An endarkened feminist epistemology? Identity, difference and the politics of representation in educational research

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This paper proposes a postmodernism and cultural studies influenced collorary to Cynthia Dillard's notion of "an endarkened feminist epistemology." The paper illustrates that Dillard has developed the notion principally as enabling of a project of recueillement the articulation of a black feminist epistemology and research paradigm. What remains unaddressed in this project (albeit understandably), is the question of what difference difference makes within an endarkened epistemology. Illustrating that difference always compounds and complicates matters, the paper proceeds to draw on postmodernist and cultural studies theory to work with the ways in which race, gender, and sexual orientation interplay to produce an articulation that does not displace the notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology but rather runs parallel and acts as a corollary in the same dual project of contributing to both the "curiously belated" examination of race and racism in educational research in general, and the development of a black feminist epistemology and research paradigm in particular.

Introduction: "Don't you know, they're talkin' bout a revolution? and it sounds like a whisper" (Tracy Chapman)

The introduction of qualitative research as an approach to educational research effectively ended the monopoly of quantitative methods and provoked the great quantitative/qualitative debate of the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Howe, 1985; Rist, 1977; Smith, 1983; Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Since then, qualitative research has definitely arrived as a legitimate approach to educational research (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). Along the way it has produced multiple and competing genres (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), a development that could be seen as having rendered it either particularly successful or else a victim of its own success (depending on one's theoretical and political perspective). Consequently, there is at present a dizzying array of qualitative approaches, and they continue to multiply, combine, overlap, blur, and compete, even as they gain increasing sway (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This multiplicity is a manifestation of the passing of the formerly upstart discourse of qualitative research, which Mathew Miles (1979) once described as an "attractive nuisance," into a veritable orthodoxy. On the other hand, quantitative research and positivism were not only vigorously defended in response to qualitative research's ascendancy (Schrag, 1992) but continue to enjoy prominence and preference among funders, higher esteem in the field of education in general, and,
at some colleges of education, virtually exclusive application in such areas as educational psychology (Miller, Wilson-Nelson, & Moore, 1998).

In this bustling, buzzing, and bewilderingly cacophonous soundscape of contemporary educational research, there are a number of distinctly new whispered interventions which signal to those who will take the time to listen that something new and of major import is occurring. It has started off as a whisper here and a whisper there but threatens (or is that promises?) to become a groundswell that will drown out the perennial but always already vain attempts to blend the various instruments and notes of contemporary educational research into a harmonious symphony. If the great quantitative/qualitative debate and other events such as the emergence of various feminist approaches, and the infusion of critical, feminist, postmodernist, and poststructuralist theory were significant, paradigm-shifting moments in educational research, my assertion is that the recent whispers signal a curiously belated moment that involves the overt racialization of educational research, a dual process and phenomenon involving what Scheurich and Young (1997) have referred to as "coloring epistemologies" on the one hand and a version of what Harrison, Harrison and Jordan (1995) have referred to as "the emancipation of subjugated knowledge" on the other.

It is virtually impossible to say precisely when these whispers started. After all, if we consider anthropology alone as a plausible source, we could go back to the very emergence of black anthropologists like W.E.B. DuBois and his place as an early black anthropologist (Harrison, 1992; Harrison & Nonini, 1992) and more specifically to DuBois's notion of black "double consciousness," or else we could identify Renato Rosaldo's (1989) persuasive attack on objectivity and neutrality in research, his assertions about the importance of the ethnographer's experience, and his notion of the ethnographer as positioned subject as that initial whisper, or we could point to the body of work of Faye Harrison (e.g. 1988, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1997, 1999a, 1999b), especially her work on the persistence of race and racism in American culture and academic work, on the racial nature of ethnographic work, on pioneering African-American anthropologists, on undertaking ethnography as politics, and on decolonizing anthropology. In the field of educational theorizing one can point to Beverly Gordon's (1990) essay on the necessity of African-American epistemology for educational theory and practice. While, in my view, the new sounds to which I am referring ought to be considered a continuation of those earlier and ongoing rumblings, they also need to be identified as particularly recent and as emanating specifically from inside (or is that inside/outside?) the field of educational research. These very recent whispers are coming from such figures as Scheurich and Young (1997, 1998) and their papers on "coloring epistemologies," Cynthia Tyson (1998) and her cogent response to Scheurich and Young, Delgado Bernal (1998) and his assertion of the significance of a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) and her identification of the emergence of what she has described as "ethnic epistemologies" as well as her crucial naming of the phenomenon of "the children of fieldhands return[ing] to do fieldwork" (p. 269), and Cynthia Dillard (2000a, 2000b) and her articulation of what she is calling an "endarkened feminist epistemology."

In their urgency and immediacy as an emerging racialized intervention, these voices render this moment not merely the present but what Walter Benjamin referred to as "now time," and incite us to live the present "historically." Some in
educational studies may have read some or all of these works and noticed other aspects of the development I am referring to and thought, "there's something happening here, what it is ain't exactly clear" (Buffalo Springfield, 1969). This paper is, in part, an acknowledgment of the import of this moment and an attempt to add my voice to the whispers of revolution. I want to make it clear: for now it may sound like a whisper but it should be understood that when novice and experienced researchers of color are teaching or taking those courses in research methods that do not appear to incorporate and reflect them and their worldviews, when they are conducting and analyzing fieldwork utilizing procedures that do not adequately or comfortably represent them and their participants, when they are entailing one another recommending and discussing the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, Patti Lather, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sandra Harding, and Renato Rosaldo, and when they are setting up those conference panels on Latina epistemology and on black epistemology, they are in fact, "talkin' bout a revolution."

What difference does i make, what difference difference makes?

Rather than attempt to explore the whispered intervention in its emerging comprehensiveness, I have chosen in this paper to focus on Cynthia Dillard's notion of an "endarkened feminist epistemology" as a particularly interesting, compelling, and expedient example. I find the notion interesting because of its specificity, because it clearly outlines its constituent aspects, and finally because for me it evokes Rastafarianism (albeit probably unintentionally). I find it compelling because for me characteristics like its freshness and innovative play on "enlightenment" both command attention and demand investigation. In this sense, the coinage "endarkened feminist epistemology" functions as Stuart Hall believes new terms and concepts ideally ought to: they enable us to see old questions in new ways, ask new questions, find new ways to organize knowledge and experiences and enable new discursive and praxis interventions.

Apart from what Edward Said (1982) would describe as the very "worldliness" of Dillard's text, and what Gayatri Spivak (1990a) reminds us is the transactional nature of all published texts, it is what I see as the potential in the notion of an endarkened epistemology to make a contribution to ongoing struggles around representation in educational research and social justice work in general that in part incites me to examine it. I find it expedient because I have read and discussed one of Dillard's papers on an endarkened feminist epistemology in my role as discussant for a 2000 AERA conference session on the issue of paradigm proliferation in educational research. That AERA session provided a context that made the notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology even more specifically interesting and expedient as a topic.

In my role as discussant at that AERA session I asked Dillard whether and how aspects of sociocultural difference (i.e., race, gender, spirituality) were ranked and what difference difference made in an endarkened feminist epistemology. She replied that she did not consider aspects of sociocultural difference to be hierarchically ordered in an endarkened feminist epistemology and that she was more interested in what difference the discourse and researcher made in the world in terms of addressing social justice than in what difference difference made within the discourse. At the time I considered her response significant in terms of the
point it made about the overt political utility of research but evasive, nonetheless, in terms of my expressed interest in how difference worked within an endarkened feminist epistemology. I have since rethought that position and have come to perceive my question as being at odds with her project and therefore politically and strategically inappropriate. She was marshalling aspects of her identity, all of which were needed to forge a holistic front, not only to articulate a new discourse but to "talk back" to power (hooks, 1988) in general and, in Sherene Razack’s (1998) felicitous phrase, to "look white people in the eye" in particular; and I was asking whether she could please fragment that holistic front and tell me which aspects were more important than which others. She was interested and engaged in the early stages of constructing an epistemology and I was inviting her to deconstruct the very epistemology she was in the process of constructing. As Philip Corrigan (1991) once asked, why should the oppressed deconstruct their projects when the powers that be keep on keeping on?

I remain excited about Dillard’s concept of an endarkened feminist epistemology as an important, empowering construct for black researchers, a significant contribution to the process of overtly racializing educational research paradigms and epistemologies and to the present debates and future directions of educational research. I also remain curious about the difference that difference would make within an endarkened feminist epistemology. Rather than approach Dillard again with a question that I have come to see as being at odds with the present trajectory of her project, I have decided to revisit her work to date on the concept and address this issue myself.

In the conclusion to her initial essay, Dillard (2000a) observes that "simply continuing to believe that such a dialogue [about racism and sexism in higher education and the unexamined epistemological assumptions that pass as universal truths] might be possible and useful is an exhibition of extraordinary faith" (p. 679). I note that in the second essay she is no longer calling for a dialogue with the dominant paradigms. While I do not want to make too much of this, I cannot help but note the contrast between the tentativeness of her call for dialogue and the boldness of the call issued by Scheurich and Young as well as the contrast between the fact that she drops her call in the second paper while in their second paper Scheurich and Young launch a stern and indignant rebuke to the educational research community for its failure to take up their call in a manner they consider adequate. While these contrasts may well be coincidental or due to individual personality differences or changes in focus in the authors’ work, I cannot help but think they are more likely reflective of the expectations of a woman of color researcher as opposed to white researchers about how seriously they and their interventions will and ought to be taken. I am hardly alone in this speculation: Cynthia Tyson’s (1998) somewhat wary response to Scheurich and Young is, "Why now? Why now raise the question of race-based epistemologies and begin debates when a White male calls for it?" (p. 22). Underlying Tyson’s response is a conviction that similar calls from people of color are not and will not be taken up as immediately, widely or seriously in the general educational research community. Reactions like Tyson’s and mine are based on observations of how race has played out previously in political developments in progressive discourses and praxis. Having said this, I do acknowledge that the work Scheurich and Young do in putting out this call constitutes a strikingly effective and progressive use of white privilege for antiracist ends.
In any case, both Dillard as a woman of color researcher and Scheurich and Young as white antiracist researchers have called for an engagement of issues of race, racism, and power in educational research epistemologies and paradigms and this paper is in part a response to that call.

The primary focus of my interest, however, is on Dillard's notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology. The larger project of addressing race, racism, and power in research epistemologies and paradigms is secondary here and inevitably emerges from examining Dillard's notion. In other words I am interested primarily in opening up and contributing to a dialogue on the notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology, and secondarily in contributing to a discussion of an endarkened feminist epistemology as a potentially significant contribution to both what Cynthia Tyson (1998) has described as emerging "epistemolog[ies] of emancipation" and the larger conversation on the mostly unacknowledged racialized nature of educational research. My interest is not in examining the notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology in totality. Rather I am interested in how sociocultural difference may operate within an endarkened feminist epistemology; in how the concept, discourse, and project would work in relation to existing, presumably allied discourses and projects such as (racially unmarked but remarkably white) feminist epistemologies; as well as in what effect it will have in the larger context of educational research.

Thus there are quite significant differences between my project and Dillard's. While, as the figure theorizing the concept into existence, hers is decidedly and necessarily a project of construction, mine as reader and critic is principally one of deconstruction. Also, while her approach has been to marshal aspects of sociocultural identity in a strategically humanist project of recueillement, my approach involves employing a messier, multiple, and contradictory concept of the subject (in the postmodern sense) as a means of allowing aspects of social difference to interact in ways that need not be about construction. While she uses the experiences and aspects of the sociocultural makeup of herself and three other black women as material for constructing her epistemology, I am working, albeit fitfully and in a limited fashion, with a much less stable notion of subject and with free-floating conceptions of sociocultural difference in undertaking my project.

I do want to make it clear, though, that this is not an attempt at theoretical sparing, let alone a misguided attempt at theoretical one-upmanship. In other words, this essay is not an attempt to characterize Dillard's conception of an endarkened feminist epistemology as somehow passe and/or "wrongly articulated" and to replace and supplant it with a postmodernist and supposedly more "correctly articulated," cutting edge, and theoretically sophisticated version of it. Rather I see Dillard as having strategically chosen a humanist and modernist approach and framework, one that reflects her worldview and works well for her project of recueillement and construction. My assessment, therefore, is that working strictly within that same theoretical framework would merely yield a conception that replicates or is at least quite similar to hers. I am interested in trying to see Dillard's dual project of identity assertion within and critique of educational research from a different perspective, one that will allow a somewhat different and decidedly pliant conception to emerge. Consequently, I have attempted to be equally strategic and chosen to utilize and make modest use of aspects of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and psychoanalytic theory (especially the notions of the multiple, fragmented subject and identity/identification), employed...
In a fashion recommended by David Blades (2000), one which allows me to tack between the modernist/humanist and the postmodernist. I regard this as the best approach to address the issues that are of interest to me and provide a parallel conceptualization of an endarkened feminist epistemology. My immediate goals are to attempt to answer those specific questions that are of concern to me and in the process to put forward another way of seeing and conceptualizing endarkened epistemologies. In general terms, the goal is to expand and multiply the conceptions of endarkened epistemologies. In narrower terms, the goal is to begin to address the question of what difference difference might make within an endarkened epistemology.

"We refuse to be what you wanted us to be, we are what we are and that's the way it's going to be" (Bob Marley)

Dillard's endarkened feminist epistemology is a project of both construction and intervention, it is reflective of yet not limited to a narrow interpretation of identity politics, and it is simultaneously a very personal and quite open discourse. Although she does allow for the possible inclusion of "other identities" (Dillard, 2000a, p. 661), Dillard bases an endarkened feminist epistemology principally on a combination of race, gender, nationalism, and spirituality; more specifically, on a black feminist, pan-Africanist, and spiritualist politics. Two aspects of the way Dillard utilizes sociocultural identity are worth noting in understanding her concept. First, she argues against a biological conception of race and gender and for a culturalist notion of blackness and African-American womanhood. Second, she employs a decidedly African-centered notion of African-American identity and even uses black, African, and African-American interchangeably throughout her essays.

The two essays reflect a conception of the researcher and educational research as overtly politicized and utilitarian both in terms of obligations to the black community and as an intervention in hegemonic (i.e. white) research paradigms. She speaks, therefore, of "research as a responsibility" (emphasis in the original), answerable and obligated to the very persons and communities being engaged in the inquiry" (p. 663), as well as of the need for "a transformation at the epistemological level" "if educational research is to truly change or transform" (p. 663). While she is intent on assigning the feminist of color researcher this dual role of supportive and reflective activist in relation to community and interventionist in relation to the research establishment, she allows that these roles are undertaken by a researcher who, as an academic, also has to operate within the restrictions and constrictions of the traditional, largely Eurocentric and conformist academy (Dillard, 2000a).

In terms of theory, Dillard indicates that she draws principally on and integrates three sets of literature: black feminist thought and the work of Patricia Hill-Collins, feminist psychology and standpoint theory, and the work of Sandra Harding, and African-American spirituality and the work of Parker Palmer. Dillard (2000b) does consider utilizing postmodernism as a theoretical framework and indicates she understands that such an approach might have some potential. However, she ultimately rejects postmodernism in favor of what she calls "a discourse more in keeping with the spirit of an African ethos and frame of reference" (p. 16). It is
noteworthy and indicative of her strategic rejection of postmodernism that the totality of this consideration and rejection of postmodernism is undertaken in a single footnote.

In her first essay, Dillard (2000a) utilizes the life notes and self-descriptions of three African-American women leaders and study participants (a graduate student, a high school principal, and a Dean) as the material that contributes to and underscores the assumptions of what she puts forward as an endarkened feminist epistemology. The life notes are powerful examples of participants' "voice" and agency, especially since they each choose a different genre (namely a poem, a short story, and a memorandum) as the form in which they express their life notes. In the second essay Dillard employs the same strategy but this time uses herself as the sole model of the African-American woman who embodies and makes use of an endarkened feminist epistemology. Thus while the first essay speaks to the potential generalizability of the notion, the second limits an endarkened feminist epistemology to a personal statement.

Certain commonalities are present in the three life stories as well as Dillard's discussion of herself, and one of the most pertinent of these is the sense of a stable identity and hence of a project of *recueillement*. This is best expressed in the graduate student's poem in which she refers repeatedly to a cohesive identity and wholeness: phrases like "Being me again," "Being Whole," "Wholly me and of all that is me" and "becoming whole" abound in the poem.

The centrality of wholeness in Dillard's construction contributes substantially to making an endarkened epistemology what I have called a project of *recueillement*. As articulated in Dillard's two essays this African-centered, spiritual, black feminist-based epistemology appears to take up its African-centeredness, blackness, and black feminism as given. In other words, these elements are not explored or problematized in any way. Spirituality is identified as an integral element that is often neglected and is therefore brought to bear and affirmed. In contrast it does not take its feminism as given but rather as positioned inside/outside a comprehensive feminism. For example, Dillard speaks of the three black women participants and their life notes as "versions of feminists and feminisms often unheard" and insists that "any/all feminist thought must fundamentally take into account the special and particular ways of seeing that Black and other marginalized female scholars bring to the knowledge production process ..." (Dillard, 2000a, p. 670).

In terms of the established research paradigms, Dillard (2000b) asserts that as a black woman she does not fit well into what she describes as "the Big Four paradigms: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory et al., and constructivism" (p. 2). She employs the metaphor of new shoes that are a size too small - she can cram her feet into them but she certainly won't be comfortable in them). It is this discomfort with all the four main paradigms that in part leads her to articulate her own epistemology. She refuses all four established paradigms and the notion that every researcher must subscribe to one of them as their chosen "Big Daddy protector" (p. 2). Her refusal of the paradigms leads to formulating her own epistemology, possibly a new paradigm, and her rejection of postmodernism enables her to take up aspects of her identity as given, whole, and cohesive.

By identifying herself as African, Dillard appears to operate on a politics reflected in Peter Tosh's (1977) assertion that "no matter where you come from, as long as you're a black man [or woman], you're an African." Similarly, in eschewing
postmodernist conceptions of identity/identification as well as an assumed incorporation into comprehensive feminism and the dominant existing epistemologies and established research paradigms, she appears to say, along with Bob Marley (1985), "We refuse to be, what you wanted us to be. We are what we are, and that's the way, its going to be." And she leaves it to the research community to deal with that dual dissention and assertion of autonomy.

**What is this epistemology in an endarkened feminist epistemology?**

Having produced what Deborah Britzman (1990, 1993) would describe as a necessarily "guilty reading" of Dillard’s notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology, I want to proceed by indicating how the notion might look from a different theoretical perspective and how difference might operate within it in terms of the identity of the researcher. As I have already indicated, I will employ tentatively and selectively certain concepts from postmodernist, poststructuralist, and psychoanalytic theory in undertaking these examinations and projections. The tentativeness indicated is a reflection of the ambivalent stance I take toward these bodies of theory. I am not associating myself here with the phenomenon of a general, definite rejection of or resistance to "the posties," reflected, for example, in several essays published in *Educational Researcher* (e.g., Constan, 1998; Howe, 1998). These can and have been readily addressed (e.g., Pillow, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000 responses in *Educational Researcher*), especially when they are construed as being based on ideological differences between "posties" work and "non-posties" work. Rather, I am thinking more specifically of what I have come to label "black ambivalence about the posties;" an international phenomenon which ought to give progressive postie theorists considerable pause since it is not based on ideological differences and originates, in fact, from presumed allies. Examples of black ambivalence to the posties include Michael Eric Dyson's assertion that we need to "dirty language, to dirty theory, to make more gritty the realities that so smoothly travel from European culture to American theory, especially as they are applied to African-American culture" (Dobrin, p. 92); Stuart Hall's ambivalence about postmodernism's ambivalent fascination with difference and his declaration that "there's nothing that global postmodernism loves better than a certain kind of difference: a touch of ethnicity, a taste of the exotic, as we say in England, 'a bit of the other'" (Hall, 1992, p. 23); Gayatri Spivak's assertions that "deconstruction cannot found a political program of any kind" (Spivak, 1990b, p. 104), and that we, non-Westerners, have been called to speak by postmodernism.  

The other side of this position is that, having expressed these reservations, Spivak not only utilizes deconstruction extensively in her work but is widely regarded as a leading deconstructionist, Dyson insists on the importance of theorists like Foucault and Derrida, and Hall does selectively employ aspects of the discourses of these theories in his work. It is this ambivalent, wary use of "the posties" I want to utilize here. I will proceed by initially pausing to reexamine the supposed transparency of meaning and taken-for-grantedness of the concept of "epistemology" and then tack back and forth as necessary between a problematized concept of epistemology and Dillard’s humanist/modernist frame and an emphasis on the discursive and a postmodern frame.
Several factors make me pause at rather than take for granted not only the concepts of epistemology and feminist epistemologies but the quite efficacious notion of "epistemological communities" (e.g. Hankinson Nelson, 1993). The first of these is Richard Rorty's critique of the accepted efficacy of employing the concept of epistemology:

The desire for a theory of knowledge is a desire for constraint - a desire to find "foundations" to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid. (1979, p. 315)

Rorty's depiction of epistemology as constraining and limiting is in sharp contrast with the assumed empowering and/or interventionist conceptions of feminist epistemologies in general and, for our present interest, Dillard's endarkened feminist epistemology in particular.

The second thing that gives me pause is closely linked with the first, and it is the understanding that what we have come to understand by and employ as the concept "epistemology," that is, "ways of knowing" and the concept "feminist epistemology," that is, "feminist ways of knowing" or "feminist critiques of traditional ways of knowing," are newer and somewhat different conceptions than the original analytic philosophy concept of epistemology (Duran, 1991, p. 81).

Traditional (i.e., androcentric) epistemology can be defined as a theory of knowledge, and rests on the premise that "a general account of knowledge, one that uncovers justificatory standards a priori, is possible" (Alcoff & Potter, 1993, p. 1). The subject in this formulation is a universal "human being" and knowledge is situated outside of that human being. As Jane Flax has pointed out, "In [traditional] philosophy, being (ontology) has been divorced from knowing (epistemology) and both have been separated from either ethics or politics" (Jane Flax, quoted in Harding, 1986, p. 152). Employing a traditional definition of epistemology, therefore, renders the notion of a feminist epistemology an oxymoron and tempts one to conclude that there cannot be feminist epistemology and that feminists ought to abandon this project rather than continue to tinker with a concept that is problematic in both its surface neutrality and its hidden androcentricm. However, critiquing this supposedly universal and neutral but insidiously androcentric version of epistemology and putting forward a decidedly politicized version that draws on women's experiences is precisely the project undertaken by feminists like Sandra Harding (1986, 1993) and Jane Duran (1991). This is how Sandra Harding phrases the interventionist politics of a feminist epistemology in research:

Once we undertake to use women's experience as a resource to generate scientific problems, hypotheses, and evidence, to design research for women, and to place the researcher in the same critical plane as the research subject, traditional epistemological assumptions can no longer be made (1987, p. 181)

Given all this, if we are to employ the notion of epistemology, it is important to insist on a politicized reconceptualization, one that goes beyond the traditional androcentric conception that both Rorty and Flax critique, since any misinterpretation of our use as the original is open to the critique of being strangely subjective, political, interventionist, and even empowering.
Third, Patti Lather (2000) has observed in passing that we have moved from epistemologies to discourses and discursive analysis in positioning ourselves in relation to both identity and representation. What this means is that the search for definitive criteria for evaluating knowledge claims ought to be replaced by a sense that the knowledge produced and its effect and effectiveness would be dependent on the discourses within which it is produced or with which it intersects. Stuart Hall has also emphasized the importance of the discursive (though without buying the poststructuralist line wholeheartedly) when he asserts:

My own view is that events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive; but that it is only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities, do they have or can they be constructed with meaning. Thus, while not wanting to expand the territorial claims of the discursive infinitely, how things are represented and the "machineries" and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation - subjectivity, identity, politics - a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life. (Hall, 1996, p. 443)

Given the existence of at least two conceptions of epistemology and the poststructuralist assertion about the efficacy of discourse as a category of analysis, it may be fruitful to view and put forward the black intervention, and indeed the black feminist intervention in discursive terms. However, rather than eschew epistemology, my approach is to tack away from it toward the discursive and tack back to it when necessary in moving forward with my analysis. This approach does not necessarily jettison the notion of the researcher as what Renato Rosaldo (1989) has referred to as a "positioned subject," nor would it mean that the researcher does not have, in Dorothy Smith's (1987, 1990) terms, a "standpoint." What it does mean, rather, is that "standpoint" is to be taken up and utilized as Smith intended, namely as an identity- and experience-informed place to start from rather than a final, fixed position from which to speak. Also, tacking to the discursive and postmodern facilitates operating with a flexible notion of the researcher as multiple, fractured, contradictory subject, criss-crossed by various identity discourses and politics as well as the discourse and politics of educational research.

**Multiplying identity talk: the difference difference makes**

I consider the framework I have just outlined useful in bringing out the specificity of the various aspects of social difference that are or can be said to constitute the subject in an endarkened feminist epistemology. Thus rather than accept that there is no hierarchy in operation and that the subject in an endarkened epistemology is Dillard's cohesive, whole subject, we can begin to see and highlight the specificity of the individual aspects of social difference at play and how discourses associated with those forms of difference might affect the standpoint of that subject as well as the version of an endarkened epistemology with which they would identify.
The cohesive subject in Dillard's endarkened feminist epistemology could be reconceptualized in terms of its multiple, fractured, self-contradictory identity/identification aspects. Teresa de Lauretis (1986) among many others reminds us that "woman," for example, could be seen not as a cohesive identity but in much more complex terms of its racial, economic, sexual orientation, cultural, and other aspects, all of which not only constitute the female subject but interact in complex ways within that subjectivity: "the female subject is a site of differences; differences that are not only sexual or only racial, economic, or (sub)cultural, but all of these together, and often enough at odds with one another" (de Lauretis, 1986, p. 14). Similarly, the category black and the black identity politics which conceptualizes blackness as a smooth blend of Africanness, African-Americaness and spirituality can be reconceptualized such that they take into account difference within blackness; such that Africanness for example is seen as an identification much more than an aspect of identity, and blackness itself is seen as reflective of varying combinations of race, culture, gender, sexuality, and so on, as well as queer, mixed-raced, multicultural identifications and politics.

In this reformulation, identity is not only plural but conspicuously so: our focus is not on the wholeness of the researcher but on the many discourses with (and indeed against) which the research identifies. Second, identity is not seen as given and complete but as open and in process, as both being and becoming. Third, identity is seen as relational and elements will gain prominence or recede depending on the circumstances the subject occupies and the others in the given situation. Fourth, identity is not essential (whether in the biological or even cultural sense) but much more loosely and tenuously a manifestation of a series of identifications. As Diana Fuss (1995) puts it, "every identity is an identification come to light" (p. 2). Finally, identity is not necessarily benign let alone positive but rather is double edged, both enabling and oppressive. Judith Butler points out that:

. . . identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression. This is not to say that I will not appear at political occasions under the sign of lesbian, but that I would like to have it permanently unclear what precisely that sign signifies.

(Butler, 1991, pp. 13-14)

Reconceptualizing the cohesive subject of an endarkened epistemology as the subject of multiple discourses makes it possible, even necessary, for difference to be seen as being in operation not only between the researcher/subject and others but within the researcher/subject and thus for the difference that difference makes to be seen as important. Race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and other forms of difference become free-floating, constitutive aspects of the subject, aspects that will be chosen in different combinations and with different emphases and understandings by different subjects, aspects which are reflections of whether and to what degree various discourses are operating in various situations on the subject.

Tacking back to epistemology and the identity of the black researcher, bringing along the revised notion of the black feminist researcher as postmodern subject could yield interesting results. Spirituality, for example, may not appear as a
criterion in some subjects' conception while it may prove a much stronger criterion in others. In fact, Daaiyyah Saleem, a black Muslim woman whose dissertation was, interestingly, supervised by Dillard, has put forward what she is calling "a Godcentric epistemology" in which religion in general and Islamic values and morality in particular are paramount and a feminist and black politics secondary. For a black lesbian with a strong politics around sexual orientation, lesbian identity and queer politics might prove paramount or will at least be one of the criteria she employs in her version of an endarkened epistemology. Some black women might choose to identify with Africa while others might not. At a gay and lesbian bar, an element of identity such as heterosexuality might become an important marker of difference and recede in importance when the same subject goes to the grocery store. Some men (like myself), white women, and women of color might identify strongly with an endarkened feminist epistemology but will of course be drawing on different experiences, etc. In short, if an endarkened feminist epistemology is conceptualized as a "floating signifier" (to use a concept Stuart Hall's has made famous), the category is rendered more inclusive and pliant: it may be appropriated by many different subjects and it will itself shift its contours depending on the subject who is utilizing it or else will proliferate into various versions of itself.

**Conclusion: Toward an integrative antiracist educational research politics, without guarantees**

How are we to see Dillard's dual project (whether conceptualized in the frame she puts forward or the parallel I have suggested here) of the construction/examination of the black woman researcher's identity/identification and the racialized intervention in educational research discourse? I want to conclude by indicating what this project means for the black identity politics and the position of black feminist researcher in educational research, for the challenge that it represents to the field, and how the field ought to respond.

I regard Dillard's conception of an endarkened feminist epistemology as an act of refusal of what Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990) has identified and decried as the problem of "bifurcation of consciousness" experienced by women (and other others) in academe. Smith's concept refers to the fact that women's world, activities, and experiences outside of academe are starkly different from the androcentric, rational, Eurocentric world and discourses of academe and therefore women (and other others) who are also academics experience a bifurcation of their consciousness in the attempt to operate in both worlds. Earlier, W.E.B. Du Bois referred to a "double consciousness" possessed by black people which he characterized as "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one black body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (DuBois, 1961, p. 17). More recently, Johnetta Cole (1986) has referred to black women's "second sightedness," an ability black women have to see "out of their womanness, often out of their poverty and sometimes out of their privilege."

If we put these notions together, we can speak of an endarkened feminist epistemology as an attempt to bring black women's experience and second sightedness to bear in the academic and research spheres such that black women
and other others do not have to operate continuously with a starkly bifurcated consciousness. While double consciousness starts early in the education of African-Americans and other others, I see bifurcation is a specific stage, a situation the other faces once upon becoming a researcher or an academic teacher, one in which the other is expected to be not only knowledgeable about but an expert on and even teacher of androcentric, white, Eurocentric knowledge. It is the bifurcation that arises out of the other being situated in these specific, ironic circumstances of being assigned a dominant subject position as well as authority over dominant knowledge that leads to the kind of discomfort and alienation that needs to be resolved. In order to operate in the world of their experience and of research, the black feminist researcher may employ her "double consciousness" and "double sightedness" not only as a survival strategy but as a position from which to launch a critique of the status quo. An endarkened feminist epistemology is an example of what can result when a black woman rejects bifurcation of consciousness and employs double sightedness and double consciousness to both articulate a perspective on knowledge and make an intervention in the status quo of knowledge production and evaluation.

What does this mean for educational research? Dillard's intervention constitutes part of the foundation on which a black feminist research can be built. However, it should also be recognized that in combination with other observations of the whiteness and maleness of educational research, it also constitutes a dual threat to the status quo of educational research. While Dillard does see her work as interventionist, she, like Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) stresses the additive nature of "ethnic epistemologies." The response from the educational research community should therefore be to make room at the table. The approach Ladson-Billings stresses should be the adoption of a tolerance for ambiguity in general and of a mestiza consciousness in particular. While I endorse these recommendations, I suspect interventions like Dillard's endarkened epistemology and racialized feminist approaches in general cannot be readily accommodated since they threaten the very race and gender of the discourse of educational research. Ruth Salvaggio (1989) has observed that academic discourses are decidedly gendered (e.g., science is male, literature is female) and I hold that the same is true of educational research. The development of feminist research threatens the maleness of educational research, the exposure of its whiteness leaves that whiteness vulnerable to change, and the assertion of a black feminist epistemology threatens to leave both the race and gender of educational research up for grabs. This double threat is not, in my view, an intervention that can be readily accommodated. Far from lamenting this, I consider this uncomfortable tension a messy state of affairs to be indulged for its productive progressive potential rather than foreclosed by attempts to assimilate and accommodate the voices of intervention that are producing it.

Whether we conceptualize the intervention Dillard makes primarily in terms of epistemology or in terms of the discursive, it should be clear it is part of a more general antiracist intervention in educational research. My hope is that I have made something of a contribution that is both derivative and somewhat different from Dillard's approach in solidarity with her project of making an endarkened intervention in the politics of educational research. I am convinced that the politics of race and the dual project of both addressing racism and the unmarked and unremarked whiteness of dominant educational research paradigms on the one
hand, and the putting forward of overtly raced epistemologies and worldviews as interventions in the field on the other is the next major intervention in the field. I am equally convinced that Dillard's ongoing project is an important contribution to this larger project.

In re-reading Dillard and putting forward a messier parallel to her project as a response to the call she and Sheurich and Young have put out for a discussion of race in educational research, I have been guided by a composite of three notions put forward by Stuart Hall to produce a less sure-footed conception of both black identity politics and antiracism politics. George Dei (1996, 1999) and others have put forward the notion of an "integrative antiracism," which constitutes a great improvement on the already powerful and efficacious discourse of antiracism. Hall (1992, 1996) undertakes a parallel step in speaking of the end of mechanistic antiracism and goes further when he speaks of the end of black innocence, and the need to operate with a notion of a politics without guarantees. By the end of a mechanistic antiracism Hall means an end to the idea of doing antiracism in "black and white," such that all blacks are victims, whites are always the oppressor and a neat formula can be found to address racism. By the end of black innocence, he means the end of the conception of blackness as not only cohesive but also as always already occupying the moral high ground. By a politics without guarantees Hall means to reference the fact that we need to operate with a sense that our theories and projects are not always guaranteed to be successful in bringing about the results we seek, that because a project originates from black politics or well intentioned antiracism is no guarantee of its efficacy, rightness, or success. The struggle for social justice is, in Gramscian terms, not a war of maneuver but a war of positions and in both that larger war and the specific battle of over-representation in educational research, Dillard and others are articulating and opening up new positions. I have attempted, here, to add my voice to the whispers that are a growing harbinger of the coming revolution.

Notes

1. The different possible positions were reflected on the panel on paradigm proliferation at the 2000 AERA conference. Lather (2000), as a feminist poststructuralist invested in unstable categories, welcomed and celebrated this development. Her response to it was first that "proliferation happens," and, more importantly, that we ought to "get a thousand paradigms flourish," since this would undermine the hegemony of the established paradigms and allow for a more fully representative and egalitarian set of paradigms to emerge. Donmoyer (1996, 2000), on the other hand, wearing the necessarily pragmatist hat of a journal editor (reflective of his role as past Features Editor of Educational Researcher) saw this proliferation as problematic. He saw it as producing or, at the very least, exacerbating the problem of incommensurability. He cautions that continuing this trend means we might end up in a situation where the educational research community is divided up into very many extremely small groups, each of which cannot address let alone assess any of the others' work. Taken to its ridiculous extreme, he warns, this development means everyone would have to have his or her own research journal or at least we will end up with a constantly multiplying and diverse set of "paradigms".

2. Stanley Fish has observed that "the emergence of factions within a once interdicted activity is a sure sign of its having achieved the status of an orthodoxy" (1980, p. 76) and by all accounts qualitative research was roundly interdicted by the educational research establishment when first introduced.

3. I identify this moment as "curiously belated" because issues of social difference and the politics of identity have been prominent, even taken-for-granted aspects in various disciplines and in interdisciplinary work. In educational research, we have taken gender into account and included feminist theory as a legitimate approach and framework for research methodology. When we combine these facts with the fact that America in particular is, in Toni Morrison's (1992) words, a "wholly racialized" society (p. xii), it is curious that the overt racialization of epistemologies and the call to unearth and explore the raced nature of the dominant research paradigms is only being taken up seriously at present.
4. The notion of "subjugated knowledges" originates from the work of Michel Foucault (1980) and the idea of the emancipation of subjugated knowledges is similar to what Foucault called the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, by which he meant the challenging of privileged truths, not so much through the production of alternate theories but through the activism of sociopolitical movements.

5. In particular I am reminded of the Rasta penchant for language games: old words are often assigned new meanings and new words coined when existing words are thought to undermine Rasta politics. Thus, Dillard's endarken, as a play on enlighten, is reminiscent of Rasta "overstanding," a refusal to be positioned "under" that the word "understanding" supposedly entails. For example, the word "dread" has two, opposing, meanings. When the Rasta dub poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson (1990) declares that "it dread in a Inglan," the phrase translate loosely as "life is dreadful in England." On the other hand, the ubiquitous "dreadlocks" refers to positive characteristics such as empowering, regal, aesthetically pleasing.

6. In posing an interview question, Julie Drew (1999) captures cogently Hall's position: "You [Stuart Hall] have commented at various times, as have others, on the importance of language for ongoing political action and systemic change. New vocabularies and new metaphors enable us to rephrase questions, repose problems, and organize experiences and knowledges in ways that create new spaces for action" (p. 235).

7. In the 1980s for example, bell hooks (1984) observed that "racism has become an accepted topic in feminist discussions not as a result of black women calling attention to it (this was done at the very onset of the movement), but as a result of white female input validating such discussions, a process which is indicative of how racism works." (p. 51).

8. The full text of the poem, quoted in Dillard (2000a) is as follows:

I be me in that space
Dark and quiet -
And Whole -
Wholly me and of all that is me
Journeying to the edges
Spilling'over to the pavement or gravel -
Sustaining this entity through movement and talk
Folding into itself facing attack
Turning out unto the street facing struggle
Being me
Being Whole
Being me again
Ever recreating
clarifying
pushing the edges
So that this Third Space
between paved and gravel becomes ...
and Becomes more than a crack (break yo' mama's back)
a line (problem of the twentieth century)
a spot (see it run)
but Becomes ...
and is becoming whole (philosopher)
integrated (transgressive)
critical (-ly important)
VOICED (heard) (p. 665).

9. This sub-heading is a play on Stuart Hall's (1992) essay title, "What is this `black' in black popular culture?"

10. Britzman's (1990, 1993) notion of guilty readings is related to the more general postmodernist idea that every reading is in fact a misreading. She employed the notion of guilty readings to indicate that when a researcher presents data on participants, whether it is the participants' actual words or the researcher's interpretation of those words, the meaning being constructed by the researcher is in fact a reading, one that can never be precisely the same as the participants'. Her point is not that this is bad but that it should in fact lead us away from the naive idea that we can ever capture and represent participants' meaning as the participants would. She uses this as part of an argument for having researchers take an unambiguous stake in the data and its interpretation, a stance of negotiating meaning in the interaction between participants' voice and researcher's agenda.

11. Stuart Hall (1996) puts the case well when he asserts that: "[The] theoretical encounter between black cultural politics and the discourses of Eurocentric, largely white, critical cultural theory which in recent years, has focused so much analysis of the politics of representation ... is always an extremely difficult, if not dangerous encounter. (I think particularly of black people encountering the discourses of post-structuralism, postmodernism, psychoanalysis and feminism.) (p. 445).
12. Duran (1992) points out that the newer, less precise conception of epistemology that is being used pervasively at present refers quite broadly and vaguely to "ways of knowing" and feminist epistemologies to women's or, more specifically, "feminist ways of knowing". Underlying these conceptions is the assumption that we already have knowledge and that the frame of that knowledge differs among us in accordance with our politics. She observes that this is in contrast with the original, more precise, analytical philosophy concept of epistemology, which does not assume that we have knowledge but that knowledge is something that is being sought. In this conception, epistemologies are not ways of knowing; they are ways of seeking knowledge.

13. The following is how Rosaldo (1989) describes the notion of the ethnographer as a positioned subject: "The ethnographer, as a positioned subject, grasps certain human phenomena better than others. He or she occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision. Consider, for example, how age, gender, being an outsider, and association with a neo-colonial regime influence what the ethnographer learns. The notion of position also refers to how life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight" (p. 19).


15. The importance of Hall's work in general and the particular significance of his notion of a politics without guarantees is reflected in the fact that an edited book (Gilroy, Grossberg, & McRobbie, 2000) of essays which work with the notion have been published under the title, Without guarantees: In honour of Stuart Hall.

References


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