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USER JOURNAL TITLE:
IYU CATALOG TITLE: Qualitative inquiry
ARTICLE TITLE: Gildersleeve and Kuntz "A Dialogue on Space and Method in Qualitative Research on Education"
ARTICLE AUTHOR:
VOLUME: 17
ISSUE: 1
MONTH:
YEAR: 2011
PAGES: 15-22
ISSN: 1077-8004
OCLC #: 30868900
CROSS REFERENCE ID: 73682981
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BORROWER: **IWA :: Main Library**
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Qualitative Inquiry 2011 17: 15

DOI: 10.1177/1077800410389440

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Qualitative Inquiry
17(1) 15–22
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DOI: 10.1177/1077800410389440
http://qix.sagepub.com



Ryan Evely Gildersleeve¹ and Aaron M. Kuntz²

Abstract

In this article, the authors critically examine the use of space in education research and illustrate how spatial analyses of education reframe persistent educational problems in productive, actionable ways. The authors juxtapose critical spatial analyses with traditional temporal analyses. The authors approach the knowledge-construction process *in dialogue*, emphasizing the spatial identity-markers of the historical moments and social spaces within/through which they investigate these ideas. The authors problematize traditional temporal notions of education research and illustrate how educational problems and research practices might be reconceptualized through a dialogic process. Cumulatively, the authors hope that their dialogue will promote understanding of how space matters in education research through dialogic knowledge construction.

Keywords

dialogue, space, time, critical inquiry

The purposes of this article are to critically examine the use of space in education research and illustrate how spatial analyses of education reframe persistent educational problems in productive, actionable ways. We juxtapose critical spatial analyses with traditional temporal analyses. We situate our analyses in the field of education research because that is the field where each of us participate in critical social inquiry. However, we believe problematizing the temporal and spatial in education might also prove useful for other fields of social research. Traditionally, educational researchers have relied on temporal frames through which to develop, actualize, and interpret their studies (Kuntz, 2009). Consequently, educational research at all levels remains dominated by, for example, developmental models of student learning, individual identity construction according to specified timelines (e.g., tenure, on the tenure track), and a linear sense of educational progression. More recently, postmodern educational scholars have been influenced by the “spatial turn” in cultural studies and cast a critical eye upon how such temporal frames overshadow other spatial analyses. Turning from the temporal to the spatial affords researchers a more layered, dynamic, and nuanced investigation into processes of learning as well as representations of meaning making.

We approach the knowledge construction process *in dialogue*, emphasizing the spatial identity markers of the historical moments and social spaces within/through which we investigate these ideas. We problematize traditional temporal notions of education research and illustrate how educational problems and research practices might be reframed and reconceptualized, spatially, through a dialogic process

between the two authors. This process relies on a recursive practice of question, response, remediation, and repair (in no particular order and illustrated below). Put another way, our dialogic process and representation afford us the opportunity to take risks in our theorizing, change our minds, make mistakes, and continually build on each others’ understandings while informing and reforming our own. It is inquiry situated relationally. Cumulatively, we hope to complicate understandings of how space matters in education research through dialogic knowledge construction. Thus, though our dialogue is presented linearly, it developed through a series of electronic interactions that allowed our dialogue to advance outside traditional progression; our conversation folds back on itself, allowing for recursive development and more dynamic representation of ideas.

Dialogue as a Mode of Inquiry

In their book, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*, hooks and West (1991) used their personal dialogues

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as an illustration of their analytical process and meaning making, effectively engaging in a project of spatialization. Within our own work, we have found promise in emphasizing the spatial possibilities inherent in dialogue, an heuristic that emphasizes the fluid nature of knowledge construction without the necessity of a fixed product. We follow this tradition as hooks and West claim, "Dialogue speaks more intimately to people's lived realities" (p. 2). Such assertions gain additional meaning when overlaid with Massey's (1994) insight, noted below, that lived realities are inherently fluid and develop in a simultaneity of multiple spaces. Dialogue allows us the opportunity to map our analyses in a manner congruent with the theoretical and conceptual framework that critical postmodern spatial theorists promote. Rather than simply dictating the progression of a conversation, which relies on the temporal notion of thought, our dialogue serves as a mapping out of the ideas at stake in our arguments.

Furthermore, this mapping allows us to share the space in which our analyses occur: where they conjoin, depart, affirm, and differentiate, not only from traditional temporal notions of research but also from each other's uses and understandings of space in education research. Within traditional scholarship meaning is demonstrated through the development of a coherent narrative, one that avoids disjunctures and "flaws" in rhetorical progression. Within the contexts of our own work, our dialogue is an engaged collaborative effort, calling forward multiple perspectives open to change even as we work towards change. In this way, dialogue values difference as much as it does consensus, disjuncture as much as cohesion. Our dialogue is asynchronous, meaning we did not engage in it face-to-face, or during the same physical time as one another. Rather, we engaged in this dialogue over a series of written exchanges, with each exchange building on the previous, adding to the multiple strands of our communication. At times we remediate each others' understandings. In this way, our dialogue was coconstructed in a variety of spaces and times. We sought multiple and contingent meaning over finite definition and a layered process that made the development of such meanings visible. At other times, we repair our comments in light of the other's insights. This strategy allows readers to enter our dialogue, inserting their own lines on our shifting map of our spatial analyses.

In using dialogue to generate and represent our understandings of space in educational research, we draw from Bakhtin's work on dialogue and dialogic process. For Bakhtin, all speech is in dialogue with other texts—literary, social, aesthetic, and scientific—always drawing from and contributing to the meaning making available from these pluralistic combinations of understanding (1981, 1986). As such, our text operates as a dialogue between us, Aaron and Ryan, both in representation but also in its sourcing of understandings from other texts. These texts include formally cited research as well as our collective knowledges from our respective

research projects, participants, and daily lives. Each act upon another, changing what each can mean or be in any given context. More important, we hope our texts make contact with readers' texts, each informing the other. In this way, our dialogue seeks to promote a living understanding of space in education research.

In accordance with Bakhtin's notions of dialogue and dialogic process, we have not sought a dialectic understanding of space. That is, we strive to work against Hegel's (1974) notions that ideologies can be merged in synthesis to create a new compromised tension or understanding. Rather, we engaged in a dialogue that can help achieve, as Bakhtin notes "a deepening with the help of other meanings . . . deepening through expansion of the remote context" (1986, p. 160). Bakhtin's spatial metaphor of depth foregrounds the spatial properties of dialogue. We present our dialogue asynchronously so as to exacerbate our resistance to synthesis and our commitment to a constant rebuilding of understanding—the infinite interpretations available to any symbolic system, according to Bakhtin. Our asynchronous representation—outside of a discrete chronology, but operating from a tenuously chronological endeavor (i.e., we started with a single e-mail and ended after a single e-mail, yet some meanings were clearer earlier and others became more crystallized or complicated over time)—underscores our commitment to dialogic contact, wherein texts live in contact with other texts, joining these texts to our dialogue. To be clear, we resist the authoritative word.

The dialogue we issue to our reader is our meaning making of how space matters in education research. It lays bare our consternation of meaning making. It re-presents that asynchronous, disjointed, yet remarkably and tentatively cohesive space of dialogic inquiry that we inhabited as we began to make sense of space in our respective—and shared—projects of critical education inquiry. Thus, our dialogue captures core agreements and differential disruptions that prove useful in illustrating ways that spatial metaphors promote pluralism in education research. As such, we present our dialogue below without demarcation of the temporal ordering of our knowledge construction, although we do indent sections that were not directly in response to its preceding section. This indentation can perhaps create a sense of bewilderment, which we enjoy and invite. Oppositionally, for the benefit of clarity, we assign our names to those sections of the dialogue that we instigated, though most meaning occurs in the interaction, the convergence of dialogue.

AK: Hi Ryan. As you know, I link conceptualizations of space to actions performed within space—daily practices. I'm interested in interrogating daily practices because I believe they reveal much about

commonsensical ideals—those things we implicitly take for granted and, consequently, fail to critically understand.

RG: I whole-heartedly agree. In my own work, I call these cultural practices (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Focusing on cultural practices as a unit of analysis affords a genetic analysis of human activity—how our activities have come about over time and the ways that we’ve organized ourselves as human agents within material constraints.

AK: I like this notion of producing a “genetic analysis.” The gene metaphor works well because it connotes both the passing down of traits through time, and makes room for genetic deformity—what might be understood as deviance. This is also a spatial metaphor—the mapping of DNA (double helix model) as well as the placement of deviance on the periphery of normative relations. Science also seeks to locate and isolate the deformed gene and to produce various technologies to normalize the way in which that gene is articulated (the shift from the genome—gene itself—to the phenome—way in which the gene is expressed) . . . something more to examine as the metaphor plays out, perhaps.

AK: And, of course, the recognition of some genes as normal, others as not, is an historical construction up for debate. And the terms of that debate often reveal much about our society.

RG: Any genetic analysis, then, would seek to understand the constituent parts of the activity, yes? Mapping them (as in the double-helix model) to make sense of both their articulation, or what might be considered their meaning, and their expression, or what might be considered their practice. Deformity then, is actually what we’re most interested in—deformity as adaptation; deviance as asset—because that is where-when tension usually resides. And where there is tension, there is an opportunity for learning.

AK: This is, of course, old news.

RG: Yes, my friend, but daily practices don’t inherently consider the spatial influence that they are subject to *and* that they influence, dialectically.

AK: Very important point, I think, the dialectical relationship between spatialized daily practices or cultural practices and the social spaces in which they are performed. I think of this as the difference between space (social) and place (material).

RG: On this I know we agree. Despite calls from other geographers to reverse the rhetoric, I think it is important to distinguish along these understandings. After all, all places are spaces, yes? But not all spaces can be said to be places, no?

AK: I think what lies behind all of this (dynamic intersection of space, place, daily practices, processes of socialization . . .) is an analysis of embodied experiences that we often miss in educational research.

RG: There is far more emphasis on a purely cognitive notion of “knowing” in education. Most scholarship ignores the “knowing labor” performed by the body, the heart, and the sacred.

AK: I appreciate your language here—“knowing labor” as inclusive of body, heart, and the sacred. In my own work, I’m trying to understand a sense of “Academic Embodiment” because when I talk with faculty activists they often note visceral effects of their work. They note the importance of *connection* in their activist work as well as the *isolation* of faculty work within the academy (Kuntz, 2009, 2007). They try to make sense of this disconcerting difference between their often bifurcated worlds, and it produces visible stress. I’ve noticed that the campuses that I’ve been on have begun to lose public space—places for informal connection have slowly disappeared from campuses, it seems. Faculty and grad lounges are turned into individual faculty offices for growing departments (to meet the needs of a growing population of students, accepted to campus to meet the needs of increasing budgetary needs) and, more generally, public space on campus is becoming privatized.

RG: What about online and other digital technologies that afford new kinds of space for collaboration and connection? Although I suppose most of these are still formalized—distance education technologies and social networking sites all have formal rules and regulations that govern the activity. How are these rules similar or different than the rules that physical artifacts (e.g., lounge chairs and tables) or social artifacts (i.e., naming a room a lounge) mediate?

AK: So you need to “rent” space to hold meetings on campus. It just seems that there are less places for informal public collaboration. This all has an effect on how faculty and students engage with the space of the academy—it increases isolation and distances collaboration. Yet, we have a sense that the work of the academy is very much in your head—distanced from your body. Way back in 1973, Sturmer wrote of the problematic focus on faculty represented in rational and linear ways that overemphasize their “book-oriented lives” (p. 75), as though researchers need not concern themselves with studying the material or social aspects of faculty lives.

AK: So, I suppose that's where I'd like to start—embodiment. We know that there is an implicit link between our interactions with the material world and cognitive understandings of our social world. In class, I often talk about business men and women who literally *step over* homeless men and women and literally *do not see them*. That is, if you were to ask them how many homeless people they encountered on their way to work, they often would say, “none.” In this sense, the embodied experience of this worker didn't include, didn't make space for, encounters with the homeless (or if it did, they didn't distinguish between a homeless man/woman and a stop sign on the street—they might recognize both are there and work around them, but not fully incorporate their presence into their consciousness). When we create studies that emphasize the temporal, we neglect embodied experiences that occur within material environments.

RG: Could you make this link between the temporal and the ignorance of the embodied more explicit for me? How is the embodied ignoring of the homeless in your example moving beyond a temporal lens, as the story you recount unfolds in a temporal trajectory?

AK: Good question—let's see if I can make a go of it. Part of what happens when we read the world temporally is that we strip the spatial from cultural ways of knowing. Consequently, in very real ways, the homeless people in this example do not actually inhabit any legitimate space—they are literally invisible. No wonder they are not seen, recognized, or remembered by the worker on the way to his or her work. They are an absent presence.

RG: I'm with you now, I think. I'm captivated by this notion of an absent presence. It could help explain a great deal of marginalization that criticalists have struggled to really name in education. It could be helpful in defending claims of marginality as well.

AK: Interpreting the world through temporal frames also, I think, encourages a progressively linear understanding of the world. That is, as time moves ahead, things progress, building on what came before, and society progresses (think here technology becoming more advanced—smaller phones and cooler iPods—or society becoming more culturally refined). All of this coalesces in particular world views, daily/cultural practices, that lead to the embodied misrecognition of the homeless. The worker's movement to work is most often culturally marked via time—governed by schedule—and not space. We might read space in relation to time (if I live here, it takes me this long to get to work), but rarely do we pause in our temporal formations to

truly understand the spaces we create and inhabit. I'm not so sure this does justice to your question—care to take a crack at it in a different way?

AK: This leads to my interest in critical geography and the material creations of educational spaces. As educational researchers we seem hesitant to dwell in the material world. We rarely ask, I think, “What are the embodied experiences of this student, this faculty member, as s/he traverses these halls? In what ways does this material environment constrain or enable particularly normative embodied experiences?” Instead, we dwell in the purely discursive, without recognizing that the discursive has particularly poignant material effects. So I'll stop there—what are your thoughts on embodiment, its link to spatialization, and educational research? Of course, if you'd like to go in another direction, I'm game.

RG: Embodiment, as you've illustrated, is largely ignored. I appreciate your questions toward the end of your thoughts—what are the embodied experiences of this student . . . etc. In my work, I seek to understand the embodiment of a particular social practice (college-going) by a group of students who are particularized in discourse as “Mexican migrant students.” Their embodied experiences are marked by racialized discourses about race, phenotype, transnational migration, and labor—their local class consciousness (Jaramillo & McLaren, 2008). But understanding the embodiment of these class consciousness processes within the social practice of college-going becomes increasingly difficult without a vocabulary to define (however tentatively) the interactions across space.

AK: Yes, we have a limited vocabulary through which to read/articulate/understand embodiment. I'm interested that you note the difficulty of understanding marginalized bodies *within* the social practice of college-going. Could you talk more of that? It would seem that placing such a discourse within a larger discourse makes it theoretically determined by the normative sense of “college-going.” Here, your own spatial metaphor (placing within) might work against you theoretically. When we place something within a larger space, it becomes defined or subsumed by it, yes?

RG: This is precisely the “spatial moment” I'm seeking to understand, I think. College-going is a normative social practice—dominant social relations have constructed it in particular ways that preclude Mexican migrant students from participating in it in ways that are recognized as meaningful. That is, in ways that get recognized and rewarded with higher education opportunity (i.e., access to colleges,

access to elite colleges, access to college success). So, to return to the genetic analysis, I seek to understand ways that Mexican migrant students disrupt this normative (and oppressive) discourse. This affords me the ability to make the argument that Mexican migrant college-going is revolutionary action. Mexican migrant college-going relies on exceptional interventions rather than institutionalize efforts. In practice, Mexican migrant college-going is the deformity, the adaptation, the asset. Without recognizing the spatial dimensions of educational opportunity, then, it becomes nearly impossible to recognize the achievements, efforts, hard-work, abilities, and new ways of imagining the social world that Mexican migrant college-going actual can promote. Without the spatialized knowings, Mexican migrant college-going gets tokenized, treated as the benefit of generational status, or benevolent dominant society. These are dangerous maps to distort because there is so much invested in sustaining the status quo.

AK: Within also connotes that it is no longer able to operate from the margins or to step outside the normative discourse. And perhaps this is the very thing you wish to point out. And perhaps this is the problem with language that doesn't do justice to spatialized ways of living. Part of this is the tricky way in which our own language as scholars invested in new ways of knowing—in this case spatial—can get tripped up and marked by the very (unconscious) spatialized language we are forced to use.

RG: You see, Mexican migrant students struggle to persist toward college access in classrooms that are structured for their failure. Outside of the material walls of the school, their walks home are marked by multimodal sign systems that instruct them to fail. For example, rather than stepping over homeless persons on their way home (ala your example of the business folk), they encounter representations of their future selves coming home from the fields tired, weary, and often times abused by their supervisors. I'm speaking of their family members who work in the fields from 5 to 3 each day. Despite the cognitive-based knowings that "college might take me somewhere else," their embodied daily practices routinely reenforce an imagined future that is perceived not to be college worthy. I know I'm treading on deficit-laden waters here. But my point is not that migrant farm workers cannot assist their students in going to college, but rather that the daily practices of migrant students foster an embodied knowledge of their cultural community's history of participation in education—one of exclusion and marginalization.

AK: Yes, you are absolutely dead-on here. Bodies become marked, and those markings do not disappear just because our bodies move to new locales (from the students' homes in your example, to the college campus). And, of course, those markings are read in multiple and varied ways depending on the different social/material contexts in which they are immersed. Most often, it would seem that the academy asks these embodied markings to be erased or disregarded while such students are on campus. Or, to follow the notion of language, these markings cannot be understood, cannot be read, within the collegiate context. So the students you mentioned have to do the work of either dismissing such markings or translating them into the language of the academy.

RG: And that work is an excellent example of the normative spatial experience in academe. In this way, the normative spatial experience can be understood and experienced in multiple ways. For dominant class consciousness, there are expectations built on their own historic cultural practices. For marginalized students, these same expectations require dismissal of identities or translation into new identities. Each of these consequences stem from the same normative space of the academy.

RG: And schooling, higher education, and the greater cultural milieu does *nothing* to counter this embodied knowledge, *nor to acknowledge and build on it as an asset—a valid and valuable way of knowing the world*. Migrant students know more about labor practices, capitalism, neocolonialism, and educational opportunity than most anthropology students at elite universities. They know it in their bodies, rather than articulate it through their cognitive sense-making communiqués.

AK: That was one of the more powerful sentences that I've read in a while—they know it in their bodies.

RG: Or that's how I might analyze my "data" from my engagement with Mexican migrant families over the past four years.

AK: Which brings us back to the use of language when dealing with embodiment and space, yes? You analyze your "data" and, in turn, might have to reconfigure your analysis into a language that has no room for spatialized/embodied ways of knowing. This is why, it strikes me, theory and the theoretical language that accompanies it, can be so powerful (or, conversely, damaging). In order to convey your findings you have to theorize embodiment and spatialized ways of knowing in innovative ways, ways that do justice to the lives of the students with whom you work. We can do this, I think, by locating the ways in which previous

theorizations fail us, break apart, and never fully account for individual meaning-making in multiple contexts. Back to the interstices again, I suppose.

RG: The interstices . . . That would be an interesting agenda in itself.

RG: This is all to suggest that embodiment helps us understand how different educational activities dialectically coconstitute and are coconstituted by spaces that generally reinforce the status quo.

AK: You've just given a rationale for studying embodiment that I've been struggling with for a good while. Thanks for that. Ironically, I had a felt understanding of how embodiment helps us to better understand space, yet hadn't yet put it into words.

RG: I don't know where to go from here . . . but this is what I got (on my second try of a response).

AK: I think one place we've come to is that one can't understand space without understanding embodiment. Spaces mark us and our markings are read (in often contradictory ways) within space.

RG: Understanding space then, it could be argued, is fundamental to understanding human activity. Space is a dimension, often ignored or misunderstood, in the analyses of daily/cultural practices that constitute human activity. Recognizing social spaces requires dialectic understandings of practice, place, and the outcomes of practices in place?

RG: Rock on!

Brief Notes on Space

Space, as a dynamic social concept, dwells in multiple meanings. There are the material aspects of space—those surroundings we experience through our physiological senses. And, of course, there are the social meanings generated through our interactions with space. In addition to these two general ways of experiencing and knowing space, the concept has implications for issues of mobility—how socio-cultural and material contexts enable and constrain particular movements through space. With mobility comes the notion of *flow*, or the movement of goods, capital, information, and people across political and geographical boundaries. Flow, in turn, (re)defines space based on recurrent patterns of movement. Particularly within our current era of hyper-globalization, concepts such as space, mobility, and flow take on heightened importance and layered meaning. As Harvey (2001) notes, globalization has reduced the cost and time of movement even as it has brought about improvements in the continuity of flow on multiple social and material levels. As a consequence, we dwell within a disruptive spatiality void of coherent or unified perspectives and spatialized identities (Harvey, 1989).

Thus, our dialogue above begins with the assumption that the spaces we encounter contribute to meaning making; all spaces are productive spaces. Space thus becomes a key element in the production of social power and power relations. As a consequence, we follow our colleagues in the field of Critical Geography by asking, "In what ways do such spaces contribute to meaning-making, how do contemporary manifestations of the spatial challenge traditional modes of inquiry, and what are the consequences of how we negotiate space in educational research?" The critical analysis of space might reveal a productive tension concerning social identity and how we come to know the world. Out of such analyses, as others have rightly noted, new modes of being might emerge, spaces as "crucibles of ongoing transformation" (Spaces and Flows, n.d.).

More important, contemporary theorizations of space link the multiple manifestations of lived experience within the spatial. As Michel Foucault (1986) claimed,

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (p. 22)

Foucault's "epoch of space" emphasizes the multiple spatial overlays inherent in human experience. Knowledges are seen in context, juxtaposed against other knowledges—"near and far," "side-by-side," and "dispersed." No longer is the human subject marked by a single progressive line, crossing spatial thresholds and understood through the passage of time. Instead, spaces forever collapse onto one another, a layering and intersection of meaning making that manifests as our experience. It is a dynamic, productive process, a "network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (Foucault, 1986, p. 22). Thus, the unraveling of such productive processes reveals much and, we argue, is a political project. Neglecting to attend to the productive processes of space in our research methodologies is, similarly, a politically laden choice. Furthermore, in order to critically engage with the spatial in all its productive forms we must consider space not just as a representational context in need of explication, but as implicating the very means by which we form our inquiry. The spatial implicates how we render our analysis. Thus, we foreground dialogue as a process for both interrogating the spatial and for challenging traditionally static or linear means for making our analysis known.

One key element emphasized in the critical geography literature consists of the many ways in which spatial analyses emphasize daily, lived, and embodied elements of social life. As Edward Soja notes, critical inquiry into space foregrounds

"the space in which we actually live, where history grates on us and erodes our lives, a space of complete experience, of the unseen and incomprehensible as well as the tangible and everyday" (quoted in Blake, 2002, p. 141). Beyond a desire to shift our collective critical gaze to our lived experiences within space, Soja offers scholars "a materialist interpretation of spatiality . . . the recognition that spatiality is socially produced and, like society itself, exists in both substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and as a set of relations between individuals and groups, an 'embodiment' and medium of social life itself" (p. 120). Thus the spatial, in all its dynamic presence, brings together elements of human experience often bifurcated in educational research: the mind and body (a Cartesian dualism often maintained by traditional epistemological perspectives), linear representations of time and a unified conception of the self (vestiges of Modernism), individual and social production of knowledges (both micro- and macro-orientations), and finite representations of inquiry (representations of inquiry as complete and thus closed, an artifact of analysis).

When considered in relation to qualitative inquiry, a critical geography perspective questions how an epistemological reliance on temporal ways of knowing insinuates particular methodologies, particular representations of data. If meaning is made in the overlay of the material with the social—simultaneously emerging from a multitude of blurred spaces and never fully placed—how might representations of meaning take on such dynamic intersections? Might the spatialization of inquiry itself be a radical act, opening new possibilities for social change? How can dialogue bring forth transformative forms of inquiry?

Thus the critical examination of the spatial is itself imbued with a sense of change and potential transformation, what Soja (1989) terms a "transformative dynamic": "Spatiality exists ontologically as a product of a transformation process, but always remains open to further transformation in the contexts of material life. It is never primordially given or permanently fixed" (p. 122). The spatial is marked by change, continual transformation full of overdetermined possibility. Consequently, researchers invested in understanding change both on the level of the material and the social will find use in Soja's incorporation of the two together in a dynamic relationship. Where social and material contexts meet and entwine transformation is possible, change by way of spatial analysis.

Similarly, Doreen Massey (1994) emphasizes spatiality as ever-changing, never fixed, because social meaning is constructed in dynamic relation with material surroundings: "Social relations are never still; they are inherently dynamic" (p. 2). Thus, the lived world exists as "a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces" (p. 3). Through her concept of space-time, Massey (1994) links spatial, platial, and temporal experiences to identity formation, analyzing the means by which power-laden identities are spatialized, necessitating critical

investigations into lived experiences of space-time. In this sense, Massey emphasizes that social groups and identities occupy different spatial locations within the microgeographies of everyday life. This development of identities within space-time has particular consequences for identity formation, embodied experiences, and the ongoing reproduction of normative daily practices. As an example, Massey (1996) examines the way in which the labs and offices of faculty scientists assert particularly gendered meanings and practices that are repeated within the boundaries of scientists' homes. Gendered practices, through their repetition in multiple environments—the lab, the home—encourage embodied experiences that are interpreted in normative ways, becoming commonsensical. Massey's work conveys the articulation and presentation of space as an inherently political project: "We make the spaces and places through which we live our lives; the making of such spaces and places is thoroughly 'political', in the widest sense of that word" (p. 123).

Scholars who foreground the spatial in their work offer critical inquirers a means to recognize the political in the making (and potential unmaking) of social and material environments. What are the microgeographies inherent in educational research? How have particular flows (of knowledge, information, bodies, etc.) become reified in the very contexts we deem "educational"? How might such geographies interact with the local places of schools, projecting meanings on the very material environments in which students learn? In this way, the incorporation of the spatial into our collective worldview is a political project, one that strives to decenter an overreliance on temporal frames for identity and context and open new possibilities for radical change on multiple levels.

Furthermore, we recognize a need for critical work in education to incorporate more space-based levels of inquiry, rather than place based. For example, most critical ethnographies of education focus on a place (a school, a neighborhood, a classroom) but resist focusing on the spaces through which students engage with education (e.g., the space of the social practice of college-going, the space of racist educational practices across individual schools, the spaces that change amid different social actors bringing different spaces into contact with physical places). More important, modes of inquiry that rely solely on place-based levels of understanding often miss the impact of mobility and processes of flow that contribute meaning to the world in which we live.

Yet more important, recognition of the spatial in educational inquiry is not best examined through traditional research methods. Indeed, our research methods often fail to make room for a transformative dynamic to the sociocultural contexts we examine. At times, even our modes of representation unnecessarily fix dynamics of meaning-making that otherwise might be understood as in a continual state of flux and ongoing change. Instead, we must find new ways of accessing our spatial experiences, the many ways in which

we engage and react to the ongoing productions of space. Thus, we turn to dialogue as a critical means through which to address space. Much like the spatial, dialogue is never static, never still, always relational. Dialogue manifests through interchange—an interactive process with transformative aims. As such, dialogue resists fixed location, produced instead through the very flow of collective meaning making.

Conclusions

There is the tendency to want to end this article with a satisfying conclusion, a few paragraphs of space that “wraps up” or otherwise frames our dialogue. Yet dialogue, as process, is never neatly packaged and is often incomplete. We wonder about this desire to contain or otherwise close off the space of our dialogue. Ryan would like to assert that space should be made a primary site of inquiry. He holds that the temporal fixes our understanding in a particular place of educational activity, one that is inherently nonexistent the moment we come to understand it. Yet spaces of activity continue their engagement (or entrapment) of our subjective understandings and our material expressions of them. Aaron would like to resist abstracting dialogue from the spatial flows in which meaning is made. Dialogue never fully ends; rather it leads to an invitation for further participation. Our dialogue (thus far) represents multiple themes—the intersection of space and embodiment, metaphorical representations of the material, and the impact of the material environment on identity development to name but a few—and we invite readers to take up these issues in multiple contexts, to extend the dialogue in micro- and macro-locales. The space of this dialogue continues as one of disjuncture, tentativeness, connectivity, and fissure; this space opens invitations for further theorizing about the possibilities that spatial analyses in education research might provoke more revolutionary and liberatory opportunities for social change.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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