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Working the Hyphens  
*Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research*

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(1994)

I am waiting for them to stop talking about the "Other," to stop even describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak. Often this speech about the "Other" is also a mask, an oppressive talk hiding gaps, absences, that space where our words would be if we were speaking, if there were silence, if we were there. This "we" is that "us" in the margins, that "we" who inhabit marginal space that is not a site of domination but a place of resistance. Enter that space. Often this speech about the "Other" annihilates, erases: "no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speak subject, and you are now at the center of my talk." Stop. (hooks, 1990, pp. 151-152)

qualitative research projects have *Othered* and to examine an emergent set of activist and/or post-modern texts that interrupt *Othering*. First, I examine the hyphen at which Self-Other join in the politics of everyday life, that is, the hyphen that both separates and merges personal identities with our inventions of Others. I then take up how qualitative researchers work this hyphen. Here I gather a growing set of works on "inscribing the Other," viewing arguments that critical, feminist, and/or Third World scholars have posed about social science as a tool of domination. This section collects a messy series of questions about methods, ethics, and epistemologies as we rethink how researchers have spoken "of" and "for" Others while occluding ourselves and our own investments, burying the contradictions that percolate at the Self-Other hyphen.

A renewed sense of possibility breathes in the next section, in which I present discussion of qualitative research projects designed for social change. Here readers engage narratives written against *Othering*, analyzing not just the decontextualized voices of Others, but the very structures, ideologies, contexts, and practices that constitute *Othering* (Bhavnani, 1992). Qualitative researchers interested in self-consciously working the hyphen—

Much of qualitative research has reproduced, if contradiction-filled, a colonizing discourse of the "Other." This essay is an attempt to review how

AUTHOR'S NOTE: My appreciation to Julie Blackman, Norman Denzin, and Yvonna Lincoln for careful reading and comments. Credit is also owed to L. Mun Wong, Cindy Kublik, Sarah Ingersoll, Judi Addeleston, and Kim Mizrahi for helping me develop these notions.

that is, unpacking notions of scientific neutrality, universal truths, and researcher dispassion—will be invited to imagine how we can braid critical and contextual struggle back into our texts (Bura-woy et al., 1992; Fine & Vanderslice, 1992).

This essay is designed to rupture the textual laminations within which Others have been sealed by social scientists, to review the complicity of researchers in the construction and distancing of Others, and to identify transgressive possibilities inside qualitative texts.

### Selves-Others: Co-constructions at the Hyphen

In September 1989, my niece was sexually assaulted by a department store security officer. He caught her shoplifting and then spent two hours threatening her with prison, legal repercussions, and likely abuse at the hands of other women in prison. She had just turned 16, and half believed him. Filled with terror, she listened for 90 minutes of what would later be determined "unlawful detainment." He offered her a deal, "Give me what women give men and I'll let you go." Surprised, shocked, understanding but not fully, she asked, "What do you mean?" She refused. For another 30 minutes he persisted. Tears, threats, and terror were exchanged. She agreed, ultimately, after he showed her a photo album of "girls who did it." Sheepishly, and brilliantly, she requested that he "get a condom."

March 5, 1992. We won the criminal case for sexual assault, and we are pursuing a civil suit against the department store. Tomorrow my niece is going to be deposed by the store's lawyers. She is, by now, 19, a new mother, living with her longtime boyfriend/father of the baby. She is Latina, and was adopted from Colombia into our middle-class Jewish family 12 years ago.

Writing this essay, I find myself ever conscious about how I participate in constructing Others. Tonight I listen to myself collude in the splitting of Jackie, my niece—the dissection of her adolescent, Latina, female body/consciousness. Family, friends, lawyers, and unsolicited advisers subtly, persistently, and uncomfortably work to present her as white/Jewish (not Latina), sexually innocent (not mother), victim (not shop-lifter), the object of male aggression. Stories of her new baby, sexuality, reproductive history, desires, and pains, we all nod across cities, should probably be avoided in her testimony.

At some point in the phone call I realize our collusion in her Othering, and I realize that Jackie has long since grown accustomed to this dynamic. Her life has been punctuated by negotiations at

the zippered borders of her gendered, raced, and classed Otherhood. As the good (adopted) grand-daughter, daughter, and niece, she always has, and does again, split for us. In a flash I remember that when she was picked up for shoplifting she gave her Spanish name to the police, not the English name she had used for nine years.

Sitting within and across alienating borders, Jackie is now being asked to draw her self-as-good-middle-class-white-woman and to silence her Other-as-bad-Latina-unwed-mother. Valerie Smith (1991) would call these "split affinities." Jackie the Latina street girl had to stay out of court because Jackie the white middle-class young lady was escorted in. That night on the phone we were all circling to find a comfortable (for whom?) space for representation. We struggled with what bell hooks (1990) would call a *politics of location*:

Within a complex and ever shifting realities of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed, ready to offer our ways of seeing and theorizing, of making culture, toward that revolutionary effort which seeks to create space where there is unlimited access to pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible? (p. 145)

No surprise, Jackie danced through the deposition shining with integrity, style, and passion. She told all as proud mother, lover, daughter, niece, and survivor. With a smile and a tear, she resisted their, and she resisted our, Othering.

Jackie mingled her autobiography with our surveilled borders on her Self and the raced and gendered legal interpretations of her Other by which she was surrounded. She braided them into her story, her deposition, which moved among "hot spots" and "safe spots." She slid from victim to survivor, from naive to coy, from deeply experienced young woman to child. In her deposition she dismantled the very categories I so worried we had constructed as sedimented pillars around her, and she wandered among them, pivoting her identity, her self-representations, and, therefore, her audiences. She became neither the Other nor the Same. Not even zippered. Her mobile positioning of contradictions could too easily be written off to the inconsistencies of adolescence. Maybe that's why she ultimately won the settlement for damages. But she would better be viewed as an honest narrator of multiple poststructural selves speaking among themselves, in front of an audience searching relentlessly for pigeonholes.

I think again about Jackie as I read a recent essay on ethnicity, identity, and difference written by Stuart Hall. Hall (1991) takes up this conversation by reviewing the representations that have seasoned his autobiography:

History changes your conception of yourself. Thus, another critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other. Only when there is an Other can you know who you are. To discover the fact is to discover and unlock the whole enormous history of nationalism and of racism. Racism is a structure of discourse and representation that tried to expel the Other symbolically—blot it out, put it over there in the Third World, at the margin. (p. 16)

Hall traces the strands of his "self" through his raced and classed body. Recognizing that representations of his selves are always politically situated, he sees them also as personally negotiated. For Hall, the Self constructs as the Other is invented. In this passage, however, Hall appears to slide between two positions. In one, he sees Self and Other as fluid. The other requires the fixing of an Other in order for Self to be constituted. Ironically, by stipulating the binary opposition, Hall reproduces the separation and detours away from investigating what is "between." Unearthing the blurred boundaries "between," as Jackie understood, constitutes a critical task for qualitative researchers.

Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1986) extend this conversation when they take up an analysis of *home* as a site for constituting Self and for expelling Others. They write:

The tension between the desire for home, for synchrony, for sameness and the realization of the repressions and violence that make home, harmony, sameness imaginable, and that enforce it, is made clear in the movement of the narrative by very careful and effective reversals which do not erase the positive desire for unit, for Oneness, but destabilize and undercut it. . . .

The relationship between the loss of community and the loss of self is crucial. To the extent that identity is collapsed with home and community and based on homogeneity and comfort, on skin, blood and heart, the giving up of home will necessarily mean the giving up of self and vice versa (pp. 208-209)

These writers acknowledge that Self and Other reside on opposite sides of the same door. Home and the "real world" are successfully split. The former codes comfort, whereas the latter flags danger. Othering helps us deny the dangers that loiter inside our homes. Othering keeps us from seeing the comforts that linger outside.

As I write this essay, the *New York Times* lands on the front porch. Another perverse splitting of Identity and Othering explodes on the front page. Lesbian women and gay men in New York City have been informed that they will not be allowed to march in this year's St. Patrick's Day parade.

One parade marshal explained, "To be Irish is to know the difference between men and women's characteristics." Ethnic community is being consolidated, whitewashed, through sexual exclusion. At a time when white working-class men and women are struggling to define themselves as whole, to locate their terror outside, and hold some Other responsible for their plight at the hands of late capitalism, we witness public rituals of race purification. A fragile collective identity is secured through promiscuous assaults on Others (African Americans? Asian Americans? women? lesbian women? gay men?) (see Weis, 1990). The exploitations endured today are protected/projected onto Others of varied colors, classes, sexualities, and bodies.

Self and Other are knottily entangled. This relationship, as lived between researchers and informants, is typically obscured in social science texts, protecting privilege, securing distance, and laminating the contradictions. Despite denials, qualitative researchers are always implicated at the hyphen. When we opt, as has been the tradition, simply to write *about* those who have been Othered, we deny the hyphen. Slipping into a contradictory discourse of individualism, personalogic theorizing, and de-contextualization, we inscribe the Other, strain to white out Self, and refuse to engage the contradictions that litter our texts.

When we opt, instead, to engage in social struggles *with* those who have been exploited and subjugated, we work the hyphen, revealing far more about ourselves, and far more about the structures of Othering. Eroding the fixedness of categories, we and they enter and play with the blurred boundaries that proliferate.

By *working the hyphen*, I mean to suggest that researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations. I mean to invite researchers to see how these "relations between" get us "better" data, limit what we feel free to say, expand our minds and constrict our mouths, engage us in intimacy and seduce us into complicity, make us quick to interpret and hesitant to write. Working the hyphen means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, "happening between," within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence.

### Inscribing the Other

Studies which have as their focal point the alleged deviant attitudes and behaviors of Blacks are

grounded within the racist assumptions and principles that only render Blacks open to further exploitation. The challenge to social scientists for a redefinition of the basic problem has been raised in terms of the "colonial analogy." It has been argued that the relationship between the researcher and his subjects, by definition, resembles that of the oppressor and the oppressed, because it is the oppressor who defines the problem, the nature of the research, and, to some extent, the quality of interaction between him and his subjects. This inability to understand and research the fundamental problem, neo-colonialism, prevents most social researchers from being able accurately to observe and analyze Black life and culture and the impact racism and oppression have upon Blacks. Their inability to understand the nature and effects of neo-colonialism in the same manner as Black people is rooted in the inherent bias of the social sciences. (Ladner, 1971, p. vii)

Joyce Ladner warned us more than 20 years ago about the racism, bred and obscured, at the Self-Other hyphen of qualitative research. Ladner knew then that texts that sought the coherence of Master Narratives needed, and so created, Others. The clean edges of those narratives were secured by the frayed borders of the Other. The articulate professional voice sounded legitimate against the noisy dialect of the Other. The rationality of the researcher/writer domesticated the outrage of the Other. These texts sought to close contradictions, and by so doing they tranquilized the hyphen, ousting the Other.

Master Narratives seek to preserve the social order while obscuring the privileged stances/investments of writers:

Within the discourse of modernity, the Other not only sometimes ceases to be a historical agent, but is often defined within totalizing and universalistic theories that create a transcendental rational White, male Eurocentric subject that both occupies the centers of power while simultaneously appearing to exist outside of time and space. Read against this Eurocentric transcendental subject, the Other is shown to lack any redeeming community traditions collective voice of historical weight—and is reduced to the imagery of the colonizer. (Giroux, 1991, p. 7)

The imperialism of such scholarship is evident in terms of whose lives get displayed and whose lives get protected by social science. Put another way, why don't we know much about how the rich live? Why don't we study whiteness? How do "their" and "our" lives get investigated (and not)? Whose stories are presented as if "naturally" self-revealing and whose stories are surrounded by "compensatory" theory? Whose "dirty linen," as

Yvonna Lincoln would put it, gets protected by such work?

Two years ago, a student of mine, Nancy Porter, asked me if she could design a dissertation around the gendered and classed lives of elite white women. I was embarrassed that I had somehow set up an expectation among students that poverty was "in." Could I really have conveyed that wealth was a bore? Nonetheless, with my blessings and to her delight, she, a professional golfer with lots of access, proceeded to conduct deep qualitative interviews with rich, "registered" Main Line women of Philadelphia, only to learn that the very discourse of wealthy women constricts and betrays few wrinkles, problems, or any outstanding features. These women describe themselves as if they were "typical," don't talk about money, and rarely reveal any domestic or interpersonal difficulties. Only if divorced will they discuss heterosexuality and gender relations critically. Nancy and I soon began to understand that there had been a collusion between social researchers committed to sanitizing/neglecting the elite through scholarly omission and an elite discourse of comfort and simplicity which conveys a relatively bump-free story of their lives. Protected then, twice, by the absence of social surveillance—in welfare offices, from public agencies, through social researchers—and the absence of a scholarly discourse on their dysfunctionality, the elite, with their "new class" academic colleagues, retain a corpus of social science material that fingers Them while it powders the faces of Us.

The social sciences have been, and still are, long on texts that inscribe some Others, preserve other Others from scrutiny, and seek to hide the researcher/writer under a veil of neutrality or objectivity. With the publication of Clifford and Marcus's *Writing Culture* (1986) came an explosion of attention to the domination encoded in such texts, and to the troubling transparency of ethnographers and writers. Although it is most problematic that Clifford and Marcus exclude the work of feminists, the essays in their volume confirm the costs in theory and praxis that devolve from the insistence that ethnographic distance be preferred over authentic engagement. By so doing, *Writing Culture* marks a significant moment in the biography of studying Others, documenting the complicity of ethnographic projects in the narration of colonialism.

A close look at these tensions is offered in Mary Louise Pratt's (1985) analysis of early travel journals. Pratt argues that within these texts, "natives" were portrayed through multiple discourses, typically as if they were "amenable to domination" and had great "potential as a labor pool" (p. 139). Written to "capture" the essence of "natives," these journals allowed little interruption and less

evidence of leakage, sweat, pleasure, oppression, rude or polite exchanges in the creation of the manuscripts. These journals were written as if there were no constructing narrators. Disinterested translators simply photographed local practices and customs. Pratt (1985) reproduces John Mandeville's *Travels* (circa 1350):

Men and women of that isle have heads like hounds; and they are called Cynocephales. This folk, thereof all they be of such shape, yet they are fully reasonable and subtle of wit. . . . And they gang all naked but a little cloth before their privy members. They are large of stature and good warriors, and they bear a great target, with which they cover all their body, and a long spear in their hand. (p. 139)

Pratt comments:

Any reader recognizes here a familiar, widespread, and stable form of "othering." The people to be othered are homogenized into a collective "they," which is distilled even further into an iconic "he" (the standardized adult male specimen). This abstracted "he"/"they" is the subject of verbs in a timeless present tense, which characterizes anything "he" is or does not as a particular historical event but as an instance of pre-given custom or trait. (p. 139)

Qualitative researchers then, and most now, produce texts through Donna Haraway's (1988) "god trick," presuming to paint the Other from "nowhere." Researchers/writers self-consciously carry no voice, body, race, class, or gender and no interests into their texts. Narrators seek to shelter themselves in the text, as if they were transparent (Spivak, 1988). They recognize no hyphen.

Analogous to Pratt's project on travel journals, sociologist Herb Gans has written and worried about the more recent dense body of work produced on "the underclass." This flourishing area of research has legitimated the category, even amidst multiple slippery frames. Poor adults and children have been codified as Others, as the broader culture is being prepared for a permanent caste of children and adults beyond redemption. Social science has been the intellectual handmaiden for this project, serving to anesthetize the culture with cognitive distinctions that help split the species. These same constructions may, of course, be producing their own subversions, resistances, and transgressions, but, for the moment, "we" don't have to see, smell, hear, feel, or respond to "them." The material and discursive hyphens, again, are being denied.

Michael Katz (1993) narrates a similar story about the historic encoding, within social scientific debates, of the "(un)deserving poor." Katz traces representations of the poor across social

science debates and public policies. He argues that social scientists have insinuated moral boundaries of deservingness that thread research and policy, enabling researchers, policy makers, and the public to believe that we can distinguish (and serve) those who are "deserving" and neglect honorably those who are "undeserving" and poor.

We confront, then, one legacy of social research that constructs, legitimates, and distances Others, banishing them to the margins of the culture. Sometimes these texts are used to deprive Them of services; always to rob Them of whole, complex, humanity. Although these portraits of subjugation may be internally slippery, they cohere momentarily around deficiencies, around who they are not. These Others are represented as unworthy, dangerous, and immoral, or as pitiable, victimized, and damaged.

There is, too, a growing postcolonial critique of Othering directed at those literatures written presumably "for" Others. Homi Bhabha (1990), for instance, unravels "nation-centered" discourses that weave ideologies of "common culture." To assure their hermetic seals, he argues these cultures are written in ways that essentialize and silence women's bodies and stories. Like Cornel West (1988) and Kimberle Crenshaw (1992), Bhabha takes affront at "common culture" discourses made coherent by "the subsumption or sublation of social antagonism. . . . the repression of social divisions. . . . the power to authorize an 'impersonal' holistic or universal discourse on the representation of the social that naturalizes cultural difference and turns it into a 'second' nature argument" (p. 242). Thus even "for" Others there are growing, stifling discourses that essentialize to map culture.

At the root of this argument, whether Othering is produced "on" or "for," qualitative researchers need to recognize that our work stands in some relation to Othering. We may self-consciously or not decide *how* to work the hyphen of Self and Other, how to gloss the boundaries between, and within, slippery constructions of Others. But when we look, get involved, demur, analyze, interpret, probe, speak, remain silent, walk away, organize for outrage, or sanitize our stories, and when we construct our texts in or on their words, we decide how to nuance our relations with/for/despite those who have been deemed Others. When we write essays about subjugated Others as if *they* were a homogeneous mass (of vice or virtue), free-floating and severed from contexts of oppression, and as if we were neutral transmitters of voices and stories, we tilt toward a narrative strategy that reproduces Othering on, despite, or even "for." When we construct texts collaboratively, self-consciously examining our relations with/for/despite those who have been contained as Others, we move against, we enable resistance to, Othering.

This is no simple binary opposition of Self and Other, nor of texts that inscribe and texts that resist. There is no easy narrative litmus for Othering. Contradictions litter all narrative forms. And all narratives about Others both inscribe and resist othering. Yet in becoming self-conscious of work at the hyphen, researchers can see a history of qualitative research that has been deeply colonial, surveilling, and exotic (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Pratt, 1985, 1992; Rosaldo, 1989). Now that the subjects of U.S. ethnography have come home, qualitative accounts of urban and rural, poverty-stricken and working-class, white and of color America flourish. Through these texts, the Other survives next door. But the privileges, interests, biographies, fetishes, and investments of researchers typically remain subtext, buried, protected (Harding, 1987; Haraway, 1988).

Renato Rosaldo (1989) contends that there are no "innocent" ethnographers. When innocence is sought, Rosaldo writes, the "eye of ethnography [often connects with] the I of imperialism" (p. 41). The project at hand is to unravel, critically, the blurred boundaries in our relation, and in our texts; to understand the political work of our narratives; to decipher how the traditions of social science serve to inscribe; and to imagine how our practice can be transformed to resist, self-consciously, acts of othering. As these scenes of translation vividly convey, qualitative researchers are chronically and uncomfortably engaged in ethical decisions about how deeply to work with/for/despite those cast as Others, and how seamlessly to represent the hyphen. Our work will never "arrive" but must always struggle "between."

### Writing Against Othering

I too think the intellectual should constantly disturb, should bear witness to the misery of the world, should be provocative by being independent, should rebel against all hidden and open pressures and manipulations, should be the chief doubter of systems, of power and its incantations, should be the witness to their mendacity. . . . An intellectual is always at odds with hard and fast categories, because these tend to be instruments used by the victors. (Havel, 1990, p. 167)

In contrast to "hard and fast" texts that inscribe and commodify Others, we move now to a set of texts that self-consciously interrupt Othering, that force a radical rethinking of the ethical and political relations of qualitative researchers to the objects/subjects of our work. In this section I review three chunks of work that write against Othering.

First, I present those texts that insert "uppity" voices, stances, and critiques to interrupt Master Narratives (see Austin, 1989; Fanon, 1965; Fine, 1992; hooks, 1989; Rollins, 1985). Often, but not always, these are essays written about and by women of color, situated at the intersection of race and gender oppression (Crenshaw, 1992).

Second, I examine texts in which qualitative researchers dissect elites' constructions of Self and Other. Listening to elites as they manicure them-Selves through Othering, we hear the voices of white fraternity brothers interviewed by Peggy Sanday (1990), white high school boys in Lois Weis's (1990) analysis of "working class without work," and nondisabled researchers' analysis of persons with disabilities, projecting their existential and aesthetic anxieties onto the bodies of disabled Others (Hahn, 1983). In each instance, the words of elites are analyzed by researchers as they evince a discourse of Othering. This work enables us to eavesdrop on privileged consciousness as it seeks to peel Self off of Other.

The third chunk of writing against Othering comprises those texts that press social research for social activism. Engaged with struggles of social transformation, these researchers raise questions about the ethics of involvement and the ethics of detachment, the illusions of objectivity and the borders of subjectivity, and the possibilities of collaborative work and the dilemmas of collusion (Burawoy et al., 1992; Fine & Vanderslice, 1992; Kitzinger, 1991; Lykes, 1989).

From the qualitative works discussed here surfaces the next generation of ethical and epistemological questions for qualitative researchers committed to projects of social justice. These writers/researchers mark a space of analysis in which the motives, consciousness, politics, and stances of informants and researchers/writers are rendered contradictory, problematic, and filled with transgressive possibilities.

#### Scene 1: Rupturing Texts With Uppity Voices

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) contends that academics/researchers can do little to correct the "material wrongs of colonialism." She argues that "in the face of the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self's shadow, a possibility of political practice for the intellectual would be to put the economic 'under erasure'" (p. 280). Like bell hooks and Joan Scott, Spivak asks that researchers stop trying to *know* the Other or *give voice to* the Other (Scott, 1991) and listen, instead, to the plural voices of those Othered, as constructors and agents of knowledge.

Although I would quibble with Spivak's sense of the diminished capacity of researchers to participate in the interruption/transformation of social conditions, central to Spivak's and Scott's project is the notion that researchers/writers need to listen and also reveal. As researchers, we need to position ourselves as no longer transparent, but as classed, gendered, raced, and sexual subjects who construct our own locations, narrate these locations, and negotiate our stances with relations of domination (Giroux, 1991). But toward what end?

Chantal Mouffe (1988) would implore activist academics to "determine what conditions are necessary for specific forms of subordination to produce struggles that seek their abolishment and to fuse these as links in a 'chain of equivalence'" (p. 99). Like Mouffe, Cornel West (1988) details a liberatory agenda for social research in which we undertake inquiry into the supremacist logics of domination, into the micropractices of daily subjugation, and into the macrostructural dynamics of class and political exploitation. Urging us to document evidence of struggle, resistance, and counterhegemony (p. 22), West presses for a research agenda steeped in movements for social justice.

How engaged researchers become with, for, against, despite Othering constitutes a political decision that is never resolved simply "in the neutral" by "not getting involved" and "doing science" instead. As Stanley Aronowitz (1988) has written, "Science purports to separate the domination of nature from human domination and regards itself as ideologically neutral" (p. 527).

The decision to retreat from scenes of domination in the name of science is oxymoronic witnessing injustice without outrage. The Other is constituted. The Self is shadowed. Science is preserved. Prevailing politics prospers. Objectivity is assumed. As Spivak (1988) warns, the benevolent "construction of] a homogeneous Other" only reassures "our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self" (p. 288). Although most qualitative work has refused to engage intentionally with the politics of justice, a few texts have imported Others to crack the binary oppositional discourses within social science and the law. Much of this work comes from African American women writing at the *intersection*, as Kimberle Crenshaw (1992) explains:

The particular experience of Black women in the dominant culture ideology of American society can be conceptualized as *intersectional*. Intersectionality captures the way in which the particular location of Black women in dominant American social relations is unique and in some sense unassimilable to the discursive paradigms of gender and race domination. (p. 2)

Using the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings as the ground for her analysis of intersectionality, Crenshaw maintains that although Anita Hill sat at the nexus of race/gender oppression, she was presented "as if" she were the prototype white woman harassment victim pitted against the prototype black man accused of rape. Crenshaw uses these images to explode, as both theoretically inadequate and strategically problematic, the narrow cultural frames that have contained *race* as black and male and *gender* as white and female. Contending that black women's experiences are not binary but profoundly intersectional, and therefore radically threatening to existing frames, Crenshaw sees Anita Hill's status as "situated within two fundamental hierarchies of social power (gender and race)," and says that "the central disadvantage that Hill faced was the lack of available and widely comprehended narratives to communicate the reality of her experience as a Black woman to the world" (p. 2). Crenshaw argues that the double marginality of black women, suppressed within both gender and race narratives, is exacerbated by the silencing of black women within the pact of race solidarity between black women and men. Hill had to be deraced to be recognized as a survivor of sexual harassment, and, Crenshaw contends, this is why so many women of color rejected her story as authentic.

Repositioning Hill as the renegade survivor resisting at the intersection of race and gender codes, unwilling to be silenced, Crenshaw splits open white feminism and black solidarity as cultural narratives that fundamentally marginalize the experience, complexity, and critique of black women. Crenshaw concludes, "The vilification of Anita Hill and the embracing of Clarence Thomas reveals that a Black woman breaking ranks to complain of sexual harassment is a much greater threat than a Black man who breaks ranks over race policy" (p. 32).

In *Sapphire Bound!*, a text authored some three years earlier, Regina Austin (1989) makes visible those ideologies surrounding black women's bodies and minds as they are buried in seemingly coherent legal texts. Austin first inserts autobiographic outrage:

When was the last time someone told you that your way of approaching problems . . . was all wrong? You are too angry, too emotional, too subjective, too pessimistic, too political, too anecdotal and too instinctive? I never know how to respond to such accusations. How can I legitimate my way of thinking? I know that I am not used to flying off the handle, seeing imaginary insults and problems where there are none. I am not a witch solely by nature, but by circumstance and choice as well. I suspect that what my critics really want to say is that I am being too self consciously black

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(brown, yellow, red) and/or female to suit their tastes and should "lighten up" because I am making them feel very uncomfortable, and that is not nice. And I want them to think that I am nice, don't I or "womanish"? . . . The chief sources of our theory should be black women's critiques of a society that is dominated by and structured to favor white men of wealth and power. We should also find inspiration in the modes of resistance black women mount, individually and collectively. (p. 540)

Austin then details the legal case in which Crystal Chambers, an African American adult woman, single and pregnant, was fired from Omaha Girls' Club because, as the justices argued, "while a single pregnant woman may indeed provide a good example of hard work and independence, the same person may be a negative role model with respect to the girls' club objective of diminishing the number of teenage pregnancies" (p. 551). Austin writes:

A black feminist jurisprudential analysis of Chambers must seriously consider the possibility that young, single, sexually active, fertile and nurturing black women are being viewed ominously because they have the temerity to attempt to break out of the rigid, economic, social and political categories that a racist, sexist and less stratified society would impose upon them. . . . Like a treasonous recruit, Crystal turns up unmarried and pregnant. As such, she embodied the enemy . . . to the cause of black cultural containment. (p. 551)

With the body of Crystal Chambers, Austin levers a critical analysis of African American women as they collectively embody the Other in the law. Austin writes against Othering through autobiography, and through the embodied story of Crystal Chambers. In an extension of this stance, Austin (1992) argues in a more recent paper, titled "*The Black Community, Its Lawbreakers and a Politics of Identification*," for what she calls a "politics of identification," in which there is critical engagement of lawbreakers by the black middle class, in an effort to invent and resuscitate, discursively and materially, "the [black] community" (p. 1815).

Mari Matsuda (1989), another critical feminist legal scholar of color, self-consciously writes against Othering by reimagining a legal canon written out of the experience of Others. By analyzing how the law buries victims' voices and how it protects an abusive elite, Matsuda invents legal text that would privilege the experiences of victims. She not only legitimates voices of subjugation, but presumes them to be the most substantive wellspring for critical legal knowledge:

There is an outsider's jurisprudence growing and thriving alongside mainstream jurisprudence in American law schools. The new feminist jurisprudence is a lively example of this. A related, and less celebrated outsider jurisprudence is that belonging to people of color. What is it that characterizes the new jurisprudence of people of color? First is a methodology grounded in the particulars of their social reality and experience. This method is consciously both historical and revisionist, attempting to know history from the bottom. From the fear and namelessness of the slave, from the broken treaties of the indigenous Americans, the desire to know history from the bottom has forced these scholars to sources often ignored: journals, poems, oral histories and stories from their own experiences of life in a hierarchically arranged world. . . .

Outsiders thus search for what Anne Scales has called the ratchet—legal tools that have progressive effect, defying the habit of neutral principals to entrench existing power. (p. 11)

Crenshaw, Austin, and Matsuda force readers to hear subjugated voices not as Others but as primary informants on Othering and as the source for radical rethinking of the law. Like these legal theorists, sociologist Judith Rollins (1985) studies domination enacted by elite white women on the women of color who work for them as domestics. Committed to the theoretical inversion of Othering, Rollins interrupts what a white reader would recognize as the traditional equipment of narrative legitimacy. Rollins delivers her analysis from the vantage of the women employed as domestics. Reversing who would typically be relied upon to tell the "real" story and who would be portrayed as Other, Rollins allows readers to hear how much subjugated women know about themselves and about Others. At the same time, she analyzes how privileged women lack knowledge of Self and knowledge of those who work for them:

Thus, domestics' stronger consciousness of the Other functions not only to help them survive in the occupation but also to maintain their self response. The worker in the home has a level of knowledge about familial and personal problems that few outsiders do. It is not surprising that domestic workers do not take the insulting attitudes and judgments of employers seriously; they are in a position to make scathing judgments of their own. (p. 215)

Jean Baker Miller, in her book *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976), argues a point similar to that made by Rollins. In colonizing relations, what Miller calls "dominant-subordinate relations,"

subordinates spend much time studying the Other. They carry, therefore, substantial knowledge about Self and dominants. Given their need to anticipate and survive, they contain this knowledge and remain silent about the extent to which dominants depend on them. Rarely do they display/flaunt their knowledge of the Other. At the same time, the dominant Other suffers for lack of knowledge of self or others.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) develops standpoint theory (see also Dorothy Smith, 1987, 1992) through African American women, who have been positioned as "outsiders within" the academy and thereby enjoy a "peculiar marginality." She urges women to venture into this marginality and unearth a "collective self defined Black feminist consciousness" by listening to black women's stories as they confront and resist images of themselves as Other. Collins recognizes that dominant groups have a "vested interest in suppressing such thought," and for that reason she encourages women to engage in just such subversive work—in contexts where we're wanted and not, in communities that feel comforting, and in those we know to be strange and dangerous.

Rupturing narratives allow us to hear the uppity voices of informants and researchers who speak against structures, representations, and practices of domination. In these texts, researchers are working the hyphen, reconciling the slippery constructions of Self and Other and the contexts of oppression in which both are invented.

#### Scene 2: Probing the Consciousness of Dominant Others

This second slice of scholarship written self-consciously against Othering probes how individuals inhabiting a space of dominance construct their sense of Self through the denigration of Others. These social researchers unpack how dominants manufacture and conceptualize their relations with subordinated Others through violence, denigration, and exploitation.

For instance, Peggy Sanday (1990) has studied how white fraternity brothers create a collective sense of brotherhood through acts of homophobia, racism, and sexism, which enables them to deny their homoeroticism. By studying these young men as elites who abuse power over women and over men of color, Sanday articulates the psychodynamics of collective homophobia as it breeds "out-group" violence, allows "in-group" homoeroticism, and hyperconfirms "the brothers'" public heterosexuality.

In parallel intellectual form, disability scholar Harlan Hahn (1983) has reviewed the works of nondisabled researchers of disability, only to conclude that by reading their work we learn more

about these researchers' terror of disability than we do about the persons with disabilities about whom they presumably have written. Hahn theorizes that nondisabled researchers carry existential and aesthetic anxieties about bodily dis-integrity that they project onto the bodies of persons with disabilities. Their narratives are laced with anxieties as if they were simply in the bodies of "them" rather than (un)settled within the (un)consciousness of the researchers.

As a last example, I draw upon the work of ethnographer Lois Weis, who has spent much time interviewing white working-class adolescent males in a town whose economy has been ravaged by deindustrialization. Weis (1990) argues that these young men, who would have generated social identities through the trade union movement in previous decades, now develop identities instead along the lines of race and gender antagonism. Having "lost" identities that were once available to their fathers and grandfathers, they narrate white, working-class, male identities saturated with "virulent racism and sexism." In an effort to solidify Self, the young men in Sanday's and Weis's texts, like the researchers in Hahn's work, rehearse publicly their ownership and degradation of Others—women, men of color, and persons with disabilities, respectively.

These researchers study the perversions of Othering that constitute a consciousness of domination. This genre of work seeks to understand how individuals carve out contradictory social identities that sculpt, harass, and repel Others within and outside themselves. Deploying what might be called *technologies of Othering* (borrowing from deLauretis, 1987), those studied seem to narrate collective, homogeneous identities by constructing collective, homogeneous identities for Others. Less well understood, or narrated, are the incoherent threads of these men as individuals struggling to construct Self.

In this cavern of critical, qualitative work, social researchers excavate voices of privilege to understand how Othering works as contradictory identity formation. When we read Sanday or Weis, we hear researchers listening to relatively high-power informants seeking desperately a Self, by constructing and expelling Others. In these works, and my own analysis in *Framing Dropouts* (Fine, 1991) could be included here, qualitative researchers practice what might be called *doubled splitting*. We split ourselves from elite informants as though they and we are contained, stable, and separable. We then study the splitting that they produce with/against subjugated Others. We stabilize, essentialize, and render our elite informants' Other. Norman Denzin (personal communication, February 1992) has written to me, concerned that in the study of power elites there remains a tendency to

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create self (colonizer) and other (colonized) as dichotomous categories, oppositions defined out of clearly defined cultural, ethnic, racial, and gendered differences. Such treatments (after Derrida and Bakhtin) fail to treat the complexities and contradictions that define membership in each category. Fixed immutable ethnic (gendered, etc.) identities are thereby inscribed. A picture of a homogeneous culturally dominant group is pitted against a picture of an equally homogeneous group of outsiders on the periphery. The internal oppositional nature of ethnic and cultural life is thereby minimized. A fixed stereotypical picture of an isolated minority group is pitted against a "coherent white-American, male power structure," etc. The image of overlapping, conflicting, de-centered circles of ethnic (gendered, etc.) identities is never considered.

By creating flat caricatures we may indeed be undermining an opportunity for ourselves as social researchers to "come clean" about the contradictory stances, politics, perspectives, and histories we import to our work. Rendering fluid, and not fixed, our constructions of Selves and Others, and the narratives produced as qualitative research, can reveal our partialities and pluralities.

#### Endings: Social Research for Social Change

Rereading Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), I can hear an ethnographer searching for a text superior to "mere journalism," a method of science designed to "capture" native life, and a narrative style able to re-present "savagery" through the eyes of an intelligent member, "whereas in a native society there are none of them." Malinowski invites readers to imagine him, a white man unwilling to retreat to the company of other white men, drinking, reading, lonely, and ultimately enjoying the company of "savagery." His portraits are painted entirely of Them, introducing "order" into the "chaos" of their lives.

Malinowski details the recipe for qualitative Othering. Early in the century, 'twas noble to write of the Other for the purposes of creating what was considered knowledge. Perhaps it still is. But now, much qualitative research is undertaken for what may be an even more terrifying aim—to "help" Them. In both contexts the effect may be Othering: muted voices; "structure" imported to local "chaos"; Others represented as extracted from their scenes of exploitation, social relationships, and meaningful communities. If they survive the decontextualization, they appear socially bereft, isolated, and deficient, with insidi-

ous distinctions drawn among the good and the bad Thems (Austin, 1992). Distinctions from Us are understood.

From such texts we often learn little about Others, except their invented shapes and texts, and less about the writers/researchers, except their projections. Domination and distance get sanitized inside science. Portraits of disdain, pity, need, strength, or all of the above are delivered for public consumption. New programs may, or may not, be spawned to "remedy" them—the problem. Either way, Others have been yanked out of the contexts of late capitalism, racism, sexism, and economic decline. The public is left with embodied stories of Them, who, in their own words, can't seem to get better.

More recently, however, and more interestingly, qualitative researchers have begun to interrupt Othering by forcing subjugated voices in context to the front of our texts and by exploiting privileged voices to scrutinize the technologies of Othering. Emerging in some spaces is this cadre of qualitative researchers who see their work with those who have been cut out as Others, on struggles of social injustice, in ways that disrupt Othering and provoke a sense of possibility (Bhavnani, 1992).

Ethnographies produced by Michael Burawoy and colleagues in *Ethnography Unbound* (1992) represent such a collection designed for social theory and action. The chapters in Bookman and Morgan's *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990) were written for and about the struggles pursued by everyday activist women in the politics of housing, education, and health care organizing. Rhoda Linton and Michelle Whitman (1982) have written through qualitative research to further feminist peace movements. Brinton Lykes (1989), writing for and with Guatemalan "indigenous" women, seeks to create an archive of political resistance of a culture in exile. All of these texts are instances of writing on/with/for political change. But lest writing/researching for change appears too facile, I'll end with one specific, self-conscious, and yet imperial instance of research for social change that embodies many of the contradictions addressed thus far. Profoundly a moment of Inscribing the Other, this work cracks open a space for our critical gaze and invites the next round of conversations about ethics, praxis, and qualitative work. Here I refer to those qualitative research projects in which researchers self-consciously translate "for" Others in order to promote social justice.

Sometimes explicitly trading on race/class privilege, in these instances researchers understand the hyphen all too well. Bartering privilege for justice, we re-present stories told by subjugated Others, stories that would otherwise be discarded. And we get a hearing. My own work with high

school dropouts exemplifies this politically tense form of ethnography (Fine, 1991).

Here, at the Self-Other border, it is not that researchers are absented and Others fronted. Instead, the class politics of translation demands that a researcher is doused quite evidently in status and privilege as the Other sits domesticated. I (white, academic, elite woman) represent the words and voices of African American and Latino, working-class and poor adolescents who have dropped out of high school, in texts, in court, and in public policy debates (Fine, 1991), and it becomes scholarship. Some even find it compelling. My raced and classed translation grants authority to their "native" and "underarticulated" narratives. My race and class are coded as "good science" (Kitzinger, 1991). The power of my translation comes far more from my whiteness, middle-classness, and education than from the stories I tell.

But my translation also colludes in structures of domination. I know that when dropouts speak, few listen. When African American, Latino, Asian, or Native American scholars do the same kinds of work as I, they are more likely to be heard as biased, self-interested, or without distanced perspective (see Cook & Fine, in press). Edward Said (1978) has written to this point:

Since the Orientals cannot represent themselves, they must therefore be represented by others who know more about Islam than Islam knows about itself. Now it is often the case that you can be known by others in different ways than you know yourself, and that valuable insights might be generated accordingly. But that it is quite different than pronouncing it as immutable law that outsiders *ipso facto* have a better sense of you as an insider than you do yourself. Note that there is no question of an *exchange* between Islam's views and an outsider's: no dialogue, no discussion, no mutual recognition. There is a flat assertion of quality, which the Western policymaker, or his faithful servant, possesses by virtue of his being Western, Shite, non-Muslim. (p. 97)

The stakes are even higher when we move qualitative translation out of academic journals and into the courts. Consider a most complicated instance of scholarly translation located precisely at the hyphen of Othering—the brilliant work of Julie Blackman. A white social psychologist who works as an expert witness for battered women—white, Latina, and/or African American—who have killed their abusers. Blackman enters courtrooms and retells the stories these women have told her, this time in Standard English. She psychologizes and explains away the contradictions. She makes them acceptable. Blackman's project is to get these women a hearing from a jury of their peers.

She has an impressive success rate for keeping these women out of jail (Blackman, 1993).

Draped in white colonizing science, Julie and I, and many others, cut a deal: *Listen to the story as long as the teller is not the Other*. Cut with the knives of racism and classism. Should we refuse? Do we merely reproduce power by playing to power? Do we regenerate the Other as we try to keep her from going to jail? Do we erase and silence as we trade on white/elite privilege?

Herein lie the very profound contradictions that face researchers who step out, who presume to want to make a difference, who are so bold or arrogant as to assume we might. Once out beyond the picket fence of illusory objectivity, we trespass all over the classed, raced, and otherwise stratified lines that have demarcated our social legitimacy for publicly telling their stories. And it is then that ethical questions boil.

I would not argue that only those "in the experience" can tell a story of injustice. Indeed, privileging raw (?) experience over analysis, as if they are separate, is simply a sign of (understandable) political desperation (see Scott, 1991). At some point, people decide, I'm tired of hearing you speak for me. Only I can speak for myself. I'll speak for my people, and these issues. As a white, nondisabled, academic woman, I have been on both sides of this tension. Sometimes I'm telling men to stop speaking for me. Sometimes I'm being told to stop speaking "for"—for adolescents, women of color, women with disabilities, and so on. And yet we all have genders and races, classes, sexualities, disabilities, and politics. If poststructuralism has taught us anything, it is to beware the frozen identities and the presumption that the hyphen is real, to suspect the binary, to worry the clear distinctions. If these "virtues" are assumed floating and political signifiers (Omi & Winant, 1986), then it is surely essentialist to presume that only women can/should "do" gender; only people of color can/should do race work; only lesbians and gays can/should "do" sexuality; only women in violence can tell the stories of violence.

Yet the risk for qualitative researchers has been and continues to be imperial translation. Doing the work of social change, as Blackman does, within a context committed to discrediting all women's voices means that social researchers have to be negotiating how, when, and why to situate and privilege whose voices. Those of us who do this work need to invent communities of friendly critical informants who can help us think through whose voices and analyses to front, and whose to foreground.

At the same time, another risk surfaces. This risk lies in the romanticizing of narratives and the concomitant retreat from analysis. In the name of

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ethical, democratic, sometimes feminist methods, there is a subtle, growing withdrawal from interpretation. Nancie Caraway (1991) writes to this point when she describes "some of the assumptions hidden in standpoint/margin/center claims: beliefs that people act rationally in their own interest, that the oppressed are not in fundamental ways damaged by their marginality, and that they themselves are somehow removed from a will to power" (p. 181).

Caraway is a white woman who worries about the stance of some scholars who claim that no one may speak for Others. She struggles in *Segregated Sisterhood* (1991) to produce a text through and about race among/between women. Relying primarily on the theoretical works of women of color, she, like Blackman and others, argues the responsibility of white women to be engaged in "crossover tracks," in critical, democratic conversations about race and racism. If we recognize race, class, gender, and sexuality to be socially and historically contingent (Hall, 1991), then silence, retreat, and engagement all pose ethical dilemmas. All are tangled with ethics of knowing, writing, and acting (see Richardson, Chapter 32, this volume).

In the early 1990s, the whispers of a collective of activist researchers can be heard struggling with these tensions. Seeking to work with, but not romanticize, subjugated voices, searching for moments of social justice, they are inventing strategies of qualitative analysis and writing against Othering. As this corpus of work ages, it too will become a contested site. Residues of domination linger heavily within these qualitative texts. But today these works constitute the next set of critical conversations among qualitative social researchers, eroding fixed categories and provoking possibilities for qualitative research that is designed *against* Othering, for social justice, and pivoting identities of Self and Other at the hyphen.

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