

# The Collaborative Turn

Working Together in Qualitative  
Research

Walter S. Gershon (Ed.)



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*Working Together in Qualitative Research*

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SENSE PUBLISHERS  
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-90-8790-958-1 (paperback)

ISBN 978-90-8790-959-8 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-8790-960-4 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,  
P.O. Box 21858, 3001 AW  
Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
<http://www.sensepublishers.com>

Printed on acid-free paper

*Cover artwork by Dena J. Gershon*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank those people without whom this book would not have been possible. First, I would like to thank the contributors for the depth, strength, and timeliness of their work, time and effort even more laudable given their personal commitments and the ever-increasing demands of their professional lives. In addition to these named contributors, several people served as a kind of *de facto*, and occasionally impromptu, editorial support team, helping me wrestle with questions that arose in the process of compiling this book. Although some are also contributing authors, I wish to again acknowledge their help in such matters. They are, in alphabetical order: Kent den Heyer, Joanne Kilgour Dowdy, Andrew Gilbert, Robert J. Helfenbein, Jr., Jennifer H. James, and Brian D. Schultz. Particular thanks goes to Janice Hutchison for her keen mechanical editing eye. I would also like to acknowledge all those whose thoughts and mentorship over the years has in many ways laid the groundwork that makes this work possible, Reba N. Page and William F. Pinar in particular.

On a more literal note, this book would not exist were it not for the help, guidance, and skill of Michel Lokhorst at Sense Publishing, all of which were provided not only with kind candor but also in an impressively timely fashion. Finally, and certainly by no means least (in fact, first and foremost), I would like to thank my wife and partner Dena J. Gershon whose wonderful artwork graces the cover of this book and our daughter Kate for their love, support, and patience throughout the process that has become this book.



## FOREWORD

In keeping with the spirit and theme of this book, Walter asked us to consider writing a collaborative foreword. The following is our response to his suggestion, a dialogic foreword in which we both write and respond to one another's thoughts about *The Collaborative Turn*, a process through which we also reflect on our process in putting this foreword together.

### JANICE KROEGER: IS THIS A FOREWORD OR A FORWARD?

The foreword of any edited volume is like doorway to the space and time of understandings between the readers and writers of a text. In order to familiarize this work and consider what has been done here between researchers and their co-creators, I first attempt to capture a simplified holism of the chapters herein and then interpretively pull on ideas that stand out to me as a qualitative researcher, author, who most often employs critical ethnography, mixed methodology and discourse processes.

To capture the intricacy and intimacy of what this volume has to offer, I first provide an overview the book, then draw from several of Mikhail Bakhtin's translated concepts (Brandist, 2002; Holquist, 1981; Morson & Emerson, 1990) to further interpret those offerings. This strategy will come as no surprise to some readers as many of the contributors to the volume share similar theoretical groundings. My hope is that readers search as I have, finding solace and direction in that which is oft not practiced or spoken about—the chronicling of research collaborations that reveal the “joy and terror and sorrow...[and] desperation” as well as the uncertain “emotional and spiritual” compromises, burdens, successes and quandaries that such qualitative work brings (Smithies, in Gershon, Lather & Smithies, this volume, pp. 17, 28)

At first glance, through my lens as a qualitative methodologist and educator, I saw the book as offering a variety of curriculum and pedagogic threads including teaching and learning in urban settings, academic settings, and performative spaces (Coulombe; George & Meggitt; Gershon, Peel & Bilinovich; Schultz & Banks; Smith & Helfenbein; Steeves, et al. this volume). However, it also features prominent contemporary social problems and issues of the day such as women's rights in immigration, AIDS support networking and awareness, the social construction of homophobia, and performance as social commentary, activism, and development for communities and students (Conrad, McCaw, & Gusul; Gooden & Gastaldo; Gershon, Lather & Smithies; Sawyer & Norris, this volume).

The books' authors crest a wave of both contemporary social issues and complex qualitative methodologies that include but are not limited to: duo-ethnography; transformational narrative; critical transformational methods; video production and

photo-action; collaborative discensus; and ethno-drama. At the same time, each author explains his or her own collaborative process as researcher, colleague, teacher and student, support group participant and psychologist, choreographer and dancer, and so on. While the simplified subject/object terminologies I use in this paragraph creates “binaries” that do not exemplify the intent of the work herein, it is in the following pages of each chapter that the reader will find how authors begin to deconstruct the ways in which such binaries are shattered in the between spaces of collaborative inquiry. Working together as co-equals to responsibly forge working lives, their projects are often discussed as being difficult to capture in writing or as “beyond words.” As importantly, many write of research projects that are built upon moral commitments towards others in the interpretive act.

In this volume, the broad idea of what Gershon has called a “collaborative turn” in qualitative methodology is the genesis of a collection of works crossing disciplinary boundaries of the fine and performing arts and the social sciences, a framing that seems rarely if ever done in an academic text. Moreover, that this book represents one of the more unique collections of work on collaboration in and among qualitative researchers is also a testament to researchers’ retrospective analyses of their projects. Here, the collective authors grapple with a set of relatively common yet also uniquely embedded and unwieldy issues indicative of the extraordinary contexts that each chapter portrays.

When considered as a collective whole, what stands out to me is the generative nature of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1935) in the collaborative research process. According to literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, dialogism is the multifaceted, layered social linguistic chain that is the starting place for all things including the self (Bakhtin, 1935; Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 52–55). Most co-equals (contributing authors/research partners) in this volume speak of ways in which a constant redefinition of project and self shapes and coheres their collaborative work. While the context and content of conducting collaborative qualitative research is an individual and emergent task, it is also one rich in unknown possibilities, shaping intent, affordances, and products of work. Many authors in this text see the collaborative process of research as a polyphonic (cf. Bakhtin, 1935; Clifford, 1988) tool—an orchestration of meanings drawn between participants and collectively constructed from various individual and/or group processes.

Raising the dialogic the bar of conversation between readers and writers in this volume may well engender common considerations and post-modern quandaries of qualitative work—for example, at the onset of their collaborations authors in this volume pose their own value assumptions. Similarly, for many authors in this volume, simple-seeming intentions like bringing the least often “voiced” perspective to the fore is a central value-guiding practice. The ethical considerations of power and voice figure prominently in the collection with many authors striving to catapult the voices of youth, the disenfranchised, and those most vulnerable into the forefront of meaning making. Least-often heard voices placed to the fore in this book include survivors, outsiders, queers, artists, inmates, aboriginals, youth, scramblers, angels and the like.

Contributors to this book explicitly note the ethical tensions surrounding questions of voice in qualitative research collaborations, rendering transparent the roles and

relationships between collaborators. Authors acknowledge and break hierarchical boundaries between self and other or claim that space more definitively by asking directly, Am I as a researcher an “I-for-myself,” an “I-for-another,” and who is “the-other-for-me” in this work (Brandist, 2002, p. 46)? It is in these acts that the transcendence and searching that occurs behind the scenes of collaborative project work is revealed.

Finally the collection causes me to question and break the bindings of the idea of consensus in community—that to collaborate one must agree with the others (see Gershon, Peel & Bilinovich, this volume). Commonly consensus is a form of implicit or explicit social contract between people of various oppositional perspectives with an appeal toward deliberate compromise. In this volume, researchers reveal how consensus is not necessarily the ultimate focus in collaboration. Alongside or in its stead, conflict and disagreement, as well as accidental and incidental previously unimagined happenings, are welcomed and utilized, leading to the transformation of researchers, problems, and projects alike.

### *Marie’s Response*

As I read your contribution, three aspects resonated with me: collaboration as generative, moral, and transformative. These are some of the most powerful aspects of the book.

These chapters document how knowledge is formed through dialogic processes that involve deeper, more demanding quests for understanding than ordinarily required by researcher-centered methods. To engage in these forms of collaboration, researchers, who are often accustomed to or socialized in the notion of researcher authority, must allow space for alternate perspectives.

It is a moral undertaking that often emerges from a deep commitment to social justice. This undertaking has a profound effect on the authors’ perspectives of self, other, and the research project. It is an intense social experience that requires a substantial commitment to reflexivity.

As we mindfully collaborate, our selves and projects are transformed. While this transformation has the potential to threaten representations of self as expert, the commitment to reflexivity and to creating space for others to speak fully offers the reward of producing multilayered, multidimensional texts that illuminate the complexities of social relations and structures in ways that are not possible using traditional methods.

### MARIE-FRANCE ORILLION: A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO A *COLLABORATIVE TURN*

I wish I had this book when I was a dissertator. It would have saved me a lot of grief, and perhaps infused more pleasure into the experience, by providing me with models for collaboration. I received excellent training in interpretive research and issues of power and representation. However, this did not prepare me for the complexities of collaborative research in practice. As Walter notes in his introduction, while there is collaborative research in print, there is little documentation of *how*

others engage in such research. As a doctoral candidate, I knew I didn't want to engage in researcher-centered practice. Yet, my first effort to attend to power relations, a dissertation on general education at a research university, was a near-disaster. I was unprepared for the complexities of "studying-up"—studying faculty when I myself was a graduate student. For multiple reasons, including my naïveté and disciplinary politics, I never established rapport with the faculty. Problems that began the first year of the study shaped relations during the second year. A consequence was that understanding (Gershon, 2008; Wolcott, 1990) their perspectives became an ongoing challenge.

During the first year I observed in the classroom of a professor who claimed to use critical pedagogy in her instruction. I was undeniably starry-eyed and hoped to document best practices. However, a request made during our first meeting resulted in complications that had significant and negative effects on the study. She wanted to see and respond to my work. Her request wasn't surprising, and I intended to share and discuss my research with her. However, she also implied that I had been trained in "fly on the wall" ethnography and, as a condition of her participation, required that I assume the undergraduate student role. As a graduate student and learner of research studying a tenured professor and critical ethnographer, I felt vulnerable. While I observed her, I knew that she would also be observing me. Her request increased my feelings of vulnerability. I was now aware that my training was suspect and my new role, as a student in her course, increased the intensity of her gaze. A second complication emerged when her students related to me as a teaching assistant, and I responded in kind. Many were English learners, and some of the texts, such as Kondo's (1997) critique of orientalism, were beyond their abilities without additional scaffolding. While I worried about the effects of this involvement on my data, it felt wrong to refuse.

I began the study intending to engage in a collaborative relationship with the professor, and found myself instead collaborating with the students and in tension with the professor. To understand her perspective I had to rely on "expressions of culture" (Gershon, 2008, p. 48); attending to the intent documented in an article she wrote about her teaching practice and how this intent was expressed in classroom interactions (Orillion, 2009). My analysis, which was not submitted until the end of the year, while acknowledging the many strengths of the course, asked challenging questions about her teaching. The next year, while I was allowed to observe in other courses, the professors denied all requests for interviews. While it is the case that reporting ethnography to informants is a process that involves substantial risk to field relations (Page, Samson & Crockett, 2000), I wonder if engaging in that process earlier might have enabled us to move past barriers we both erected.

The importance of transparency is a theme that emerges in various forms throughout this book. However, the chapter that resonated with me is the one on collaborative discensus, by Gershon, Peel, and Bilinovich. It offers a theory and a framework, a highly usable tool for working through *and* representing tensions much like the ones I struggled with in my dissertation. Moreover, the text is performative. The theory, and their story of applying the theory, is organized according to a four-part framework that enables each participant to be equally

represented. The performative nature of this chapter, and many other chapters in the book, elicited the pleasure that I referenced in the beginning of this essay.

Many chapters transcend description and analysis by performing the collaboration as the authors tell their stories, recalling Geertz's (1973) performance of thick description. And, as with Geertz's writings, it is a pleasure to read them. For example, Steeves, Pearce, Orr, Murphy, Huber, Huber, and Clandinin's critique and response to the dominant discourse of individualism begins on a playful note, with a word image, before shifting into a poetic and multivocal story of trust, respect, and improvisation. It also offers, through its structure, insights into how to manage multiple voices in a text.

Finally, the book offers a sense of community. Collaborative research violates tacit norms borrowed from quantitative research, e.g., objectivity. For example, the inevitable, and often passionate, conversations that I have with my current research participants/collaborator teachers often leave me uneasy because they violate the distance dictated by the classic participant-observer stance (Erickson, 2006). However, I can't not engage. Through these interactions we begin to understand (Gershon, 2008; Wolcott, 1990) each other. An important benefit of this book is the way it connects the reader to a community of practice. These connections offer validation for and exemplify what Janice refers to above as the "generative nature of dialogism in the collaborative research process."

### *Janice's Response*

It seems to me that many qualitative researchers are confronted with decision making and unexpected surprises when establishing rapport and building trust with their participants as they seek to find the fine line between trust and truth. The general ethos of doing qualitative research is to respect participants. However, actually understanding what that means in practice is a difficult construct, especially for new researchers. I appreciate your candor about your struggles.

As I listened to your passages and we spoke about your experience it seemed to be about tensions of representation as well as transparency. On the one hand you shared what may have been threatening to the professor's image of self and thus lost ground within an alliance to her. On the other hand, clearly you had what seems to me to be a sense of moral obligation to students who were English Language Learners and with considerably less power and status. Indeed, as you point out, critical pedagogy in practice may not always live up to its rhetoric.

What do we do when our representations cause disruptions in the very images our constituents want to hold of themselves? How do we handle our sense of duty toward the least powerful in our work when the nature of the constructed images of self collide with our moral integrity? This seems a difficult but not uncommon dilemma.

Very similar dynamics also marked my early work. I shared transcripts with a man who was professionally educated, a late-comer convert to Judaism (from Christianity), and he was what I considered fairly "hegemonic" (classed and raced) in his thinking about poor kids. To me how he described children in his son's school

was similar to most dominant constructions of social class and education—but for my very valuable informant I was being what he considered “racist and anti-Semitic.”

I was crushed. I didn’t understand what I had written incorrectly in my member checks from his view. Moreover, my portrayal of him was very similar to how other critical theorists had conceptualized social class among professionally educated parents who call themselves middle-class but are probably of the upper-middle class because of their high social capital, income, or both (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2003). As a result, I had to rebuild that very damaged relationship and it felt as if it could cost me other alliances I had made in the field. In its moment, this crisis was very real and felt dangerous to me. Like you, I learned.

I think what your writing reveals are the risks that researchers take when they attempt to be transparent in their member-checking and methodological processes. Vulnerability to losing valuable time and effort as well as resulting research opportunity or written products is real to us. Being successful as academics often interfaces with the very nature of who we think we are as people and what our work can help our professions accomplish. For most of us our successful work production is associated with economic, political, social, and emotional losses, particularly if our mistakes in the field close down opportunities for other opportunities in research.

I also see now why you turned to the chapter (Gershon, Peel, & Bilinovich, this volume) as you did. The process they describe could be a very important framework and template for practice at the foundation of collaborative inquiry.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### *Marie*

For me, collaborating with Janice was truly generative. Through our conversations, I came to a richer understanding of the meaning that I was trying to express in my early drafts of this foreword. I remain grateful to her, as I am grateful to Walter for including me in his project.

### *Janice*

I agree with Marie that it was a productive writing experience. We used Walter’s suggestions about the process of writing this non-traditional foreword and found that although we may have written from very different places, not only could we understand each other but we could also push each other’s thinking forward/foreword. Walter was a skilled editor, helping me with expression and economy of words. I enjoyed reading the contributing chapters, finding insight and metaphors I hadn’t considered. Writing with Walter and Marie allowed me to delve again into Bakhtin’s work, which reminds me that language *is* formidable action, just as the contributors of the volume remind me that processes are actions that do not always have adequate words to describe them.

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WALTER S. GERSHON

## **INTRODUCTION: WORKING TOGETHER IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

*The Many Faces of Collaboration*

Collaboration in qualitative research is ubiquitous. Qualitative researchers have a deep history of working with one another in a multitude of configurations and on a wide variety of questions (cf. Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman & Smith, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Given, 2008; Lecompte, Millroy & Preissle, 1992; Spindler & Spindler, 1982; Weis & Fine, 2005). In addition, interpretive studies are in and of themselves forms of collaboration between those conducting the research and the local actors and contexts they study, a differentiation that is itself a source of debate (Clifford, 1988; Denzin & Lincoln; Wolcott, 1990). It is therefore somewhat surprising that with a few notable exceptions (cf. Erickson & Christman, 1996; Jipson & Wilson, 1997; Lather & Smithies, 1997), most qualitative studies have tended not to make explicit either a) the ways in which co-authors worked together or b) the implicit and explicit collaborations between “researcher” and “researched,” the inherently collaborative nature of interpreting the meanings of other people’s lives.

The decision by qualitative scholars to address their specific means of collaboration as a kind of explicit methodological footnote in order to turn their attention to the contexts, collection, presentation, and analysis of data is certainly understandable. However, such choices can mask important methodological questions that pertain to every step of research, from considering who “counts” as a researcher and what can be considered research, to what research partnerships mean and whose ideas remain when findings are presented for publication. This is important because compromise can be not only a mutually mitigated solution but also an implicit or explicit means of marginalization and omission (see Gershon, Peel, & Bilinovich, this volume). In short, while collaboration in interpretive research is not in and of itself news, attention to how it is conducted and the ways in which such choices impact all aspects of scholarship have been largely overlooked.

Furthermore, the previous decade or so in qualitative research can be seen as a kind of turning inwards (Page, 2000). This movement towards foregrounding the personal can be understood as a response to recognizing the impossibility of separating one’s self from the research one conducts, the necessity of more transparently acknowledging and locating one’s biases, and a growing recognition of the importance of people’s personal knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Rather than avoiding the elephant in the room, such scholarship addressed the impossibility of separating self from research context to their advantage, melding and molding existing methodologies into methods that were specifically designed to explicitly collect, analyze, and present data through the lens of self.

This movement in qualitative research, one that Foley (2002) refers to as “the reflexive turn” in his description of its possibilities for his ethnographic processes, is represented by such methodologies as autobiographical studies, autoethnography, and the rise of action research as a means for teachers to examine and reflect upon their own teaching practices (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000; Moss, 2001; Okely & Callaway, 1992; Pinar, 1995). Variations of narrative inquiry similarly fit this category in the ways that narrative researchers rely upon the telling of one’s own stories and/or the stories of others as a means to locate themselves within the contexts of their research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Contrasting such scholarship, authors in this book represent the crest of an emerging methodological trend in qualitative research. In ever-increasing numbers, interpretive scholars are reaching out across the methodological divide between research methodologies, the presidium to local actors in research contexts, and to the complex juxtapositions of multiple identities and possibilities that reside within individual researchers (cf. Clandinin et al., 2006; Erickson, 2006; Mehan, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2007; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Turning towards one another in order to provide more complex and rich pictures of the contexts we study—a movement that includes retaining a firm regard for the personal, individual, and other complex contexts that inform our work—adds to the depth and richness of the questions asked, the findings co-authors present, as well as the processes of data collection and analysis utilized to arrive at such findings.

Contributing authors’ means of collaboration and their decisions to work with others have methodological, practical, and ethnical components. To work collaboratively in qualitative research, they argue, is much more than the inescapable necessity of engaging others in the collection and production of data. It is the process of explicitly wrestling with questions of representation and analysis. It is also the need to struggle with the paradox of interpreting complex contexts to non-participants in an organized, transparent, and clear fashion—the difficulty of representing the voices of those who work, live, and play in the contexts one studies in a nuanced and rich manner that is neither overly reductionist nor over-detailed in delivery. In sum, questioning and pushing at the boundaries of what collaborative research might mean and to whom such meanings matter are simultaneously an exploration of the meanings and purposes of qualitative research.

Thus, in light of this recent trend towards collaboration and a general absence of any collection of work about *how* participants collaborate across qualitative studies,<sup>2</sup> the purpose of this book is twofold. First, it fills a gap in the literature on qualitative methodologies. Despite a long tradition of collaboration in qualitative research, it is the rare occasion in which collaborators either share (Spindler & Spindler, 1982; Valli & Chambliss, 2007) or otherwise make explicit (Lather & Smithies, 1997; Marshall et al., 2006) the means through which they work with one another. In asking contributors from across the qualitative spectrum to write about their decisions to collaborate and how those collaborative processes were enacted, the chapters in this book provide newcomers to the field and current qualitative methodologists alike a largely unprecedented, concrete discussion of just how such relationships are fostered and function in practice.

Second, this volume is also designed to highlight the processes through which qualitative methodologists are collaborating with one another and, perhaps most importantly, with the local actors whose lives become the data utilized in their studies. Through collaboration, authors in this volume are challenging implicit yet widespread notions of what collaboration means as well as what such relationships can foster in both their scholarly work and in the communities in which their work is conducted. In these ways, authors in this work also performatively (Austin, 1961) demonstrate that a desire to extend the boundaries of current interpretive methodological possibilities, in addition to turning inwards towards our own experiences, also requires turning outwards towards one another in collaboration.

The work in this book is not intended to be exhaustive in its representations of methods of collaboration. Instead it has been compiled as a representation of the depth and breadth of possibilities for working together in qualitative research. Therefore, the purpose of this book is to exemplify some of the ways collaborations can function; demonstrate both the viability and the possibilities such cooperative work can foster; illustrate the growing tendency for qualitative methodologists to reach out to one another and across methodological lines; and document a few emerging collaborative methodologies.

Although there are many overlapping themes that resonate between chapters, I have divided this volume into two overarching sections. Part I addresses the ways in which contributing authors have expanded upon existing qualitative research methodologies through their collaborations. Part II presents emerging collaborative methodologies and the use of collaboration in the arts, both of which utilize forms of collaboration as qualitative research methodology.

#### PART I: EXPANDING QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES THROUGH COLLABORATION

This section begins with a chapter that revisits one of the more often-cited collaborative works in qualitative research in the past twenty years, Patti Lather and Chris Smithies' (1997) *Troubling the Angles: Women Living with HIV/AIDS*. What makes this book stand out is the combination of the transparency of its authors, the book's juxtaposed location as research and informational resource, and its multi-modal, intertextual layout. Although aspects of their collaborative process have been outlined not only in the work itself but also in Lather's (2001, 2007) subsequent books, this chapter represents the first time Lather and Smithies have addressed in depth how their own collaboration functioned, an emergent process that produced one of the more polyphonic texts (Clifford, 1988) in the field.

Lather and Smithies enunciate the importance of being open to and trusting the emergent, organizational nature of qualitative research. Their ability to improvise within, through, or around frameworks of process and expectations helped create strong collaborations between the authors and the women who participated in their study. Central to this process was their shared understanding of feminism as a verb, the need to act in ways that helped call attention to issues of women's health, safety, information and justice as the AIDS crisis crescendoed in the early to mid-1990s.

It is, in fact, this very trust in the emergent, improvisational nature of collaboration that turned what I had conceived as a transcribed interview of Patti and Chris into the polyphonic chapter here. They requested and entrusted me to organize our recorded conversation in a way that represented the tone, tenor and content of the conversation in a meaningful manner—a decision in which my outsider status (e.g. male, heterosexual, HIV negative) served only to underscore their beliefs in both collaboration and its potential in qualitative research methodology.

The result of that trust is a multi-vocal, split-panelled rendering of our conversation that often places similar processes or ideas in parallel. In keeping with the transparent nature of Lather and Smithies' work to date, this chapter also contains a running commentary in which I wrestle with my charge of the chapter. Additionally, as a final nod to *Troubling the Angels* and the continuing struggle of women with HIV/AIDS, this chapter also includes recent information about the effect of this ongoing pandemic on women's lives around the world, a list of online resources for women, and help numbers for women who have questions about their own health and safety or that of those whom they care.

As with Gershon, Lather, and Smithies, authors of the second and third chapters in this book reflect upon and trouble the collaborative processes they utilized to create previously published works. Schultz and Banks' chapter embody this task literally and figuratively. Citing *Troubling the Angels* and other work that make splits in narrative explicit through their literal embodiment as split-framed texts, the co-authors present "a hermeneutic commentary (Ricœur, 1981)" in which they "reflect on a previously published article that we co-wrote" (p. 35). Starting with the "devastating news that one of his [Paris'] closest friends had been shot and killed in broad daylight directly in front his house" (p. 36), Schultz and Banks provide running conversation along side their previously published work that contextualizes, complicates, and problematizes their collaborative effort. Unlike the previously published article, this chapter foregrounds Schultz's struggles with differences between himself and Banks (one of his former fifth grade students), presents how Banks' candid, insightful responses to adults' questions complicate how adults make meanings about youth, and concludes with the notion of the possibilities for collaboration that are manifest in collective memory.

In the third chapter, Steeves, Pearce, Orr, Murphy, Huber, Huber, and Clandinin seek to "interrupt the institutional narrative of individualism" through layered dialogs about the collaboration that provided the space for seven authors to write as one voice in their book *Composing Diverse Identities: Narrative Inquiries into the Interwoven Lives of Children and Teachers* (2007). Similar to Lather and Smithies and Schultz and Banks, this group of authors cites the importance of the improvisational nature of collaborative work and the need for respectful, transparent engagement in moments of seemingly inevitable tension. Citing Heilbrun (1999), Steeves et al. emphasize the possibility of liminal spaces as places for wonder and addressing tensions, the potential for the impermanent nature of liminality to serve as a springboard for movement rather than concretizing either inquiry or interpersonal agitation.

Ultimately, for Steeves et al., it is the strength and communal nature of their counterstories that are of greatest importance. Stories are composed in relation: “in relationships seeking to find hope in the midst of dominant narratives looking to keep people in place, dominated by, and submissive to, paths well worn or laid down, to narratives often taken for granted within institutions” (p. 67). Here, Steeves et al. have provided a counterstory to their own counterstory, a deconstruction of the singular voice of their book in their nuanced, multi-vocal rendering of their collaboration. In doing so, they interrupt not only the hegemonic narratives their book is designed to disrupt but also their own work with one another.

As with the first three chapters in this section, chapters four and five are also related. This pairing begins with Gooden and Gastaldo’s explication and reflection of their “critical application” of Participatory Action Research (PAR) for their project *Revisiting Personal is Political: Immigrant Women’s Health Promotion Project (RPP)*. Similar to Lather and Smithies, Gooden and Gastaldo’s project is a collaboration that reaches across locations and methodological boundaries in documenting “how immigrant women in Toronto, Canada, collaborated with researchers from academic and practice settings” (p. 71). As “two immigrant women who are also academic researchers,” (p. 71), this chapter complicates the literature on PAR in two significant ways. First, through their location as immigrant women and researchers, the co-authors’ participation is doubly layered; in studying with their participants they are simultaneously studying themselves, a complication they explicitly address in narrative form in this chapter. Second, where reporting of findings in PAR often favors discussions of findings and the presentation of participants’ perspectives over talk of how such collaborations functioned, Gooden and Gastaldo explicitly document both their collaborative processes and outline how they applied those “principles of collaboration.”

The remaining chapter in this section has close ties to PAR. In it, Smith and Helfenbein seek to trouble “the role of universities in communities while simultaneously challenging researchers with the task of redefining our conception and practice of contemporary research efforts in schools of education” (p. 89). They are concerned by the linear nature of research practices that promote a lack of deep, sustained contact and collaboration between researchers and the people and contexts they study, often serving to reify lines between researcher and subject. Furthermore, Smith and Helfenbein argue that traditional research practices produce less meaningful research, missing important nuances central to understanding educational practices and possibilities that can serve to improve the daily lives of local actors.

In its stead, Smith and Helfenbein suggest translational research in practice (TRIP) as one possible framework for disrupting traditional research patterns. While the collaborative nature of the relationship between “researchers” and “subjects” shares some similarities with PAR, there are significant differences between the two collaborative research methodologies.

For example, while there is an expectation that project directors, teachers, administrators, and grant writers are actively engaged during the conception and fleshing out of ideas and proposals, we typically do not train teachers and

community members to collect data but rather intentionally build in time to review data, both raw and analyzed. (p. 94)

Grounding their argument in their work as directors of the Center for Urban and Multicultural Education (CUME) at Indiana University, Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), the co-authors document how TRIP has led to research practices that are more collaborative in nature and the ways in which these collaborations engender deeper, sustained relationships between research partners to the benefit of all collaborators, local actors and university researchers alike.

## PART II: EMERGING METHODOLOGIES AND THE ARTS: COLLABORATION AS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The emergent collaborative research practices and the uses of collaboration in the arts presented in the latter section of the book share a central, salient feature: collaboration as a means for conducting qualitative research. Additionally, while aspects of the arts—uses of arts metaphors to describe qualitative research practices, or particular arts practices as qualitative research methodologies are well-documented—are often organized into research practices that utilize the arts such as “arts-based research,” (McNiff, 2009), “arts research in education” (Cahmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008) or “a/r/tography” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay et al., 2007). Although each of these research practices calls for the use of the arts in/as qualitative research practices, it is far less frequent that an art is considered to be a methodology unto itself (cf. Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Sullivan, 2005). Furthermore, discussions of the collaborative nature of the arts and the role of collaboration the arts-as-qualitative-research are generally even more absent from most discussions of qualitative research methodology. Because the arts-as-collaborative-research-practice and the particular arts (the processes of data-as-playwriting, dance, improvisational musics [Nettle, 2005]) presented in the last three chapters of this book remain largely undocumented, they represent another aspect of an emerging understanding of what collaboration in qualitative research might mean and present possible models for how it could function in practice. It is in light of such possible meanings that I have placed these final six chapters together.

The first three chapters in this section represent emerging collaborative methodologies in qualitative research. In the first chapter of this section, Willis and Siltanen continue to build upon and wrestle with their evolving construction of reflective team research. Similar to concerns raised by Lather and Smithies, Willis and Siltanen “developed and implemented” these research practices “in order to take seriously feminist and post-positivist orientations to social science knowledge production” (p. 105). This is the authors’ “third (re)storying” of this process, following the initial collaborative research process and “a second story [presented] in a publication whose main agenda is to argue for the possibility and interpretive value of team-based reflexivity (Siltanen, Willis & Scobie, 2008)” (p. 105).

The co-authors describe the difference between their previous publication and this chapter in the following manner:

Looking again at our previous paper “Separately Together: Working Reflexively as a Team,” we realized that although we had intended to set out how reflexivity can be done in the context of team research, we did not quite reach this goal. The orientations and practices we outlined do not actually describe how to do reflexivity but rather suggest ways of providing opportunities for reflexivity. In re-examining our efforts from the perspective of narrative inquiry, we hope to move closer to identifying how reflexivity can be done in and by research teams. (p. 105)

Here Willis and Siltanen document how they moved from working reflexively *in* a team and working reflexively *as* a team in their creation of this qualitative research methodology. Through their process, the inclusion of their own stories with those they collected, wrestling with the layers of meanings within and between these narratives, lead to a rich, polyvocal, overarching collective storyline that was more than the sum of its parts. In so doing, they also do justice to the subjects of their study, “the ways in which inequalities affect peoples’ capacity to cope with work change (Siltanen, Willis & Scobie, in press)” (p. 106).

In searching for a similar kind of reflexivity and complexity, Sawyer and Norris came to tell their own stories together, a process they have come to call “duoethnography.” Drawing from ethnographic research practices, duoethnographic studies are stratified, nested autoethnographic accounts of a given research context or question. Each participant conducts her/his own autoethnographic account, situating her/himself fully within the research context. The research partners then place their separately analyzed findings together, creating dialogic inquiries in which the researchers themselves are firmly located within the scope of the gaze of their research.

Examining personal artifacts, stories, memories, compositions, texts, and critical incidents, duoethnographers excavate the temporal, social, cultural, and geographical cartography of their lives, making explicit their assumptions and perspectives. Considering themselves the site rather than the topic of their research (Oberg, 1992), duoethnographers seek to discover and explore the overlapping grey zones in-between their perspectives as intertwined intersections that create “hybrid identities” (Asher, 2007, p. 68) instead of binary opposites. (p. 127)

Sawyer and Norris compare duoethnography in practice to the emergent, transformative aspects of jazz performance in which collaborators work separately together to create complex meanings from intertwining, simultaneous narratives. When exercised to its potential, Sawyer and Norris argue, duoethnography has the potential “to allow participants to engage in dialogic self-study and thus to empower and intellectually liberate its participants” (p. 138).

Similar to Willis and Siltanen’s chapter, Gershon, Peel, and Bilinovich’s chapter presents another iteration of their ongoing struggle to understand a difficult semester they shared together as professor and preservice teachers. Instead of sweeping their “semester-long” struggles over “the intersections of race, education, and social studies content” (p. 142) under the proverbial rug, the co-authors elected to examine their challenging semester together (Gershon, Peel & Bilinovich, 2008).

Different from their previous work on the topic, this chapter is performative in that a process of collaborative discensus serves as both the content of their chapter and the methodological process through which they examine that content. Where the purpose of duoethography is the empowerment and liberation of its participants, collaborative discensus is a four-part framework designed for collaborators to work together without the need to compromise their perspectives, language, or findings through consensus. Where processes of consensus can serve to marginalize participants' perspectives, discensus can serve as an ethical act, providing the space for all collaborators' voices, ideas and ideals.

Collaborative discensus is a process comprised of four key components: Participants frame their collaboration and inquiry, conduct research according to their own perspectives, present their findings without compromise, and respond to one another's presentations. In their use of collaborative discensus, Gershon, Peel, and Bilinovich illustrate the potential of collaborative methodology to mitigate possible inequities in research, provide space for collaborators to transparently negotiate difficult contexts or content, and provide complex, layered interpretations of meaning. Additionally, in their open framing of the process, there are several chapters in this volume that could possibly be considered forms of collaborative discensus including the next chapter in this section, Conrad, McCaw, and Gusul's dialogue about their collaboration in turning Conrad's data set into a script.

Conrad, McCaw, and Gusul's chapter on their work together in rendering Conrad's data set as a play is the first of the three chapters on collaboration in the arts as qualitative methodology. As Conrad describes their process in the introduction to the chapter,

[T]his is a collaborative piece of writing. It is an intertwining of the personal journals of its three authors, engaged collaboratively in a process of ethno-dramatic playwriting—a collaboratively written piece about collaboration based on collaborative research. (p. 165)

This writing is based on a three-year project of conducting participatory drama with youth in the Native program of an Alberta jail. Reflecting “a symptom of systemic racism within the Canadian justice system,” the “majority of incarcerated youth in Alberta are Aboriginal” (p. 165). Conrad's collaborators in this chapter are McCaw, the project's dramaturg and faculty member in the Drama Department at the University of Alberta, and Gusul, a graduate student who served as a research assistant on Conrad's project. Together, the three co-authors share their perspectives of the playwriting process through a chronological presentation of entries Conrad and McCaw's research journals and transcriptions of McCaw's oral responses to their entries.

The resulting chapter is a story about the possibilities and struggles of collaboration in the field and between participants, the use of qualitative data as theatre, and the birth of a play. As with the two other chapters in this section on collaboration in the arts as qualitative methodology, the questions Conrad, McCaw, and Gusul raise about the nature of collaboration in the arts—such as that between performer and audience, playwright and dramaturg—are also questions about the nature of qualitative

research methodology and collaboration in qualitative research.

Discussions of qualitative research methodologies rarely include conversations about dance as qualitative research (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2005; Leavy, 2009; Toney, 2008); dialogues about the role of collaboration in dance and qualitative research are even more infrequent occurrences. As George and Meggitt state in the introduction to their chapter, examinations of dance are important because,

Dance makes clear and expands that which cannot be otherwise articulated, be it through language, image, or sound. The creation and the watching of dance are powerful and intimate exchanges that inform participants in ways that are both immediate and vast. (p. 185)

George and Meggitt have divided their chapter in half in order to provide each author an opportunity to discuss how collaboration functions in their lives as dancers and choreographers. For George, collaboration is implicit yet embedded within every aspect of her work as a dance educator. Her approach to dance and dance education is through Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), a “system of observing, understanding, and notating movement...organized into four interrelated categories: body, effort, shape, and space” (p. 187). Strongly informed by LMA, George’s approaches to dance and working with students’ includes a focus on inquiry and problem solving and an expectation of transformation in her process—what she envisioned at the beginning of a work is not the work that emerges by its performance (pp. 187–188). These understandings parallel the steps of strong interpretive research both in education (cf. Erickson, 1986) and non-educational contexts (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Unlike George’s relationship to collaboration in dance and choreography, Meggitt approaches collaboration in her work explicitly, illustrating the central role collaboration plays in her work as choreographer and leader of Antaeus Dance. For Meggitt, collaboration is the vehicle through which she works with the dancers in her company and the other artists (composers, set designers, etc.) who contribute to the productions Antaeus Dance mounts. What George and Meggitt share in their stories of collaboration is attention to the ethical considerations of working with others; the collaborative nature of dance as a medium; improvisation as a means for exploring possible form and functions of collaboration in movement, thought, and otherwise; and the relationships between choreographer and dancers, performers and audience.

In the final chapter in this section and the book, Coulombe provides another rarely represented voice in discussions of qualitative methodology (cf. Gershon, 2006), the collaborative nature of improvised music as research methodology, a topic she addresses directly in the beginning of her chapter.

The unique nature of improvisation, as spontaneous expression in the act of performance itself, has no “translation” from abstraction into metaphor and therefore no language, no syntax. Other than a few notable exceptions (cf. Bailey, 1993; Lewis, 2002), this abstract nature also explains the relative lack of theorization and documentation in comparison to other performance disciplines. This does not diminish, however, the vast community of improvisers

and improvisational genres in culture, or the burgeoning quantity and quality of scholarship in the area. (pp. 209–210)

What is needed, Coulombe argues, is more detailed examinations of how improvised music functions as qualitative research methodology, a research practice that is inseparable from its location in performance and collaboration.

To illustrate how freely improvised music can serve as a site for inquiry, similar to George and Meggitt's chapter on dance, Coulombe draws upon her work as a teacher of improvised music in a university context and as an improviser with other professional improvisers. In her conclusion, Coulombe posits that,

Deploying collective improvisation as methodology beyond performance to research events allows *both* participants *and* audience members to themselves enter the symbolic order in real time, broadening the conscious rewriting of signifiers and narrations of the past and allowing new meanings to collectively emerge. This eliminates what has been a fundamental dissociation of artistic practice—the separation of process and product, in which the negotiation of meaning has traditionally occurred apart from the work itself, hidden from the audience and sometimes even from participants themselves. (p. 221)

She also enunciates recurring themes that resonate throughout this book: collaborative approaches to qualitative research provide the space for critical reflexivity in such a way that the possible meanings of research contexts are rendered in a complex fashion where a multiplicity of perspectives does not usurp the individual but instead engenders a deeper, more rich representation of local actors, their meanings, and the contexts that inform their actions.

#### A FINAL NOTE

The chapters in this book represent a relatively wide swath of qualitative methodologies (e.g. feminist research practices, participatory action research, narrative inquiry, theatre, transactional research) from a variety of perspectives and fields (e. g. anthropology, dance, education, music, nursing, Pan-African Studies, sociology, students, theatre, youth). However, despite an effort towards a broader inclusion of possible voices in this book, fields, perspectives, and qualitative methodologies that rely on collaboration are missing. There are three central reasons for this orientation. First, to paraphrase Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) preface to their most recent edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, there is, to some degree, an overreliance on perspectives with which I am familiar (p. xvii). However, this bias is strongly mitigated by the remaining two reasons.

The second reason this book contains these works is because, as in all edited volumes, potential authors and the fields and topics their work represents were unable to participate due to the usual culprits of previous commitments and timeline to completion. Third, and perhaps most significantly, much of the current collaborative turn in qualitative methodologies has been occurring more in fields such as education than in journals specific to fields such as anthropology or sociology. For example, the second half of Spindler and Hammond's (2006) book

on ethnography in education is dedicated to questions of collaboration. Similarly, editors of a recent special issue in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (2008) on “activist educational anthropology” refer to the articles in that volume as being “very collaborative approaches to theorizing and writing ethnography” (Foley, Dworin, Foster, Urrieta, & Villenas, 2008, p. 1); the *International Journal of Qualitative Research in Education* has published several recent articles that focus on collaboration (cf. Gerstl-Pepin & Gunzenhauser, 2002; Krøjer & Hølge-Hazeltonk, 2008).

Finally, in the spirit of collaboration, I wish to again acknowledge the contributors whose work graces the pages of this book. I am much indebted to the hard work and strong contributions from all who gave of their time, thought, and effort to this project. I remain impressed by not only the richness of their chapters but also the respectful, timely manner in which they collaborated with one another and gave me the space to serve as their editor. Specific information about each contributing author and their research interests can be found in the contributors section at the end of this book.

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**PART I: EXPANDING QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES  
THROUGH COLLABORATION**



## 1. TROUBLING THE ANGELS REDUX

### *Tales of Collaboration Towards a Polyphonic Text*

#### GETTING STARTED

Chris: Okay. Ready, set, go.

Walter: Good. Okay so I guess the first question I'm curious about is how did this come to fruition? What is the genesis of the project? How did the two of you meet and how did you decide that this might be a course you'd want to go on?

Patti: And, of course, part of my interest in being here is to hear what Chris has to say about that, our very memories and readings of things. So if you want to start on that one, Chris. Where did we get started here?

*Chris: A Partner, a Collaborator, a Guide, a Feminist*

Chris: Well, I think we got started, and correct me because some of this is memory and it's filtered through at this point, because when did we start? 1992 or 3?

Patti: Something like that. Two-ish.

Chris: Yeah, so it's been 15, 16 years since we've actually started. But I was a psychologist and AIDS activist, a feminist, and had the opportunity through a position at the University of Cincinnati to work with one of the

*Patti: You would be a fool not to open this door and go in*

Walter: What were some of your trepidations, Patti, going into it? Chris was talking about some of hers in choosing you, and you said that even with the drive out for some space what was...?

Patti: Oh I'm a loner.

Chris: That's just who she is.

Walter: I know that you like the space in general.

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This chapter is the end result of an over two-hour conversation with Patti Lather and Chris Smithies on their collaborative processes as they created the work that became *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS*. I originally conceived of this chapter as a relatively straightforward interview transcription. In my mind, I was going to drive down to Columbus, either interview Patti and Chris or have them interview each other, get the interview transcribed, check and edit the transcription,

first women's HIV-positive/AIDS support groups. And found that work very intriguing, gratifying, and intense.

Patti: What was the year on that? When did you get started?

Chris: That must have been, it was January of 1989. Yeah, cause I had just got my Ph.D. and that was in December. So, I started the group.

Walter: You got a Ph.D. in?

Chris: In counseling, and was working with the Center for the Treatment of Eating Disorders at the University of Cincinnati. Then HIV of course at this time was brand new, terrifying, a huge mystery. And at the University of Cincinnati to this day has an excellent physician and researcher by the name of Dr. Peter Frame, who invited me to do the group for a small stipend, and I thought, "Oh I'm done with my Ph.D. I have room for something." And thank goodness I said yes because it certainly changed my life. This was a time of great crisis where women were infected and became ill very quickly. It was a time of urgency. They often had been infected by men that they didn't expect to be infected by; there were just remarkable stories and a coming together. I think one of the things I remember most of all is that this group of women, in many cases, had not really relied on other women frequently throughout their

Patti: I'm a loner, and I don't like getting sucked into zones of proximal development.

Chris: She was gonna be stuck with people all weekend.

Patti: Particularly retreats. I usually get physically ill if I'm captured in a space, especially with strangers...

Chris: It's the intensity, the emotional intensity of it.

Patti: ...and, see here I am, I don't even have my own car now, and we're out in the middle of some cornfield in Indiana with bunch of old nuns and people I don't know, and I don't have a car. I was ready to get sick, but it didn't [happen]. I remember I took a lot of walks. I got outside.

Chris: You did. And we didn't feel like we had to be side-by-side the whole weekend.

Patti: I walked around that graveyard a lot. That was my space. But in a way it's my personality of claustrophobia and low tolerance for really the social in any sort of intense and long term. You know like family reunions for example. Like an afternoon I can take but...

Walter: A whole weekend is a little much.

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and send it back to them for review. Given my outsider status in relation to *Troubling the Angels*—I'm male, HIV-negative, and straight for starters—I was leaning towards the option of setting up the necessary equipment and letting the authors have a recorded conversation that they then could edit as they saw fit after transcription. In spite of Patti's insistence that I participate more fully as interviewer, I was still envisioning a chapter with Patti and Chris as authors "interviewed by Walter S. Gershon." How, then, did I end up as lead author of this chapter and how did it take this particular shape?

lives for emotional support, for getting through the tough times and that emerged in this group. Very diverse group of women especially in terms of class, from very modest education or impoverished really all the way up to individuals with Master's degrees. And so as I did this work over a couple of years, two or three years, the women would talk about, "oh we should write a book," and I always thought that was great. We certainly had plenty of material. I moved back to Columbus and continued to go down to Cincinnati and started also a group in Columbus. It just became very clear to me, partly as the women's voices said we want our stories out there. We want the public, we want the community, we want other women, especially those who undoubtedly become HIV-positive, we want them aware that there are groups like this and other women who can support them. And I knew that because the women had grown from their support of each other, I knew, it was just crystal clear to me that any work that I would do would be in a collaboration with someone. That was just not even a question. And so I went looking through an HIV educational center here at Ohio State. There was a good guy named Jim. I don't remember his...

Patti: Pearsol.

Chris: Pearsol. And I said I'm looking for someone, I'm looking for a colleague.

Patti: A whole weekend starts making me, I mean, again, I get physically ill.

Walter: So then let me ask that a different way cause there's a bit that was an answer to the question I asked, but I don't think that was the question I had in mind once it came out of my mouth. The thing I'm wondering is, you speak to it a little bit in the book and Chris spoke a little bit on her concern about sort of "testing" you out. When you started thinking about HIV and AIDS and when you started thinking about participating with women and having connections to social justice you have and to methodology and most particularly to feminism. How did these pieces fit together in a way that you became involved and what were some of the questions you had as you started this process in the beginning that you can remember?

Patti: I remember thinking, I mean I was pretty, what would the word be, careerist isn't exactly the right word but I was a woman in search of a project in terms of the trajectory of my own career at that time. I finished *Getting Smart*. I'd given myself a little vacation after that, and I kind of had an empty plate and I was searching for a topic and I felt like this dropped on high from heaven. And I could see it from the get go that this was a project from heaven, in terms of timing, engagement, academic interest, in terms of there wasn't much out on women and HIV/AIDS and there was such rich praxis. I mean it was just like neon

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After turning on the microphone, setting up a pad so anyone could take notes, and tucking into the tea and cheese Patti kindly offered, we began to set the parameters for our recorded conversation/interview. I began by stating that Patti and Chris would receive copies of the audio recording and transcripts, review the final version pre-submission to the publisher, and have full veto power of any aspect of the chapter they found problematic. Because I had not met Chris before and only met Patti a few months prior at a conference (although I was familiar with her work and we have mutual friends and colleagues)

Patti: And you knew to say qualitative researcher didn't you?

Chris: I knew I wanted it to be qualitative research. You know, the women actually wanted a K-mart book, and I knew we weren't gonna write that. But I knew enough about qualitative research from my own degree—I did not do qualitative research for my dissertation partly just I wanted to get done to be honest—but I knew enough to know that this was an incredible opportunity for qualitative research. But I knew I needed a partner, a collaborator, a guide, and Jim knew Patti. He literally got us together, and we had a blind date.

Patti: Mmm, hmm. It was awesome, I remember.

Chris: You take it from there because you probably...

Patti: Well, Jim taught for me. He was one of my adjunct professors in qualitative research. So when Chris went looking for a feminist, she knew she wanted a feminist.

Chris: There were a few criteria.

Walter: What were the criteria?

Chris: Well, a woman. It had to be a feminist. It had to be someone who would have an interest in women living with HIV/AIDS, and then it needed to be somebody who had a stronger research background than I

lights for everything I cared about. And I could see that Chris and I were gonna be able to figure things out and I've never done fundable research before. But remember we even talked to Jim about possibilities for getting funding. To me, it was like the first project I'd ever been involved with that actually might be fundable. Remember that time we had with him where he came and he had us meet with potential funders?

Chris: He did; you're right.

Patti: And they wanted such personal information about the women. All they cared about was their sex habits and their drug IV habits, and I said, you mean you're gonna ask us to go ask these women. I'd say hi my name is Patti and how many times have you had unprotected anal sex?

Walter: With random people you didn't know.

Patti: With random people I didn't know, yeah. And in the name of building trust and research empathy and relationships—I said I don't think so. So remember we had a talk after that and decided we just weren't gonna go with the funding route if that was the kind of data we were gonna have to collect in order to get funding. And you could say in a way that was part of our bonding, too, because we were so much on the same page with that.

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Chris asked me several questions to which I responded at length about my research and this book in order to have a better sense of to whom she would be speaking and to further clarify the purpose of our conversation. About 15 minutes into the conversation, Patti stated, "Chris and I haven't talked about this but I'm very happy to have you be the author, like 'with' us." When I replied that I would prefer that they be lead authors "as interviewed by" me and that I had been "trying to wrestle out of this role" of a more full participant since the process began, Patti responded: "Yeah, well we want you to do all the work." Then she and Chris laughed. It quickly became clear that what Patti and Chris preferred was not

had, and, I think, access to the world of publication because whatever this was going to be I wanted to see it published for the sake of the women. The publication certainly has brought riches into our lives, and probably Patti's in particular, but to me it was the women that needed to see something published. They did not have the means. I had more means than they did, but I didn't really think I had the qualifications or the expertise to do it solo and I didn't want to do it solo. So having someone with stronger academic credentials and certainly a passion, as I quickly discovered, with qualitative research. Those were my criteria and more criteria emerged as we got going. But that's what I presented to Jim, that's what I needed and wanted and did he know anybody. And I was checking it out. I was using all my contacts to try to find somebody, and Jim found Patti.

Walter: Can I ask one more follow-up question before we get to Patti?

Chris: Yes.

Walter: You said a few times now that you wanted a collaborator.

Chris: Absolutely

Walter: That seems to be really important to the [research] process and it also seems important to the process of the groups as we discuss it...

Chris: It was parallel process.

front I was ready to get engaged on. I remember saying to myself, you would be a fool to not open this door and go in.

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a straightforward, lightly edited conversation but a tightly organized, edited version of what transpired that wintry afternoon in January. This chapter is the result of their request. Like the collaborative processes that became *Troubling the Angels*, the form of this chapter was emergent, organic, and member checked. As I checked, reworked, and began to organize the transcription, it became evident to me that using the book as a framework for the chapter would provide both the organizational structure and complexity needed to convey the warp and weft of the interwoven themes and meanings that

Walter: And I wanted to know a little bit about that.

Chris: Yeah. It was just very clear to me that they weren't doing anything alone. That, for these women, their survivorship, the quality of their life, had really become just dependent and interconnected with their relationships with each other, and those were very positive. Not that there weren't ever disagreements, but overall their lives they would have said, and I'm quoting them, the collaboration in their lives in many cases, well, not many, in several cases women said actually my life's better now that I have HIV because all of the relationships and connections and support I have for the first time in my life. So, I saw that again and again and again and again, and loved it, appreciated it. So, to me, it was just never a question that I would certainly collaborate with them but I needed someone else to collaborate with as well. And then I think in the purely personal piece, by this time was doing full-time private practice, which you do by yourself, and so in a very personal level, having the opportunity to collaborate, to maintain an academic connection. I'm not an academic, but I appreciate and value academia and I knew that academia could benefit from these women's stories and from what I had to offer, that academics didn't have access to this group typically. Just as I needed access to the world of publication, so, yeah.

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surfaced over the course of our time together. In this spirit of transparently presenting the complex layers of talk, I have elected to: offer split pagination, use participants' words to form most of the titles to the sections, rearrange the conversation to fit these categories, add a final section of HIV/AIDS resources at the end of the piece, and provide a reflexive running participant's conversation, adding another layer to our interview. Finally, I opted for a middle ground in the case of authorship. As I did indeed end up doing the work of a lead author at the request of my now-co-authors, I have gone

*First Steps: Defining and Testing Roles*

Walter: And then Patti you were on, I think, your take on meeting in Jim's office before we left that off.

Patti: Yeah, we met at Jim's office and Chris and I had a pretty good connection as I remember and decided to probably have another meeting where we followed up on that, and I'm trying to think, maybe in Jim's office as well. I'm kind of remembering he was involved a bit at the front end. And for a while we actually talked about collaborating with him.

Chris: We did.

Patti: It was a little fuzzy at the front end in terms of his role. He actually got us together with the idea that maybe the three of us would write together. And I think we sort of kept it loose but "possibles" here and there. And then we got out in the field, and quickly could see that it was a woman thing, having a man in the room was not gonna work.

Chris: And fortunately Jim is the kind of gentleman who's not at all self-serving. He was very much a catalyst and was content with that.

Patti: I'm having some vague memory that at a certain point we went back to him and sort of said...

Chris: See, I don't remember that at all.

Patti: It's starting to be clear to us that it just needed to be the two of us and how did he feel about that.

Chris: And then I kind of put Patti to the test.

Patti: At the retreat.

Chris: Yes. I ran retreats for women who were HIV positive. And this particular retreat was held at a nunnery just over the line in Indiana, correct me if I'm remembering any of this wrong.

Patti: No, that's right

Chris: And women came from all over Ohio.

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forward with Patti and Chris' kind offer to take the lead author spot for this chapter, an offer also extended with full recognition of my Assistant Professor status. However, rather than "with" Patti and Chris they remain co-authors, for without their years of hard work, dedication, vision, perseverance, and willingness to participate in a recorded interview for this volume, this chapter would not exist. I wish to again thank and publicly acknowledge Patti and Chris for their candor, kindness, and participation as well as for a wonderful conversation full of intelligence, wit, and laughter.

Patti: I don't remember a nunnery.

Chris: It was a former convent or a current convent.

Patti: Maybe actually an active convent.

Chris: It may have been an active convent.

Patti: It had a wing for retreats.

Chris: I think it was a convent that had a wing for retreats.

Patti: It was a retirement home for old nuns.

Chris: That's what it was. It was a retirement home for old nuns.

Patti: And it had one wing of these old girls and then a wing for retreats.

Chris: And here are these nuns welcoming our HIV positive group, and I had set up workshops and various support activities at a very low cost that women came in from all over Ohio. And of course this was still when most people were becoming ill and dying, so we had women at all stages of illness or wellness depending upon how you wanted to put it. And I had said to Patti come and see, come see what you think, come meet the women. I really needed to know, and I laugh at this now because I know where you're at now, but I really needed to know that the passion I had for these women would not get lost in working with Patti or working with anybody else. So as it turned out your car broke down and you and I had to ride there together. We had planned on going separately.

Patti: I had wanted the space, cause I always want my space.

Chris: Yes. It was too much too quickly. You wanted the space. So she was stuck riding with me, and we had a great time.

Patti: That was kind of our real bonding.

Chris: Yes.

Patti: I think it was the car trip both there and then particularly on the return where we...

Chris: Processed.

Patti: Where we fell into our process of Chris driving and us just talking a mile a minute and me taking notes while we're driving down the road. And then many of those notes ended up in the book. Those were my field notes.

Chris: Yes. At that point I didn't realize that I was gonna be data.

Patti: I don't know that I did. I didn't know either.

Chris: But I caught on pretty quickly. Maybe you didn't know either.

Patti: I mean, in my mind, I think I was taking my field notes towards getting better data from the women, but that was at a time when field notes, the whole kind of autobiography thing, didn't necessarily end up in the final product. So I certainly didn't write those notes with the idea that they'd end up in the book.

THE ORGANIC, EMERGENT NATURE OF COLLABORATION IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

*The Format: Emergent and Evolving*

Chris: And we didn't know what the book was gonna look like, right?

Patti: Correct. Very correct.

Chris: I mean it definitely was...

Patti: That was an emergent situation.

Chris: An emergent, yeah.

Patti: The form was so very emergent. And I think I've said this before but I don't think people pay enough attention to it. Much of the form of the book was a matter of convenience between you and me with our very busy lives, not being able to get together very much, figuring out how to keep things up.

Chris: I adopted a daughter

Patti: You take this hunk; I'll take that hunk. And at that time we weren't even emailing all that much,

Chris: No, that's right we weren't.

Patti: So it wasn't like you could just throw things back and forth to each

*The Process: Emergent and Organic*

Walter: And did that emerge as well? Or Patti did you as the "qualitative researcher" of the pair more sort of say hey do we try it this way or was it something that the two of you decided that it would be easier or it just sort of happened?

Chris: I think there were some things that happened first. I think aside from just Patti's phenomenal expertise you were always very transparent. I found that my conversations with Patti were intellectually engaging. I felt valued by Patti for what I could bring. I always felt valued for what I could bring to this, and we brought different things. Our feminism we each brought, and I think that was a profoundly common bond and yoke. We had a, help me with the word, we had a perspective, a grounding, a foundation, an ideology that was very shared despite her being in more of an academic world, and I of course with a Ph.D. am familiar with that academic world but living a very applied life. So I think there was a tremendous foundation that we shared in common,

other. And so we sort of farmed out, we tried to figure out a way to put the book together that would let us work pretty independently, write independently and get together really as little as possible given our lives.

Chris: That's all true. Mmm, hmm. Oh when you were tested I do remember in our conversation we did ask what if Patti was positive? What would it do to our work? That was pretty interesting; I don't even remember what we said.

Patti: Well, that was a methodological issue, insider/outsider.

Chris: Yes, that was a methodological issue, yeah. So I remember we kind of tried that on for size.

Walter: Yes. And thinking about these ideas, can you talk to me a little bit about the form because the book has about four or five key components. It has the conversations; it has...

Patti: Factoids.

Walter: Factoids. It has also researcher text.

Patti: Researcher text, reflective text.

Walter: And also the...

Patti: Angel intertext.

Walter: the resources for women. How did this piece come to be? Was this, again, emergent? How did this evolve? How did you get to this multiply layered text?

Chris: We just had so...

Patti: I think it was so evolving.

but Patti was transparent. She sometimes used words or phrases that I had no idea. She still does, and I can just say I have no idea what you're talking about and please explain that to me.

Walter: Was that directness comfortable from the beginning?

Patti: We're both pretty...

Chris: Yes Patti: We were a pretty good personality [fit].

Chris: Right from the beginning.

Patti: Yeah but we were a pretty good personality mix. I mean it was a pretty easy connection. And I don't remember having...

Chris: We liked each other.

Patti: Having to negotiate much space. I mean we had our tensions but they were substantive.

Chris: They were substantive. I don't think there was ever a personal tension that I can recall, even around why haven't you gotten something done, absolutely none of that that I recall.

Patti: Very in sync with one another's life issues. Cause you know this process it started in '92. That manuscript didn't go to the publisher til '96 so you've got about a four year...

Chris: We had a long relationship.

Patti: Four years of getting data, analyzing the data, trying different approaches to the writing. Many life changes in both your life and mine, that we were good enough friends about...

Chris: Yeah. It was so evolving, and we agreed on most. I mean the angel intertext, I think, required the most discussion between us. The opportunity to educate women, that's certainly our agenda, but it was the agenda of the women. See, we had guides. We had guides in terms of what these women envisioned and while what we ended up creating was far different than what any one of them envisioned, we had guides that kept us on track. Patti, for all of her academia think tank stuff, never questioned that the women who read this book, it's a chance to educate them. And you actually did most of the research on the educational pieces.

Patti: The factoid part.

Chris: The factoid parts those were mostly [Patti's doing].

Patti: I remember that really being the hardest because it kept changing.

Chris: It kept changing and we knew some of it would become dated, but as it turns out it's wonderful because the piece is a historical chronicle now as well because AIDS changed so much. So I think we needed to find ways to include all those components. We wanted the women's voices. I wanted a room of women talking. How do you actually capture that? And the women all along would say we want to get our voices out there, and we came back to that again and again and again. That was a shared [value] and so, like I said, I think we had guides and we wanted to educate. We wanted to encourage other support groups to start. So there were some very practical missions that we didn't lose sight of in part because of our commitments, because our guides

Chris: We made space for each other.

Patti: that we were pretty much in touch with those life issues and shifts and figuring out how to get our work done within that in a way that honored our lives.

Chris: And I think the other thing that happened is that we had, you know, Patti passed all the tests and was clearly moved personally by these women. I think that's what I was looking for, is whatever research we did, I wanted to know that I would be working with someone who could let them in and who would be moved by them, and that weekend kind of really moved you. She was definitely affected by it and it was deep and significant, and that was very, very important to me. So I think as we went through our process over the next four or five years, there continued to be, in addition to our feminism, it always came back to the women, and it came back in different ways at different times. But I always felt that Patti was on board. That whatever individually we were living, whatever individually we were accomplishing, that there was a continuing commitment to the women and to those women feeling that they counted on us as a team to get their voices out there. And we brought different things to the team, but we had this higher goal to get their voices out there and in a way that they would respect and feel good about. And, yes, we did have some differences about what that would look like, but it became very clear to us, and I think to the women, that what we did would work in a way that they would feel very proud of. So, yeah, I think that

were going to hold us accountable.

Patti: And I think the factoid, the little boxes emerged, I want to say, out of some of the models I looked at.

Chris: Yeah, I don't know how they emerged.

Patti: I was gonna say when Nancy and I sat down to lay that out, but I clearly had that laid out in rough form before she [began]. And I had such limited skills with the computer, so when she put it into PageMaker she could make it much prettier. But I know I'd already found how to draw those little boxes. I had to draw them all the way across because I didn't know how to do anything else, but I'd already figured that out. And the only way I would have figured that out would have been through some of the models I was looking at cause I knew I wanted multiple things going on the page. And the decision to do the underwriting, I think as we talked we couldn't figure [it] out. We didn't want to put ourselves first or frame things. We wanted the women to be the first thing people saw and we didn't want to put ourselves at that back where we would say what things really meant. So [our voices] first didn't work. The end with the women's voices didn't work so then, once we sort of experimented with [it] on the same page, it just clicked. And then that was perfect. And then we divvied up the data and looked for themes, and then you'd write like you did the support group. You'd take that group and I took the families or, I don't know how we divided it up, but we sort of looked for themes together and then divided the themes up and took the first crack at writing the data stories as we called them. Then [we] would exchange

we kind of had a third colleague, a higher cause, and Patti maintained sight of that even with her more academic bent and brain. She maintained sight of that, and I could always bring it back to that, and I tried not to get too bogged down with that. Because there were times that I had to say, "I don't think the women like this but we should do it anyway" or "You're right." But I think that we had a higher purpose to what we were doing.

Patti: And that was certainly a blessing and a motivation, but it was also the main source of anxiety.

Chris: Yes.

Patti: and the sense of responsibility and whatever the depths of despair were in the project wherever they came in. It was always about feeling like maybe we wouldn't pull this off.

Chris: Yes, and we would disappoint the women.

Patti: And that between your life and my life we wouldn't be able to figure this out or...

Chris: They would die before they got to see it.

Patti: ...they would die before we get it out. I mean, there was a certain sense of press that was in quite a bit of tension with [our process]; it's almost like the project needed its time. You know, if we would have been forced to write that book in two years instead of four or five it would have been a very different book and I think not as good. I think whatever chance it has of standing up for X amount of years it is because it had its time. It needed a

and plug in bottom writing. Like you wrote most of the bottom for the support groups and I would go back through all my notes and see what fit where and run it by you, and then you'd fill in.

Chris: And often you would come and say Chris could you write something on this, okay.

Walter: So Patti would watch the overall scope?

Chris: I would say she did. She had the bigger overview.

Patti: Particularly once it started happening, once there was a template then it sort of took care of itself. But at the front end where we were trying this and we were trying that and see what works, and then, like I'm thinking of the decision to have that up front part where each of the women wrote her own self description. That was very much a conversation we had: How will we introduce the women?

Chris: Well, let's let them introduce themselves.

Patti: And I told you of a few models that were not unusual in ethnographic work, and I think it was your idea. You said, "Well why don't you just have them write their own?"

Chris: And that spoke volumes to them. It was like, wow, you guys are really gonna do this and I'm really gonna get my words out there and represent my own name.

Patti: And again, I have to keep saying this that was before email.

fullness of time, including that touch with their lives, the evolution of their lives, and the evolution of our lives, and in some ways the evolution of the field. You know, the sort of methodological literature I was reading and feeding my head with, and it had to be what it was even though there were, maybe this was me particularly, the tension between my intellectual and academic desires. You know I could speak very specifically about the angels. You know, did the angels cost us a year or two because I had to do that? Could I have gotten the book or could we have gotten the book out a year or two earlier if we wouldn't have had all that in there? But it had to be in there. I mean there's no way I could make it happen without that being in there so.... But if there was anything that was about losing sleep it was about that.

Chris: I think whenever we disagreed about something one of the things I liked about collaborating with Patti and I hope I did the same thing neither one of us quickly positioned ourselves. There were times that we said I couldn't give that up or that couldn't change entirely. But I learned very quickly with Patti and we didn't have a lot of impasses. The ones that we had I think we talked about.

Patti: Yeah.

Chris: Yeah. But I always felt like if we had an impasse or a disagreement, and we were very selective; we didn't have lots, that discussing it, bringing it forth it brought something better out. And I came to trust that in Patti. That if I'm feeling uncomfortable with something she's gonna go off and do

Chris: Yes.

Patti: Nobody had email so whatever we did it had to be done I remember it got done by mail.

Chris: Yeah. A lot of that was done by mail.

Walter: Sure.

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: So it was a stumbly, bumbly, back and forth and then we would show some parts to some of the women. Like I remember going to Dayton and the decision to do the desktop publishing came out of the Dayton group where I was showing them [the work to date]. I'd just print stuff off of my computer and take it over to them and they'd look at it. They didn't even want to read it. They would say well where's the book? We want a book, and so I could see that getting them to do member checks was not gonna be easy with just computer paper. So then we started talking about this possibly and I started poking around seeing what it would cost and who might fund it [a desktop published version]. So in a way that would be a good example actually of a sort of field based, emergent decision. We did not go into this saying, "Oh we're going to do a desktop published version."

Chris: No, that emerged.

Patti: That absolutely emerged out of interaction with the women. It felt [like a] kind of organic interaction with the women.

Walter: Right. And so I'd like if you wouldn't mind momentarily talking about that tension sort of between the

her little think tank thing and very likely come forth with something that both of us feel good about. And I never felt like I had to give anything up, that maybe I had to change.

Patti: But it didn't even feel so much like compromise.

Chris: No, I did not feel like we had to compromise. I feel like we collaborated until there was something that worked, but we weren't saying, "Okay we've got to stick this out until we find something." There was just a sense that when we had a difference of opinion it was a really useful pause sign. I think you in particular would go off and come back with something that you were excited about that also took my concerns into account.

Patti: That I wouldn't have come up with if you wouldn't have raised the concern.

Chris: If I hadn't said I'm not feeling real comfortable with this or I don't understand this. She would go away with that. She'd just go oh. And then you would come back with something.

Patti: Instead of fighting or sticking our heels in the sand.

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: I don't remember much defense of certain positions. I mean you made me articulate the angels more than once and continued, if my memory serves me right, to the bitter end saying you still didn't really understand it. But if I felt like I had to have that in there in order to do the project.

deeply spiritual and the deeply meaningful and also the terribly tragic, which they seem to be kissing each other throughout the book.

Patti: Well, that was again one of the gifts of the project was that was part of the glorious complication of it that could not be tidy. I guess I've read some AIDS stuff that avoids all that, but it's pretty hard to be in that territory and do superficial work. I mean the territory itself is just so complicated and layered, and it is about joy and terror and sorrow just all implicated with each other. You just can't take one thread out and not have the others in there. And I would say part of our work together was to make sure we kept all that in there.

Chris: The emotional, the spiritual.

Patti: That we helped each other negotiate that territory so that we were honoring all of that, and we weren't just telling the happy stories and we weren't just mired in the tragic stories; and we did pay attention to the trials and tribulations of daily life; and who's gonna feed the damn kids as well as some of the more dramatic. I mean it's also a territory where it's pretty easy to get high drama and in a cheap sort of way and end up doing a disservice to the women because of how easily it lends itself to soap opera sorts of stories.

Chris: I think that [was part of] our decision to include the data about the support group that was having a very hard discussion about race. You know we didn't want to, I mean, at a very practical level I wanted this book to inspire more support groups. So we didn't want to idealize it or imply that there weren't also these tensions and

Chris: And what I was most concerned about is that the women wouldn't understand.

Patti: Yes. And of course some did and some didn't as we found out in the member checks.

Chris: Some loved it, some understood it, and some didn't understand it, but it didn't matter. They skipped chapters [they didn't like] and others didn't like [the angels]. And that was the other great thing about Patti is if someone didn't like something, that wasn't a reason not to do it.

Patti: Right, articulate your arguments or whatever and then, if they still don't like it, maybe try one more time and then if they still don't like it; I'm trying to think how that would have worked with you and me. Well, what I think with the angels that you had some insistences, like you insisted that they be short. They were at one time those angel inter-chapters were two and three times longer. And Chris says, well, if you just have to have them in there then cut them down and make them as understandable as possible.

Chris: Well, and I was concerned. Like I didn't want it to become alienating to the nonacademic population. But Patti got that. I mean that we were writing to a diverse audience. She had probably a little more investment in one audience, and I had more investment in another audience but we wanted a book that would speak to both.

Walter: So if I heard that correctly the moments where there was just sort of very firm and a finite sense of jeez

challenges that these women had had in group with each other. There was a woman who came to the group who was very vocal in our data collection who was faking that she had HIV. Yeah, so there it was important to keep that real. We wanted these women to continue to be real to themselves—that was the best thing like when you read this you recognize yourself and that will help make the book a success. And that's where the member check [came in]. I think some of the process themes that were, really this is with hindsight, but I don't know if this was done other places. I've never asked you this before, but the big print at the top and our smaller print voices at the bottom...

Patti: I had a few models for that.

Chris: That just clicked. That just worked for me. That was like, wow, it keeps them most important.

that's not gonna work for me were so few and far between that when they actually happened each of you listened to the other and thought, "Oh, this is one of the few times. Okay. I have a difference of opinion about this, but I'm gonna let this ride and see what comes of it rather than pushing at it." So it was almost simpatico in the way that let these differences emerged in a deferential, respectful way.

Patti: I think that's very right and I was thinking, one of my big really life lessons was that if you're up against the wall with somebody, and it feels like you're in a stuck place, take a vacation. Engage with one another as well. You can [engage] at that point in time around it and then back off and let some time happen. And you call it my think tank, and one certainly does, hopefully not obsessively, but, you know, let it cook a little bit. Let it move around over X amount of time and then something will emerge. Some unstuckness will happen and, like you said, it will be better than what I would have done on my own or that if we would have [had we] just let it out [at each other rather than waiting]. Like one of the things was the title. Well, it was about the angels, too.

*Trust that Process: Enjoy the Collaborative Nature of Qualitative Research*

Walter: Are there any ideas or frameworks or things that you would like to keep in mind or that you would suggest others keep in mind were they to do this? Because the process itself sounds very emergent, that word has come up over and again.

Patti: I say be comfortable with the emergent nature of things. Don't feel like you have to have a lot of things set in stone. I mean, like when I was trying to get the book published, in a way that was a pulling together too, of format. You have to get a proposal together so you've got to have something, so you have to make some kind of a template. So that would be an example of the kind of forcing of the process. But there's like organic steps where you have to pull some things together.

Walter: And by organic steps you mean not something preplanned but things that come out and emerge?

Patti: Well, like the pulling a proposal together to submit to a publisher is an organic step in the process. But we had no idea at the front end what the format would look like. We didn't feel the need to.

Chris: No.

Patti: And we got a little research design together when you and I were talking because that was part of my passing inspection was you wanted me to submit a research proposal. It was probably like only two pages.

Chris: Right.

Patti: Two or three pages of a research design, but you wanted to see what I had in mind. So that forced me to put [my thoughts] down on paper. We certainly changed a lot of it, but it got the ball rolling and then the logic of the field, like the decision to do support group interviews, was emergent. We were gonna do one-on-one interviews. We didn't even think about support group interviews until we met with the Cincinnati group to come up with some questions that we were gonna ask in the one-on-ones.

Chris: I remember on the way back I said let's do group interviews.

Patti: It went so well we decided why would we break this frame.

Chris: Yeah, yeah. We were gonna do that, I forgot.

Patti: Yeah. So we did support group interviews and supplemented them with the one-on-ones, but we didn't do very many one-on-one interviews.

Chris: Which, again, I think just lined up with everything else.

Patti: Oh it was perfect. But we didn't know that at the front end.

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: So I would say that in a way the big thing would be to enjoy the emergent nature of qualitative research. Trust that process to steer you in good directions. And I want to say enjoy. I want to say be comfortable and curious and awake to it, and not anxious about not having a lot of it up front, cause if we would have a felt need to be real firm at the front end and then a felt need to stick to it, it would have been a very different project.

NEGOTIATING STUCK PLACES

*We were set up to be Quite  
Complementary*

Walter: Stuck places. The title and the angels are the two stuck places that you write about and they're the two stuck places that have come up [here]. What were some other stuck places that you remember if there were any? Or were those just two sort of places where that was just difficult to get around?

Chris: I think there were; I think they were so well resolved for a lack of better word that they're almost erased from memory.

Patti: I mean, I'm just trying to think where our decision trees were. We had decision trees around who would go to what group sort of scheduling because we did very few of the interviews together. Well, we did the ones here in town together.

Chris: And we did Cincinnati together.

Patti: And we did Cincinnati together mostly. Although you did a couple by yourself.

Chris: I may have done some extra.

Patti: And I went to Dayton pretty much by myself.

Chris: That's right.

Patti: And I went to Cleveland.

Chris: I think we went to Cleveland together.

Patti: We went to Cleveland at least once together.

*We Couldn't get the Goddamn Book  
Published*

Patti: Oh, can I talk about another stuck place? We couldn't get the goddamn book published. I couldn't find a goddamn publisher. That was terrible.

Walter: Was it the form or was it the topic?

Patti: It was the form. The topic was hot, but I sent to 13, was it 13 different publishers?

Chris: It was a lot.

Patti: And by then we had this [desktop published version] which usually when you can send them a mockup like that they just fall at your feet. So I sent to 13 publishers, and I sent them this and a little proposal and all that stuff, and they come back: oh if you just change your format and do this and do that kind of thing they might be interested. But they wouldn't take the book and it was Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg that took me by the hand, and Joe just died at 57 of a heart attack.

Walter: Oh, it is so shocking.

Patti: Took me by the hand at AERA and took me over to a handful of publishers and gave that personal talk with the publisher, you know did the bridge, and got me the contract at Westview.

Chris: And it had to be camera ready, remember?

Patti: Yes. Yeah, they made us pay. We paid big time for that book. Well, we

Chris: So we did maybe half by ourselves, probably half.

Patti: Yeah. That's about right. It sort of took care of itself because it just made sense whose life lent itself to what. Like going up there to see what's her name in the hospital, I wanted us together. I didn't want to do that by myself. Chris had been at many a hospital scene and I had not and there was no way, I don't know that I would have done that by myself. But going in there to interview her in the hospital with her family around her, I needed you to be able to do that. And I remember I was very quiet, in that interview; I did not say much. Chris definitely took the lead and that was another part of the collaboration. There were things that I didn't have the, I would almost say the strength for, that you were at great ease with. And then there were other times, I don't know, maybe some of our conference presentations or whatever, where I could take the lead, although you never seemed very nervous about that. Were you nervous?

Chris: No. No, I mean you've had many more opportunities to speak and be out and about, but no I've never felt nervous or second chair. I mean there was no question from the beginning who first author was gonna be so that was never [an issue].

Walter: Why is that out of curiosity?

Chris: I think for me it was, I don't even really remember there even being a discussion but...

Patti: Oh no, we did have a discussion.

paid for that one, but we got a grant for that one [the desktop version]. The West-view one just came out of our pockets.

Walter: Unreal.

Patti: So the publishers were not our friends in many ways, but by the time we got to here I was so desperate that our contract wasn't a very good contract. They acted like it was a big favor they were doing us to publish this book, and by that time we were willing to take it on those terms. So we just, I mean I knew that I wasn't gonna have any other offers, so we just signed. We signed pretty quick.

Walter: Have you thought about putting an updated version out?

Patti: Well, no one has approached me on that. And in terms of what it would mean to bring that group of women back together again. You know some of course are dead, but not as many as you might think because the new treatments kicked in.

Chris: Just as our book was finished the pervasiveness of crisis diminished significantly. We didn't realize this when we wrote the book, but our book really chronicles the first phase of the AIDS crisis in this country. Pre-antiretrovirals. I haven't said that word for awhile. So are you familiar with *Getting Lost*? There is a chapter that I write about some of the follow up, and I think there's things you write about, too.

Patti: Well, Linda B., one of the women has one of the little inter-texts in there.

Walter: That's right.

Chris: Did we have? Okay, you say what you remember then.

Patti: Well, I remember that we talked about it rather early on because as an academic...

Chris: No, we did talk about it. Absolutely.

Patti: And that's probably about as much follow up as we're prepared to do.

Chris: Yeah. And it's interesting it's not as grabbing because the intensity is not there at this point.

#### WOMEN AND HIV: SNAPSHOT BY REIGIONS

**Sub-Saharan Africa** — Sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest-hit region in the world. In 2007, there were 22.5 million people in sub-Saharan Africa living with HIV. Globally, 68 percent of all people living with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. Around 61 percent of all adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women. Most women with HIV here have been infected by their husbands or sexual partners. Nearly 12 million children under the age of 18 living in sub-Saharan Africa have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Many grandparents, who have lost all of their adult children to the disease, are left raising their grandchildren, many of whom also are HIV-positive. Fortunately, in most sub-Saharan African countries, HIV rates are stable or showing signs of decline. Prevention efforts appear to be having an impact in some countries. Coinfection with tuberculosis (TB), which is a major cause of illness and death in people with HIV, also is a big problem in this region. Here, roughly 50 percent to 80 percent of people with tuberculosis (TB) also are HIV-positive. Addressing both infections is an urgent need.

**Asia** — About 4.9 million people were living with HIV in Asia in 2007. Trends vary by region and country. Southeast Asia is the most effected, with the epidemic growing at especially high rates in Indonesia. New HIV infections had climbed by almost 20 percent since 2001 in East Asia. In China, roughly 700,000 people are living with HIV. About 2.5 million people in India are living with HIV. In many parts of Asia, HIV is found mainly in high-risk groups, such as sex workers and injection drug users. But in India, HIV has spread to the wider population, including women thought to be at low risk of infection.

**Caribbean** — The Caribbean is the second most affected region in the world. There were 230,000 people living with HIV in the Caribbean at the end of 2007. Nearly three-quarters of people with HIV in the Caribbean live in Haiti or Dominican Republic. Unprotected sex between sex workers and clients is a main cause of HIV spread in the region. Especially at risk are young girls, who commonly have relationships with older men, who because of their age are more likely to have HIV.

**Eastern Europe/Central Asia** — The number of people with HIV in this region rose in 2007 to about 1.6 million, 40 percent of whom were women. Nearly 90 percent of new HIV cases were in the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Injection drug use has fueled the spread of HIV in this region, followed by unprotected sex between men and women.

**Latin America** — In 2007, about 1.6 million people were living with HIV in this region, where HIV rates are stable. Unprotected sex between men is a main cause of HIV spread in many Latin American countries. HIV transmission between female sex workers and their clients is another major factor in the spread of HIV in this region. Widespread stigma, discrimination, and cultural issues keep prevention and treatment efforts from reaching at-risk populations in this region.

**North America, Western/Central Europe** — About 2.1 million people in North America and Western and Central Europe were living with HIV in 2007. Access to life-prolonging treatment has helped the numbers of AIDS-related deaths in this region to stay low compared to other parts of the world. Still, the United States has one of the largest HIV epidemics in the world, and certain populations are more affected. AIDS is the leading cause of death among African American women aged 25 to 34 living in the United States. Canada's epidemic is much smaller, with an estimated 58,000 people living with HIV in 2005. In Western and Central Europe the number of new HIV diagnoses has climbed since 2002.

Middle East and North Africa — In 2007, there were an estimated 380,000 people living with HIV in the Middle East and North Africa. Limited data here makes it hard to see patterns and trends related to the HIV epidemic. We do know that unprotected paid sex is the main way HIV is passed in some counties, while injection drug use is the way HIV is passed in other counties. Most HIV cases are found in men. But in some countries, more and more women are getting HIV as it is passed to them from men who pay for sex or use injection drugs.

Oceania — In Oceania there were about 75,000 people living with HIV in 2007. Papua New Guinea's cases account for more than 70 percent of HIV infections in the region, and the epidemic is growing at an alarming rate. Women are heavily discriminated against in Papua

New Guinea and high levels of sexual violence against women have been reported. Both paid and casual sex encounters are the norm, and there is generally no condom use. Unsafe sex between men is the main way HIV is spread in New Zealand and Australia.

Retrieved from <http://www.4woman.gov/hiv/worldwide/#d> April 20, 2009

*We were set up to be Quite Complementary (Con't)*

Patti: Just like I did with Walter here. I mean you want to see where does it go on the vitae and whose name comes first is always a big concern.

Chris: No, it was very upfront.

Patti: If I remember right, I suggested I be first because I was gonna end up writing. I wrote some proposals for funding. We were writing a grant; we got a little grant from Women's Studies. I was gonna write that. I knew I was gonna write the proposal for the book to the publishers, negotiate that territory. I knew that I would probably take the lead at least at the front end in terms of data analysis cause I knew how to do that and I was taking the lead in terms of I did all the transcriptions.

Chris: Yes.

Patti: At first we tried to hire transcriptions out, but that didn't work.

Chris: You got the transcriptions done and then I organized them for the book.

Patti: Jim gave us money to hire a transcriber but it didn't work. It just didn't work.

Chris: Yeah, a graduate student that just didn't work out.

Patti: So then I had to do all the transcriptions so then just as we sort of laid out, if I remember right, my argument was here's this sort of labor involved in the project and in my mind it makes most sense for me to be first author, and Chris said sure.

Chris: Yeah, and Patti has an academic career. I do not, and that may have been part of what worked in the whole thing. We were never ever competitors. We were never one ego over the other. We functioned in very different worlds with great respect for each other's world, but there was not a...

Patti: That is interesting. If we both would have been academics, would it have been different, a little more competitive?

Chris: It might have been a different.

Walter: Or if you had both been practitioners?

Patti: Or that.

Chris: Yeah, yeah.

Walter: Because then the questions about the sort of drive and things that we have [as academics to get things published] because you can let these things pass, but the second you go to work or you go to a conference you hear someone else is working on something. And it's not necessarily competitive, but there's a sort of [a feeling] like, oh nuts. There's this thing I really wanted and you get sort of inspired and you're constantly being reminded of that, and not being reminded of that it might have taken longer too.

Patti: And I do think because we had somewhat different worlds, that let us more easily [work together]. Like I remember that conference of doctors that we spoke at. What was clear to me was that that was your bailiwick. I mean, I was out of my element there. So whatever it meant for one of us to take the lead or the other one to take the lead there was not much debate about it.

Chris: It was like, please.

Patti: It was just so clear.

Chris: Yeah. So that might have been part of it.

Patti: Materially, we were set up to not be competitive. In fact, we were set up to be quite complementary

ON COLLABORATION: WORKING WITH RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

*Collaboration between Researchers:  
Ripeness, Timing and Friendship*

Patti: And remember we were taking that walk and you were hating that title and those angels and what were we gonna do about it and then we came up with the "The."

Chris: Mmm, hmm.

*Collaboration between Researchers  
and Researched: Romance, Layers,  
and Negotiation*

Walter: So it's clear that this is driven by the members of the support groups. On the other hand, in the introduction to the book, in its conclusion, and now a few times each of you has said that this is different from what the women

Patti: "The." "The." It was so simple.

Chris: I remember out walking and it came to me and I called you up and I said could you accept "Troubling *the* Angels?" And she said, YES! That's exactly how it went. YES!

Patti: Yeah, yeah. But I often think of that walk as that could have been a break that might have not killed the project or anything; we were too far into it by then but create a little bad blood that would have simmered there, but it just didn't.

Chris: It didn't, no. I never felt . . .

Patti: And I wouldn't say we learned to fight. I wouldn't say we learned to compromise. It was something else that was very good. Like I said, it was life [changing]. I mean, I do this with my girlfriend all the time now. When we run up against that brick wall, then we do that back away thing.

Chris: And our lives built some of that in. You know, there were times that I think we had the wisdom to back off. And other times it just kind of happened. And those pauses were probably good opportunities for more to emerge.

Walter: What I would like to know is a little bit more about the ways in which you were able to support each other in the complexities.

Patti: Hot tubs.

Walter: I heard about that; I read that.

Chris: Naked methodology.

envisioned. And it may not be the book that they envisioned so it seems like, on the one hand, there's this deep honoring of the women and their space and their words, and on the other hand its putting together is removed. I don't know if removed is the right word but somehow different from, with no connotation attached, that experience. And I'd like if you wouldn't mind talking about . . .

Patti: No, not at all. I think that's a really important one. I think that's the realities of doing the work is that at a certain point the researchers are making decisions if for no other reason than in terms of pulling things together to have somebody do a member check. You've got to do that first template or whatever you want to call it. We were not co-writing with them. We invited them in and there's as you know some poetry and a few essays and speeches and things, and we issued sort of broad invitations around more collaborative co-writing at the front end. But the message by and large was, "We're pretty busy dealing with our lives and don't have the time or the inclination to like analyze data and look for emerging themes and patterns and write up first drafts and experiment with textual format."

Chris: And it was a foreign language to most of the women.

Patti: Yes.

Chris: And their need to take care of their lives and their health I think would have precluded co-writing even if the group was populated by doctoral students.

Walter: Yeah and I thought naked methodology and I thought how clever.

Chris: Well, most people probably don't get naked in a hot tub with their clients either.

Walter: Probably not...

Patti: I don't know. Yeah, but part of me thinks that's feminists. That's not unusual.

Chris: That's true. Women colleagues will strip down and go into the hot tub together, that's for sure. But there was, yeah, there was a friendship developed and a friendship that I think will persist. A friendship that's supported our individual lives and changes that were occurring. When we got together we didn't just talk about the research, we talked about our personal lives. I was adopting a baby during this time and becoming a mother, and that was not something Patti was interested in doing, but she was wonderfully excited and supportive and never once said but you know what about our book. And so I think that the friendship and the support and the personal sharing we did what the women in the group did. It happened I think relatively easily.

Patti: That's actually a great example of the rhythm of the book. You could say that your adopting Elena cost us a year in that book, but it was so clear that you needed that to feed your soul and your life at the time that would then feed the book.

Chris: It did feed the book.

Patti: That the book was better for getting slowed down so that you could have that baby.

Patti: And there was one.

Chris: There was one.

Patti: And I remember going to her particularly thinking maybe she'd want to do something more collaborative. She said, "I'm doing my damn dissertation. I'm busy."

Chris: Another one was pre-med.

Patti: Yeah. Even the ones who might have had more background, they didn't want to. They were busy. So it became, I think, actually a very important statement about the romance of collaboration that often exists, you think you're issuing this invitation and it falls on busy lives.

Chris: And I think the women's trust in us had grown. One of the reasons this project worked is, from the outset at least, some of the women already knew and trusted me. There were other women that I met just as strangers in this process. But I think through the process of collecting our data, we did that very informally just like we're doing it today. And I can't think of any counter examples to this, but they came to trust that we were going to have integrity around the project. I think bringing them a box of books where their stories were evident helped. That this is taking longer than you [the women] thought; it's not looking like what you thought. I think, too, at some other level what happened in support groups is bigger and more than any one woman or participant, and the end product was certainly different than any one support group or bigger and broader than any one woman. But yeah, I think they felt they had personal relationships with Patti and I.

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: In the fruit is the ripeness of its own time. The project had the ripeness of its own time, in a way, even though we were under urgent pressure from the women. You know the decision to do the desktop published book was part of that urgency.

Chris: Yes. Oh that's good.

Patti: And I remember my immense sense of relief when we handed those mothers [the desktop published versions] out at Christmas two years into the project, like in '94, whenever it was. I could sleep again.

Chris: Yes.

Patti: And I thought, now I can slow down. Now if we're having babies and new affairs and whatever all of that can have its time because we've met really what the women [wanted]. The women had a book in their hands and that was what they really cared about. The later book, the orange book [the book published by Westview Press] they were happy enough with, but it was that first book, that white book [the desktop published version] that really mattered to them.

Chris: Yeah, yeah. No, that was a turning point where we had in a sense delivered to them.

Walter: On your promise.

Chris: Yeah. On our promise. In all honesty, I think timing, and this is something I'm learning from our conversation today, just how much timing

And I think they did to a degree.

Patti: Much more with you.

Chris: Yeah, much more with me, and Patti could kind of ride on my coattails in terms of entrée into the support groups but then established her own good reputation.

Patti: Well, I didn't screw up the opportunity that you offered.

Chris: You didn't screw up. And I rode on her coattails into the publishing world so we definitely brought different strengths to the project, but I think with the women it was, you know, I think they were guides. I think we couldn't honor that 100%, but we honored it enough that it kept working.

Patti: Well, and there was a rough spot or two that negotiating that with some sensitivity worked to create more possibilities. I'm thinking of, remember at the retreat where I didn't announce myself as a researcher that first night?

Chris: Oh yeah.

Walter: At the first retreat?

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: And I got called to account at lunch when what's her name stood up and said, I'll never forget that, she said I want all the helpers to identify themselves so she knew who was HIV positive and who was a helper.

Walter: Oh, right.

Patti: She said, "I want all the helpers to identify themselves."

was on our side in so many ways. And I think for me, and I do write about this, fortunately, I mean my time of being so fully invested emotionally, in hindsight, it needed to wind down. You burn out. And the fact that our project wound down and the AIDS crisis wound down and the need for me as a psychologist in this arena it changed and then diminished. That was good timing too because I couldn't still be doing the work I was doing then.

Patti: It was a young woman's gig.

Chris: And I think young but also just the intensity of it and the desperation of it and even the joy of it. I don't know that I could have continued and been a good mother. And that's certainly became the top priority as I became a parent, things shifted. But timing-wise it worked out fine because I was able to wind it down gracefully. I didn't have to quit. I didn't have to face quitting. It just wound down because the need diminished.

Patti: Organic.

Chris: Yeah, it was. It was so.

Patti: Yeah, I would use that word with my experience. It was all organic at a time when I had an enormous amount of energy for it, there it was. And by the time it was done I was starting to, well, I maintained my energy. Each phase was its own thrill. I remember when this [desktop published version] came out, that was about half way through and that was thrilling. And when this [published version] came out I was just beside myself.

Chris: And when I think about Peter Frame the physician at Cincinnati, I

Chris: That's right. She did.

Patti: So I stood up cause I was clearly one of the helpers.

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: And she was not overly happy about it.

Chris: She wasn't quite sure how you fit in.

Patti: No.

Chris: And I remember we had debated whether to announce you. We didn't know even for sure that we were gonna proceed together. I mean, it was looking good, but we didn't know because the retreat was the test and so we probably weren't as prepared. I remember we talked about it.

Patti: How should we announce ourselves?

Chris: Yeah, how should we announce ourselves? How should I announce you? How should we announce my role changing?

Patti: People just went around and said their names. So it got to my place and I just said, "Hi I'm Patti from Columbus," or whatever it was.

Chris: Yeah, yeah.

Patti: I didn't say, "I'm Patti and I'm here to maybe do some research if Chris decides I'm worthy."

Chris: And now we'll vote.

Patti: Yeah. So that would be one example and there was a handful of

mean, if he hadn't asked me to do this. [It] was innovative on his part that, okay, we're starting to see some women who are HIV positive, and could you do a support group? I mean, if he hadn't asked that, if he hadn't been caring and far thinking, then who knows, this probably wouldn't have happened. So there was a lot of good timing. For all that was awful about HIV/AIDS there was a lot of good timing.

Patti: For this project.

Chris: For us to do our work.

Patti: For this project and relationship to it, yeah.

Chris: It gave me opportunity to reflect on it far more than I think I would have been able to by myself or...

Patti: And you think in a way that sustained your work then in counseling?

Chris: Yes. I think it sustained my work.

Patti: You were able to maybe sustain yourself longer in that work.

Chris: Yeah. Well, and because while we occasionally helped each other with a personal problem, you know Patti was always, I mean you're solid. You're mentally healthy and I am too. So there was the opportunity, I think, to talk and share, whether we were there at the same moment or not, in a way that I didn't have to worry I would burden you because you were interested, too. And you were okay. You were fundamentally okay so I didn't have to be in a helper role ever with you. So that was probably a good thing.

others where it was a little confused. There was a woman at Dayton who, when we did the member check with her, she wanted to pull out, and the way that got negotiated kept her in.

Walter: How was it negotiated?

Patti: Oh, I said, "I'll come over, we'll go word by word through everything that I've used of yours. You can take anything out you want."

Chris: Was it Amber?

Patti: No, it was, God I'm forgetting her name, and I can't remember what we called her. She was the one that had two little girls and she was worried about those two little girls growing up, and she'd been around the block several times and she didn't want them to see. She'd gone through drug and alcohol counseling, and she'd sort of changed her life. But some of the stories that we originally had in the book were pretty rough and she didn't want her girls to read that.

Chris: When she was dead to be reading about that aspect of her life. And then Amber, she was a false positive.

Patti: Yeah, but she was thrilled to be. She was kind of a Bette Midler type.

Chris: She was. She wanted to stay in the book.

Patti: Even though she was HIV negative.

Chris: "Will you keep me now that I'm HIV negative?"

Patti: Yeah, but this other woman I just sat with her, and we crossed out

Patti: That might be a good point too in terms of we're both pretty strong, pretty psychically stable, so that you could go into that intensity, that sort of long term intensity, and, not that we didn't spell one another now and then, but we never worried that you'd fall apart or wouldn't be able to hold your end up in things, or that you'd be a burden on my life or whatever. There was never a minute of that.

Walter: So in a way you were able to go through the process because you were each other's support person implicitly or explicitly?

Patti: Well, and also we knew that each other were their own support system. I mean, the idea that you could lean on each a little bit because you knew it wasn't gonna be too much. I had other people leaning on me, and Chris had other people leaning on her. The last thing in the world either one of us needed was another person who was gonna be leaning on us that we were gonna have to carry through. And it felt more like a shoulder-to-shoulder going through it.

Walter: And were there moments so when the moments came where it was particularly difficult for each of you, did you have a tendency to reflect on that yourself? Each of you write about different moments where you had particularly difficult transcripts to go through or particularly difficult sections of things to go through.

Patti: Oh. I remember that time when you called me and, I'm trying to think. See, I was taking notes all the time so whenever Chris would call me I'd grab my notepad, and I'd start taking notes

anything she [didn't want in]. I just said, "I want to work with you in such a way that we can keep as much of what you're comfortable with as possible." So we went line by line, and she actually ended up letting me keep in more than I thought she would. We got rid of, I don't know, maybe a fourth of it, but three quarters of it she okay'd to go forward. And then of course I taped our conversation so then that became another conversation in the subtext was her and me negotiating what to keep in here. So it added another really rich layer.

Walter: That was one of the questions I wanted to ask you. You looked at groups in if I remember correctly Cincinnati, Columbus, Toledo...

Patti: No, not Toledo. Cleveland and Dayton.

Walter: Oh, I'm sorry, Cleveland and Dayton. Were there differences regionally between how people thought and talked about HIV even within the state?

Patti: It's hard for me to relate to the question regionally because the cultural makeup of the groups was different and that mattered more than regionality. The Cleveland bunch was mostly Latina. The Dayton bunch was mostly White. The Cincinnati bunch was quite a mix of White and Black, and the Columbus bunch was mostly White.

Chris: Mostly White, yeah.

Patti: So that mattered more.

Chris: I think we saw more similarities, and part of what we liked was that this was Ohio women. It wasn't California or Boston or even Portland. It was

on whatever we were talking about. But where something had been difficult...

Chris: I think it was when the baby died.

Patti: The baby, the mom with the baby.

Chris: The mom with the baby.

Walter: Which?

Patti: The one chapter in there, and actually, that was an add-in.

Chris: The Hispanic one.

Walter: Is her name "Lisa" in it?

Chris: Yeah.

Walter: Whose son is "Alex?"

Chris: Yeah, and it says they took him to Disneyland.

Walter: Honestly these are hard things for me. I was reading this; I'm on the plane crying. Both of the sections with children, are just, I'm so glad you included them, but I'm welling up just thinking about it.

Chris: It is hard.

Walter: Were those things that you wrestled with yourself and then share with each other? Or were these things that sort of you kept in your own world so you didn't burden one another?

Patti: I don't think we ever thought about, "Oh, I don't want to say anything, I don't want to burden Chris." That was never a minute's thought for me partly because I knew she was tough. She's a tough girl. And I did. Again maybe that's a very good example of actually not having to worry about taking care

Ohio. It was breadbasket women, and while they certainly were diverse in terms of their experiences and background they were all Ohioans, right?

Patti: And they knew each other. Many of them knew each other through the retreats.

Chris: Because we did these conferences together where they met each other.

Patti: Some of the Cincinnati women knew some of the Dayton women.

Chris: Yeah, so we encouraged them to know each other. And that wasn't because of the book necessarily. That was just my work was to get women from across the state together. So in the course of just the work I was doing and then the work we were doing they did know each other, or would ask about each other, or follow each other. But you know? You get these women together at a retreat and it was a damn good time.

of her. And if I needed to talk to somebody she'd be the first one I'd do it with because I knew she'd understand. And I knew that my burden was not gonna burden her somehow.

Chris: Like when you were testing.

Patti: Yes, that's another good example.

Chris: That's a good example that had various levels.

Patti: I was worried.

Chris: While it was unlikely, blah blah blah, you were worried. And I remember when we went to get the results.

Patti: We walked around the park.

Chris: We walked around the park when you got your results, and it was just that was personal then, oh you know you're okay. But there was a certain sharing of what women who are wondering about their status or men, but women in this case, what they go through. I mean, we couldn't distance entirely from this, one, because we need to know she was okay. And I had been tested earlier than that so I had experienced it, but you were tested during the course of the research, you don't mind that I say that?

Patti: Oh, no, no. It's in the book for God's sake.

Chris: Okay, I thought so. I just wanted to make sure.

Patti: But that actually would be a good one. I mean I look back at that and I just think of, that's what friends do. That felt more like just that's what friends do for each other.

*Don't Do it by Yourself: Suggestions for Doing Richly Complex, Reflective Work*

Walter: What would you say to other folk who wish to try and do richly complex, respectful, and reflective work like this?

Patti: I almost want to say don't do it by yourself.

Chris: Oh, I would definitely say you can't do it by yourself.

Patti: Find a buddy.

Chris: Yeah.

Patti: Well, you could. I mean I know people who have. But I think it actually results in a much better product.

Walter: When you have others?

Patti: When you have at least one other person involved.

Walter: As a researcher not just having the members be the other voice?

Patti: I want to say as a researcher, a co-equal. A strong co-equal. It's hard for me to think of doing it by myself.

Chris: I can't imagine doing it by myself.

Patti: And I could add especially with this intense of a topic, but part of me wants to think any topic can be intense when you start poking around in it.

Chris: Well, and I think there was, this is my orientation as a psychologist, but I think people grow from relationships and interaction more than from anything else. And the growth we did, you know we did some growth at so many levels, but certainly some of it was personal as well, and I wouldn't have wanted to have missed that part.

Patti: Without those conversations.

Chris: Yeah. I just can't imagine having done it by myself even if I had all the skills, I cannot imagine having engaged in that process by myself. But of course I felt that way from the very beginning.

Patti: And I would just ditto that. It would have been a much poorer project including the product. The product is such a production of our, and I don't want to use the word negotiation, but our partnership. It's like this is a little bit of an overstatement, but it's like a child that a couple raises. And that that child is so

much the product of that joint effort that you can't imagine what that kid would be if it would have been just this one or that one... Well Walter, this has been fun.

Chris: It has been fun. I feel like it's been a walk down memory lane.

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800-232-4636 (English/Español)  
TTY/TDD: 800-232-6348  
email: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)

National Sexually Transmitted Infections Hotline:  
800-227-8922  
En Español: 800-344-7432 (8a-2am, EST)  
TTY/TDD: 800-243-7889

Teen AIDS Hotline:  
800-440-TEEN (8336) Fri & Sat 6pm-12m (EST)

Retrieved 3/19/09 from <http://www.aidsquilt.org/hivaidresources.htm>

#### ONLINE HIV/AIDS RESOURCES FOR WOMEN

**The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS**

- o <http://womenandaids.unaids.org/about/default.html>

**Health Information for Women with HIV and AIDS from the Well Project**

- o <http://www.thewellproject.org/>

**HIVWoman.com**

- o [www.hivwoman.com/default.htm](http://www.hivwoman.com/default.htm)

**Women's AIDS Network**

- o [www.womens-AIDS-network.com](http://www.womens-AIDS-network.com)

**AIDS Memorial Quilt/The NAMES Project Foundation**

- o <http://www.aidsquilt.org/hivaidresources.htm>
- o Has a very large database of phone numbers/contact information on a wide variety of AIDS/HIV-related topics on the front page of their website.

**The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource**

- o <http://www.thebody.com/>

**US Government HIV/AIDS Information**

- o <http://www.aids.gov/>

**US Dept of Health and Human Services**

- o <http://www.aidsinfo.nih.gov/>

**AIDS Education Global Information System**

- o <http://www.aegis.com/>

**AIDS.org**

- o <http://www.aids.org/>

## 2. CO-OPTATION, ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

### *A Writing Story*

In this chapter, we explore the collaborative and complicated nature of what it means to write together. Writing as hermeneutic commentary (Ricœur, 1981), we reflect on a previously published article that we co-wrote<sup>3</sup>. The current interpretation found in this chapter exemplifies our ongoing collaboration regarding efforts to make sense of our experiences, as well as to better understand our views (and relationships) about teaching, learning, and working together. The purpose of this interpretation-upon-interpretation is to present the complexity inherent in our collaborating to conceptualize co-written texts between two authors—Brian, a former elementary classroom teacher who is now a university professor and his former fifth-grade student, Paris, a high school sophomore—whose social locations and positionalities are notably different in multiple dimensions (Bahktin, 1981).

When we constructed the original published piece, we collaborated through dialogue as writers, as theorizers to develop a cohesive narrative split text (Blumenfeld-Jones & Barone, 1997; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Oyler, 2001; Schultz & Oyler, 2006). In the original piece, we worked to keep Paris' voice prominent as we depicted his perspective and our shared understandings of how and what teachers and teacher educators could learn from their students. In this chapter, we present an additional dimension of split text analysis to the original essay. In so doing, we further make meaning, present tensions and ethical dilemmas, and write into the collaborative process of the previous text.

We see this chapter as an opportunity to become readers of our own written text as we continue to collaborate together. We believe that we are working towards thinking into the disruption about *What is text?* presented by Ricœur (1981):

Dialogue is an exchange of questions and answers; there is no exchange of this sort between the writer and the reader. The writer does not respond to the reader. Rather, the book divides the act of writing and the act of reading into two sides, between which there is no communication. The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading. The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer. It thereby replaces the relation of dialogue, which directly connects the voice of one to the hearing of the other. (pp. 146–147)

Through a doubled split text re-reading/re-writing, a “writing-story,” or the story of how the text was constructed, emerges (Richardson, 1995, p. 189). The authors’ writing-story—through hermeneutic commentary arranged in bold font in an *in situ*-side bar to the right of the original published essay—becomes a method of discovery (Richardson, 2001). This side bar commentary explains not only how parts of the original text were constructed, but also exposes complexities of the process and product of such writing endeavors.

As a result of our re-reading and re-writing, we interrogate spaces of collaboration addressing Ricœur’s dilemma of absence in the reading/writing of text as we try to explain, examine, problematize, and reconcile our previous work. With attention to literature on postcolonial knowledges and research (Coulter, 2006; Denzin, 2005; Hoagland, in press), dual/multiple relationships (Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005; Rubert & Holmes, 1997), and collective memory (Assman, 1988; Halbwachs, 1980), we wrestle with what it means to collaborate. Through our commentary, we honor the narrative sociologist Laurel Richardson’s (1995) challenge to “valorize writing-stories” in order to “extend reflexivity into our writing practices, demystify writing...and deepen and expand our writing/reading strategies” (p. 189).

A SHORTY TEACHING TEACHERS: ONE KID’S PERSPECTIVE ABOUT “KEEPIN’ IT REAL” IN THE CLASSROOM

Brian D. Schultz, Northeastern Illinois University  
Paris Banks, Chicago Public Schools

In Pedro Noguera’s (2008) critically acclaimed book, *The Trouble with Black Boys...And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education*, readers are challenged to boldly look to students for perspective on how to improve schools, teaching, and learning (pp. 61–71). Noguera contends that possible solutions to issues related to achievement gaps, school safety and discipline, as well as student motivation might be remedied by looking to actual children in classrooms. There is deep potential to transform education since, as he argues, “students may very well have ideas and insights adults are not privy to [which] could prove to be very helpful to improving schools if adults were willing to listen” (p. 69). Whereas Noguera makes a convincing argument, much of the current literature in

AGAINST COLLABORATIVE CO-OPTATION

Earlier in the week, Paris’ mother left me a voicemail urging me to get in touch with her son. Although, I had a wonderful relationship with Paris’ family and spoke with both his parents fairly regularly over the past five years since Paris was a student in my fifth-grade classroom, Paris’ mother never initiated a call. Something was wrong.

Just days later, Paris and I were sharing a plate of French fries at a local diner. We had several tasks at hand: putting finishing touches on the *Shorty* article as well as preparing for a talk to future school counselors we were giving together at a local university. Before getting started on our work, however, Paris detailed devastating news that one of his closest friends had been shot and killed in broad daylight directly in front his house. Paris told me that he was “dealing with it,” that his “momma was looking for a new

teacher education and practice in schools falls short of his thesis. If his contention were something new, radical, or even controversial it might be understandable, but the premise of looking to students for what is worthwhile has a rich, yet often ignored, history in American public education.

Why is it that such theoretical guidance over the century in curriculum history (Kliebard, 2004) and the history of public education in the United States we cannot find it in ourselves to leverage the insight, imaginations, and creativity of our students? Certainly one can easily look to John Dewey's (1897, 1916, 1938) detailed notions of involving learners in designing curricula and overall schooling experiences. Likewise, L. Thomas Hopkins (1954) questioning of what makes the curriculum, where he purports that classroom content was always developed by adults outside the classroom to (their own) unsatisfactory results, could be a starting point not only to rhetorically value student input in curriculum making, but also to embrace the possibilities. A rereading of Joseph Schwab's (1971) argument about curricular commonplaces could shed light on the value and necessity of students' interplay on teaching and learning. And, certainly looking to Freire's (1970) insistence on people's critical reading of their worlds could be paralleled to this plea for not only listening to students but also learning from, with, and alongside them as well.

Using the constructs from the rich history of curriculum studies outlined by the theorists noted above, it becomes evident that involving youth and tapping into their perspectives in teaching and learning has great potential for improving education and increasing young people's participation in school. Unfortunately, given current educational policy, top-down mandates, and prescriptive education,

place to live," and that "even though the police know who done it, nothing will happen cause them boys must of already left out of town."

"Even though it ain't right, this is just what happens between kids in this neighborhood," Paris explained, but assured me that he was staying out of the trouble and laying low at his auntie's house far from where the incident occurred.

This incident was so removed from my experiences. I tried to relate to it, but really struggled. Out of awkwardness and not knowing what to say, I suggested that we review our article and organize our talk for the future school counselors.

My feelings of awkwardness did not subside with the change of topics. If anything they became more apparent, as I read aloud the introduction to our article and Noguera's book title—*The Trouble with Black Boys...* I looked to Paris for a reaction, quickly offering an explanation of who this "Noguera" person was and why I had decided to frame our piece in such a way. Wondering if I was off-base in how I conceptualized *our* co-written text, I explained (somewhat convincingly) to Paris why I thought this worked for the article.

The irony swirled about us—caught up with/in Noguera's book title and the news that Paris had just shared. After a short silence, I began reading further, and then interrupted myself to ask Paris: *Why do you want to write with me?* His response was quick and succinct.

"This is something that I like to do," he said. "I especially like

student participation in curriculum development is seldom practiced or even seen as a possibility (Au, 2009; Schultz, 2008). Students typically have very little control over how they learn, what they learn, and are largely left out of discussions about what is considered to be worthwhile within teaching and learning (Schubert, 1997). This disregard for students' insights or perspectives regarding content taught and approaches to classroom dynamics are closely related to how many students are viewed in urban schools—merely as empty vessels for (someone else's) knowledge to be deposited (Freire, 1970). As Lipman (2003) and others argue, the structures associated with schools further this disconnect, and often as a result, either silence or push children—especially historically marginalized groups from urban areas—further away from the classroom (Au, 2009; Fine & Weis, 2003; Noguera, 2008). With the common belief that urban students are nothing more than deficits and pathologies (Ayers, 2004), and the (inaccurate) inclinations that the majority of this particular group of students does not value their learning, schooling reinforces the notions of cultural reproduction (Apple, 1995). Challenging these beliefs are youth that have a stake in their learning and a tremendous will not only to think about, but also to act on the challenges of (inequitable) expectations they face in schools (Schultz, 2008b). Looking to students for insight about what it takes to motivate and engage them has tremendous possibilities in transforming our schools. It rejects commonly held assumptions about urban youth, while it also has the potential of leveraging students' insights in “constructing a rigorous, practical, culturally and socio-economically sensitive, just, and engaging urban education” (Kincheloe in Kincheloe & Hayes, 2006, p. 3).

telling stories—you know getting people to think and all. You know I've got a lot to say. And, I don't get to do much in school.”

I accepted Paris' answer, but wanted to continue the discussion. On one hand, what Paris articulated reflected not only Noguera's message about listening to students, but also connected with the curriculum theories about starting with the students that were highlighted in the remainder of the introductory section. Yet, on the other hand, I was hung up on my positionality and the ethical dilemmas of writing with a former student. Perhaps this act was not serving Paris' interests. I wanted to avoid what Cathy Coulter (2006) insightfully refers to as “the colonialist trap of co-opting the study, the story, and the outcome for my own personal gain” (para. 3). Our writing needed to be what Paris wanted and what he believed. In this collaborative writing project, Paris needed to “own the research process” (Denzin, 2005, p. 944) in order to resist the potential oppressive nature inherent to our (former and ongoing) teacher/student relationship and our differing social locations. Working through my own “ethical sensibilities” (Coulter, 2006, para. 9), I wanted to answer broad questions with Paris related to: Who was benefitting from our collaboration? Whose interests were served in and through our writing? Who was our co-writing ultimately accountable to? And, who had authority over the text (Bishop, 2005)?

Paris and I discussed these questions and others not to necessarily come up with answers or conclusions but to think through

This essay is an attempt to capture one student's perspective and insight about teaching and learning in the hopes that others can begin to learn from and listen to youth's perspectives about teaching and teacher education. In this article, a former classroom teacher and his student from five years earlier reflect on what is meaningful, striking, and pertinent about the student's learning experiences—then and now. Together, the co-authors are embracing the idea that students not only have perspectives about what good teaching is and what good teaching looks like, but also have the capacity to affect change for how both future and practicing educators perceive, connect, and engage with their students. Inherent to the insight and emergent storytelling should be a challenge to the common assumptions and stereotypes about city kids. Through this discussion, the authors believe they are beginning to heed Noguera's (2008) call to listen to students for help with solving the dire problems our urban schools face.

#### NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENTING

The following narrative inquiry emerges as co-written text, storytelling, and reflection (Easter & Schultz, 2008). Although a singular essay is told through the narrative construction (Barone, 2007), the reflections are based on the two authors synthesis of ideas, telling, and "retelling and reliving of stories" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 33). Together the authors worked to keep the student's (second author) voice (and that of his peers) prominent and authentic, while also working to be accurate to language and form. For the purpose of this article, the accuracy referred to is meant to be reflective of the narrator's point of view, perspective, and language usage in an effort to capture the essence of his student voice as narrator, student, and teacher. His authentic voice,

uncertainty and complexity. As I asked Paris about the coloniality of knowledge, querying him with questions like "is this something you said or I putting words in your mouth?" and "do you want to change how that sounds so it is more real—more you," it became clearer to both of us that I was not co-opting his ideas, but rather was working to *think and act with* him (Hoagland, in press). He made remarks like "I'm feelin' it," and "I'm diggin' working this paper together." I suspect, perhaps, beyond these sentiments, the collaboration and working together was of value to Paris in other ways, too. I think our collaboration filled a void he describes of his schooling and the ongoing relationship with me—a former teacher that has been consistent in his life for years—is something we both hold in high regard.

Maybe the complicated nature of collaboration—where each of us gets what we need depending on circumstances—is where this commentary and writing-story is headed? Yet, despite attempts to co-author postcolonial research and accomplish hermeneutic commentary, I cannot deny issues of power and authority in general or as they pertained to our specific work. As Richardson (1995) reminds us, when developing a writing-story, especially a co-authored one, the question of "who has the power to have their will prevail" (p. 200) becomes especially important. I have to recognize that based on language, style, and the mere fact that this re-reading is written in my first-person singular voice, that I am dominating the

which isn't in conventional, standard written English captures more "truth" and wisdom because of his particular forms of expression that name ideas and concepts precisely.

The construction focuses on *studenting* (Fenstermacher, 1986; Gershon, 2008; Hughes & Wiggins, 2008; Schultz, Baricovich, & McSurley, in press). According to Hughes and Wiggins, studenting "involves a struggle to gain new and difficult concepts," with specific insight to "learning for the sake of learning," and where "an intrinsic motivation...to reaching one's highest potential are inherent and unquestioned" (p. 58). In the process of being and doing in school, studenting perspectives take on the analysis and introspection of teacher and student lore. Lore is a form of educational inquiry that is an interpretive, artistic practice both teachers and students engage in as they actively seek to learn from their own experiences in classrooms (Schubert, 1992; Schubert & Ayers, 1999). Constructing and analyzing lore affords readers an opportunity to gain insight through the "practical research and inquiry" that the students conducted "through daily practice" (Schubert, 1989, p. 282) within both formal schooling and informal learning experiences. Related to Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) ideas of "personal practical knowledge," the co-written text becomes the "nexus of the theoretical, the practical, the objective, and the subjective" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 361), helping to seek meaning about a particular phenomenon.

A multiplicity of data were used to inform the storytelling including: informal conversations in out-of-school learning contexts (Schubert, 1981); semi-structured, emergent interviews; dialogue between the authors; presentations scripts from the American Educational Research Association (2008) annual meeting and the Center for Civic Education (2004); as well as classroom dialogue drawn from a previous inquiry in which both authors were involved (Schultz,

collaboration with/ from my (academic and privileged) perspective.

#### CO-CONSTRUCTION AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

We had been fielding questions from the university class for some time. As I began to answer the next question, Paris gently interrupted, "I got this one." But, rather than simply answering the query, he posed a question back to the entire room. It was clear Paris was getting more comfortable explaining his perspectives about how classrooms could and should be in the course of participating in presentations to university-based groups such as this one.

Wondering aloud, Paris responded with a somewhat raised voice, "If you asking us 'bout that, what do you think about us writing or presenting together?" His reply echoed our earlier conversation at the diner concerning ethical dimensions of our collaborative work. Although I may have been more curious about it earlier especially in terms of co-opting his story, Paris showed his willingness and his interest in engaging in such a conversation.

Paris' approach was much different than mine would have been. The space, however, was his to respond as he wished. Our voices that night were in constant complement and contrast with one another; there were multiple perspectives at play within our answers to the provocative questions. Yet, it was clear to me, as Barone (2001) states,

[Polyphonic] exchanges serve as constant reminders of *otherness* in speech, as they celebrate a diversity of voices

2008). We present the data in the form of a narrative split text (Blumenfeld-Jones & Barone, 1997; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Oyler, 2001; Schultz & Oyler, 2006). The stories, in italics and captured from primary documentation, are followed by co-written analysis in the form of speculative essay (Schubert, 1991). This joint analysis maintains the student's voice as prominent so as to keep language and form in as authentic a construction as possible, leveraging the words and thoughts of the second author while the first author assembled the text for presentation here.

### “KEEPIN’ IT REAL”: AN INTRODUCTION

Teachers have got to make school exciting for students; they need to “keep it real” in the classroom. Keepin’ it real means that school connects with the students. It also means that school is related to the students’ lives. When school connects and relates to the kids, it reflects what is on the students’ minds in every way. When this happens, kids want to be in school and are motivated by what happens in the classroom. Unfortunately, too often school is not the place that kids want to be because there is a big disconnect with what goes on in school with students’ lives. It is no wonder that kids drop out, skip, or sleep through school. There are many reasons school does not seem right for city kids. Some of the reasons that kids check out of school is because of how their teachers approach what they are teaching, the content teachers actually teach their students, how teachers relate to the kids’ parents and neighborhoods, and how they view the kids themselves. Based on my experiences, teachers can do things differently in their classrooms. There are ways teachers can make school a place that gets students excited or as we call it, “geeked up.” Now

offering varied interpretations of phenomena (Bakhtin, 1975/1981). Often conflicting, the voices heard in the textual conversation may raise important questions about topics under discussion, challenging the reader to rethink the values that undergird certain social practices. (p. 157)

Looking back on this moment, Paris and I were co-constructing our verbal texts for the audience just as we had earlier in the article.

The heart of Paris’ response or problem-posing back at the questioner is a part of that very important notion of our relationship of doing scholarly work together. Paris’ response was complex. I suppose we were fortunate to have been engaging with a school counseling classroom as the adult students and their professor counterparts related our collaboration to ideas they had been studying—dual and multiple relationships between practitioners and clients. They encouraged us to think how our working with one another paralleled some of this conceptualization, especially in regard to the ethical dimensions of our shared inquiry.

In school counseling, “a dual or multiple relationship exists whenever a counselor has other connections to a client in addition or in succession to the counselor-client relationship” (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005, p. 3). Further, these kinds of relationships “occur when the professional tries to simultaneously fill two or more different roles.... [and] there are conflicts between the demands of the two roles”

this is where you, the reader of my writing, probably ask, "How can a teacher create this sort of interest for students in school?" Well it is not something that is simple, but it starts with some things that are simple. Let me explain.

*Problem-Posing, Letting the Kids Ask the Questions, and Just Doing Things*

*I was more than excited. I was on my first-ever airplane ride. Me and my old classmates headed to St. Louis with our old teacher to present to a bunch of adults about the last school year when my classroom fought for a new school building for our neighborhood. At the time I was in the sixth grade and at a different school, but the Center for Civic Education people wanted us to tell a whole slew of grown-ups about our experiences the year before in identifying a problem in our neighborhood of Cabrini Green and coming up with a solution. Before we got to St. Louis, believe it or not, I was just plain old excited, not nervous at all. I presented so many times about this stuff for over a year by then that I figured it would be the same old-same old...*

*What was nice about the trip was that it was not all planned out for us in advance by some old folks. We got to do the planning, just like we had done all the time the previous year. It really felt like a reward for all the work we were doing to help ourselves and it reminded me about all the activities we had done during our fight for a better school. This is important because we DID things during that year. We petitioned, surveyed, produced documentaries, and all sorts of other things during that year of school instead of just hearing about others doing it or reading about it in books....*

*After we got to explore the city and get some good eats, we headed to the big presentation. We got a proper-style intro by the head person from the Center for Civic Education while we were on center stage in*

(Rupert & Holmes, 1997, p. 661). Although this topic is mostly unexplored between teachers and students (Blevins-Knabe, 1992), thinking through our split text narrative account of Paris engaged in critical storytelling (Barone, 2000) is an important exercise to think about concerning the ethical boundaries of doing such work. Citing the American Psychological Association's ethical principles, Blevins-Knabe (1992) provides areas to examine when engaged in an activity that might push ethical boundaries emphasizing: "conflict of interests, impaired objectivity, impaired professional judgment, and increased risk of exploitation" (p. 152). No doubt our collaborative efforts touch on all of these aspects; I wrestle with these issues in terms of what our ongoing relationship entails.

Yet, when pushed about these ethical dimensions, Paris gives short responses that indicate he does not see a problem. "Don't matter none," "I enjoy it so what's it matter," or "it's fun to talk about these things" are all common assertions. At the same time, it is clear to me that he is readily in touch with the fact that some might think it is problematic or questionable, especially in light of the above anecdote in the classroom where he demonstrated his desire to interrogate such spaces. This same contemplation is exemplified when Paris told me that he "likes the way that our working together makes me think in different ways or think about things I am not used to thinking about."

*front of over 600 people. Me and my old classmates dusted off some speeches about our fight for what was right and our push in the 'hood of trying to get a better place to learn. Even though I thought it was going to be the same old talk, it was different. I had never been in front of so many people—and all them adults seemed to be paying such close attention to us—with them beady eyes watching us closely. Good thing we had practiced with the technology and our speeches because we could've really messed it up. As we told them our story, we showed them some video documentaries, movies, a PowerPoint presentation and took them to our website...*

*While the last one of my classmates showed off that website, I stayed busy taking some notes. I knew that once we finished our bang-up presenting job there were going to be some important folk that wanted to question us all about our project. Not only did I need to be prepared, I had some things on my own mind that I figured I would ask the audience—only fair, right? As the MC got up to the microphone to thank us and start allowing all them questions, I shortstopped her and got her to listen to what I had in mind. I whispered in her ear and convinced her to let me take the mike before all them questions were fired at us from the audience. After she heard what I had to say, she did get back up to podium but I think her message was a little different. She said, "instead of having questions from the legislators and all of you, Paris would like to address you all again."*

*As I watched how this went down on the video of this presentation, I laughed at myself. I was all pimped out—pinstripes and fancy shoes—not sure I would ever dress that way again! I was a real shorty back then, too, barely able to see above the podium. I cleared my throat before I began speaking to the crowd again and said,*

Paris' ideas resonate with what Ellis (2004) describes in discussing co-constructed narratives in that "relationships between people are jointly authored, incomplete, and historically situated. Connections hinge on contingencies of conversation and negotiation that often produce unexpected outcomes" (p. 71). I think these unexpected outcomes of our thinking together helps push us beyond "the ethical risk of the relationship" (Blevins-Knabe, 1992, p. 154) and help us to contemplate ethical risk questions related to learning, power, choice, objectivity, and consequences (Blevins-Knabe, 1992).

Given all of this contemplation in thinking through our approaches to collaboration, I am not sure where we are to go from here given our experimentation with voice in our writing (Creamer, 2005). The point is certainly not to arrive at a conclusion of any sort, but to muddle through our relationship(s) heeding attention to how Paris and I feel about the work that we are doing together. This collaboration can viewed as "text(s)...used... to decenter authority by acknowledging the co-constructed nature of most scientific inquiry, creativity, thought, or insight, regardless of the attribution in a list of authors (Creamer, 2005, p. 531). At the same time, it is important to recognize that we may very well be pushing boundaries in our work together as former student and teacher. Some may be skeptical. But, together (although I acknowledge that I may be the initiator of such theorizing that Paris and I do together), we believe/think

*“Before you ask us any questions, I have a few questions for all of you!”*

*The audience snickered and laughed at what I was saying. But, y’know I think that kids should be able to ask the questions that are important to them. So, I repeated the same thing again and then started to read off some of my notes that I took while my classmates were presenting minutes before. The audience responded with some props when I asked if they liked what we had done. But to be honest, I don’t think that crowd understood what we was all about. As they continued their hoorahs and fast claps, I talked over them. This quieted them down real fast. I wanted them to get our point. I said,*

*“It is fine and good that y’all think we did good work, cause I agree, we did. Thank you. But, how you gonna help us? You know it costs a lot of money to get a new school, and kids can’t go to schools like our bootleg, old one. I am not saying we want your money now, but when you leave out of here, I bet there are schools just like ours in y’all cities. What are you going to do to make a difference for them kids and them schools? You can’t just think we did good, clap a lot—which I like by the way—and then not do something in your communities. Think about it.”*

*-Paris Banks, Keynote Address, Center for Civic Education National Conference on Project Citizen, St. Louis, Missouri, 2004*

First off, how teachers teach is real important. The best experiences I have had in school were when the classroom was based on doing activities. When I got to actually do things rather than just hear the teach talk about them, the learning was much more interesting to me. In classrooms where kids got to experiment, I was always involved. But, if I had to sit still, with my hands folded on my desk, and (supposedly) listen,

that honoring and paying attention to a youth’s perspective about teaching can have profound possibilities in not only thinking about collaboration, but also in their capacity to influence teaching and learning in schools.

#### COLLABORATING VIA COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Paris named several possibilities: “How ‘bout the time we were all at O’Hare airport practicing our speeches;” “We could write about being on the street in NYC before we went live for the national radio show;” “Or, what do you say ‘bout them long car rides in traffic?”

We were attempting to come up with a “perfect” story that would illustrate how our storytelling—the narratives that we constructed for the *Shorty* article—could be understood in context. As we brainstormed potential ideas, we also talked about complicated questions we thought others might wonder about: How was it that we recalled and remembered the same things? How could we present a unified voice when we were hyper aware that for every shared experience over the past five years, we responded and reflected in markedly different ways? It made us ponder other complex issues: Were we remembering the past correctly? Or, better yet, how were we helping each other in our remembering?

Through our brainstorming, we came to understand that our attempts provoked many ideas and recollections in and of themselves. We were, in fact, engaged in the process of building what the French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs (1980),

I did not pay any attention to that teacher. This should be of no surprise to teachers, but some still need to hear it out loud because I have come to realize that most of my teachers talk at kids rather than with them. And, most don't listen to them neither. Everyone knows it is boring and makes you sleepy to have someone lecture to you for hours on end.

To build on this idea, I think one of the biggest problems is that so many teachers think that kids don't know what they are talking about and don't know anything. This is the farthest from reality. My friends and I know a lot, but almost all my teachers treat me as if I am an idiot. I know that many of my teachers judge me before I even have the chance to speak in the classroom. They draw conclusions by how I dress, or the friends that I hang out with in the halls—I can hear them muttering under their breaths that I must be some drug dealing, gangbanger. It amazes me about what they do not know. This is bogus 'cause I know I am smart but you would never know it from the way the teacher approaches learning or treats me in the classroom. This is one of the worst things about schools. It seems like most teachers are always jumping to conclusions about their students. And, when a teacher makes a mistake and the kids try and correct it, they don't want to hear about it.

Since I have been a little kid, I have wondered why school is like this. It seems that school is all about memorizing stuff rather than really trying to learn things. Just cause someone can recite something does not mean they know it—you know I can remember stuff, just ask me that same old question us kids always be hearing: How is it that you can learn all them hip hop lyrics but not learn my history facts or math equations?

My idea is to make the school all about the kids. Asking the students in your

calls collective memory.

This idea generation was very similar to the way we had developed previous narratives together. We had helped each other think about prior events and detailed the perspectives about what we individually experienced. Even though we might have had differences in our viewpoints or disagreements about how something transpired, we shared specific thoughts about what had happened. In spite of such possible differences in perspective, we were able to “agree on the essentials that permit us to reconstruct a body of remembrances that we recognize” (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 22). As we further teased out various anecdotes, our “confidence in the accuracy of our impression increase[d]” since it could be “supported by others’ remembrances” (p. 22). It was in the chronicling of our lore and looking to documentation of past events that we “conceive[d] their unity and peculiarity through a common image” (Assman, 1988, p. 127).

Rather than picking an “essential” story, we decided it was more appropriate to describe our dialogue—this very discussion—as it helps us to better understand our collaboration and, thus, may shed light on these collaborative ways for others. Our co-constructed stories, including this writing-story, were created because “a great many of our remembrances reappear because other persons recall them to us” (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 32). It is in these actions of sharing, of working and thinking together, that we find the potency in our collaboration. These co-created

classroom what they think is important can make it fun for everyone. Let the kids do things. Let them make things. Let them build and even break things. Kids will pick challenging ideas and concepts if they are given opportunities because they know that they will never get better by just picking something easy. Kids got a lot of great ideas but it always feels like no one wants to hear about them. When kids get to choose what they want to learn about, they can be as creative as they can be. If they are focused on something that is important to them, they want to represent well. This means that not only will they put in a lot of effort, they will work hard at it make sure they understand it from all directions. They will make it look cool with technology and art because they know that it will help them in understanding what they are studying.

Bottom line: school is usually all about what the teacher wants to teach, or at least, what they are supposed to teach. But what if this little thing was different? Kids have lots of questions that are important to them, just like I was ready with questions after our presentation. What if teachers let the kids ask the questions in school instead of always being the ones asking the questions? What if they did activities that were relevant to the kids' lives instead of just reading or hearing about them? While I have been in schools for what seems like forever—actually shuffled around from various high schools and alternative schools recently—I have had some experiences particularly in elementary school where kids were asking questions that changed the way I think about learning and school.

*Community, Parents, and Getting to Know the Students*

*Ann was straight up about kids and education and...demonstrat(ed) that classrooms do not have to be only in school but can be*

*perspectives have power to affect others' views on who has the capacity to be a teacher and what we can learn from students (including our own). Through our narratives, we "transformed the text into a site where two separate approaches—styles, voices, personae—were co-existing" (Richardson, 1995, p. 199). We transcended boundaries of audience, approach, and method through our collaboration in interpretive inquiries.*

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part of the community just as the community should be part of them....

Growing up in a place like Cabrini Green there weren't many people that cared about us kids other than family. The Greens, as we called our housing project, was a rough ghetto neighborhood where you really got to be careful in every part you go. When I met Ann, I came to realize that there were people outside in the world besides family that care about kids. She did not care about where we were from, how bad our neighborhood was, or anything else, she just cared about what we were doing to get a better place to learn. Our classroom ended up being not just our teacher and us, but we got other people involved. These other people, like Ann, gave us some wonderful ideas that we would never have thought of doing. For me this made school different than ever because people with fresh ideas and experiences showed them to us fifth graders. This made our subjects in school much more exciting because it was not just using books and dictionaries, but getting other people's thoughts. To further describe, Ann's involvement in our classroom showed me that there are different ways everyday folks can get involved in schools without even having to come to them.

-Tywon Easter, *Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy* (Easter & Schultz, 2008, pp. 70–73); *Interactive Symposium, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, 2008*

Just like Tywon said how it is really important to get the community involved in urban classrooms and to get classrooms involved in the community, I am here to tell you about how important it is to get parents involved in the classrooms. Getting our parents involved in school is so important. My teacher used to call my house every week! At the time, I thought it was too much—Mr. Schultz is calling again—but he

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*was not calling to tell bad news and it was really a good thing.*

*I think most teachers only call kids mommas when their kids are in trouble. This is not good. If teachers call parents regularly and tell what is happening in the classroom the parents can support the teacher. They want to support the teacher. Parents should be involved all the time and in our case it was good because most of the parents really got involved in our cause. I think too many teachers think that city kids' parents don't care about their kids' education. This is just plain wrong.*

*My momma really cares about what I am learning, why I am learning it, and what she can do to support help me. Without my teacher inviting to get her involved she could not help out. An example of this was when my mom took off work to travel with us to present a conference out of town.... And now here in New York, is another one of our mommas...So the bottom line—make sure you find ways to get the parents involved. They do care! They can help!*

*-Kaprice Pruitt, Interactive Symposium, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, 2008*

Getting to know the kids in your classroom is extremely important. Really, it is all about respect and seeing the kids as having something to offer. In all the years that I have been in school, the teachers seemed never to care about learning what the kids are all about or what interests them. Teachers never understood my friends or me, they only talked to my parents when there was trouble, and they certainly did not want to come into my neighborhood. They even thought my parents were trouble! There are a lot of different ways that a teacher can do better by the kids in front of them.

If teachers got to know the kids' interests and learned about them, I think

Schultz, B. D., & Oyler, C. (2006). We make this road as we walk together: sharing teacher authority in a social action curriculum project. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36(4), 423–451.

school could be a better a place. Most of my teachers really never knew me. Most don't have a clue and did not try to find out what was important to us kids. To them, I was just another Black face in the class. To them, we all blended together. No distinctions by attitude or behavior or smarts. This makes for a bad situation. A teacher ought to want to know about his or her students. Teachers and students need to have a connection, but this won't happen if they don't even try to know each other. Stated differently, if the teacher gets to learning about the students in their classrooms, they can make the kids want to be in school much easier. For instance, when I get to know my teacher and have a personal relationship with him or her, believe it or not, I actually want to be in school. Just check my attendance record; it shows clearly which teacher made that effort and which teachers did not. With a connection, I actually want to be around in school. Unfortunately, most of the time I really don't care to stay in school cause my teachers have no idea what I am all about.

I think part of it is that teachers see themselves as different than the kids in their classrooms. This is especially true in terms of the teachers working with the students' parents. It always seemed weird to me that the teachers might be the same age as the kids' parents. They don't want to build relationships with the parents. And, what I see almost every single day is that teachers are always putting it on the parents when some kid gives them a problem in they classroom. I just gotta ask all the teachers: What are you doing to make the parents feel welcome, like they can be a part of the conversation in the school or the classroom?

Learning about the neighborhoods that the kids come from is something that might help teachers in getting to know kids in

their classrooms. So many of my teachers think that the kids are bad because they come from a bad neighborhood—or should I say, a supposedly bad neighborhood. Most of my teachers did not grow up in the ghetto. Not only that, most had never set foot in one before. For this reason, I think that teachers see themselves as different or even better than us kids. They think the ghetto is so terrible. They see it as dangerous. They are scared of it. All this makes some of them believe that us kids are terrible, dangerous, and scary. I am not saying everything is fine in the hood, cause its not, but there is distance between many teachers and me cause they see me as different. It just goes to show that most teachers no so little about what the projects and the kids in their classrooms from the projects are all about.

Teachers need to understand that because bad things are happening in a neighborhood does not mean that everything in that neighborhood is bad. To tell you the truth, everybody that is from the projects where I grew up in is like a big family. We all have each others' backs and really do care about each other a lot. My advice is that teachers should sometimes go into our hood with their students so they can begin to learn about us through our neighborhood. I am not saying that they should come in all the time, but if they even visited a little, they would get to see what our lives are really like—not just what the inner city is like on TV. If teachers got this kind of first hand experience, I think they would see us as people just like them, people that have to put up with a lot. From this sort of experience, they may begin to understand their students and the neighborhoods where they teach better.

To be honest, I believe that kids really can teach their teachers—a lot. My hope is that if you have gotten this far in reading what I have to say, is that maybe, just

maybe, you will try some of the things I've been thinking about here. I bet school could be a better place for everyone—students, teachers, parents—if kids got to ask the questions; if kids got to have real life experiences in schools; if kids were not immediately looked down upon because of their skin color or how they dressed or what crew they hung with. I cannot encourage you enough to listen to the young folk in your classrooms. Let them ask questions. Go to their all communities. Spend some time with they parents. Not only will you learn something, maybe you will make that connection to them by letting them teach you. Maybe you could keep it real.

<sup>1</sup> This extended quote comes from the Perspectives section of an issue of *Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy* (2008) titled: Collective Memory, Curriculum Studies, and a Scoffing Dragon: Celebrating the Life, Love, and Legacy of Ann Lynn Lopez Schubert. Tywon refers to the ongoing relationship he and his class had with the outside community and in particular, Ann Lopez Schubert during a previous school year.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Debra Freedman, Cathy Coulter, Jake Burdick, Jenny Sandlin, and Erin Mason for their insight and feedback on earlier drafts of this chapter.