing vantage points from which to view a phenomenon” (p. 138). *With this in mind, a Möbius strip allows for a multiplicity of twists—the voices of participants, scholars, and memories—to engage in discourse and learning that provide an array of responses to any given question. I think about these acts of twisting of time and experience upon each other when I read Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008): “A multilogical epistemology and ontology promotes a special distancing from reality that allows an observer diverse frames of reference” (p. 139). The multiple theoretical perspectives with which my dissertation entered and exited, thus allowing me space/s to think with theory as a means to understand my data and to think with data as a means to understand theory.*

*Working within a multilogical epistemology and ontology allowed me to “plug in” and engage my data as an assemblage, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as a space comprised of segments, strata, territories, and “lines of flight” that provide movement and multiplicity. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3-4). The plugging of participant voices, theories, methods, and literature flattens the traditional hierarchy of qualitative research because they enter and exit the threshold and shape the assemblage on equal footing (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). I was thus able to make connections and disconnections between the participants’ experiences, my reflexivity, theories, and literature, thus providing for complex discourse on the larger implications for social studies with/in Indigenous contexts.*

### **Unpacking postcolonial theory: Seeking out the post- in an un-post world**

In its most basic form, colonialism creates a structure that allows one group to dominate another group. Not only is coloniality defined by the physical occupation of space, but also extends to include the taking of resources for the development of Western economies (Sharp, 2009). Postcolonial theory extends the notions of political and economic domination to also include the struggle of historically marginalized cultures to overcome hegemony (Gramsci, 2000; Sharp, 2009; Spivak, 1994). Postcolonial theory challenges dominant Eurocentric ways of knowing, calls into question power, and seeks the unheard voices of the subaltern (Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1965; Said, 1994; Spivak, 1994). McLeod (2000) would further contend that postcolonialism is not “the same as ‘after colonialism,’ as if colonial values are no longer to be reckoned with. It does not define a radically new historical era, nor does it herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured” (p. 33). Postcolonial theorists, therefore, exist with/in the struggle to dismantle dominant colonial thought that persists today (Sharp, 2009).

A central figure in the development of post/colonial thought, Edward Said, who reasoned in his conception of Orientalism that knowledge and power are inextricably linked, creating a dichotomy where *Others* bend to the whim of the dominant European (White) authority (Said, 1994). Working from Gramsci’s hegemony, Said (1994) noted:

Orientalism is never far from... a collective notion identifying ‘us’

Europeans as against all ‘those’ non-Europeans, and indeed it can be

argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic in both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European people and cultures (p. 134).

Looking through Said's lens we see a world of two colliding forces ("Us" vs. "Those") in the expanding global context. He further articulated the division of Europe and the Orient—or read in our context as the Americas—that "Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant" (Said, 2002, p. 21). Through this manner of thinking, in Said's colonialism, power and knowledge were expressed through language as well as physical presence (Sharp, 2009). Within this hegemonic lens, the Orient was seen as a stage upon which European dominance played out its natural course—a stage, too, where cultures of the East were codified as a singular form (Said, 2002). One could further argue that all members of the stage fall victim to a dangerous play where power and knowledge enchant all parties, thus allowing hegemony to continue indefinitely. As such, this play allowed for the naming of the *Other*—the Orient and Orientals—thus, simplifying the East (or in our context, Indigenous Americans) and "by making it known to Europeans, made it possible for them to control it" (Sharp, 2009, p. 18).

A closer examination of Said's Orientalism reveals why some critics (Ahmad, 1994; Porter, 1994) argue that his colonial thought creates too simplistic a dichotomy when thinking about colonial thinking. Indeed, even in his notions of Occidentalism, Said reduced the entirety of European culture into a basic definition. Sharp (2009) noted that the major difference between Orientalism and



Occidentalism lies within the context of power. The West—Europe—had power despite Said's reductionism. Regardless of the critics, Said's understanding of power and knowledge play within the hegemonic state is still useful in the context of this discourse because it speaks to problems of silencing non-dominant voices. For example, in attempting to strip Indigenous children of their individual identities, boarding schools banned them from speaking their native languages. As such, the forced English-only policies that left children literally and figuratively silent.

While Said's colonial thinking established a foundation for the understanding of how the non-dominant East (and ultimately the non-dominant cultures of the Americas) were conquered by the West, it is within postcolonial thought that we see a challenge to the continuation of the hegemonic state. One issue of prominent importance in this trajectory towards a truly *post*-colonial world, is the question of whether or not, as Spivak (1995) posited, *the subaltern can speak?* She extended and departed from Said's thinking to argue that the subaltern could not speak because issues of masculine-Eurocentric representation and assimilation lie within popular discourse of freeing the Other to speak. As a woman, Spivak argued that it is only within rules established by and controlled by men that a subaltern is allowed to speak, and thusly is maintained in a space of perpetual inferiority (Spivak, 1995).

Spivak's (1995) discussion of the Other (subaltern), while primarily focused within the context of women, has a number of implications for this discourse. First and foremost, Spivak (1995) introduced, based on her readings of

Foucault, Derrida, and Said, the notion of *epistemic violence*, which she defined as the “remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (p. 76). She commented

Perhaps it is no more than to ask that the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism be recognized as “subjugated knowledge,” “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy...” (p. 76).

In this regard, then, dominant ways of knowing are privileged over Others’ ways of knowing. This calculated over-taking of knowledge systems allowed European imperialism to establish norms, which have arguably lasted a lifetime. By extension, as well, Spivak (1995) argues that for the Other to be heard it is required of them to adopt the norms of dominant language and ways of knowing.

In this context, then, a reading of Spivak (1995) leaves us to question whether or not the Other will ever truly find a space in which to speak from his or her non-dominant way(s) of knowing. Sharp (2009) noted that, for Spivak, “the subaltern must always be caught in translation, never truly expressing herself, but always already interpreted” (p. 111). It is not impossible, however, for the Other to find his or her voice within the Western system, but the path to this space is fraught with continued power struggles that requires both the Other and the non-Other to unlearn the previously accepted norms. While apparently hopeless, a deeper reading of Spivak reveals her continued striving for the upheaval of such a hegemonic system. Sharp (2009) argued hope lives in Spivak’s commentary on

“strategic essentialism” (p. 114) that called for alliances between subaltern groups to have a shared identity—even if formed only temporarily—that could challenge hegemonic norms.

To address this problem, one can also draw from Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial writings on mimicry, stereotyping, and hybridity to challenge the binary culture in which colonization was established and has largely endured. “The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 248). Both Bhabha and Spivak further expand upon and complicate the Eurocentric knowledge-power structure inherent within Said’s Orientalism. First, Bhabha’s (2002) conception that the dominant, European understanding of history and the Other has largely been through a language that is “forked, not false” (p. 113). In this commentary, Bhabha turned the idea of European domination over the Other into a scene of folly in which he challenged Said’s seriousness with the irony of mimicry. Bhabha commented

It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not merely “rupture” the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty

which fixes the colonial subject as a “partial” presence. By “partial” I mean both “incomplete” and “virtual.” (p. 115).

Bhabha’s meaning here is that within mimicry the subaltern remains dependent on the dominant culture for its identity. This dependence is built on irony—in order to exist, the subaltern must take on an identity that is not their own, and therefore become a half self. Ultimately, these re/presentations present the dominant power with continued success in their work to remain dominant.

Bhabha (1994) further noted that it is the “force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization” (p. 95). Bhabha (1994) argued within his discussion of stereotypes that it is not enough to look at images as either good or bad, but rather center examination on the process/es by which they have come about in the common vernacular. It is through the examination of the process/es that we can eventually understand how the subaltern has been subjugated, and in turn begin to challenge such assertions of identity. Building from Said’s colonial theory, too, Bhabha further reflected that the “play in the colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an “other” and yet entirely knowable and visible” (p. 101). The subaltern is both visible and invisible to dominant society, but never truly existing as a whole. Like mimicry and mockery, then, stereotypes involve the subaltern and dominant culture in a never ending recycling of identity creation.

Whereas Spivak presented a semi-hopeful belief that the Other will one day speak, Bhabha looked to utilize mimicry and ambivalence in/to the Other's favor. Bhabha's conception of hybridity offer us a true turn toward dismantling the layered hegemony through which we will examine the teaching of social studies with/in Indigenous contexts. Within the hybrid state, there is "no neat inside/outside division" (Sharp, 2009, p. 121). Because mimicry and stereotyping has made the subaltern both like and different from the dominant culture, it is possible, in Bhabha's line of thinking, to challenge the system, and thus re/create it. He noted "the historical movement of hybridity as camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency functioning in the time-lag of sign/symbol, which is a space in-between the rules of engagement" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 277). In other words, subalterns or individuals who purposefully and tactfully re/negotiate their identities as surviving inside and outside the hegemonic structure can, with time, dismantle the codes that exist to define any one identity. By complicating the re/presentations (signs, symbols, maps, etc.) of the Orient and Occident, Bhabha transformed coloniality into post-coloniality. Sharp (2009) noted that many postcolonial theorists praise Bhabha's conception of hybridity because it offers the first real possibility for the end to colonial thinking.

### **The issues of teaching and learning: Using critical pedagogy as an additional lens**

The hegemonic space in question—that of social studies with/in Indigenous contexts—re/institute colonial ways of knowing Others (Apple, 2004;

Freire, 2010; Giroux, 2011). In utilizing critical pedagogy as a lens to unpack hegemony, Apple (2004) wrote that hegemony “refers to an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are lived” (p. 4). For Apple (2004), Brayboy (2005), Giroux (2011), and McLaren (2003, 2009), hegemony in American education reinforces the goals of the White, Euro-Americans to produce a skilled and docile labor force that embraces a well-crafted American narrative devoid of Indigenous knowledges. The nuts and bolts of knowledge for this narrative are chosen by the dominant group to maintain the understood and established system. Knowledge—and even the possibility of multiple knowledges—is filtered out of discussions of power, thusly leaving facts to be “mastered” (McLaren, 2009, p. 72) instead of providing students space/s for unpacking the complex layers of societal and historical discourses. This is especially true of the Indigenous contexts. Brayboy (2005) commented, “The everyday experiences of American Indians, the Indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, have essentially been removed from the awareness of dominant members of U.S. society” (p. 431). This anchoring of education in hegemony leaves little to no space/s for the voices non-dominant groups to be heard (Brayboy, 2005; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Utilizing critical pedagogy as lens with/in my multilogical approach to thinking with theory provides another opportunity for looking at the marginalization of Indigenous historical and cultures with/in social studies curriculum at the district level. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) commented that

Drawing on this critical multilogicality in this pedagogical pursuit, these [critical] educators, like liberal theologians in Latin America, make no apology for seeking the viewpoints, insights, and sensitivities of the marginalized. The way to see from a perspective differing from that of the positivist guardians involves exploring an institution such as Western education from the vantage point of those who have been marginalized by it (p. 139).

Approaching teaching this way can permanently shift the power/knowledge problem found in American hegemony. Gramsci's writings on the complex nature of knowledge reproduction coupled with Foucault's writings on creative acts of resistance to hegemonic power make for unique windows for which critical pedagogy can further dismantle educational narratives that exclude the histories and cultures of marginalized groups (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009).

Four Arrows (2013) further articulated that hegemony, as embedded in education, is "designed to maintain status quo benefits for a ruling elite" and is, therefore, "by definition a form of anti-Indianism" (p. 20). Mann (2013) noted that status quo education in the United States "does not encourage students to question where all the Indigenous People have gone" largely because this history is too "unpleasant" (p. 145). The American *Indian*, therefore, is re/created over and over again in an image that is more palatable and housed within a distant past (Grande, 2004). Critical pedagogy can serve as an additional lens to those previously discussed with regard the mis/re/presentations can be unpacked with/in education (specifically social studies). For Grande (2004), however, we should

proceed with caution because “the process of interrogation itself may encode the same sociotemporal markers of colonialist consciousness that incites movement away from ‘sacred’ ways of knowing toward increased secularization” (p. 84). Just as with previous vigilance to guarding against homogenizing Indigenous knowledges, so too must critically-oriented education prevent homogenization in the discourse of problematizing, for example, history curriculum (Grande, 2004).

Arguably this homogenization occurs on a regular basis in today’s education setting that looks and acts remarkably like Freire’s (2010) banking method that “emphasizes permanence and becomes reactionary” (p. 84). Critically oriented education, however, is revolutionary because it is problem posing, challenging students to see and question overt and covert narratives that work to promote hegemony (Freire, 2010). Whether or not critically oriented education exists (any form or fashion) with/in Indigenous contexts is central to this dissertation. Applying critical pedagogy’s challenge to hegemony allowed me to be action oriented, which as I have discussed previously, is crucial to the decolonization project.

### **Dissertating along a Mobius strip: Returning to idea of dissertation dis/obedience**

*I return to my previous discussion of Bateson (1994): “To get outside of the imprisoning framework of assumptions learning within a singular tradition, habits of attention and interpretation need to be stretched and pulled and folded back upon themselves” (p. 43). I understand Bateson’s writing as challenging me*



*to return time and time again to these theories previously discussed so that I can, on the one hand be familiar with them, but on the other hand continue to find new ways to see them as unfamiliar. If I double back, for example, to postcolonial theory, I can see both how far I have come in my understanding and how far I still need to go in developing my understanding. The Möbius strip, like a double-helix strand of DNA, is never-ending. So, too, the multilogical approach to thinking with theory provides more ways of viewing a phenomenon like social studies curriculum development and implementation in an predominately Indigenous school district than can be housed in a single dissertation. In this way, then, my dissertation is both obedient and disobedient. There are no answers, only more questions. Thinking with theory, as will be discussed in the preceding chapters will further complicate possible ways to re/create social studies that is culturally relevant and accurate for Indigenous students.*

**Chapter Four**  
**The complexities of silence/ing and identity: On social studies and subalternity**

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“And in the naked light I saw  
 Ten thousand people, maybe more.  
 People talking without speaking,  
 People hearing without listening,  
 People writing songs that voices never share  
 And no one dared  
 Disturb the sound of silence.”

~ Simon and Garfunkel, “The Sound of Silence”

**Shining a light on the rules of engagement: Disturbing the silence/s of the colonial-imperial project in the United States**

*I set off for the District in hopes to learn how social studies curriculum was talked about and planned for in a community where the vast majority of the students are identified as Indigenous. What I learned about this research question, and what I continue to learn, is that the answer/s are far more complex. The absence of a district-wide social studies curriculum, which I turn to in the next chapter, is ever-present in the minds of the educators I spoke to. The reasons for this absence are multiple and will be explored in this chapter. Central to these reasons, though, are the notions of subalternness and various acts of silencing imposed upon the voices of my participants and myself in a uniquely American (U.S.) context. I will provide further unpacking of key ideas (in **bold**) related to*

*subalterns and silencing in this opening section to frame the larger discourse before turning my attention to the District.*

First and foremost, the “Other” or **subaltern**—individual or group—exists in a perpetual state of marginalization. Hierarchy is essential to hegemony, and therefore a subaltern individual or group must exist in order for the powerful to: 1) define their power and 2) remain powerful (Sharp, 2009; Smith, 1999). Said theorized in *Orientalism* that the Occident (West) could not exist without the Orient (East/Other) because it is “the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (Said, 2000, p. 68). The West re/created and re/presented these identities of the dominant (White, European, Christian) and subaltern (Non-White, Non-European, Non-Christian) in art and literature so as to establish its dominance over all who were outside their vision of civilization (Burney, 2012). Frantz Fanon (1963) noted that

Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form of substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it...The final aim of colonization was to convince the indigenous population it would save them from darkness (p. 149).

As the West expanded its borders into other parts of the world—and specifically into the Americas, which is the focus of this work—it was/is vital to maintain this master narrative of an identity creation central to the colonial-imperial project:

that Europeans and Euro-Americans were/are civilized while Indigenous peoples were/are not (Smith, 1999).

The United States exists in this context as both subject to and facilitator of this colonial-imperial project in as much as it is/was “an anticolonial revolutionary power in relation to Europe, and a colonizing, hegemonic power in relation to Native Americans and African peoples” (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 113). This duality put Americans in a tenuous position from the inception of the colonial-imperial-turned revolutionary period because to become *American*, the European colonists needed to shed their (mostly) British cloaks, but what to *become* after the shedding complicated the narrative of subalternity on/of the Indigenous peoples of the new United States. Stam and Shohat (2012) noted, “European and Euro-American thinkers deployed ‘the Indian’ as inspiration for social critique and utopian desire” (p. 376). The imagined identity allowed Euro-Americans to see and act upon Indigenous peoples as “both the dystopian imagery of Hobbes’s nasty and brutish savage and the utopian imagery of an egalitarian social system” (p. 376). This conflict is seen in colonialists’ use of feathers and war paint as the first act of freedom at the Boston Tea Party while all the while these same colonialists viewed Indigenous peoples as hindrances in the expansion and control of territory (Deloria, 1998).

In constantly and consistently re/creating the image of the Indian, Americans from the inception of the colonies through the revolution and beyond subjugated Indigenous peoples to playing whatever role best fit the colonial-imperial project in the United States. Similarly, in thinking about this interplay of

colonizer-colonized, I draw from Hall (1994): “Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being externally fixed in some essentialist past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (p. 394). In this sense then, the fluidity of identity/ies are linked to time, place, and space, and are therefore far more complex than race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc. Smith (1999) noted, and for which I discussed previously, that Europeans sought to subjugate the minds of both Indigenous peoples and colonialists in order to maintain their prescribed notions of civilization. I argue here that Hall’s complexification of identity/ies and Deloria’s (1998) example of the Boston Tea Party illustrate the oft-silent rules of hegemony in the U.S. context: that shedding our<sup>7</sup> colonial cloak was less about freeing ourselves from oppression and more about our full indoctrination into the Western narrative of domination. Euro-Americans embodied both the spirit of racial and religious superiority to the continent’s Other and the desire for power, which manifested first in the American Revolution and later into Westward Expansion.

By extension, the American re/creation and re/presentation of Indigenous peoples represents **epistemic violence**. Violence, in this case, is two-fold: to making Indigenous ways of knowing illegitimate in the eyes of the West and making Indigenous peoples knowable through the Western gaze (Sharp, 2009; Spivak, 1994). Sharp (2009, p. 111) further articulated that, for Spivak, the

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term “our” to my personal connection to this history. As a woman of colonial English descent on my mother’s side, I am fully aware of the precarious position I am in as both beneficiary and critic of the colonial-imperial project in the United States.

subaltern is only ever heard in “translation” because the language of the colonial-imperial project excludes, in this case, Indigenous tongues from acceptable forms of verbal and written communication. In addition, Dotson (2011) noted, “An epistemic side of colonialism is the devastating effect of the ‘disappearing’ of knowledge, where local or provincial knowledge is dismissed due to privileging alternative, often Western, epistemic practices” (p. 236). In essence, the ultimate aim of violence is **silence**. The act of silencing marginalizes voices, experiences, and knowledges not accepted within the hegemonic system. For the purposes of this study, I argue the promotion of Western ways of knowing and learning in Indigenous contexts constitutes violence. Likewise, the marginalization of social studies with/in the education machine is also representative of epistemic violence.

*Unpacking the power of epistemic violence is especially important for this dissertation, as much as I can “speak” for a particular subaltern, I also re/create the subaltern, and thus can fall inadvertently back into the hegemonic system I wished at the start to deconstruct. Vigilance to the way/s in which I talk about/for/with my participants and about social studies is therefore paramount. The responsibility of re/presentation “comes with the challenge of how to ethically and imaginatively inhabit other people’s narrative—without appropriating it and without doing violence to it” (Dhawan, 2012, p. 51). This challenge is at the heart of the discomfort I have felt—and continue to feel—along this research. Honoring the voices and experiences of my participants while attempting to arrive (or not arrive as the case may be) at some understanding/s of the current circumstances of social studies education in the District feels at time*

*to be extractive and violent because I have to, in some degree, pick apart each narrative and then return it to the whole. I proceed with caution then, in the remaining parts of this chapter, to not speak for my participants, but rather speak with them, challenging my own thinking along the way.*

Part and parcel to these issues is the debate on how **power/knowledge** interplay in re/presentation/s of and speaking for/to subaltern/s. Spivak (1994) and her contemporaries focus their deconstruction of this debate through careful consideration of: 1) a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze on the responsibility of representation, and 2) a Derrida's challenge of Foucault's writings on madness. I want to turn, briefly, to connecting this larger debate to my discussion on subalternity and epistemic violence. First, Spivak (1999) commented on her understanding the Foucault-Deleuze conversation: "the issue seems to be that there is no representation, no signifier...theory is a relay of practice...and the oppressed can know and speak for themselves" (p. 264). The intellectual, according to Spivak, is transparent in that they "merely report on the nonrepresented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of (the unnamed Subject irreducibly presupposed by) power and desire" (p. 265). As such, Foucault and Deleuze both miss a critical element of discourse in relation to dominant and subaltern voices—that "speaking about" (a person/group) goes hand in hand with "speaking for" (a person/group) (Dhawan, 2012, p. 52). As such, the reification of hegemony abounds when Western researchers/intellectuals speak for Others without careful consideration of the colonial-imperial project.

Second, Derrida challenged Foucault's writing on madness because, according to Derrida, it is impossible to speak for madness. Foucault's search for a language to represent madness further silenced the mad (the subaltern in this case). Foucault (1984) wrote:

Compared to the incessant dialogue of reason and madness during the Renaissance, classical internment has been a silencing. But it was not total: language was engaged in things rather than really suppressed. Confinement, prisons, dungeons, even tortures, engaged in a mute dialogue between reason and unreason—the dialogue of struggle. This dialogue itself was now disengaged; silence was absolute; there was no longer any common language between madness and reason (p. 152).

Dhawan's (2012) reading of Foucault and Derrida's critique of Madness and Civilization contends the use of reason to provide voice to madness reconstitutes the act of silencing. Searching for the voice of madness, which Derrida argued was at the heart of Foucault's project, was doomed to failure. "The language of exclusion, specifically, the language of reason cannot be used to combat exclusion. In the face of the inaccessibility of the Other, perhaps silence is the only answer. For to speak is to betray" (Dhawan, 2012, p. 54). Silence is language, arguably, and any attempt to make it audible represents epistemic violence because it is being re/defined with/in hegemonic norms.

*Derrida's critique of Foucault has implications for this chapter—and for the totality of this dissertation—in as much as I exist in, what Dhawan (2012) calls a "double-bind" (p. 54). This existence with/in the double-bind is fraught*



*with the struggle to unpack and simultaneously prevent further silencing and epistemic violence of Indigenous contexts while using the voices and experiences of my participants, who I argue in future sections, live and re/act in various dominant/subaltern realities.*

### **A twist of the Möbius strip: Reflections with/in the double-bind**

*My double-bind*

*European-American*

*Colonizer-Colonized*

*Researcher-Ally*

*Expert-Learner*

*Always in-between*

*Always bound to both*

*Always bound by both*

*Always bound*

*Who to honor*

*Who to critique*

*Who to silence*

*Whose silence*

*Power-knowledge*

*Colonial-postcolonial*

*White-hybrid*

*Speaking for-Speaking about*

*My double-bind*

### **Detour Two: Caveats on the journey to understanding**

*Returning to the task at hand is precarious because tradition would hold that I speak for and speak about the opinions and experiences of my dissertation's participants and then analyze them. I choose not to do that. My multilogical*

*approach that seeks to unpack the hegemony of Western research compels me to think about the words of my participants in front of, but also alongside theory alongside my own voice. Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) wrote:*

Beginning each section with the words of others does two things: It gives homage to conversations that have happened before us, and it reveals that our voices, words, and understandings are a collection of others' discourses. In this way, we are using others' words and ideas as catalysts for our own construction of thoughts (p. 29).

*As such, the voices of my participants provide an entryway into the threshold of social studies as it pertains to the District. Similarly, the "findings" of any research can and will undoubtedly change as experience is gained. As Van Maanen (1988) noted: "More reading, writing, research, conversation, or simply living will surely lead to amendment and further understanding" (p. 123). As such, my thinking with theory reflects my current learning about decolonizing and postcolonial work with/in social studies to/for Indigenous students in the District.*

### **Questions and a multiplicity of answers: Entering the threshold of social studies in the District**

*Why social studies? Why teaching?*

Maria Theresa

"The one social studies teacher I had...that man, I mean he just **oozed history**...it was **fun to watch** him, and I think I had the first

experience where I said damn that's good stuff...I had seen science teachers and they're excited about stuff, but when I watched him I thought this is what I wanted...**I want to help students realize how relevant history is to their life**...I would love to go to [state capitol] and tell them **social studies is just as relevant** as math and reading and writing...it's such a rich, rich subject, you know in history you can study science, you can study math, you can study economics, you can study everything... it's **always there**... everything.”

#### Amy

“This is a very easy question for me because I became a social studies teacher for very specific reason. When I was in the seventh grade I had a social studies teacher for [state name omitted] history, and I was always kind of whatever and in [state name omitted] the history program was very big on National History Day, and so in the seventh grade my social studies teacher... she was an older lady and a lot of kids made fun of her, but she was very **passionate about teaching social studies** and she knew that myself and another kid in class were really **bored**, so she got us involved in National History Day... and she actually allowed us three days a week to go work on our History Day project instead of doing the **silly stuff** that the class was doing, which was really **boring** to us and so we ended up doing this fabulous project for National History Day... and

we went all the way to nationals that year, and I got so involved in National History Day all the way up until senior year. I wanted to be a social studies teacher. I wanted to do so in a way that allowed kids to become **independent thinkers** so as far as specific classes many of them in the traditional lecture right-of-way, but I had such a great experience with this other component that it overshadowed every boring thing.”

Sean White

“I didn't choose social studies... at first I chose science because it was very tangible and it was fun to teach the kids... you know something here again is the subject that is always getting a bad rap and I tried to make science a little bit more tangible: see, hear, feel... **it's a little bit harder with history but we still do it**... we still do it... I tried to make that history as **tangible** as possible through books, through pictures.”

Ms. Arc

“What I experienced in school in the eighth grade mock trial was about the Salem witch trials... I was going to work with history somehow and whether or not I was teaching, I didn't know yet at the time, but there was **always going to be something about history**. I wanted to be an archaeologist and they made me take a whole bunch of math and science classes, and I wasn't... I just kind of gave up before I started and my dad

suggested that I take some teaching courses because I didn't want to move out of [state name omitted] and there were a lot of job opportunities for people who majored in history... so he said he would pay for the courses if I tried teaching so I went to [university name omitted], and as I was working through the courses I liked it.”

Lindsey Waite

“Well, I don't know it wasn't truthfully because of culture, it was because my ability to play sports and going into college to play and drove me into a lot of physical education classes and then it caught on, education was going to be cool, **I didn't grow up always wanting to be a teacher**, so it kind of came through sports...I had a double major in the double minor, it was because of me taking social studies and just being **interested in other parts of the world and learning how to do maps** and being artistic and doing those kinds of things that I really enjoyed a lot of social studies classes, so I ended up with a amount that I enjoyed both of those things it ended up with me having a double major in phys ed and social studies, then I was so interested in the geography.”

Estaban Catastrophe

“My thing was I didn't see history, and this kind of gets into my social studies philosophy, and that **I didn't see history as facts and**

**figures and dates or people**, there are important people, it's nice to know who they are it's good to know these guys, that Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president during the Civil War...it is good to know because you don't like an idiot and there are some things that are nice to know, but you don't have to know who Millard Fillmore was, but I always tried to see social studies as **skills**, map reading is a skill, so if I use this unit on Rome and all these beautiful Roman maps that the book put in there to teach map reading is a skill and you leave this class in your go on in life and you understand map reading as a skill that is good, it is not so important that you remember where Rove was in relation to Robina, but can you read a map, **it's not really that big of a deal for you to memorize** what the US-Russian Cold War, but if you know that the term Cold War means X,Y and Z and you can apply that knowledge to a larger scope that's good... **I always try to emphasize depth over breadth.**”

### Hollywood

“No, **I didn't want to be a teacher**...actually my first two years I had to really think about it...I wanted to actually do law like my brother so really I came back to step into the classroom just to see...I had actually my senior year so more teaching type courses and actually working in elementary school for little bit, but no it wasn't until after the first two years of teaching that I decided to stay and do my Masters program for

elementary education and stay in teaching...and then having students come back, too, was a huge factor for me...**having students come back and you say wow the impact that you can have on the life is amazing.**”

*I didn't want to be a teacher as a kid. I wanted to be a marine biologist. I wanted to be a journalist. I wanted to work in politics. I majored in mass communications in undergrad because it seemed like a good thing to do at the time. I went to Washington, D.C. and interned in the public relations' office for a Congressman, but I didn't like what that world. It was cold and calculating. I also worked for a short time in corporate public relations. That world was cold and calculating, too. I didn't like the person I was becoming. I longed for a day spent in wonder. I wanted to return to a time in my life when there were endless possibilities. I wanted to see if there was a life where I could continue to learn and be inspired by others. So, I became a teacher, and I have never regretted that decision. Becoming a social studies teacher, for me, was an easy choice because of my love for the subject matter. I could be a marine biologist when teaching about water systems in geography. I could be a journalist when teaching current affairs. I could be a politician when teaching civics. The classroom, for me, was a place to be many things at once.*

*I was also inspired to become a teacher by memories of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. history teacher. He was, undoubtedly, the best teacher I had in my K-12 experience because he loved what he taught, and he made us love it, too. He was*

*curious about our opinions and our readings of the world. He saw endless possibilities for thinking about the impact of history on our current and future selves. He learned, I think, as much from us as we did from him. He challenged us to think complexly and creatively. That is my memory of him, and that memory continues to inspire me. I saw a great deal of my own experiences in talking to my participants about their paths to social studies and teaching. My participants' sharing of why they became social studies educators or, as with Hollywood, an elementary teacher, made me think a great deal about identity/ies and how we became—or continue to become—teachers. Our identities as teachers of social studies also shaped the answers to the question.*

***“Do you think social studies is valued in the District?”***

Amy

“I think social studies was **pushed by the wayside** a long time ago in the elementary levels...they are concerned about test scores...obviously they are concerned about school grades, and by that I mean the A through F grading of the schools in [state name omitted] that logically their direction is **we’ve got to hit ELA and math hard**...and we’ve got to focus on math...and social studies and science, you need to support them.”

Ms. Arc

“No. **I don’t think it’s valued a lot anywhere**...I’m not trying to slam the schools, but if you are going to take a test and your school grade



counts on language arts and math, that's what you're going to teach...it's not until they get to high school that they realize that **they've been shafted**, but for elementary schools, if they spend any more time on social studies than they **lose instruction in language arts.**"

Maria Theresa

"Well, no I don't. And what has happened is I have listened and not all language arts teachers, a select few, say well I don't know what you are worried about because **it is not an important course, but I say it is a core class** and they need it to graduate."

Lindsey Waite

"Absolutely not...**absolutely not.**"

Sean White

"I don't think so, and I...you know **I am questioning where it is valued and I really don't think that history is valued here.**"

*The answer to this question haunts me. As a former high school social studies teacher, I had in the back of my mind my own answer to this question, and the educators who participated in my dissertation work confirmed my greatest fear: social studies as a subject area is not valued. Social studies courses—history, geography, civics, and the behavioral sciences—historically constituted a*

*core subject area in American education, but now it seems social studies is pushed aside to make room for more instruction in math and language arts. My participants' feelings about the status of social studies in the District highlight what I believe is a fundamental flaw in our current education system: the reinforcement of a hegemonic structure where subject areas exist as silos and only those deemed worthy are given the keys to unlock themselves. In reading and listening to the voices of my participants, I kept coming back to this nagging idea of social studies as a subaltern. The postcolonialist in me could not resist drawing this connection. I recall Hall's (1994) argument that cultural identities come with and are born from history. Could this argument also hold true for a subject taught in schools?*

*In thinking about social studies as a subaltern in the District, I recalled the centuries' long (and oft-written about) narrative of social studies' ever-evolving identity and how it may have been possible within this development that social studies became an education subaltern. The transformation of social studies as a subaltern has a long history, and it largely centers on deep-seeded debates about what social studies as a core education subject are—a debate about social studies' identity/ies. What we learn, in what sequences we learn, and in whose hands those decisions are made have been a constant battle in the nearly 120-year history of social studies in the United States (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977; Evans, 2004, 2011a, 2011b; Lybarger, 1991; Saxe, 1991; Symcox, 2002; Thornton, 2008). As Symcox (2002) noted, “The social studies curriculum has been difficult to define because it is organized as a loose confederation of social*

science disciplines, rather than as a single discipline with a coherent intellectual framework and methodology” (p. 74). *Defining this broad subject area in the schools has always been contentious and remains a struggle in today’s high-stakes testing culture* (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977; Saxe, 1991; Schwartz, 2001; Thornton, 2008).

### **Social studies ↔ subaltern: On re/enacting epistemic violence and silence in the District**

With a current shift in focus on standardized testing and the use of education as a vehicle by which the United States competes globally with regards our math and literacy scores as my current context, social studies is marginalized in the District for two external reasons: 1) social studies are not seen a vital to this global competitive game and 2) there is (potentially) a never-ending war to define social studies. Both of these reasons, in my opinion, re/constitute epistemic violence and reifies social studies as an education subaltern.

With regards the first reason, Au (2009) discussed social studies as a “disappearing subject” because of its non-testing status under No Child Left Behind (p. 47). He noted several national studies that found schools reducing or eliminating social studies instructional time because of the demands put on schools to test math and literacy. Social studies are, undoubtedly, silenced. In its original formulation, Gramsci wrote of subalterns as classes oppressed by the business of economics. Unequal power relations silenced and rendered some groups powerless in the face of shifting economic considerations (Buras & Apple,

2006). Hegemony here works in two powerful, cyclical ways: 1) making the subaltern accept his/her/its inferiority as the natural state of affairs and 2) making the subaltern believe the only way to overcome that inferiority is by assimilating into dominant culture (Andreotti, 2011). Thinking about these conditions in education terms, arguably, looks a great deal like recent shifts to a business model of education anchored to high-stakes testing in which the goal is to regain global superiority. In order to be heard, some within social studies “have called for social studies to be included on all high-stakes tests, thus guaranteeing their survival as part of the whole-school curriculum” (Au, 2009, p. 47). My problem with this approach is that value, according to this argument, can only be found by being included in the dominant—hegemonic—education system.

This perpetual state of translation, as discussed early in this chapter, works not only with/in cultural groups, but with/in educational culture as well. Returning to the related issue of the war to define—to establish a singular, united identity—the social studies with/in the larger education culture constitutes a second act of epistemic violence. “What is the point of an identity if it isn’t one thing? That is why we keep hoping that identities will come our way: because the rest of the world is so confusing...” (Hall, 1997, p. 175). Taking Hall’s question about cultural identity to the realm of social studies, I pose the following: What is the point of social studies if it cannot agree on its identity and, by extension, vision for its place in education? Because, it would seem, the shifting sands of education reform are too confusing, to borrow Hall’s phrase, or scary otherwise. Claiming a singular identity or a singular goal is representative of epistemic violence in that

the singular denies—silences—the possibilities of the multiple (truths, identities, realities, etc.). Social studies are a complex subject within education because of its encompassing histories, geographies, civics education, and the behavioral sciences.

The question of who are we is fraught with potential violence towards, as we have seen throughout the history of the field, opinions at the margins of popular education theory and practice (for which the margins shift depending on the decade). At the end—or the beginning—or in the middle of this is/are language/s. The arguments for and against social studies as subaltern or as an education content area in need of an identity is a matter of discourse.

Discourse will probably never cease to exist until the demise of the last of humanity... for the expression of ideas initiates responses that seek to understand the complexity of a plethora of motivational factors looming below the surface of any subject position. Identifying what is right and wrong also goes along with discovering how these values are constructed and sometimes, perhaps why (Trifonas, 1998, p. 140).

The impact a war of words and ideologies can/will/does/not have on the value and identity/ies of social studies at the district-level and in everyday classrooms.

**Returning to our teacher selves: Negotiating social studies in a  
marginalized field**

*Why do you think social studies for the District has been moved to the side  
or devalued?*

Lindsey Waite

“Social studies teachers think that they are **just off to the side**, therefore **they operate in their own isolation**...they don’t **talk** to each other, they don’t understand systematic processes...but there is **no communication** and there is no one in a Central Office position to **oversee social studies.**”

Hollywood

“It’s kind of like trying to **keep your head above water** all the time and that is certainly the way I felt for quite a while...trying to keep your head above water and you have these great ideas...you have these things you want to do, but again **when is that going to happen**...it is going to happen **after you go home from work, after the kids leave you** and by then **you are really tired and exhausted** and a lot of other people are as well.... when we do have professional development days they are sucked up by the District with sometimes professional development that is really nuts and make no sense, and again though I do think there are times where we do have time to

collaborate and sit together without that leadership without that person or team that can be calm and say 'look here is the direction we want to go, can you bring these things the table'...**it is really not going to happen so I think that is what I saw**, I also had leadership on days when we did have break time to collaborate and do things together, it was 'okay well go ahead back to the classroom and work' and **you do those things in your classroom that keep your head above water**, but it would have been great to have those times where a **strong leader would say** 'could you bring this could you bring this could bring this and talk and we slowly work on some type of plan.'

Amy

"I think we **lack the instructional leadership** that can see...and not all schools, but it's prevalent...that could really **recognize how much social studies could support** through content alignment to [state name omitted] or whatever history standards and how much that could support **improvements in ELA.**"

Sean White

"You know I have the vision, but **I don't have the legs to make the vision happen**...some of that has to happen at the district level so those are things I would like to see, I would like assistance and I just don't see any of that...**I am an autonomous** in the four walls of the

school for what I teach because I go ahead and I'm standards-based...**I can justify my existence**, but we have teachers out there who teach nothing similar to a standard-based operation and I think there is **little accountability**...mean let's face it, **who wouldn't want to be a history teacher, we aren't tested, we are rarely observed and, you know, we are just like this jellyfish out there floating around**... Hey [name omitted] you did crappy on your assessment here and we would like to go ahead and take you to task...**No one cares about history**... So while I'm complaining about history, it makes **my life very easy**, but there are teachers out there who and it kills me because to be a history teacher takes so little.”

#### Estaban Catastrophe

“There is a thing that strikes me...the way that schools are often administered in that kind of old ‘if you are putting all of these restraints on me as a teacher you obviously don't trust me to do the job you hired me to do’...**sadly some of my colleagues have shown that they should not be trusted to do the job they were hired to do**, but you know it's almost like a trickle-down effect...I can think of middle school and high school kids complaining about how ‘you are still treating me like a little kid’ and that old teacher retort of ‘act like an adult and I'll treat you like an adult...to **teachers feeling like administrators are putting them in straight jackets**, and I think about a sticker that were literally on several filing



cabinets across the district that were created by our union of which I am a member of but it said **'just let me teach'**....and then I think of the **passive aggressive nature of Central Office**... of principles toward Central Office, and I think of the Central Office restraints put on by the state Department of Education which is dealing with these **restraints** and **rules** and **regulations** from the federal department of education."

Ms. Arc

"It's **solo** work. They are not very effective at providing materials, and even when we have trainings, they are **not geared toward social studies teachers working together**. I tend to be an introvert anyway, so **it doesn't really bother me.**"

*In order to further unpack the social studies in the District, I sought once again the voices of my participants to re/engage issue/s of epistemic violence. Do we as educators reinforce our own marginalization by the way we talk about marginalization? Can the social studies claim equal footing with other subject areas like math and literacy if it is a subaltern? Are social studies educators in/advertently reinforcing social studies' subalternness? Central to my struggle is Spivak's question that is taken up regularly by postcolonial and critical pedagogy thinkers: can the subaltern speak? In thinking in a hybrid space where the voice of my participants meet my voice and the voices of theory and literature, I consider the power/knowledge*

*struggle in my attempt/s to learn some/thing/s about social studies and social studies educators in the District. In reviewing the transcripts, I noticed that directly after or shortly after asking participants if they believed social studies was valued in the district the questions turned toward seeking responsibility—in a sense, I wanted to know who these participants saw as responsible for the devaluing of social studies in the District. From the passages shared above, I see teachers and administrators (or the lack there of) as the two loci of the subaltern status of social studies in the District.*

*The first loci, teachers, were singled out by participants for why they saw social studies as lacking voice and value in the District. All of these participants, if you recall, were former or are current social studies educators. The one elementary voice, Hollywood, while not solely a social studies teacher, did teach social studies during the decade she was a classroom teacher. The current teachers spoke to feelings of isolation from the conversation of curricular development (as emphasis, in their opinions, were placed on literacy and math) while simultaneously defending their comfort with existing in this space. As a former classroom teacher myself, I am haunted by this in as much I think about the reification of social studies' subaltern status by teachers who do not speak. But, again, that is my placement of my worldview on a participant. Similarly, the former teachers are all now in some area of school or district-level administration. This is especially pertinent to the pointing of a lack of social studies leadership at the administrative level as a reason why social studies is devalued in the District.*

*If there are former social studies teachers in these spaces, why can they not speak on behalf of social studies? This is a question I wrestle with daily, and I am troubled by it.*

### **Speak/ing and Identi/ty/fy: Re/considering postcolonial theory and decolonization in re/search**

Taking all of this into consideration, I tenuously re/engage the double-bind as I feel the need to talk about my participants' comments and my own reflections in relation to postcolonial and critical pedagogy tenets, but at the same time I do not want to speak for my participants. *So, I proceed with caution. The multiplicity of voices and experiences provide insights into the threshold of social studies in the District, but no definitive answer/s. In thinking about the conversations I had with each of my participants about the value of social studies, I recalled Vanessa Andreotti (2011):*

Spivak questions the subaltern's ability to speak "for herself" (without being a mouthpiece) and suggests that, if the subaltern is speaking (given a voice) she is not a subaltern anymore, and that the terms determined for her speech (the space opened for her to speak) will affect what is going to be said and how her voice will be heard (p. 42).

*I wonder, then, if the contexts of my relationships with each of the participants and the ramp-up to questions related to value shaped how they responded.*

*While I sit and think about each of their perspectives, I also must challenge what, if any, impact I had on their responses to my questions.*

*Fundamental to the consideration of speaking for and/or about my participants is the distress of defining their identity/ies and the identity/ies of social studies within this text. The discourse of subalternity is riddled with concerns on the power to identify. “The question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 64). In thinking about Bhabha here, I seek to understand whether I inadvertently forced social studies in/to subaltern-ness by asking the questions I asked? Did the lightning bolts I heard through the voices of my participants contribute to the production of social studies as an Other in the District? As such, did I make my participants culpable in the othering of social studies? These are tremendously complex questions.*

*However, if identity and voice are both engaged in a process with which the subject potentially assumes the identity bestowed up s/he/it by the dominant culture (or voice) than is even possible to engage in a decolonizing project such as mine? In locating social studies as a subaltern in the District and in the larger education structure, it is entirely possible that this chapter is in fact an act of epistemic violence because to be named a subaltern is to attempt to know it and to name it.*

The complexities of silence/ing and subalternity should not be lost on the academy, since it is within works such as this that the terms of marginality are most often used.

If there is a buzzword in cultural critique now, it is “marginality.” Every academic knows that one cannot do without labels. When a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the center wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center (Spivak, 1993, p. 61).

Spivak’s argument deserves consideration as we think about social studies’ subaltern—or marginal—identity within and outside the District. The voices offering insights to a discussion of subalternity, as previously disclosed, were or are currently social studies educators. Their identities as teachers and administrators, as well as my own identity as a social studies educator, exist within and outside the hegemonic structure. The boundaries of insider-outsider are blurry. I return, then, to Bhabha’s (1994) notion of hybridity in that identity and voice are neither inside nor outside—they move fluidly in and out and alongside dominant identity/ies and discourse/s. The ambiguity of the hybrid makes it possible to challenge the hegemonic nature of binaries (Sharp, 2009). The task, then, is to deliberate how hybridity or Mignolo’s (2000) writings on border thinking provide spaces for actionable change to how social studies is talked about and seen in the District.

**Chapter Five**  
**Social studies as hegemonic re/enforcer: On curriculum and teaching in/for Indigenous contexts**

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“Education in the English-American context resembles indoctrination more than it does other forms of teaching because it insists on implanting a particular body of knowledge and a specific view of the world, which often does not correspond to the life experiences that people have or might be expected to encounter.”

~ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*

**Creating America: Establishing a foundation for our<sup>8</sup> journey into social studies curriculum as standards and textbooks at the district-level**

Defining the social studies is fraught with politics and ideology. “Whether progressive or conservative, any social science is taught through some curricular frame and, in that sense, is never entirely ideologically neutral” (Thornton, 2008, p. 19). To this end, there are as many opinions on the creation and implementation of social studies curriculum—textbooks and standards—as there are people engaged in the century’s long war for the soul of social studies in schools (Grant & Salinas, 2008). Some social justice-oriented scholars (Au, 2009; Epstein, 2009; Gradwell, 2006; Grant, 2006; Grant & Salinas, 2008; Loewen, 2010; Salinas, 2006; Thornton, 1991; Wineburg, 2001) advocate that teachers renegotiate curriculum in their social studies classrooms to make content more

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<sup>8</sup> I use “our” here as recognition of my reader/s. You will, undoubtedly, come to some understandings and questions that I do not address. This is what excited me most about not knowing who or in what context/s this writing may enter. I hope we can continue this dialogue across time and space.

relevant and historically truthful for students to analyze. This renegotiation, they argue, allows for more voices and experiences outside the master narrative to enter the classroom, thus providing students a richer environment to learn and critique U.S. history and current events. The renegotiation and the critique of standards, textbooks, and classroom practices towards social justices for the social studies will be taken up throughout the proceeding discourse.

While social studies scholarship has paid some attention to the historical development of state-level content standards, little research exists on individual state reform movements and the implementation of these standards in classrooms. In their review of literature currently available, Shear and Castro (2012) discovered that power to shape and define content and contexts for social studies curriculum throughout the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century was largely in the hands of neoconservatives who advocated the maintenance of a Eurocentric vision of the United States. Additionally, the committees tasked to reform the standards kept, for the most part, the voices of teachers and other historically marginalized groups out of the debate, which calls into question the relevance of state-level content standards in everyday classroom practices (Shear & Castro, 2012).

One such example of the neoconservative power grab was found in California where Diane Ravitch and Charlotte Crabtree, both university scholars at the time, were tasked with writing of the final draft of the state's social studies frameworks without input or feedback from other members of the writing committee or larger community (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995).

Another unique example can be found in Texas where just recently only six of the fifteen members of the state's curriculum board who were charged with deciding the state's social studies curriculum had any classroom experience (Blanchette, 2010). Similarly, the Virginia State Board of Education's Advisory Committee on Social Studies Standards, the group charged with ending the year-long conflict over the social studies standards, was comprised mainly of college faculty, curriculum "specialists," parents, business leaders, and representatives from professional organizations. Teachers were included but kept at a distance (Van Hover et al, 2010). In New York, as well, scholars out-numbered and out-ranked teachers. There were thirteen university scholars, including Ravitch, Paul Gagnon, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and only seven teachers on New York's committee (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995). This trend of keeping teachers out of the final process was seen time and time again, and ultimately research found teachers had tremendous difficulty implementing the standards as they were devised in the top-down approach (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Van Hover et al., 2010).

Along these same lines, few studies have studied the kinds of knowledge sanctioned in state standards about Indigenous peoples. In his study of Arizona and Washington, Anderson (2012) found social studies standards to lack complexity in the teaching of Indigenous-related content. These standards, according to Anderson (2012), maintain the tradition of teaching a whitewashed master narrative of United States history. Similarly, Journell's (2009) study of nine state standards found the standards promoted a master narrative of Euro-



American hegemony. For example, Journell (2009) found coverage of Indigenous-related content dropped off significantly after the establishment of the reservation system in all nine states. In a study currently pending final revisions, my colleagues and I looked at all 50 states and the District of Columbia's K-12 U.S. history standards and found that roughly 87% of existing U.S. history content standards related to Indigenous peoples exists in a pre-1900 context. As such, Indigenous peoples are confined to existing in the distant past and not a part of the current and future narratives of the United States. All three studies concluded that the states in question promoted a Eurocentric narrative of American Indian experiences in U.S. history.

While there is little by the way of literature on the development of state curriculum standards, the amount of research available on content varies, especially with regards social studies textbooks. Loewen (2007, 2010) completed extensive studies of social studies textbooks. They found that both social studies curriculum and their associated textbooks promote a heroic view of the United States, both past and present. This heroism takes the shape of a United States born out of a struggle to provide freedom and democracy to its citizens (VanSledright, 2011). As such, this master narrative of history tells of a nation immune to racism, sexism, and inequality (Aldridge, 2006). The narrative provided in curriculum provide teachers a framework for which to teach that the United States was and continue to be a country without fault, and a country whose trajectory towards great power and prestige was (and will remain) inevitable (Aldridge, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Lintner, 2007; Moore & Clark,

2004). With regards to the promotion or critique of such a narrative, Levstik and Barton (2001) wrote, “We would side with those who maintain that in a world of multiple voices and perspectives, no single cultural tradition can be singled out to represent the ‘finest’ achievement of humanity (p.126).” How teachers teach this narrative, then, is of critical importance to unpacking the social studies.

In support of previous discussion on the master narrative of the social studies, McNight and Chandler (2009) wrote, “The ‘facts’ of history are different depending on who you ask” (p. 63). Nowhere is this more relevant than in the discussion of social studies in Indigenous contexts.

Unfortunately, few research studies address the frequency of Indigenous history, culture, and current issues in the social studies. While there have been broad analyses of state standards (Stern & Stern, 2011), most of what we know about the teaching of Indigenous content appears in the form of textbook analyses (Fleming, 2006; Loewen, 2007, 2010; Marino, 2011; Moore & Clark, 2004; Sanchez, 2001). Moore and Clark (2004) examined Nebraska social studies textbooks to discover that the books told a narrative of history devoid of historical and cultural accuracy and empathy. These texts presented Indigenous peoples as thieves, drunks, and bloodthirsty savages. Issues of land rights ignored Indigenous perspectives and a provided a theme of inevitability that posited western expansion as a foregone conclusion to the creation of America. Similarly, Rains (2006) articulated many problems within social studies curriculum, especially as it deals with Indigenous peoples in more current contexts. She noted that social studies curriculum “bypasses” such topics as the United States granting

Indigenous citizenship in 1924 and voting rights in the 1960s. Indeed, “the highly ethnocentric approach to textbook history and social studies is stabilized by a language of universality and objectivity” (McCarthy, 1990, p. 123). History, by definition here, is portrayed as simple and easy to digest. By ignoring the complexities of this historical narrative/s of any particular event or time, social studies re/enforces hegemony and the subaltern status of those not recognized as members of the American story.

While thinking about curriculum in the form of standards or textbooks, it is important to also consider the role/s these state-sanctioned resources play in the development of curriculum at the district level (Apple, 2000). With regards the context of this dissertation, the implications of state-sanctioned curriculum in teaching social studies to/for Indigenous students are paramount. On textbooks and state content standards providing only a broad narrative of Indigenous cultures, Chandler (2010) notes that basic lists and descriptions of information

Leaves students with a distorted version of what part and role that Native customs and government played on the unfolding of the United States.

This lack of exposure to the interactive nature of Native and European interaction leaves students with a conceptual void that is filled with stereotypes and caricatures (p. 42).

Chandler highlighted the crux of the problem of re/presentation—that of Indigenous peoples as relics of a distant past, void of complexity/ies and voice/s in the shaping and telling of the United States. Given the nature of social studies curriculum—both as state-sanctioned content standards and textbooks—as a

mechanism for the re/enforcement of American hegemony, this chapter seeks to understand what social studies curriculum exists in the District, how participants addressed issues of historical and cultural re/presentations of Indigenous peoples in their classrooms, and the implications social studies curriculum has on Indigenous students' success.

### **Social studies curriculum in the District: Moving through the threshold for more understandings**

#### *Does the District have a social studies curriculum?*

##### Estaban Catastrophe

“...The problem is that **we see curriculum as a textbook** and if you go have a conversation with our [district-level position name omitted] is going to talk about the curriculum as a textbook, but the textbook doesn't teach everything that's in the standards coming out and when we choose textbooks **we don't necessarily crosswalk or map** those things...I was on a curriculum adoption committee for social studies at [school name omitted] in I think that was 2004, 2005...we were adopting a new social studies curriculum and **we spent more time looking at the reading level and the readability of the text then we did considering the actual content** of what was taught...”

Amy

“Okay my experience the social studies curriculum has been whatever **textbook** is available...my first experience back in 2000 when I moved here was I came in the middle of the year I showed a couple days before Christmas break...somebody let me in the classroom and said here you go and there was a hodgepodge of social studies books in there that was at the [school name omitted] but it was pretty much **here's the books, here's the [state name omitted] standards do with it what you will**, and I really **struggled**... two years later I went to [school name omitted] which was a little more structured...social studies was bigger and had a department head...it had the resources as far as books and things were much more organized and distributed and kept track of...for example I taught world history so myself and two other world history teachers we were using the same textbook...there was **no collaboration**... it was basically **once again here's the [state name omitted] standards, the textbook to do what you may** and it actually led to quite a few philosophical differences amongst even the three teachers that taught world history because when you're looking at the world history standards for [state name omitted] its Renaissance forward, so of course then you have teachers who say [students] didn't have history since sixth grade, they forgot everything so we have to start at the beginning of the book...and we **need to ram it down these kids throats** and then make it all the way to

present day in one year... and so there was a lot of **philosophical differences**, but then again we function in **isolation** so we can have our philosophical debates in our once a month department meetings and then everybody goes back to their classroom and **close the door** and does as they choose...that is **the only sense of curriculum is that you're using the same textbook** and then we did adopt a few years ago and we had some reps come in again philosophical differences as far as skill-based versus content base..."

Sean White

"A **book**, and that was it and **I had to create the curriculum...**"

Ms. Arc

"I **built my own curriculum** out of the state standards so I look at **state content standards** and now **common core standards** and figure out what I am going to do..."

Lindsey Waite

"...We got **textbooks** and maybe a few videos or whatever..."

Maria Theresa

"No, what's happening now because we got the common core and social studies doesn't have common core standards yet, **I am having to**

**do my regular [state name omitted] state standards**, but I have to **incorporate the language arts common core standards** into the lessons...so one way has to be based on language arts, but as far as curriculum this is an example, a **textbook** that gives you suggestions you can pretty much do whatever you want in it, but it would behoove the kids to have some kind of a plan...”

### Hollywood

“The district **did not have a curriculum**...if they did we did not know about it...so when I first started teaching the first two years in 2000 there was **no mention of any curriculum for social studies** or science...I left for a year and came back working for another school in the district and it was all reading and math...and they had just started introducing at that time No Child Left Behind and that was all starting to roll in **reading and math were the priority**...and then I left again for another year to work with a particular teacher and came back and started working at the [school reference omitted] for the past seven years and again **no mention of any social studies** or science curriculum...the only books that I found in the classroom were [state name omitted] **textbooks** that I used once in a while if I needed anything from it to teach the fourth grade at [state name omitted] **standards** for social studies and then for fifth grade

we had some US history books...**I don't know who bought them or where they came from, but there were not enough for a classroom...**”

*It became clear as I spoke with the seven educators who participated in my dissertation work that social studies curriculum is neither here nor there. The passages I provided as entry to this reflection are snapshots of these educators' access to district-level curriculum. Each participant had or is currently having to create his or her own curriculum using the state mandated social studies standards and whatever textbook is chosen by his or her particular school. There is no district-wide adoption of texts for subject or grade level and there is no district-wide curriculum guide (e.g. content pacing guide). In thinking about the literature related to standards and textbooks that I addressed at the opening of this chapter, I see two crucial challenges for changes to the current social studies curriculum used in the District. These challenges also speak to a larger issue for this dissertation—the potential impact of social studies education to/for Indigenous students.*

### **Re/considering decolonization and social justice for social studies:**

#### **Theoretical points of consideration before we think with critical pedagogy**

Underlying a number of the studies previously discussed is the notion of social justice, and it is a theoretical consideration to take up as a component of decolonization. Au (2009) defined social justice in the following way, “social studies for social justice *actively* seeks to *recognize* the diversity of the world and



the *complexities* associated with issues of racism, sexism, class oppression, and other forms of inequality” (p. 25, emphasis added). The use of the words “actively,” “recognize” and “complexities” are interesting and could be deconstructed to read that social studies for social justice seeks to *actively recognize complexities*... but what comes after this recognition? This is a question that I have pondered for some time. One could argue that Au means for social studies educators to engage in a critical reading of the content and contexts of the in/visible narrative/s embedded in social studies curriculum, but this would require educators to have working knowledge of the language of the oppressor (Grande, 2004) since textbooks and state-level standards, as I have discussed, are largely written to/for Euro-American eyes and ears. It is possible, arguably, to foster a means of investigation of the deeper dynamics embedded in the structures of inequity, but it is no easy task.

In order to engage in such an inquiry, social studies educators at all levels would also need to engage in a discourse of working with social justice as a means to an identified end or a life-long struggle to overcome oppression/s as they fluctuate over time. Shultz noted: “It is helpful to distinguish the ‘path to social justice’ as different from ‘the path of social justice’, with the latter holding the possibility of achieving decolonization” (Shultz, 2012, p. 39). The path of social justice as a means of decolonization, according to Shultz, requires recognition that justice is not the end result of overcoming a struggle or series of struggles, but instead justice is the daily messiness of humanity that “requires us to take a path of justice where change is understood as disruptive and

unpredictable” (Shultz, emphasis in original, 2012, p. 39). As such, it is difficult to define what social justice as a decolonization project would or could look like, but one could argue that at its core is dialogue—the meeting of minds and hearts that see oppression and work together to overcome it (Freire, 2007).

Part and parcel to this discourse is the recognition that identities of otherness are created and as such can be uncreated. Freire (1993) wrote:

The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not ‘marginals,’ are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside”—inside the structure which made them “beings for others.” The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves” (p. 55).

This is especially important as we move into considering the role/s curriculum play in the District. Education, as has been discussed throughout this chapter and in the Preface to this dissertation, has had a tremendous impact on Indigenous students, and not always for the better. Thinking with critical pedagogy, which “makes a direct, explicit and undeniable linkage between the formalized experience in the classroom and the lived experience outside of the classroom” (Carr & Thésée, 2012, p. 25) will provide a lens in which we can seek to understand how social studies is currently implemented in the District.

### **Challenge #1: Re/enforcing “banking education”**

*At this stage in my learning to make connections between larger bodies of literature, theory, and the experiences of my dissertation participants, I come to*

*understand standardized curriculum in the form of state standards and textbooks as a means to provide students a series of facts and figures without attention paid to the complexities of identity/ies and culture/s. This is especially prevalent in social studies. Freire (1993) noted that this type of education “becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (p. 53). If, like my participants said, the District provides only textbooks and the state standards as guidance for the teaching of social studies, how is this anything more than the mere depositing of a carefully crafted Euro-American narrative into the minds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth? What impact does the District’s lack of a district-level curriculum have on students, especially since it is seen through previous discussion that textbooks especially re/present Indigenous peoples as relics of a distant past? BUT, is the solution to create a district-based curriculum? If yes, then what resources are needed to counteract the hegemony of standardized social studies curriculum? I do not ask these questions to be difficult<sup>9</sup>. I ask this question because it is entirely relevant to the topic at hand. These are the questions I wrestle with because to provide an affirmative answer would be to speak and work against the creation of a path of social justice.*

*Providing a definitive answer to any of these questions could, arguably, put the creation of a more socially just curriculum in the District in a precarious position because it could re/enforce the structure/s inherent in current*

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<sup>9</sup> I am well aware that many academic scoff at the notion of question posing in the middle—or sometimes anywhere—of a document.

*curriculum, which is enacted through the depositing of information into students' heads. This leads me to another haunting question: In the search for curriculum that challenges the hegemonic Euro-American narrative, how can educators ensure that what takes its place does not inadvertently silence diversity of cultures, languages, opinions and experiences (to name a few)?*

### **Challenge #2: Re/enforcing the language of the oppressor**

*In keeping with thinking about the questions posed above, I am reminded of Grande's (2004) writings on critical pedagogy in Indigenous contexts. Grande's writings are especially pertinent here as I consider how critical pedagogy and Indigenous ways of knowing and being may interplay in re/thinking social studies to/for Indigenous students. The colonial-imperial project that has been ongoing in the United States since the arrival of the Europeans, and it is important I remain vigilant to a philosophy that not only underlies the development of the United States, but critical pedagogy as well—the philosophy of progress. Grande (2004) wrote:*

While any pedagogy with a root metaphor of “change as progress” presents specific challenges to indigenous cultures rooted in tradition and intergenerational knowledge, revolutionary theorists do not categorically advocate change as inherently progressive. Rather, they are very definitive in their distinction between change that emancipates and change that merely furthers the dictates of market imperatives (p. 82).

*This is where, I think, the use of reflexivity plays a crucial role in the usefulness of critical pedagogy as an active member on the path of social justice for social studies to/for Indigenous students.*

*Keeping this in mind, the question on the use of state-level content standards and textbooks in the District still looms large. The place of critical pedagogy as a lens for thinking about the experiences of my participants certainly has merit as it seeks to critique hegemony, but I must also be careful to not re/enforce the language of the oppressor in offering critical pedagogy as the only path of social justice for social studies in the District. As Grande (2004) noted: “But where critical scholars ground their vision in Western conceptions of democracy and justice that presume a ‘liberated’ self, indigenous scholars ground their vision in conceptions of sovereignty that presume a profound connection to place and land” (p. 117). Ways of knowing and being are complex, and this is a critical point in the journey of this dissertation. As a Western academic, I come to the path/s of social justice from a critical, progressive lens. My understandings of education may undoubtedly be different than the Indigenous communities with whom I work. I think Grande’s writing here serves as a reminder for non-Indigenous educators to work as allies in the struggle against hegemony rather than the bestowers of such justice.*

*It is important to pause here and return to the voices of my participants in the District, as they will provide us another entry into the discourse of social studies curriculum in the District—that of the teaching with/in Indigenous*

*contexts. The four passages are long, and I do this purposefully because of the complexities inherent in each.*

**It's not just an issue of curriculum: On teaching and the implications for Indigenous students in the District**

*Did/do you incorporate Indigenous histories and cultures in your social studies lessons? Do you think social studies curriculum should be more culturally relevant and accurate for the students in the District?*

Amy

“You know **I wish that I could say that I did more of that, but I am not going to lie, I did not.** I taught World History... European World History from the Renaissance forward, so the only time that I spent on incorporating any kind of [specific tribal reference removed] or American Indian history into my lessons was when I was dealing with something very specific like Western Expansion...**but I did not in any way shape or form incorporate enough American Indian history or culture into my lessons** and that's for two reasons. One, **I didn't feel like I had enough knowledge to do so** more than on a surface level. However, I did as often as I could incorporate the ideas of what is **assimilation**, what is **genocide**... focusing on bigger themes of thinking, but as far as actually really being conscious about putting the history of the American Indians into my lessons I did not, and also because **I was incredibly pushed for**

**time and that's a copout**, but you know you're covering the Renaissance through modern day in one school year for an hour a day. To be able to do collaborative projects and things like that it was a struggle to get through the content, so I didn't do a good enough job of that, which sucks.

You know what I end up seeing [in the District] is **educators are so unprepared for coming here** that then those things become their excuses...people that come out here and they as soon as they enter the classroom...they want to write off of **their list of the three reasons why these kids are unsuccessful** and why their writing isn't good: its **attendance**, the **kids aren't in class**, they're **ELL**, or where they live... they won't necessarily say the **reservation**... but that they are transfers in and they're not from the district; they are supposed to be at [specific school reference removed] or whatever. So those other three excuses, not what I can do to meet their needs, how can you help me meet their needs, it's here's my three packaged excuses for why these kids can't learn, and I think that bothers me about teachers who come to this district because let's call a spade a spade. **The teachers who are teaching here are not from here**. Most of them come from other places. The majority of them are **Anglo-American**. They were **not prepared to teach this unique population of people**. The American Indian students have not generally been successful in schools so we've targeted and placed our three excuses and we just hold on to them whereas with me, **if we can change**

that paradigm of thinking of how can we meet these kids needs, they're **capable**, they're **capable**, they're really **capable**, but that takes a huge shift in thinking.”

Lindsey Waite

“I think more culturally as Native Americans we tend to just, **oh well they got it wrong again, and deal with the fact that they don't know what they're talking about** and so we will just leave our culture here that we do, what I did see in my classroom was that when I used the *Girl Who Chased Away Sorrow*...at a seventh grade level, **what I did see was those kids who did not like reading and did not like those things became very interested when it was their own culture**, I would never hear about anybody's grandmother weaving a rug or what plan they were, but **when we read that book they became involved because it was them** and I attribute that to it being a pretty well told story...but **unless you grow up native and you know how to feels...then you don't understand the true impact of what that can make to native kids...so a white teacher from [state reference omitted] is never going to pull that off** and we continually hire people like that and...it is not a prerequisite to have any kind of [state reference omitted] history before becoming a teacher...I think that is wrong, I think that there should be a minimum of hours that someone spends because [state reference omitted] history is our culture there are so many cultures in that and even that's not



just the Native Americans and the Spanish...but it's also Mexicans and the Black buffalo soldiers and what about the Chinese and Japanese internment camps...”

### Estaban Catastrophe

“...Novice teachers, those people with less than three years of experience and we really want them to follow the curriculum because **they don't have enough experience to not follow the curriculum**...it's been a few years, but for example [teacher's name omitted] made a habit for years of picking up copies of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, he would be like 'oh let's stop at this garage sale'...he could slowly accumulate the class set of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and I congratulate him for that...you know because yes the book represents a viewpoint, yes it was written by an author that represents a viewpoint from the 1920s, but it shows all the peoples of [state reference removed], it is truly **representative of the students who are in the room** because it discusses the Mexican-Spanish population, it talks about the White American settlers and the traders and those kinds of things, it discusses, it brings in the [specific tribal reference removed] because it does talk about **repression** in the kind of thing, and it brings in the [specific tribal reference removed]...**that's not in the standards anywhere**, if you look at [state reference removed] standards is not going to say, hey we know the [text] book is crap so if you go pull in

these other resources it is going to be good, and part of the problem is, like I've said, **we have so many people who are still dealing with teaching 101...**"

### Hollywood

"I really think that when you're in a community long enough you can ask more...**you can go and say heavier more deeper issues and tackle some things that you couldn't if you are a first year teacher there in that community**...even if you are an experienced, awesome teacher **it takes times for Native American populations especially the [specific tribal reference removed] to trust and to let you in**, so I think it is necessary for new teachers to understand the **implications** for the classroom...so they know all these great things that they want to accomplish, but how is that going to happen...**they just need to be aware of the culture** which sometimes I haven't thought about myself and really haven't thought about how it has impacted the history of this area...how it does impact right now and someone shared with me recently that I thought was interesting, they said you know when I come to [state reference removed] I feel like I'm stepping back 100 years in history, and that was interesting to me because this person was saying that when working or talking with [specific tribal reference removed] people in particular or even the [specific tribal reference removed] **very tied to their**

**culture**...and...are holding onto an even more than you know...that in terms of communication and social issues and all of those kinds of things that the [specific tribal reference removed] are about 100 years behind and that was very interesting to me...so I think yeah, some regards in terms of social studies in particular and talking about community relationships and race issues and all of those kinds of things takes time because **I don't think even amongst the community they talk about things like that...**

What would be **interesting is if the district would have some of these discussions with community members** and get their ideas about how they want to maybe incorporate some of those things in the classroom because like I said I really think that some of these issues bring up **pain** and they bring up **hurt** and they bring up **anger** and that can be **pretty intense for some of the students and for some of the families** and so **I think it would be a wise thing of the district tried to incorporate some kind of curriculum based around native issues** and those kind of things that would take in **consideration community viewpoints** as well and how that can be done in a wise way..."

*In thinking about Amy and Estaban's passages, I am reminded of the literature related to teachers' experiences with issues of race and culture in classrooms. Addressing academic success in this population of students, understanding who they are as learners, and working as educators towards improving education for Indigenous students is compounded when we are faced*

*with content and classroom practices that are culturally and historically inaccurate and irrelevant (Pewewardy, 2002). As self-identified White educators, both Amy and Estaban have first-hand knowledge of the challenges presented to non-Indigenous educators, especially if those educators have not been given space in teacher preparation to tackle issues of race and privilege.*

In unpacking the issues of race in the classroom, Bolgatz (2005) found that when teachers teach about race it is always “within carefully controlled boundaries of scope and sequence. Textbooks, state standards and guidelines, and standardized tests neatly package and limit the treatment of race into confined arenas” (p. 260). Similarly, in a study of how teachers teach for diversity, Wills (2001) found that teachers often presented overgeneralized and simplistic information about marginalized groups, such as Indigenous perspectives of colonization, which did little to promote the aims of social justice. In a related study, Cornbleth (1998) found that teachers avoided critical images of the United States, and instead chose positive and neutral images for students to consider. She further articulated that because of these varying degrees of narrative, students were often provided only “partial images or vignettes” with which to formulate an image of the United States. The narrative, in Cornbleth’s (1998) study, was presented chronologically according to curriculum mandates.

In considering my participants’ experiences and the aforementioned research, I want to turn the discussion for a moment toward standardized education and teaching in Indigenous contexts. How Indigenous students learn and how they feel about themselves as students in a society historically prone to

not only leaving them behind, but also forcefully assimilating them into dominant culture is an underlying issue for this dissertation. As education in the United States continues down the path of higher accountability and even stiffer consequences for schools that fail to meet the standards set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top, the need to address curriculum and teaching at district and classroom levels is vital. The dangerous side effects of the colonial-imperial project in education are evident in Indigenous students' graduation rates (Faircloth and Tippeconnic III, 2010). They found that only 44% of American Indian and Alaskan Native students graduated in 2006 (compared to the national average of 69%). Likewise, Sanchez and Stuckey (1999) reported similar graduation results a decade earlier. They also found that in some areas drop out rates were nearing 100%, and that only 17% of American Indian and Alaskan Native students attend college.

Both studies cite differences in belief systems and politics of the schools, Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and Indigenous epistemologies as reasons why these students graduate to a lesser degree than other students in the U.S. education system. Faircloth and Tippeconnic III (2010) further noted that "school-level factors associated with dropping out include large schools, a perceived lack of empathy among teachers, passive teaching methods, irrelevant curriculum, inappropriate testing, tracking, and lack of parent involvement" (emphasis in original, p. 27-28) contributed to high attrition rates. *The need for more dialogue in this area is critical, and it spurs me to ask difficult questions of my own dissertation as it relates to the planning for and teaching of social studies in*

*Indigenous contexts. This is, however, a difficult task. “Due to various factors such as tribal and linguistic diversity, wide ranging geographical dispersal, and the largely rural nature of tribal schools, educational studies of tribal schools are rare and often too costly to implement” (Lindeen, 2005, p. 367). Not seeking to engage in dialogue to better understand the experiences of Indigenous students in reservation and in-town schools is dangerous, especially when the fates of all schools, especially Indigenous schools that rely almost entirely on federal funds, are tied to student performance. I see this issue in the District as social studies is marginalized to make more time for tested subjects like math and literacy.*

*Returning, then, to the District, I see challenges and opportunities in the experiences shared at the start of this section that can help address the teaching of social studies to/for Indigenous students in the District. In thinking with both postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy, I will address key themes related to teaching and seeking a path of social justice.*

### **Challenge #3: Teachers and the content they teach to/for Indigenous students**

Lower than average graduation rates are not the only problem facing Indigenous students in the classroom. Their abilities to voice how they learn best are also being neglected in classrooms. Morgan (2010) found that Indigenous students “are likely to behave and react to teachers and teaching strategies in ways that are often different from mainstream students” (p. 45). Morgan did not, unfortunately, explain why this is so. Starnes (2006), however, did. In synthesizing a few of the most recent, relevant research studies of the learning

styles of American Indian and Alaskan Native students, she noted, “there is a positive relationship between students’ academic learning and their strong sense of cultural identity” (p. 386). Starnes (2006) and Morgan (2010) both highlight, in broad terms, key cultural aspects of the Indigenous experience in school and offer teachers suggestions to address achievement discrepancies, such as focusing on culturally responsive teaching. Sparks (2000) and Castagno and Brayboy (2008) noted similar findings in their research, highlighting the fact that Indigenous students learn best when their culture is taught in conjunction with the dominant culture, which has significant implications to our discussion of the social studies in the District. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) in particular discuss in depth the use of culturally responsive teaching in Indigenous classrooms, but note that despite best efforts, schools are still failing to meet the needs of these students. *This is especially important to consider in relation to Amy’s comments about the “excuses” she sees many teachers in the District using for why students are failing.*

In thinking about the inclusion of Indigenous-centered content and Indigenous-centered pedagogy in the social studies means to directly challenge the hegemony present in current social studies curricula. An underlying problem to all of this is the fact that social studies teachers (history or any other subject) do not know all there is to know in their content area well enough to do this. *For the social studies, then, of critical concern is not just the issue of how teachers’ teach but what they teach. Esteban’s colleague’s use of outside texts and Lindsey’s use of the novel are two isolated examples within the District of educators actively*

*engaged in providing counter-narratives to the standardized curriculum.* They are, as Thornton (2008) described as curriculum gatekeepers. He defined the teacher's role as follows:

As gatekeepers [of curriculum], teachers actively shape an instructional program. Teachers can and do interpret what counts as successful passage through the gate, open the gate wide or narrow, based on what they believe students can or should profit from on the other side, allow innovation through or block it based on their estimation of its educational or practical worth, and so forth (p.16).

*Unfortunately, not all social studies teachers are like Lindsey or Estaban's colleague.* The majority of teachers are Euro-American and may not have had the opportunity to unpack the language of the colonial-imperial project underlying social studies curriculum enough to challenge it directly.

This is especially true of history teachers, who Wineburg (2001) noted “must take what they know and create representations of content that engender new understandings among children who often come to school with scant motivation to learn” (p. 82). To this end, Adler (2008) and Van Hover (2008) synthesized the literature related to social studies pre-service teacher education and in-service social studies teacher development respectively. Like Wineburg (2001), both provided valuable insights to the current state of the social studies profession. At issue with their reviews, however, is the prevalence of broad-based research on teacher education and professional development rather than a focus on the social studies specifically (Van Hover, 2008).



Similarly, Levstik's (2008) work expanded on this finding to discuss the issue of political correctness, norms, and the fear of indoctrination. She commented that teachers' beliefs about what constitutes an issue worth teaching depends not only on their content knowledge (as Hess, 2008 described) but also their ideological perspectives on the matter. Levstik (2008) concluded that teachers engage students within well-established cultural and ideological norms, and thusly stay away from teaching anything inherently controversial. *This is especially troublesome for my dissertation, as I seek to understand the teaching of social studies at the district-level.*

We must turn, then, towards a focused discussion of teachers' roles in the Indigenous contexts. As Nola Lodge, a member of the Oneida Nation said, "teachers think they are doing a lot for us by having a week on Indians... 'We are going to make a little headband with feathers and everyone is going to understand what it is to be an Indian.' That's ridiculous" (Kelting-Gibson, 2006, p. 204). *If the representations of Indian-ness are not addressed accurately and relevantly by teachers, it could be argued that we will continue to see what we have already previously discussed—high attrition rates, disconnected students, and the continued stranglehold of hegemony in not only social studies, but all of education.*

*In the examination of teacher practice for Indigenous education, the research literature is rather scattered and broad, but it bares inclusion in this dissertation.* With regards the documentation of Indigenous teachers' decision-making in the classroom, the research is difficult to find. Historically, Gere (2005)

noted that the image of the Indigenous teacher has been largely kept out of our collective narratives, especially towards the turn of the century and into the 1930s. It has been equally difficult to find research focused on issues faced by non-Indigenous (predominately White) teachers in the teaching of Indigenous content. To illustrate the lack of clarity in teacher decision-making research in this regard, I offer three examples. The first is a rather extensive study of teacher decision-making in Hawaiian Native studies (Kaomea, 2005). The second is a non-research piece of scholarship that addresses the problems of non-Native teachers who teach Native students (Starnes, 2006). The third is a research study of urban Native experiences in Chicago that discusses teachers but is not focused on their decision-making (Beck, 2000).

First, Kaomea's (2005) two-year case study looked not only at the schools and history in context, but focused almost entirely on the classroom practices of elementary teachers. In her study of Hawaiian Native content lessons, she found that non-Hawaiian Native teachers who lacked foundational knowledge of accurate and relevant Hawaiian history and culture more often than not consciously taught the content incorrectly or kept the content at the periphery of their lessons despite the availability of guest speakers (tribal elders) and a Hawaiian studies program. One teacher, Kaomea (2005) noted:

Confessed that Hawaiian studies was one area of the curriculum in which she was not particularly confident or proud of her program. Admitting to an over-reliance on outdated texts and workbooks, she welcomed me to visit in a couple of weeks but asked me to be forgiving of any inaccuracies

that I might observe in her factual teaching or Hawaiian language pronunciation (p. 36).

In reflecting on the findings of her study, Kaomea (2005) called on teachers to think critically about their daily curriculum decision-making in regards to the impact said decisions will have on the education of their students—especially their Hawaiian Native students. In thinking critically about these decisions, Kaomea (2005) challenged teachers to consider whether their lessons support or oppose colonial mentalities and dominant narratives of Hawaiian history and culture.

In stark contrast, Starnes (2005) offered only a brief commentary of suggestions for teacher practice based on her study of Indigenous education (primarily student learning studies). She suggested White teachers seek out mentors from Indigenous communities, engage in self-teaching on Indigenous history and culture, attend community events, and advocate for more professional development. Unlike Kaomea (2005), Starnes (2005) provided little empirical support for her suggestions even though they could prove helpful to classroom teachers. Similarly, Beck's (2000) research on curricular issues in Chicago-area schools found that urban Indigenous students wanted to see themselves reflected in the content of their textbooks and lessons, but the research provided no first-hand accounts of teacher decision-making in this regard. Like Starnes (2005), Beck (2000) drew on the literature in his argument for teachers to educate themselves about the history of Indigenous-U.S. relations. *I see Lindsey's and Amy's accounts relevant here—as both spoke to the challenges of non-Indigenous*

*teachers in predominately Indigenous classrooms.* Providing space for teachers to engage in this learning, however, is difficult and costly not only in physical resources but in time. This is not to say it is not worth the investment.

### **Challenging hegemony's hold: Critical pedagogy as a tool of decolonization**

The three challenges presented in this chapter illuminate the hegemonic nature of social studies within the education machine and have immense implications for Indigenous education. As Martinez (2006) noted: "The intensity of cultural hegemony in the schools is symptomatic of a larger educational crisis that has prevailed in the historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples" (p. 121). The history of social studies, as has been a point of discussion throughout this work, is very much reflective of struggles for control of education's content and methods of accountability. Buras and Apple (2006) commented, "conservative modernization refers to the growing power of a new 'hegemonic bloc'—a new alliance of rightist forces that is currently exerting leadership in society" (p. 6). This hegemonic bloc has sought and continues to seek complete control over the re/presentation of American culture, and the power they yield to re/enforce this image is especially damaging to historically marginalized peoples, including Indigenous peoples (Apple, 2013). The question then becomes how educators working with/in Indigenous communities can challenge hegemony's hold in order to make learning relevant to Indigenous students.

To this end, critical pedagogy could serve as a tool to confront hegemony within schools and social studies curriculum. Seeking the voices of marginalized

peoples and integrating their experiences and perspectives are central to the mission of critical pedagogues and as such could serve as a space for change in the District's social studies curriculum (Kincheloe, 2008). I must be cautious, however, in pursuing the inclusion of critical pedagogy in totality. Also central to critical pedagogy are Western notions of democracy and citizenship, which could re/constitute epistemic violence in the District as it would impose Western ways of knowing and being in Indigenous contexts. Critical pedagogy, then, must work hand-in-hand with the work of decolonization. As Grande (2004) wrote:

Insofar as the project for colonialist education has been imbricated with the social, economic, and political policies of U.S. imperialism, an education for decolonization must also make no claim to political neutrality. It must engage a method of analysis and social inquiry that troubles the imperialist aims of unfettered competition, accumulation, and exploitation. Moreover, beyond an approach to schooling that underscores the political nature of education, Native students and educators require a praxis that enables the dismantling of *colonialist* forces” (emphasis in original, p. 319-320).

If, as Kincheloe (2007) argued, critical pedagogy creates space/s for social activism, then we must consider working within a hybrid space where the forces of critical pedagogy and decolonization can change the nature of social studies—and education—in Indigenous contexts.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The journey continues: Navigating an uncertain future**

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“The question then lies in determining how to turn difficulties into possibility. For that reason, in the struggle for change, we must be neither solely impatient, but patiently impatient. Unlimited patience, one that is never restless, ends up immobilizing transformative action. The same is the case with willful impatience, which demands immediate results from action even while it is still being planned.”

~ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*

#### **Perspectives: What I learned and the participants’ hopes for change**

I began this journey seeking to understand how a school district with a predominately Indigenous student population discussed and planned for social studies education. What I learned is much bigger and more complex than I could have ever imagined. The discussion to follow will use both my learning and the voices of my participants to engage perspectives for change. Broadly speaking, this discussion will focus on the following themes:

1. Common Core, C3, and implications for teaching in the District
2. Preparing teachers to teach in Indigenous contexts
3. My continued development as a non-Indigenous ally and the implications for re/search

Ultimately, what I learned during this journey and the hopes for change expressed by my participants will be brought back to the District.

## **Un/certain change/s: Common Core, C3, and implications for teaching social studies in the District**

*Social studies have a problem. We<sup>10</sup> marginalize and are marginalized. The question becomes what do we do about it? Social studies is stuck. If we do not address the hegemony of our current curriculum—states content standards and textbooks—then we will continue the Euro-American master narrative that silences the voices and experiences of non-dominant Others, including Indigenous peoples. If we do not test or change our practices to keep up with the hurricane of education reforms flooding the field, then we will continue to be marginalized. As such, we have been presented in recent years with two curricular options: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.*

### ***What do you think about the Common Core?***

Maria Theresa

“I had done special education before I had gone to secondary education, but I kind of like that idea of social studies and language arts being **partners** because what I've discovered is what they learn over there, and they get support from me over here is getting them to **be better writers and readers**, so it has become a good idea...when I first started I hated it, but as I have seen how the kids have learned to do certain things

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<sup>10</sup> I use the term “we” here to engage social studies educators who read this in our individual and collective culpability for the problems currently facing social studies.

in language arts class, and I'm doing the same thing with them here with social studies topics, they have discovered that it is **relevant no matter where they are**... what I have read of Common Core...they are expecting you to read, but they are not expecting you to read their topics...they are expecting you to read whatever social studies topic you are talking about.”

Lindsey Waite

“Oh God, **fuel to the fire**, how can we apply standards that don't make sense, and it is not that we have to apply them...maybe we have to integrate them with something that is supposed to make sense for the **middle**, and we keep **teaching to the middle** and **we don't support kids who are highly gifted and we don't support kids were low**, and that is what **common**, the most common is the **middle**, you know... these are kids that are seeing in books that Christianity is **America's** religion...and I don't think America itself is true to its **history**, I don't think the president does enough to recognize the native tribes for what they are, I think he recognizes them because it is a **political move**...not something that is genuine because if he doesn't do that and he's going to catch shit.”

Amy

“I think the Common Core will really lend itself to being able to **explore in depth topics** like that because the Common Core is not



focused at all on covering this point to that point. It's about making kids **critical thinkers** so that they are ready for **college** and ready for **careers**, basically that they can go out and do what I thought kids could do anyways, but the Common Core is focused on **reading informational text**... you know reading historical informational pieces where you can do that kind of stuff... you look at **primary sources** from the U.S. government then take a look at informational texts or historical informational text from that time. And let's look at speeches by great American Indian chiefs on that topic and you can analyze...they are really coming up with something, they are thinking about the times, this is what the government's purpose was, this is what the American Indian people want, **formulate your opinion** now on who was right or wrong or whatever the case may be... that is what the Common Core is designed to do. It is not just designed to push through a textbook from this point to this point, and I think this will really help especially history in the sense of **incorporating** and having kids think about where we come from historically and how does that define us today, how can we learn from that to become more **culturally** and **ethnically appreciative** of one another in the roles we play in making this country what it is.”

#### Estaban Catastrophe

“I am one of those people that has some **gratitude** about Common Core, **there is a lot of freak out** going on about Common Core, I see it as

a **grand opportunity** and I pray it is an **opportunity we don't squander** again, because they have squandered opportunities that, if you look at Common Core standards for math and reading are very much **performance based**...we are going to get social studies standards for literature, if you go look at the Common Core literacy standards for, what does it say, social studies, science, and **career readiness**, and it is expecting us to use nonfiction materials and original source materials to make students more literate, **this is outside the realm of the comprehension of the majority of people within the field**, that's my feeling.”

#### Hollywood

“I really like Common Core. I like how I really like the **progression** that it lays out, and I really think that you know if we can understand it and teachers have some **professional development** to really knowing what it is an implement that and the **schools have time to create a vision** for those progressions that we really could create students when they leave 12 grade are ready to **perform** at the levels that Common Core asking, but it seems it will take a lot of **collaboration**, it just seems I don't know if any school right now in this district anyway that does that very well, and so I do really like how Common Core has the **skills** laid out **not so much the content**, it is really the skills you're trying to help the kids think to write...I

was thinking with one child perhaps, you know I am working with one child and really trying to play with the Common Core standards with him in terms of reading, really trying to develop this idea of what Common Core is asking for literacy with him alone, and so sometimes I think, **okay well how is this going to look for 25 kids or 30 kids?** Yeah it is a tough thing, I think social studies and science have taken a **back burner** to the whole idea of it's got to be reading and math without the idea of the idea that you can **integrate** them.”

*In reflecting on the history of the social studies and the realities of social studies instruction in the District, it is difficult to champion the CCSS. The CCSS, while (potentially) opening new spaces for inquiry learning, also promotes a thoroughly Western belief system steeped in economic competitiveness and neoliberal conservatism (Au, 2013). The CCSS, which is part of the larger Common Core movement sweeping the core content areas of math, science, language arts, and social studies, places social studies as the tool for literacy education. As such, social studies within the CCSS is relegated to serving the needs of literacy rather than existing as a unique area for learning and teaching. “A striking aspect of the Social Studies/History CCSS is that they essentially exchange the pure content of previous era’s ossified standards for a new focus on pure skills” (Au, 2013, p. 7). In trading social studies content for skill development within a literacy frame, the CCSS strips the social studies of its heart, which in its optimal form promotes critical and creative thinking about*

*history, civics, and an ever-evolving global community.* Tieken (2012) noted, “The standards do little to promote global literacy through cultural collaboration and cooperation. They do not stress socially-conscious problem-solving or strategizing. In fact, a conscious is not even necessary because there is not any authentic, critical thinking in the standards” (p. 5). *The CCSS belittles the social studies and it remains unclear what impact the CCSS will have in actual classroom practice. Like the state-level movements of the 1980s, the CCSS isolated teachers from key conversations in the writing of the national standards (Au, 2013).*

*In an attempt to challenge the marginalization of social studies within the CCSS, the National Council for the Social Studies worked with social studies scholars to write the C3 Framework. The final draft of the C3 was presented to the social studies community at the NCSS annual conference in November 2013. The C3, which promotes inquiry learning for the preparation of students to succeed in college, career, and civic life in the United States, refocuses the lens toward social studies content areas while maintaining a connection with the skill-based initiatives of the CCSS. The writers of the C3 opted to allow states and local districts to choose specific content for teaching social studies, but it is unclear how those decisions are going to be made as the C3 has only recently been released. In any case, focusing social studies on the preparation of students for college, career, and civic life runs the risk of re/enforcing the hegemonic nature of social studies. Specifically, in the narrative of the colonial-imperial*

*project, the United States that has fought for centuries to maintain intellectual, political, and economic dominance on the world stage.*

*In a lengthy critique of the C3, Au (2013) wrote:*

For instance they focus on liberal individualism to the exclusion of non-Western conceptions of community, social, and cultural collectives. They also assume the goodness of market capitalism while seemingly avoiding issues around the exploitation of humans and the environment.

Additionally, the C3 standards only continue my concern that civic education is framed in ways that either domesticate or marginalize activism as a legitimate and valuable means of pushing for social and political change. Unfortunately, I have similar questions about the discourse of citizenship within and through the C3 standards, especially given the rise of white nationalism and xenophobia in the United States. The C3 standards also seem to operate on the presumption that the United States really does operate on “democratic values,” when that presumption often depends on which community or economic class one hails from (p. 8).

*I see in Au’s critique of the C3 a connection to the social studies’ war from Chapter One in that the new standards continue a long tradition of indoctrinating young minds to an American ideal of economic, political, and ideological domination of the world. The implications for teaching social studies to/for Indigenous students, especially in the District, are huge. My participants were generally hopeful about CCSS, but they had only heard of the C3 Framework*

*when I mentioned it to them. Like the CCSS, they had not read the documents associated with the standards, nor had they had time to consider how to use them. Teaching social studies to/for Indigenous students, as I have discussed throughout this work, must be reflective of the culture/s and community/ies in which these students live if they are to be successful. Whether or not the CCSS or the C3 will provide space/s for teachers to engage in such practice/s is yet to be seen. The critiques of both national standards, however, highlight key problems with/in social studies. If the new national standards are meant to create globally competitive citizens, how is that not hegemonic? If a student comes from a cultural background that puts community over individuality, how do the changes in social studies standards not continue to marginalize their cultures and ways of knowing and being?*

*Addressing these questions is no easy task, especially at the district-level. One of the more difficult aspects of this dissertation was the understanding through Hollywood's experiences, that are shared in Chapter One and Chapter Four, that re/engaging the community about re/thinking social studies curriculum that is more culturally relevant and accurate for students could bring up hurts and angers not regularly talked about. This concerns me for two reasons: 1) the literature shows that creating curriculum that reflects Indigenous students' identities helps them succeed, and 2) this is not, in my opinion, a conversation I can force upon the community. To the first concern, social studies curriculum as discussed in Chapter Five marginalized Indigenous histories and cultures. If the literature, which was also presented in Chapter Five, points to the need to make*

*curriculum reflective of the cultures of Indigenous students, why has social studies not risen to the occasion to change content standards and textbooks? This question speaks to the larger issue of hegemony in social studies curriculum, but it is pertinent here because students in the District, from what I learned in conversation with my participants, are exposed to the American master narrative because of the District's use of state-level standards and standardized textbooks without additional resources that directly reflect the community's cultures. It would be useful to extend the work of this dissertation to talk to students and to see if there is, in fact, a connection between the District's low test scores and the hegemonic nature of the curriculum.*

*Additionally, and for as much as the District and larger community welcomed me into their hearts and homes, I am still an outsider to their everyday lives as educators. Opening space/s for my participants to voice the change/s they wanted for the District was of the utmost importance. The section to follow provides detailed, often lengthy segments of interview text. I felt it essential to include my participants' exact words in turning the space/s in which this dissertation works towards change. As an outsider, I can provide my thoughts on the potential for change, which I will after my participants, as insiders to the everyday acts of teaching in the District, have had an opportunity to express their perspectives.*

*What changes for social studies would you like to see in the District?*

Amy

“We have to figure out how to do it and then **teach teachers** how to do it if they are not currently in their methods classes... we need to get into universities because we are **losing kids** in the classroom if we wait to teach teachers how to teach when they are **in front of kids**...like I said because this district is so in **randomness** that I really think it's a quality issue...I'd even go as far to say and, God strike me dead for this because I am about **autonomy** and having some **flexibility** in **freethinking** and all those things, but I think we are **so far off track** that I almost feel like we need a **scripted curriculum** for about **three years to get everybody back on track**...I know that's ridiculous, but yes I would even go beyond skeletal to say we need a really **viable curriculum** that everybody's following...now of course you can vary your **instructional strategies**, your activities, but yes the units need to be the same or at least the **objectives for the outcomes** of what you want the students to know...and nobody is testing the **same knowledge or skills** at the end of it, so how is that **equitable** to our students? There has been a **disregard for the importance of social studies** for a very long time...it's evident in staffing, it is evident in **nobody ever comes to check** on who's doing what, and if you're following the standards or what type of **rigor** in your classroom...really focused on helping to develop skill development not just content, yes content to build critical thinking and all of those things of



course **training for the staff on how to teach social studies in that way.**”

### Estaban Catastrophe

“I think, I hope for two things I hope for, I think **better standards** would help...**we need more PD on how to teach**...we are putting with a bachelors in underwater basket weaving in the elementary classroom and telling them to teach, so maybe it's the better solution because I was thinking about one of our schools which is doing pretty poorly, it is one of our F schools, in our state recently adopted A to F grading, I went out to that school in January, and I went out there to do some **follow-up training** with teachers who were **first years** and I had this nice list of the school's first year elementary teachers, five names on the list, got there talked to the principal, only one of those names had anything to do with reality, the other people even in their first year had already **transferred** to other elementary schools within the District, **a few of them never even showed up after getting hired**...and I'm not even going to say the word talk to practitioners because that implies a certain kind of **interaction**...the greatest power is derived from talking to the **day-to-day practitioners** and so that is what I would say, **listen** to the practitioners.”

Lindsey Waite

“I have the ability to **integrate** that [social studies] into that program [Native language and culture] and it would be interesting to try to, you know it would be a **challenge to structure that and work with the teachers** but I think that if the mainstream teachers understood more, they would do better, like anybody else... I don't think people realize that **connection** all the time and people are so **overwhelmed** with all the **mandates** and all of that, that is what is stopping them from doing stuff like that, you [referring to me] opened my eyes yesterday, I was like holy cow that could be part of the **curriculum.**”

Hollywood

“I think the District does have a little **introductions to the culture and history** and all of that and I think a lot of people who come here have an idea of what they're coming into otherwise I don't think they would be coming here, but again it is always that being of **implications for the classrooms**, how is this going to look in the classroom and how you approach it in a wise way.”

Ms. Arc

“I would like **time** in the summer to be able to **work with other history teachers** and sit around and talk about the things we are having

trouble teaching and try to **come up with lesson plans together** on how we are going to work through that especially with Common Core...I am not strong in knowing how to **teach documents** and it is **frustrating** because the language, **you have to know the language in order to ask the questions for the test** and to try to make them **understand** what the document means is very frustrating for me, and so **I would like to be able to talk to other teachers about that**, but I would like to do it in the summer so that **I do not have to miss class**...I will leave class a lot for the big history project and it seems **anything that happens has to happen during the school year when you have a class that no one cares about anyway** and the kids are two years away from taking a test that they have to pass in order to graduate or to go to college without it passing it, and I haven't heard anything about your class before then it is not something I like to do, so I would like the **time in the summer** to be able to plan with other social studies teachers some kind of **conference** set up where **we can work on stuff together.**”

Sean White

“I would like to have the district or someone **say this is important**, you know, let's have some **continual education** here, let's have you go back and we would like to have you take three credit hours every two years on something...You know I would like to have **grade-based**

**standards** instead of having standards that are listed from fourth grade to eighth grade you know it's kind of a **mishmash** of standards that are once again put in place to go ahead and fit everything into one framework you know so I think that would be a good start...I would like to have **shared resources that are user-friendly to all of us** so that means we go ahead and offer something and then we go ahead and say hey we are going to have an **in-service** and we're going to have all social studies teachers go over here and we are going to show you how to use it... so give us the **resources** and then **train us on how to use the resources** and train us how to use the resources within the group of people that are common to me teaching the same thing at the same grade level.”

*In listening to and reflecting on my conversations with my participants, I sensed a great deal of frustration in their want for change in the District’s social studies curriculum. As an outsider, I can provide my perspectives, but I in no way think of myself as person who could make these changes for the District. I would hope, if invited, to work with the District to explore ways changes could be made based on the resources—time, money, and staff—available. Like my participants, I think, despite the tension this creates in me, there needs to be a district-level curriculum guide that provides topics, activities, and resources outside the standardized textbooks for social studies teachers to draw from when planning their lessons. This guide should, I argue, be made through collaborative efforts of social studies teachers. The issue here is finding time for social studies teachers*

*to meet and discuss what they teach, how they teach, and ways they can engage in culturally relevant pedagogy for their students. The District, in my opinion, needs to take a leadership role in this regard. There are a number of former social studies teachers serving in administrative and Central Office staffing roles, and I would urge them to take the lead in meeting with social studies teachers to plan these professional development opportunities.*

*New teachers to the District, too, need time and space to address community and cultural sensitivities they may lack so that they can create safe, meaningful spaces for their students to learn. Teacher educators like myself can serve as allies in this regard, and I will speak to teacher preparation momentarily. At the district-level, though, creating partnerships with tribal elders and tribal communities could provide opportunities for professional development not only for new teachers, but veteran teachers as well. Building a strong bond between tribal communities and the District, I argue, has the potential to fundamentally shift the learning experiences of Indigenous students. Along these same lines, building a strong connection between the District and neighboring tribal communities could help social studies teachers create more culturally relevant and accurate curriculum. Bridging the divide between Western ways of knowing that dominate social studies education and Indigenous ways of knowing could, as Sparks (2000) and Castagno and Brayboy (2008), improve learning outcomes for Indigenous students.*

*I am, without a doubt, living and working with/in a double-bind. I came to the District to seek some understandings of how social studies curriculum is*

*discussed, planned, and taught in Indigenous contexts. The realities of this journey are undoubtedly more complex. My desire to counteract the hegemonic history of Western research and social studies curriculum cannot come at the expense of the communities with whom I work. I simply will not do that. While I can provide my perspectives, these changes and conversations are not mine to force on the District or the communities they serve.*

*In seeking these conversations, however, I am reminded of Delpit (1988) who aptly charged that engaging in critical dialogue,*

Takes a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment—and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue (p. 297).

*Whether or not the writing of this dissertation or future visits to the District to share my learning will amount to opening space for a difficult dialogue to emerge, I do not know. Just as with all the questions posed within this dissertation journey, there are no clear answers.*

### **They are people, not machines: Challenging hegemony in teacher education**

*In thinking multilogically within the threshold, I see a challenge to teacher education programs and professional development to help close the gap that exists between White teachers and their Indigenous students, but how to go about this is an enormous task. The problem, according to Bartolomé (2007) is that*

Unfortunately, transforming educators' conscious and unconscious beliefs and attitudes regarding the legitimacy of the dominant social order and of the resulting unequal power relations among cultural groups at the school and classroom level has, by and large, historically not been acknowledged in mainstream teacher education programs as a significant step towards improving the educational processes for and outcomes of low-SES, non-White, and linguistic-minority students (p. 265).

*This critique shines an unflattering light on teacher education programs, but more so is also a wake-up call to engage the critical discourse of whose knowledge, whose ways of knowing, whose ways of learning, and whose ways of teaching are acceptable in the current hegemonic system.*

*Hegemony embedded in teacher preparation programs—not all, but many—is linked inextricably to the growing demands of states for universities to standardize not only the knowledge taught to students but also the ways in which future teachers engage the teaching process. Very rarely do these institutions engage in the “radicalization of teachers” (Giroux & McLaren, 1988, p. 161). Radicalization, according to Giroux and McLaren in this context, involves encouraging pre-service teachers to see education as a means of emancipation.*

*While they acknowledge that some teacher preparation programs have put forth efforts to engage radical practice, they also critique these efforts as being either “a celebration of more refined and reflective modes of inquiry and methods of instruction or they remain confined to the prison house of critique” (p. 161). In other words, providing pre-service teachers with the skills of inquiry teaching is not the radicalization needed—what is needed is a new space for pre-service teachers to engage schooling with/in larger societal struggles for equality and equity. Essential to the radicalization of teacher education is the creation of counterhegemony. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) defined counterhegemony as “those intellectual and social spaces where power relationships are reconstructed to make central the voices and experiences of those who have historically existed at the margins of public institutions” (p. 12). Part and parcel to this recognition of counterhegemony is action—in the “type of active opposition it should engender” (Giroux & McLaren, 1988, p. 162). This politicization of teachers, however, has proven a most difficult task.*

*The task of teaching teachers to counter the hegemony in/visible in social studies education is incredibly difficult. One way, perhaps, to approach the creation of counterhegemonies within teacher preparation programs is to practice compassion. Conklin (2008) challenged teacher educators to reflect on how they re/act towards pre-service teachers, most of whom come into teacher preparation programs with little experience with diversity or issues of oppression. Working with pre-service teachers, then, requires an engagement with Freire’s (2007) notion of critical education in which “the process of teaching—where the*



teaching challenges learners to *apprehend* the object, to then learn it in their relations with the world—implies the exercise of critical perception, perception of the object’s reason for being” (emphasis in original, p. 75). *Engaging students’ curiosity and modeling reflexivity in a compassionate way allows counterhegemony to emerge and provide a re-humanization of the learning process. Like the aims of decolonization to work in-between Diversi and Moreira’s (2009) notion of “being and being more human” a humanizing pedagogy creates space/s for students and teachers to challenge traditional ways of teaching that promoted a “one-size-fits-all” way of seeing the world (Salazar, 2013, p. 124). Students can, in those spaces, learn how to critically read the world/s of education and the word/s of education (Freire, 2007).*

*Opening spaces for counterhegemony is especially important for social studies as it is a subject that, if taught critically, engages teachers and students alike in difficult dialogues about race, privilege, history, and stereotypes. In confronting the deeply engrained hegemonic system of social studies in teacher preparation programs (and by extension classroom practice), we must seek to transform not only the content but also ourselves. Vine Deloria, Jr. (2001) aptly wrote, “Education today trains professionals but it does not produce people” (p. 43). The push for standardization of curriculum and instruction has marginalized the political and ethical nature of education. Teaching teachers to be neutral robs them of their humanity, and it robs students of space/s for their own personal growth.*

*One of the great challenges to this type of teaching is the fear experienced by pre-service teachers in seeing themselves as and treating themselves as teachers while also seeing their students (whom they have never met and exist in a hypothetical world) as unique individuals who come with their own histories and perspectives. McNally and Blake (2010) found the relationship developed early in the meeting of student and teacher greatly impacts the way/s in which the teacher, especially a new teacher, creates a safe space for learning. This “reciprocal ontological security” exists when students feel they are seen and known by their teacher and vice versa. Working with teachers to develop these mutually beneficial relationships with students also requires pre-service teachers see their students as unique individuals and overcome the problem of White teachers teaching non-White students in a one-size-fits-all way (Bartolomé, 1994).*

*The role of social studies teacher education programs, therefore, must become not only a space for pre-service teachers to think about their own identities and the histories and cultures of the students they may teach, but also a space for breaking down the hegemonic structures within education that have allowed such racism to persist. The methods in which pre-service teachers experienced learning as young students must be stripped and rebuilt with them as adult teacher-learners in ways that provide optimal multiplicity for examining history, geography, citizenship, and the other social studies subjects. In thinking about Deloria’s assessment that education today produces professionals but not people, I can see the power of Bartolomé (1994) and McNally and Blake’s (2010) findings to help teacher educators teach pre-service teachers to counter the*

*hegemonic nature of education, and if coupled with Freire (2010) the impact of building mutually beneficial relationships between teachers and students could radically shift teaching and learning experiences. Freire (2010) wrote:*

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In the process, arguments based on ‘authority’ are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must *be on the side* of freedom, not *against* it (emphasis in original, p. 80).

*Working with pre-service teachers to see themselves as co-learners speaks to the goals of seeking a path for social justice and the re-humanization of not only social studies, but also all education.*

### **In solidarity: Returning to the beginning and starting all over again**

*I am struck at the end of the question Amy asked me in Chapter Two about the goal of my dissertation work. I had so many lofty ideas for what my dissertation could be, and I have come to learn that social studies education in the District and in the larger educational sphere is more complex than is a riddle too confounding for me to solve in my current time and space. Within this complex jumble of questions and perspectives, I perhaps have stumbled unknowingly on the most profound finding of all—my self. Engaging decolonization as a process of learning demands transformation, the turning of the mirror on oneself to unpack how information from literature and theory and*

*participants is heard and seen. Paulette Regan (2010) called this process “unsettling the settler within.” Working to challenge hegemony undoubtedly begins with the oft-silent war that wages within the hearts and minds of those of us engaged in this transformative process. Transforming the settler into an ally is a life-long struggle, but it is worth beginning the journey. With a twist of the Möbius strip I am returned to my visit to Carlisle and the guilt that still plagues me. I cannot wash my blood clean of its ancestry. I will always be White. I will always be privileged. Opening myself to vulnerability is not a tradition of Western research. The messy human-ness of decolonizing work requires nothing less than the full engagement of my brain and my heart in the learning process. Paulo Freire (2010) wrote, "Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were" (p. 49-50, 61). I am no longer the person I was when I began this dissertation work. Freire referred to this process of change as an act of love. For me, this process was rooted in hope—hope that change is possible.*

*Thinking multilogically along a Möbius strip provided space/s for me throughout the dissertation process to constantly and consistently re/engage theory and literature. Neither postcolonial theory nor critical pedagogy are silver bullets in working for change in social studies education. The central tenets of these theories provide ample support for those of us working to challenge the hegemonic nature of education and the life-long struggle to decolonize teaching and learning, but like life, circumstances at the district-level and in classrooms make thinking about the useful application of theory more complex. My*

*participants' experiences served as entry for me into research, and as such I learned more about theory and literature than I could have ever imagined. I have come to think more critically about research and the ways scholars, often I argue unknowingly, marginalize the truths spoken by the communities in which they work. I do not think any of us intentionally sets out to silence or marginalize the men and women who open themselves up to our questions, but I think modes of analysis need to be critiqued. Rather than placing the words of my participants under the microscope of theory to be dissected, I sought to place social studies with/in Indigenous contexts as the central figure in a conversation between participants, theory, literature, and myself.*

*Part of my becoming impatiently patient is the continued efforts I will make to decolonize my self and my work. Decolonization as tool for the un/making of dissertation research was no easy task, but it was and continues to be a journey into the unknown. The Möbius strip continues to turn. My work within the academy bothers me. I do not want to become too comfortable with the space/s I am provided to sit and write without consequences to the communities with whom I engage in conversation. How to turn my work into action is the next phase of this dissertation journey. I do not know how the District will react to this work when I present it to the Board of Education in the coming months. Thinking multilogically has opened me to seeing and hearing the complexities of social studies in the lives of the educators, and I hope I have provided space/s for them to be heard alongside my own voice and the writings of theorists and scholars. I did not seek to analyze my participants—I wanted to learn from them, to journey*

*in-between colonial traditions and the much hoped for post-colonial world where  
we are all freed from hegemony's noose.*

To journey to the in-between, I acknowledge  
Blood, mother-tongue  
Lewis, English  
Colonization my birthright

*Settler,*

To enter the in-between, I hear  
Children crying  
The headmaster's switch  
My breath escape me

*Why are you here?*

To live in the in-between, I see  
Reflections in the mirror  
Shadows of the past  
Impenetrable structures

*To question*

To survive in the in-between, I must  
Use my power in solidarity  
Seek multiplicity  
Embrace vulnerability

*To learn*

*To grow*

*To change*

## Epilogue

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*I defended my dissertation two weeks ago. If the measure of a successful dissertation is the collection of committee members' signatures at the end of the day, then I succeeded with flying colors. They say a good dissertation is a done dissertation. Yes, of course the end goal of a doctoral program is to finish, to receive the signatures on a piece of paper that say you have done the work to gain entrance to this world we call academics. But, what comes of the work in relation to our participants, the communities, and the questions asked for months on end? For me, this dissertation is still a work in progress. I measure success not in the confines of these pages, but the conversations yet to begin when I return to the District in the months to come to share these learnings and see how social studies can change to make teaching and learning more relevant to teachers and students. The District asked, when they gave me permission to do this dissertation work, that I return to talk about the findings of my work and the implications it has for social studies curriculum, and that is exactly what I intend to do. This dissertation was just the beginning of a life-long commitment to engaging the District and communities across the country in critical conversation about social studies with/in Indigenous contexts.*

*The Möbius strip in which I traveled has returned me to the start, and I am not the same person today that I was when I began this journey. Looking backward was a major component of this work because I needed to create a space where I could learn about my personal history and the contexts of colonization that still penetrate the fabric of our lives and interactions in the United States. I*

*could not walk a path of social justice and engage my participants in conversation without seeking to understand how we got to this critical juncture in social studies education. Now sitting in the present with an eye toward the future I understand better the complexities of my ever-evolving identities, the need for research to engage a critical dialogue about the speaking for/about our participants rather than letting them speak for/about themselves, and the difficult road ahead to change social studies education.*



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