

# Creating Openings for Co-Theorizing

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Qualitative Inquiry  
2023, Vol. 29(1) 137–146  
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DOI: 10.1177/10778004221095053  
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## Abstract

This article is derived from a webinar series conversation titled, “Post Philosophies and the Doing of Inquiry.” During the webinar sessions the panelists, Dr. Fikile Nxumalo and Dr. Eve Tuck, discussed the ways in which their philosophical orientations contribute to how they enact inquiry as co-theorizing.

## Keywords

Indigenous approaches to knowledge, ethnicity and race, Indigenous critical theory, cross-disciplinary methodology, methodologies

## A Note From Special Issue Guest Co-Editors

This article is derived from a webinar series conversation titled, “Post Philosophies and the Doing of Inquiry,” co-hosted by Candace R. Kuby and Viv Bozalek. The webinar sessions ran from August 2020 to September 2021. This webinar series was made possible by a research collaborative partnership between the University of Missouri System in the United States and the University of the Western Cape (or UWC) in Cape Town, South Africa. During the webinar sessions, the panelists were asked to respond to four questions:

1. How does your philosophical approach influence your ways of doing inquiry?
2. What does this philosophical approach make thinkable or possible for inquiry? (so how does your approach relate to more traditional practices such as literature reviews, data collection, analysis, and so forth)
3. What are your perspectives on methodology(ies) and/or methods? How do you envision that in your approaches to doing inquiry?
4. What mechanisms could be put in place at universities to help supervisors and/or committees support students doing post philosophy-inspired ways of inquiring?

We are grateful for James Salvo’s invitation to publish the webinar in a special issue and to Erin Price who assisted with technology, logistics, and the art for the series. To learn more information about the webinar series, please locate the guest editors’ (Kuby & Bozalek) introduction to the special issue on the website for *Qualitative Inquiry*.

Each panelist in the webinar series suggested several readings to accompany their talk. To access the recorded webinars and suggested readings, please visit: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4P\\_GUK6QV2Wp\\_OAWEpw87Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4P_GUK6QV2Wp_OAWEpw87Q). For more information about the webinar series, visit: <https://education.missouri.edu/learning-teaching-curriculum/webinars/>.

**Candace Kuby: Let’s begin with our first question that we’re posing to all of our panelists in this series, and the question is, how does your philosophical approach influence your ways of doing inquiry?**

**Fikile Nxumalo:** I want to begin by stating that I’m speaking today from what is now Toronto on the territories and treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit River; the Wendat, Anishnaabe, and the Haudenosaunee. Toronto is also a place of long Black presence and relations between Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous peoples. My hope is that my words today will be in good relation with these lands and people.

In terms of that question, I would say, there are three main interconnected philosophical orientations that guide how I do inquiry. When I think of inquiry, I think not only about research, but the inquiry work that I do with young children and teachers, particularly in relation to engaging with place

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in critically oriented ways. The first area I think of major philosophical influence in my work relates to my interest in working with conceptual orientations that really helped me to respond to the ways in which anti-Blackness emerges and the places and spaces of early childhood education, particularly in relation to my interest in rethinking environmental education. In that work, Black feminist theories have been an important grounding. So, for example, in my most recent work, I've drawn on Tina Campt's work on Black refusal, Black fugitivity, and Black futurity (Nxumalo, 2021)—to put forward affirmative ways of engaging Black children's place relations and to put forward an intervention into what I see as an overwhelming amount of research that is concerned with revealing the harms that Black children face in education. In that same paper, which I think also speaks to my commitment to engaging inquiry in ways that bring Black and Indigenous theorizing into conversation, I also draw on Dr. Tuck's work on disrupting the idea of revealing damage as a theory of change. In terms of an example of how the philosophical thought guides my inquiry—while that particular paper is primarily conceptual, I also put these Black feminist concepts to work to do a reading of everyday encounters between a young Black girl, an Austin, Texas creek where we spent time and some of the anti-colonial place-attuned pedagogies that we enacted at this particular place . . . so for instance I think through what a relational lens of Black refusal-as-futurity about what it might mean in terms of what I notice differently about those encounters including their affective intensities. I would also add that in particular within the umbrella of Black feminist theories, Black feminist geographies have been really important to my concerns with disrupted emplaced anti-Blackness in early childhood studies within the context of what is now the United States and Canada.

The second area of philosophical influence in my work which is also a part of responding to anti-Blackness is an anti-colonial orientation. Black feminist work, such as for instance Tiffany Lethabo King's work which I draw on in the article I shared for the webinar: called *Decolonizing place in early childhood studies*, is also important to how I think with anti-coloniality. Indigenous onto-epistemologies are also really important to how I approach anti-colonial inquiry. I would underline here that it is important for that I draw from anti-colonial thinkers from the geographies of the places close to where I was born and spent the first 18 years of my life—so for instance, I have drawn from Bagele Chilisa's work, Lesley le Grange's work, and John Mbiti's work. At the same time, because my work is situated within the settler context of North America is emphasizes relations with particular places, lands, and waters, I often think alongside the work of Indigenous scholars on Turtle Island. For example, I have drawn on Anishnaabe scholar, Leeane Simpson's concept of *presencing* to help me articulate what I call *refiguring presences* as a conceptual, methodological,

and pedagogical orientation for *storying* young children's place relations in ways that unsettle anthropocentric and colonial enactments of outdoor education in Canadian contexts. In my work, I am interested in *presencing* as practices that reencounter Indigenous onto-epistemologies and land relations as always already present despite the effects of settler colonialism. I use the term *refiguring presences* to describe this anti-colonial orientation, where *refiguring presences* refers to rethinking Indigenous land relations as presences in educational places and spaces in settler colonial contexts. *Refiguring presences* can take many situated, contextual forms. For example, I have engaged with *refiguring presences* through interruptive visual and textual *storytelling* of children's encounters with a forest and its more-than-human inhabitants in what is now British Columbia. In this *storytelling*, I *diffract* descriptions of children's encounters with logged cedar tree stumps; the forest trail; emplaced Indigenous stories of the cedar as relative; and with histories of colonial logging in this and other forests in British Columbia—I also attempt to disrupt a human-centric *storying* of this forest by speculating what stories the trees, tree stumps, and their more-than-human inhabitants might tell of this particular place.

The third philosophical influence, which is also interconnected with anti-coloniality, that I will briefly mention is concepts and theories that help me to unsettle anthropocentrism/human centrism or human supremacy and relatedly, nature/culture divides in early childhood education. In this third area of philosophical influence, I draw from multiple perspectives including again Black and Indigenous feminist theories as well as posthumanist-oriented work. Often in my work, I find that I have to bring what can be disparate philosophical orientations into conversation because I am always grappling with how a disruption of human centrism as part of responding to current times of ecological precarity can also not also be a flattening of human difference. So brought together, these perspectives help me to do this work in researching children's everyday encounters with more-than-human others. For example, in one of the articles, I shared for the webinar, co-authored with the wonderful Marleen Villaneuva we think with situated Indigenous Coaheultican knowledge that oriented both our anti-colonial research and our pedagogical work focused on children's relations to water (Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020). At the same time, we also draw on theories of affect that help us to attend to the complexities of the moments that emerged with the children and particular with respect to Sara Ahmed's work on affect—to help us pay attention to our complex situatedness in those moments as Black and Indigenous researchers working with predominantly white settler children.

**Candace Kuby: So we'll be able to dig into more of that later, but that was a great way just to kind of**

**give that initial overview of the different philosophical traditions and concepts that really have inspired your body of scholarship.**

**Eve would you like to jump in now with that question: What are the philosophical perspectives that really orient how you think about doing inquiry?**

**Eve Tuck:** Yes, and thank you for the invitation to be in conversation today. Thank you especially to Dr. Nxumalo, who is a really beloved colleague and friend. I often think with and learn from Fikile's work. I actually find the question of philosophical perspectives that inform my work to be quite challenging. My sense is that it's very hard to separate out who I am as a writer and thinker and as a person. I am a person who cares about my own experiences in the academy, and also other people's experiences in the academy, at the same time as not really having very much faith in the redeemable qualities of many of the disciplines that we are engaging. Being suspicious or being quite antagonistic, or certainly ambivalent, has been a through-line of my approaches to both being in the academy, and also making work from within the academy. I have a deep and active sensibility about what should be said in public and what should not be shared. What does the academy deserve and what has it not yet proved itself to deserve? That informs what I think is appropriate in terms of asking Black communities and asking Indigenous communities to share our stories. This is especially because the academy has not worked in good faith in relation to these communities. It has certainly worked in order to extend settler colonialism, and has worked in real time and after the fact, to justify transatlantic slavery.

Certainly, Unanga philosophy and worldviews are at the center of my thinking. When I was first starting to make work in the academy, there weren't many other Unanga scholars. Although Unanga philosophies and cosmology are very important to who I am in the world, I have always been very reluctant to publish or directly bring Unanga stories into academic work; I feel like I've needed more guidance, more collaboration, to think about what story should be shared and which stories shouldn't be shared. But now there are a number of Unangan scholars with whom I can consider these questions, including Liza Mack, Haliehana Stepetin, and Lauren Peters. I am less alone in making these choices about what, from our community knowledges, should be made public.

I do think that there are practices of inquiry, practices of writing, that we can do in the academy we can also practice outside of the academy. I believe very much in Orlando Fals-Borda and M. Anisur Rahman's (1991) idea of

breaking up the monopoly that the academy has on asking questions, being curious, and engaging in inquiry practices. For this reason, I'm especially interested in those research practices that involve co-theorizing and are deeply collaborative. These practices are co-constituted so that the collectives that work on them work together for as long as they do and then break apart when the project is over because they're not meant to be permanent. These are some of the sensibilities that I bring to this work, that are informed by who I am as an Unanga person and who I am as someone who is suspicious of the academy. And, really, who I am as a person who still tries to make meaning in any kind of place or job that I would have under mandatory capitalism, as we live in now.

**Candace Kuby:** I'm going to build on that, if you don't mind, based on the readings that you suggested for today and that I also heard Fikile mention. In both of the readings that you [Eve] suggested for today, there's a discussion around the logics of pain or in damage centered research. And a conversation about moving toward desire based frameworks. Maybe spend a little bit of time, for those who are with us today, discussing that notion of damage centered research. I think the way that you particularly referred to it was this notion of the theories of change. Later, I noticed, as I was reading that there was a bit of discussions around binaries and how you see a caution about binaries maybe popping up in your other writing. I know that's a lot, but I was just wondering if you might be able to comment or talk a little bit about that for those who maybe read the suggested readings for today. This notion of damage centered research and theories of change are informed by who you are in what you were just sharing with us.

**Eve Tuck:** I work at the intersection of education and Indigenous studies. This article, *Suspending Damage: A letter to communities* (Tuck, 2009), was one of my earliest publications. I actually plotted it out in a car ride with Dr. Malia Villegas, who was on the editorial board of the *Harvard Educational Review*, when we were on our way to the movies one rainy night. The idea for the article emerged when I was explaining to her that I was so frustrated and impatient with the very over-determined ways that Indigenous communities and also other communities have been narrated in educational research and other social science. Indigenous communities, Black communities, Black Native communities, and communities of color are often defined by oppression and by relationships that are made for us within white supremacy, settler colonialism, and what Dr. Saidiya Hartman (2008) calls

the afterlife of slavery. The article emerged from my observation that researchers who are often not from those communities go into communities with the very liberal, idealistic, unfounded theory of change that if somebody can just shine a spotlight on the harm that has been done to these communities, that change will happen. These researchers believe that by documenting and exposing the harm that communities experience is going to result all of the people who are doing the harm or benefitting from it will change their behavior. This is a theory of change that is over invested in the innocence and agency of white people, of people who benefit from settler colonialism.

At the time that I wrote the article, I hadn't read Saidiya Hartman, 1997 book *Scenes of Subjection*, but now I would connect the observations that I was making to her crucial challenge to the idea of empathy as being a reliable motivator in policies and practices of abolition. What I call damage-centered research narratives are those which try to document and expose the pain and trauma of communities to convince white and powerful people to give up power and resources. These research narratives are still a very prevalent preoccupation of educational research and much of social science, and I don't think we have any evidence that this theory of change actually works. This theory of change is deliberately naive about how whiteness, power, and capitalism work. In the end, this research just produces lots and lots of pain stories about communities. Indeed, the only way that some communities are able to even legibly describe themselves is through those pain stories. This is something that K. Wayne Yang and I have written about in our 2014 essay on *Unbecoming Claims*.

Learning from what scholars like Audra Simpson (2007, 2014) have described as community refusals to engage in this kind of research, I have tried over the course of my career to build practices of desire-based research. I am particularly interested in bringing to the fore the theories of change that are at work in our research. I am so curious about theories of change! I love the discussions that we might have about theories of change. I wish that in our societies we talked more frequently and openly about theories of change. This could be, for example, a question that people ask one another on a first date, akin to asking others for their astrological sign. For those of us who engage in research, I think we should be talking about our theories of change because again, many latent theories of change seem to rely on the belief that if we expose the harm, then people will feel more empathy and they will change their ways. This is simply not true. More, this is a colonial theory of change, one that is relying on somebody more powerful than us to be agentic. This, in turn, allows them to maintain that power. This theory of change relies on the innocence of white people. It relies on the innocence of settlers who just

didn't know that they were continuing to benefit from settler colonialism. I'm not going to make work that invests in the empathy of white people toward Indigenous communities. I'm not going to do that.

**Candace Kuby: Before we go into the second question I wanted to come back to you Fikile and ask you to talk a little bit more about the three traditions that have influenced your scholarship as you were sharing a few minutes ago. You talked about the third one as posthumanism and the critiques of that and how you sit with that tension or wrestle with that, but then also why. You find some times, like you mentioned earlier, needing affect theory to help you be attuned to certain things. I know, often that students will ask me, if particular philosophies are compatible and who gets to decide if they are. Can you put them [certain philosophies] together and in conversation with each other? Maybe talk a little bit about how these kind of three traditions that you see overlap, but you also see that they help you to be attuned to or attentive to different things. How do you think about that in your work and kind of deciding you know when particular threads come into play more than other? What do you do when there are those frictions and tensions that people might not see as compatible in some way?**

**Fikile Nxumalo:** That's a really good question, I wouldn't say that I have a uniform approach that I engage the ideas with; it's more in terms of what is it that I want to think with and what's helpful to for me to think with something in a deeper way and with a particular orientation. The question of incommensurability is one that I grapple with all the time particularly more recently as I have read the work of Black feminists such as Tiffany Lethabo King (2017) who writes about how Black feminists have good reason to be suspicious of posthumanist theories and some of the flattening of human difference that can occur in that work. I would say that if I am bringing into conversation for instance ideas from critical posthumanism and Black feminism I would say I make an effort to be explicit about the work that the concepts I am working with are doing—in particular I am very interested in how in my work on environmental and place-based education, how it might be possible to challenge human supremacy while also attending to the mattering of racialized and colonial structuring of the human.

**Candace Kuby: So let's jump into our second question which builds on this one.**

**The question is about how the philosophical concepts and traditions that you gravitate toward—what**



do they make thinkable or possible for inquiry? This question really comes from lots of conversations with students when they are trained in the academy to write literature reviews to have certain methods of data production, and you know, sometimes as they jump into different theories and philosophies they find a lot of tension in that. Talk with us a little bit about how you think about the doing of inquiry.

**Eve Tuck:** Many of my choices of what work to pursue are guided by the impulse to try to undermine the legitimacy of the academy, to try to diminish the influence of the academy, and to reimagine what counts as knowing, what counts as being, and what counts as making political work. I say diminish the influence of the academy as being the sole producer of knowledge, at the same time that I really wish that our societies would listen to pandemic scientists and climate scientists. On one level for me, that means like try to take everything that is marked as elite and try to undermine exclusive access to it. I take exactly what I teach in courses at the University of Toronto and teach these same research skills to community members and to Black and Indigenous youth. In my own small way, in many of the decisions I make, I am trying to thwart the tendency of the university to hoard resources and hoard knowledge.

At the same time, I am often pushing back on the academy's sense of entitlement to know everything. I am pushing back on the academy's entitlement to ask any question and to feel like any piece of information that is collectible should be collected. My social theorizing and research practice has tried to resist those habits of collection and hoarding. As a whole, my research practice is participatory and collaborative. It's very hard for me to think of research that I would not do, or could not do, alongside community co-researchers or youth co-researchers. Sometimes I find collaborators because there are community organizations that approach me and asked me to work with them on a research project or question. Other times, I gather a group of youth or community members to create a research collective to create a project. Doing participatory research means thinking differently about who has expertise, whose expertise matters, whose questions matter, who makes theory, and whose meaning-making counts. Doing participatory research as a scholar employed by a university means thinking about how I spend my time with people, and how I want to teach students to do their work in relation to the communities that are important to them.

**Candace Kuby:** I would love to follow up a little bit from the refusing research piece that you shared as a suggested reading. I'll just read the little part

here, just in case, those who are with us today aren't familiar. You put forth three axioms that you discuss in the piece with your co-author: "The subaltern can speak, but, is only invited to speak her pain" is the first one, the second one, "there are some forms of knowledge that the academy doesn't deserve" and I feel like I heard you bring that up a little bit earlier today in some way. And the third is that "research may not be the intervention that is needed." You really dig into those three axioms with your co-author. Do you mind talking a little bit more, maybe about those three and how that relates to what you were sharing about the ways that you engage or think about inquiry in the world?

**Eve Tuck:** I wrote that essay with K. Wayne Yang in 2012 or 2013, and it was published in 2014. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick was one of my teachers in graduate school, and certainly I learned about the practice of theorizing by making axioms through her 1990 book, *The Epistemology of the Closet*. In making a series of axiomatic statements, we are setting some positions that are often argued against, and instead writing what's possible when we operate as though they are given facts.

What I appreciate about making something axiomatic is that you're taking something that people might argue against and saying actually, "No, this is my baseline, I'm not going to argue about this anymore." When I think about the urgency we felt when we were writing that piece to set forth those axioms, it must have been a sense of urgency out of always having to defend ourselves in relation to those ideas. We were fatigued by colleagues who wanted to debate whether research has done harm, and so on. Years later, in my daily life as a teacher and researcher, I do feel like I get to operate from that set of axioms as a set of given conditions or factual premises.

Of course, I cannot help but notice that there is always a hunger for pain stories. I work actively to support students to thwart the pressure they are under to serve up pain stories. I help them not to feel embarrassed that this is what the academy seems to want from them and instead turn that embarrassment back onto the people who want that from them. In the work I do to support students and write about our research, I am very explicit about the kinds of things that we publish about and the kinds of things that we don't. When we're doing research with youth and communities, we are trying to be in good relation with our collaborators. This means we come to know a lot of stuff about people's lives. What the academy would have us believe is that this is the good stuff, the valuable stuff, and it seems like we're supposed to tell are these stories. These might be stories that are sensational or stories of neglect or humiliation. And it

might feel like these are the stories that will convince someone powerful to give up power or be less awful. To be a researcher that refuses to circulate pain stories is to be comfortable with knowing stuff, knowing stories that fully inform our work but that we won't ever tell. Because the academy has never shown itself to be responsible with stories like that.

The third axiom in that chapter with K. Wayne Yang is concerned with the idea that research is not always the intervention that is needed. This is when we are doing research to convince someone powerful of our humanity, when we are doing research just to rehearse something that a community already knows, or when we are doing research just to make ourselves seem more legitimate. Sometimes you don't need research, you need a billboard. Indeed, it's quite cynical to engage in a whole study and invite people to respond to questions, when everyone knows the answers just to come across as more legitimate or respectable. Or to engage in research just to convince some people, often white people, of something of which they are actually never going to be convinced.

I'm interested in research as a craft, inquiry as a craft. This is in the same way I'm interested in dancing and running and karate and pottery as a craft. When we understand research as a craft, as something that humans invented, as a way to make work. It is something we do in a deliberate way, we do it for a certain amount of time because it's interesting and sometimes beautiful and connective for us to do. It allows me to see other possibilities for research, rather than believing that it can do something to convince people that are structurally on our necks to step off. I'm not going to spend my time trying to change people who will never take me seriously.

**Candace Kuby:** Fikile would you like to jump in on this question about what philosophies that you engage with make thinkable or not thinkable or what is possible or not possible in the doing of inquiry? As I was reading [your suggested readings], and you might already be thinking about speaking about this, you mentioned this at the beginning, is that your work is so interconnected to inquiry and your pedagogical work with young children in the world. So I wonder, too, if you might speak a little bit about that because many of the communities you engage with are in spaces with children. How does that shape the way you think about what's possible with inquiry?

**Fikile Nxumalo:** I would say these philosophical approaches help to shape the stories that I tell in my research in that I would echo what Eve has said in wanting to trouble what counts as theory and also what counts as data—so for me this often means working with concepts, images, songs, objects, land,

waters, historical fragments and more are all part of the stories that I want to tell about my research and are not necessarily separate. So for example, in the earlier work that I referred to before, where I wanted to engage with what it might look like to put the concept of refiguring presences to work in dialogue with everyday pedagogical encounters between myself, children and educators and a particular forest—in that work it was important for me not only work with “data” as what happened with children and educators, but to bring interruptive elements to juxtapose with those encounters and do the work of refiguring presences that was actually not there in our encounters—so that meant for instance, juxtaposing images of our encounters with logged cedar trees, with colonial histories of logging in the forest, and with a speculative story of what the rotting tree hollows might teach us about living in damaged landscapes and so on. So that is to say I have found most generative, to try out writing in ways that do not create strict boundaries around what is data, what is theory/knowledge, and what is speculative, disruptive storytelling—at the same time these ways of storying research for me do not mean anything goes—they are grounded in the ethos that I mentioned earlier which is an intentionality with respect to situated disruptions of anti-Blackness, settler colonialism and anthropocentrism in early childhood studies.

**Candace Kuby:** I noticed across what both of you are saying, in some ways, is this idea for you, Fikile, that pedagogy and working with children and inquiries and research practices—as I read your suggested readings for today, it's hard to define those as separate. Eve, I think, even the way that you talk about working with communities and youth, I mean it's not that there's this inquiry or research thing that's happening in the academy and then there's what's happening, whether it's with children or youth. [Rather] it's very much intertwined, it seems, in some way that these aren't these separate things.

So that really does, I think, take us to our third question around methodologies and methods, and I think I was struck in your writing, Fikile, you talking about pedagogical documentation which for those in the early years or childhood studies communities draw upon the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy. I was thinking about this notion of methods and methodologies. I was drawn to your writing on minor events or what might be called kinds of everyday mundane interactions. Maybe talk with us a little bit about how you think about methodologies and methods and the work that you're doing and perhaps to elaborate or illuminate a little bit more about these

**everyday mundane interactions that you really find generative for the thinking that you're doing.**

**Fikile Nxumalo:** Yes, and maybe to answer that it would be helpful to talk about pedagogical documentation, because I would say, for me, that's really been essential, both as a methodological tool and as a way to really facilitate the inquiry based work that I do with children and educators. Pedagogical documentation for those that don't know, is kind of the visual, textual, and sonic traces of curriculum-making including artifacts that are made by the children. It also includes educators' and families' critical reflection on the pedagogical encounters so that in working with these everyday encounters, that you mentioned, pedagogical documentation becomes a way to collectively make meaning of these encounters to share them with families for their perspectives and together to think about what we might want to do next, with the children to build on the inquiry and even to create movement in a different direction. One of the things about documentation that I have found really enriching in my research and pedagogical work is that (and this relates to what our earlier discussions around theory) is that I think it creates openings for theory to not just be something that me as the researcher brings to educators, for instance, but also to think about how children and educators are also theorizing and also brings possibilities to really interrupt early childhood education-as-usual, because, as we come together around a piece of documentation, we can collectively deeply question the taken for granted ways that we think about children and their relations and then to think about what other perspectives can help us to think differently.

**Candace Kuby:** *Eve, as I was reading your pieces, I was also struck by your discussions and the way that you weave in conversations around autoethnography or participatory action research or other approaches that might be seen as non-dominant or maybe seen as somewhat radical in the academy, but you're still talking about them in a way that helps us to pause and to question what they're producing and what they're doing in the world and who they're serving. Some of the big questions that you thread throughout [the suggested readings] is not only about methodological choice, but really about axiological questions and the doing of research, to what end and for who. For example, in the piece about refusing research you write about theorizing *with* rather than *about*. I wondered if any of that might be something you can talk a little bit about in relation to this third question about methods or methodologies?*

**Eve Tuck:** I want to name explicitly how critical race theory has informed my work as an educational researcher (Dixson et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Race, racialization, and racism are very important dynamics for me to study and attend to. This is why, here, I am specifically identifying and ultimately decentering whiteness in our inquiry practice. I definitely associate the desire to know everything, and the belief that everything *should* be known, with whiteness. I associate the idea that there should be no limits to knowledge or it being undemocratic to not make all forms of knowledge accessible to everybody with whiteness. And in this regard in particular, it runs counter to Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies. Within Indigenous people's frameworks of knowledge, there are relationships at the heart of some of the most important teachings. We learn some of the most important things, from people who love us, at the right time in our lives. We know that it is important for people to know what they need to know, when they need to know it, so there is a peaceable comfort that not everything is to be known right now. I definitely locate that insatiable and arrogant desire to know everything in how whiteness operates and how capitalism operates.

When I say that research has been used to forward settler colonialism or justify land theft and genocide, I am speaking of this as a contemporary practice. This is because most researchers are not ready to grapple with whiteness or white supremacy at the heart of their knowledge production practices. People mistakenly think the solution to addressing the harms of research is to diminish research, like, "Oh, we're just hanging out," or "I'm not really a researcher, I'm just like a friend who has a university job." They never consider not doing inquiry, and instead focus on trying to dissolve the boundary between everyday living and research. "We're just keeping it casual," and so forth.

Instead, I actually move in the other direction, in which I get super formal about the start of research. I'm very formal and bring so much attention to asking for consent. I bring attention to the awkwardness of asking for consent. Of course, I am collaborating with people who care about me and whom I care about very much. But although these are very mutual relationships, there is no mistake when we are doing research. It is clear when we begin and when we end our inquiry process.

I bring more attention to the boundary between living and research practice because, as I said earlier in this conversation, research is a practice, it is a craft. We are doing this on purpose. We are collaborating on inquiry on purpose. What this looks like, for example, is, say we are in a work session with high school-aged young people. There might be a moment when one of the university facilitators or one of the young people themselves says, "Hey, this is a

good conversation for us to record. Do we consent to turning on the recorder?" That might feel like it would interrupt the conversation like you're breaking the fourth wall or something by stopping to ask for consent to record. Perhaps even the conversation will change because people are now talking with the awareness of being recorded, but that doesn't mean the conversation is any less real or meaningful. It means it is happening in a way that is energized with the self-awareness of consent. Emphasizing consent is what you do to take care of relationships in research.

Consent is extended as a theme in the work I have been doing in recent years with youth and communities in participatory photography and other visual methods. In working with youth to do participatory visual methods, they too are often in the position of asking for consent. They ask other people, each other, us, "May I take your photo?" And we talk a lot about how asking for consent can feel awkward and embarrassing, not because we shouldn't do it, but because we live in a society that largely does not take consent seriously. In our project, *Making Sense of Movements*, Black and Indigenous youth photographers have decided that consent entails not only asking a person if they can take a photograph but also explaining to the person what about them is so photographic in that moment. At first, the practice felt so strange, but now it is a shared referent for what we mean when we discuss consent.

**Candace Kuby:** Thanks for sharing. So this notion of being super formal about consent, and in a sense, it sounds maybe contradictory, but it's really, as you said, about taking care of relationships. Our final question is really about students and how we mentor and work with our students in the academy and the communities that we're a part of. I want to just give a couple minutes [to this] because I know it's already come up through some of the other conversations we've had today. But just to give a moment to see if there's anything else either of you might want to share. Oftentimes our students are asking us about how we navigate within the academy.

**Eve Tuck:** I work with amazing students at the University of Toronto and elsewhere. What I have learned about mentoring is to remind students that research takes a long time, and it is hard. Like, this is maybe one of the hardest things that you've ever done, so it's okay that it feels challenging. For this reason, it's really important to ask questions that matter to you.

Not just questions that are answerable within the certain amount of time, which is sometimes how people are taught to ask a dissertation question. I encourage people to think about what will be their next project. I learn a lot from

people in my life who make beadwork. I encourage students to think of each project that we engage—whether that's a collaborative project or one that we are leading—as a bead that we're stringing together with other beads. At first it can just look like a bead, and then string of beads. But then, when you start to sew it to the hide, over time, a design starts to emerge. So, a culminating graduate project just needs to be the first bead on that string. It will soon be sewn along with others. That is how the design starts to emerge and so sometimes it's thinking about: What is the first bead that needs to be strong and sewn? Along with the question of what is important, we can also encourage students to ask, why am I the person to work on it? I learned this from Leigh Patel (2015) in her book *Decolonizing Educational Research*. Patel is saying, sure, you have a great question, but is it your question to ask? Do you have enough of a relationship with the relevant communities to ask that question?

Finally, we are sometimes doing our work in lonely places. We might be the only one in a university doing participatory work, for example. Maybe your mentor doesn't really understand what you are trying to do or even is invested in other epistemological stakes that you can't get with. This can be very lonely, and you might feel pressure to change your work to fit in or meet expectations. But I encourage graduate students and assistant professors in this situation to remember that the work we do is like a lighthouse that is shining so that others can find us. There have been so many beautiful people in my life, who have who have just come into my life because they read this little thing that I wrote, or they came to this little thing that happened. Don't spend your energy doing work that doesn't matter to you, because that will be the light that draws people to you. If you are putting out a little signal about work that matters to you, even if you are lonely now, it will invite other people to come into relation with you and your work.

**Candace Kuby:** That is so beautiful. I love that imagery of the lighthouse, or, putting out the signals and thinking about who you're inviting to come in your life. That's a beautiful way to think about inquiry. Fikile, anything that you want to add about mentoring and working with the students that you work with before we open a space up for the two of you to talk a little bit across your work?

**Fikile Nxumalo:** I would just echo everything that has been said. I don't have specific advice, but I would just say that mentoring, is one of my favorite things that I get to do as part of my job; I present with students at conferences and work closely with them as co-researchers and co-writers. One of my favorite things that I was able to do at UT Austin [University of Texas, Austin] was to teach a qualitative inquiry course that engaged students in thinking deeply about



the concepts that make sense for what they're most interested in their research and how they might put those concepts to work methodologically. So doing that work with students is really important to me; that's all I would add.

**Candace Kuby:** I love hearing that mentoring is your favorite part of work. I think for many people, that is the case. I know that the two of you had mentioned wanting a little space to think across your work. As I read both of your suggested readings, I could see a lot of intersection, so I'll just open it up for either one of you or both of you to share a little bit about what you're thinking about related to that.

**Eve Tuck:** Fikile, I have been following and learning from your work for a long time. One of the things that I have learned so much from you is about the past conditional temporality, as Lisa Lowe calls it (learning from Edward Said), of reading a moment or pedagogical encounter that happened in the past now with a meaning that wasn't necessarily imbued in the moment. Sometimes, at least in educational research, missed opportunities for theorizing for deeper meaning or moving from theory to practice and back again is kind of explained away. Someone might say, "Well, I didn't know how to ask that question," or "I didn't know how to ask that question to young people and so that's just not the level that we were ever able to get to," and they kind of underestimate spaces, underestimate classrooms, or underestimate early learning spaces. There's something in the theorizing that you do that isn't as bound to what was or wasn't possible in real time. I love that your work kind of moves back and forth with time; you're so playful with time, and have found ways to very ethically revisit conversations with teachers and children. This is both in real time through your pedagogical practice, and in your theorizing. You return to conversations and add layers, add remixes, add other kinds of reverberations. I have learned so much from you about this. That just because a moment is over, doesn't mean that the moment is over. We can continue to learn, continue, both in our writing and in our practice, to return to something.

The other thing that I learned from your work, every time I read it, is about writing with texture. I am thinking about the logs and the moss and the places in your writing. You are describing children in particular places. Your writing is so textured. It's so bumpy and so smelly and so sensory. It so squishy, I feel like I can imagine the squish of the moss. There's something so affective and transportive about how you write about place. I learn from this every time I ever engage your work.

**Fikile Nxumalo:** Thank you. First, I want to share with you, that Eve, you've inspired my work for a long time. So when my doctoral supervisor asked me who would be my dream external examiner, you were, of course at the top of my list, and I was so nervous and ecstatic when you said yes. And so, while I want to speak about some of the ways in which you know your work has inspired me, I also want to just begin by saying that you've been a really great mentor in helping me navigate the academy so I'm really thankful to have you as a colleague and friend. As I mentioned earlier, your paper on suspending damage in communities has been very influential to me and I've returned to that paper many times from when I first encountered it in my doctoral studies.

As I also briefly mentioned earlier, my most recent revisiting of that, was to place it into conversation with Black feminist theories of refusal. This brings me to something that I really appreciate about your work in that it's really been generative in relation to being in conversation with Black studies and its ability to be placed in conversation with work in Black studies, which I think is so important, both within and beyond the academy—in relation to Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous relationalities and solidarity work.

Your work on critical place inquiry and land education has also been really important to my own thinking and doing and unsettling of place-based education. Your 2014 book, *Place in Research*, with Marcia McKenzie, was so helpful to me as I was completing my dissertation and working to find language for non-anthropocentric and anti-colonial ways of thinking about place and land that did not also erase Black land relations and their complexities.

I also wanted to mention that *Before Dispossession*, or *Surviving It*, your paper with Angie Morrill, and the *Super Futures Haunt Collective* (2016) is another one of your writings that I have found inspiring. I have assigned this paper multiple times in the qualitative research methods class I taught at UT Austin and students and myself both really appreciated the beautiful, affective storying and theorizing work that the paper does—and it provided an inspiration for students to see possibilities for generatively bringing theories into conversation with narratives, imagery, artwork, and poetics—I highly recommend it to anyone in the audience that has not read that work and is interested in Indigenous theories of haunting as well as in creative ways of storying research. I feel like there's so much more I could say but I'll stop there, thank you.

**Viv Bozalek:** I think everyone is really enjoying the discussion. I've had a number of personal messages and I see, also in the chat that people are very much benefiting from this conversation. Well, it is time to close

so thanks to everyone for attending today we've had a good turnout and thank you, both for your time and for engaging with us, and people are very really, really appreciate it.

**Candace Kuby:** Yes, I'll just echo Viv. Thank you both so much for your time and expertise and generosity, candidness, sharing back-stories, and in the ways that you engage in the world within the institution of the academy, as well as the communities that you're in relationship with.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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

### Funding

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

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