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## Epiphamania

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### Abstract

This article is a narrative exposition of collaborative research performed at Bergamo in October 2001. As a performance of research, we hoped to extend the involvement of audience/participants and to problematize both method and articulation of lives lived (Knowles & Cole, 2001) by using art forms in (re)searching the nature and possibilities of socially

constructed and experienced boundaries. The primary foci of our work are (1) the relationship of research and/to/with art, (2) the nature and effects of socially constructed boundaries in research/life/curriculum, and (3) the nature of collaboration. We used the media of dance, poetry and readers' theater to both theorize and present data about socially defined roles and identities and our responses them.

### **Epiphamania**

*What consciousness of transcendence does is to make one aware of the partiality of each disciplined outlook and sensitive to the many-sidedness of the reality that one confronts.*

—Phenix (2000)

### **Setting the Stage**

We have woven together the script from our performance at Bergamo<sup>1</sup> with narrative segments from a conversation we had driving back to there one year after our performance. Our drive to Ohio from North Carolina was approximately ten hours and the van was fully packed. We had the closeness and time to reminisce, reveal and contemplate. All five of us were returning to the conference as individual presenters this time. Our lives inside and out of the academy had changed. While the previous year our classes together kept us in constant contact, each of us was now on a more individual path. Other words in this text are taken from our email messages as we collaborated again on the production of this article. Rather than detract from the flow of reading we use endnotes to indicate where each textual bit was taken from.

We use endnotes to emphasize the inherently simultaneous multiplicity of layers of content, materialization and meaning in our work. We utilize endnotes which are easily brought to the surface to make visually demonstrative what our language infers about multiplicity, identity and education as well as to build the infrastructure to support our interpretations and the bridges linking our work to work in more immediately recognizable spheres of educational research and school functions. Using the medium of cyber space the reader is prompted to move back and forth between and among the layers and even to extend out into the boundary-less space of the internet. Our purpose is to render the medium useful as a theoretical and graphic illustration of boundaries.

In our effort to invite the reader into the work we did not smooth our conversational and informal 'talk.' We expose ourselves. We make our selves vulnerable to critical academic eyes. We had to combine the personal and theoretical to move out of the safer places of academic sensibilities and into the more explicitly reflexive and, therefore, more expressive and interpretive realms of artfulness, self, learning and research.

In 2001, we five women (one of us being the professor<sup>2</sup>) were in a qualitative research seminar together. Our discussion, research and, ultimately our performance developed in response to the work – the theory, philosophy, ethics, and questions<sup>3</sup> – represented in the works of curriculum theorists and qualitative researchers, introduced in the seminar. Together, as a seminar group, explored the intersection between artistic expression, artfulness, anti-oppressive, socially active education and research. We began

to view notions of research and artistic expression in new (for us) and exciting ways. We are:<sup>4</sup>

I, Kristin Atkins Cuilla, am currently the Senior Administrator for High School English Language Arts for the Wake County Public School System in Raleigh, North Carolina. At the time of this presentation, I served as an Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction at Southeast Raleigh High School, a magnet school located in Raleigh. After graduating from North Carolina State University in December, 2004, with a Ph.D. in Educational Research and Policy Analysis, my research continues to focus on investigations of identity and identity formation. Envisioning me--a petite, white, blonde, middle class woman--in white and red is an important layer to understand my dialogue

I, Julie Machlin Burke, am a visiting professor in Educational Studies at a small, old, Quaker, Liberal Arts College. Previously, I spent nearly twenty years working in public schools and a school I started in a rural, Southern, coastal community; the only Jewish Yankee for miles. My research and teaching involve the ongoing development of teacher identities specifically, as passion, fun and reality are constructed within them. My life as a dancer deeply effects my life as a scholar and social activist. Since my daughters have left home I enjoy watching our cats frolic in the marsh.

I, Ann Gibson Winfield, and my son moved, in the summer of 2005, to Bristol Rhode Island after a 9 year stay in North Carolina. I received my doctorate in Curriculum Studies in May of 2004. My research interests are eugenics, memory, and history. In pursuit of understanding why things are as they are, there hasn't been much time for art but I have recommitted myself to my guitar and am working on redeveloping those

I, Lucille Elizabeth Eaton, and my golden retriever reside in Durham, NC, while my son and daughter are away at college. I received my doctorate in Curriculum Studies in the fall of 2005. Currently, I am a literary specialist with the Durham City Schools. My research focus is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies and the events that occur at the crossroads of Queer and Feminist Theory. A self-identified idealist, I plan to transform the brick-layered boundaries of inequality into permeable screens of tolerance and acceptance.

I, Anna Victoria Wilson, live in California. An Assistant Professor in Education at Chapman University, my research focuses on margins, centers, and the multiplicity of privilege definitions within feminist poststructuralist theory. An activist throughout my life, I continue to challenge those areas that marginalize those of us whose voices are diminished by the dominant culture.

This article is organized as a palimpsest. Palimpsest, according to Diamond & Mullen (2002), is a form consisting of “cowritten text that provides an artistic patchwork of perspectives . . . a joint account and [separate] versions of collaboration [combined] to undercut any expert or privileged epistemological stances” (p. 109). We have chosen to present our work in palimpsest form to highlight our collaborative efforts as well as our multiple perspectives both as a group and as individuals. Our intention is to represent those perspectives as synchronistic, overlapping, divergent and emergent.

The text is derived from three places. One place is the narrative constructed from the interdisciplinary fields of education. The second place is the script of the performance/research presentation from which this paper was constructed. Much of the text is taken from transcripts of conversations we had as we traveled back and forth to the Conference in Ohio where we presented our original research.

Text that appears in this ‘ordinary’ font is narrative. That means it is, to an extent, the theoretical framing, or an additional description of what undergirds our work. Finally,

individuals have provided additional theoretical and personal thought via the use of endnotes. The challenge of reproducing a performance is daunting and ultimately produces an entirely different entity. Nevertheless, we have endeavored to preserve the feeling of being present as much as possible with the following parameters. Italics indicate stage directions, or a description of what was happening on during the performance. Much of this paper is the transcribed script from our performance with the stage directions. The words an actor or actors spoke during the performance are centered on the page. However, we have rearranged the order of the script; it is not the same as our performance. Each actor is set off by a colon from her words and/or actions.

Julie: My own distress was unexpected.<sup>5</sup>

It emerged as the boundaries between

Art and research seemingly dissolve

The unexpectedness of this unease

made it more profound.

I consider myself to be an artist, a dancer/teacher

and have worked hard for the embedding

of arts and academics with/in each other.

An idea of complicity offers

a way to understand that the whole is more than

the sum of its parts; that in this instance arts

and academics are systems that can

interact in such ways

that they change one another.

Lucy: What brings me to this collaboration?<sup>6</sup>

Why do I choose to walk this journey with my  
colleagues?

I am interested in the melding of the visual,  
the rhythm and the word

I am interested in the complexity of

boundaries– how they form, how they shift

and how they can transcend and be transcended

I cannot imagine this piece without a group

dance.

The first time we did the contact

improvisation in class, I knew it would

become more and I knew I wanted to

become a part of it.<sup>7</sup>

Anna: You have framed this very well – now we all need to input our dialogue- we need  
this conversation<sup>8</sup>

### **Reflexivity of our Group<sup>9</sup>**

We talk, weep, write and ponder the boundaries that we live by. We question the

Kristin: I actually started getting interested in it because of reading Mary Doll's book . . . the public/private, good girl/bad girl dichotomy was me . . .<sup>11</sup>

Annie: Well . . . For me one of the most enduring feelings that I have about the whole experience is the level of risk and bravery for each other and for ourselves that we all put into and took out of the experience.

unspoken assumptions we make about their tenacity . . . While each presentation has as its focus a particular boundary, we recognize that none occur in isolation. And we remember our performance.<sup>10</sup>

### **And Now We Begin**

*Anna – Strides to center of stage*

Me . . . A college professor

Who would have thought?

Me . . . a college professor

Divorced – mother of three – Grandmother

Great grandmother – to – be.

Teaching . . . . . Writing . . . . . Mentoring

Moving Against the Grain.

Teaching Against the Grain.

Writing Against the Grain.

Mentoring Against the Grain.

Intersections . . . . Dissection

Deconstructions . . . Reconstructions

Removing . . . Changing . . . Transcending

The boundaries

My Boundaries

Our Boundaries

*Anna ends center stage facing the audience.*

*Annie and Julie come to her – and stand beside her.*

Kristin: Oh, I remember not wanting to share. Because . . . you know. Good girls don't share what's going on with them. They just dress up and go out and do what they're supposed to do and . . . come home and be private.

Lucy: Well, you know at first I didn't feel like it was such a brave thing. I was just like 'yeah well' kind of thing . . . Because for the last few years I've just been myself and I've been so comfortable with the screen of just flowing back and forth and just being who I am and now going back into the public schools I am much more closeted.

*Their bodies form a box opened to upstage.*

*Lucy is crouched in the space inside the box our bodies create.*

*As Lucy speaks we, the box, crouch down exposing her.*<sup>11</sup>

I could list the many ways

I describe myself and each time I do,

I create new boundaries . . .

If there is to be any lasting change,

a true metamorphosis,

the change must come from within.

We have to willingly alter our boundaries,

and that is possible through self-love, self-respect,

and inner peace/security.

It requires facing the world with a loving heart

and releasing the fears

that build the hardest walls of all. . . .

The boundaries must be permeable enough

to hear and honor all voices.

Kristin: I felt like I was observing too . . . participating and observing. I remember watching Annie sit in the chair to do her piece and Anna standing in the middle. I mean we were moving and that kind of thing while it was going on, but I felt distanced . . . like I was outside watching everybody do their part except I was doing my part . . . because all the things we were talking about were very personal to us . . . and I was trying to hear it in the context of the presentation.

*Lucy moves back into the space, her back is to the audience.*

*We stand up concealing her from the audience.*

*We wait a beat and then make the opening appear again.*

*Lucy steps outside with an aggressive movement and addresses the audience.*

You just called me a ----WHAT?



*Moving forward and 'peeling' onto Lucy, Kristin, Julie & Annie*

*The group holds its breath one beat.*

*Then peeling off as one body we say:*

Good . . . .

Bad . . . . .

*Then we turn and pointing . . . extend arms at Kristin*

*Julie: Moving in the interior of the out-reached accusing fingers and moving them away.*

Relinquishing and redeeming ourselves

*Julie is running inside the out reached fingers*

No boundaries . . . no relationships

*Julie is walking as the space opens between the other dancers walk with gliding steps  
through space*

No intersections, center, margins

All holds barred

Flat infinite glossy space<sup>14</sup>

*Kristin walks to the front of the stage downstage center. Julie arrives at Kristin and*

*draws the red chiffon scarf she is wearing from her neck as she says:*

How do we do the becoming in the next moment of the dance?

Annie: I think we were talking about boundaries and interacting. About boundaries both between ourselves and the audience but also internal boundaries we have for the way we operate in the world. I wanted to approach that issue from a couple of different levels –one was the more physical level . . .<sup>15</sup>

*The group begins off stage.*

*Entrances are silent as we slowly walk in a clockwise direct (4 slow counts) and then*



*begin eye contact – gazing toward the center (4 slow counts).*

*Raising our hands as we diminish the space between us.*

*Walking we make the circle smaller . . .*

*And then we hold each others' right wrists as in the standard twirl of square dancing.*

*Leaning out – holding on to each other against the spinning of the movement, with centrifugal force – we turn the circle swiftly in (4 slow counts).*

*We Stop*

*Right arms rise as we turn 'inside' until we stand back to back in a circle.*

**We Say:** Women

*We raise our joined hands high*

Sisters

*Turning right, we bow over the one beside us in a "Matisse Cut – out" like embrace*

Scholars

*A lively, large step out from the circle – facing audience twirling and stepping back to the circle, to end holding hands*

We, as a group, contemplated/problematised the socially constructed boundaries that define and/or divide us by normative conventions, class, and gender, sex, faith/religion, and credentials. Questions emerged about their tenacity and the possibilities for reinterpretation of boundaries.

Dancers

Lucy<sup>16</sup>: I set out to answer these questions  
within a trusted circle of friends/colleagues.

I discover that the perceived boundary  
between my dance partner and myself  
fades in the negotiation of the dance,

Julie<sup>17</sup>: We were a force of diverse  
and powerful voices

threading our own tapestry  
and it felt/feels much more solid  
and hopeful to work within

blending the physical of our bodies,  
 the intellect of our minds and  
 the warmth of our spirits.  
 Our friendship and trust deepen.  
 The fibers of difference that exist  
 within our performance group  
 slowly weave together,  
 re(con)textualizing the level of understanding  
 and acceptance between us.  
 We are more than one voice singing together.  
 We become one body  
 flowing smoothly in and out of the permeations  
 that define who we are.

the richness of the cloth than  
 as a single thread blowing in the wind.  
 Annie<sup>18</sup>: In terms of the way . . .  
 we categorize certain things,  
 you know art and expression and art and  
 academia. . . It's true  
 they are false categories  
 and in fact deep down  
 I suppose I do think I have art in me  
 But, I don't feel like there is any place that it  
 is recognized in the world of art  
 as I envision what it is.  
 To me, art is the bark on the tree or  
 Musical performance or dance. I mean it is  
 Just an expression...

*End with Annie standing downstage center – the group has moved outward from Annie to the perimeter of the stage and they have their backs to the center stage.*

*Annie at center stage says:*

What are boundaries?

**Boundaries can be useful**

when they keep our voices from being silenced,  
 or when we are able to discover more about each other  
 because of the way our boundaries intersect.

**Boundaries are illusory,**

when, for instance,

the voice of the dominant culture projects in my mind a racial stereotype,  
or when they separate us into categories.

*As Annie speaks we have turned and are moving towards her. Placing our hands on her.*

*Her flexed palms are rising up*

**Boundaries are always**

socially, culturally and personally constructed modes

of **SEPARATION**

*Pressing out away from her self, we all respond, propelled by her pushing, moving away  
from the center.*

*Julie, Kristin, Annie end at their perimeter spots – heads bowed, backs to the stage.*

We introduced the media of theatrical reading, poetry and contact improvisation as languages and experience to access the veiled and subliminal contours or frames inherent in our lived experiences and identities.

Anna to Kristin: Why didn't you want to share?

Kristin: I have hard time with sharing the private, because, you know, Good girls don't share what's going on with them. They just dress up and go out and do what they're supposed to do . . . and come home and be private.

*Kristin is conversing with her audience:*

But I've *always* been the "good girl!"

Can't you see that? Can't you see me?

No...I may not be able to articulate this for you...

**you** are part of the problem...

**all of you—**

I can't really tell you about me in public...

what I have to say is inarticulate—

I...I don't know...

No!...

I don't have my **own** words to express how I am a good girl...

I only have **your** words...  
 and I'm not sure they capture my thoughts . . .  
 I actually have a platform!  
 So I should get about the business of finding my voice...  
 yes, the business of speaking with you...  
 (*clear throat*)  
 (*Stay hesitant*)  
 So—you think I'm bad, huh?  
 Hmm...if you could only see beyond my body...  
 if you could be inside my head —  
 in the private spaces of my heart—  
 you'd really see me....  
 you'd see that I am good?  
 I know I shouldn't have to do this,  
 but I can't help it....  
 you make me defensive...  
 I, uh....(*deep breath*)...  
 I am a good girl because I follow the rules...  
 You can tell—  
 can't you—  
 I know how to dress and how to walk and how to articulate...  
 I know how to behave,  
 I know what you expect of me...  
 Be the good girl—  
 the good daughter—  
 the good debutante—  
 the good Barbie...  
 you want me to marry a fine gentleman

who will take care of me...

you have trained me well in all of these gifts...

and I have, dutifully, obeyed.

*(Irony, a stronger voice)*

But you also educated me . . .

I get myself in trouble when I express my opinions.

Maybe it's the way I talk to you about why I get so frustrated—

no, angry really – about the way I've been treated.

Why don't you want to hear my *(get up)* stories?

Are they painful for you too?

Probably not...

I guess they just complicate the image you've created for me...

but they are part of me...

Do you want to hear about how sad I am that my marriage failed?

*(Find a person to answer)*

Yes...I know it was my fault—

do you always have to remind me about that?

Can't I still be sorry?

Isn't it still my story?

Fine!

I won't talk...

maybe that's all you wanted of me in the first place...

my silence.

*(sit)*

But before I give in,

I want you to know something...

*(Indignant. Clear Voice)*

I'm not invisible you know...and I'm not bad.

I may have skeletons in my closet  
 but I am not going to lie to you about them  
just to make you feel better  
 or to fit your image of who you think I should be.  
 I've had about all the "shoulds" I can take.  
 I have a score to settle with those "shoulds" ...  
*(gesture to my colleagues- thumb behind me)*  
 what I really should do is stop listening to you....  
 stop playing the part  
*(get up)*  
 —stop starching myself for public appearances.  
 I choose not to be a beautiful little fool anymore!  
 . . . Do you want to know that I am haunted  
 by that good girl you saw sitting over there?  
 Do you really want to hear that  
 I need to be able to articulate my life in my own way...  
 not in **your** way...  
 and not for you to hear it  
 but for me to **know** it. . . .<sup>19</sup>  
*(Almost blaming)*  
 Can you see what your "education" has done for me?  
 You made me want to uncover the truth—  
 to be seen—  
 you trained me to be silent and yet  
 you educated me and gave me  
 a powerful voice.  
 You want to call me bad?  
 Fine...do that...

Using arts forms to represent and research the concepts of boundaries is meant to foster multidimensional and visceral re-examination of a fairly ubiquitous concept – socially-constructed boundaries. The (re)presentation is both an exploration of “methodological issues and a metaphorical articulation of lives lived” (Knowles and Cole, 2002, p. 208). We worked together to expand our approaches to theorizing and representing our research into/about how boundaries operate in our lives. What we attempted to do through our performance was to be somewhat fearless, expressing our passionate “accumulation” that rationalism deems too uncontrollable or unreliable to include as valid forms/process of knowing/understanding/theorizing.

I don't really care anymore what you think.

I don't need you—

I finally found me...and you know what?

I can be independent.

I can live alone and still be successful.

I can talk and you will have to listen.

You know why?

Because I'm here...in your presence...

and we are together

*(gesture to colleagues)*—

making contact...

*(grab chair)*

in body and in spirit...

in public to be sure...

but I suspect in private too...

all you have to do is reach out—

*(start dragging the chair off)*

in the meantime,

I'll be sitting over here trying not to disturb you.

Annie: I didn't want to communicate on just one plane. I wanted to share myself in another way too. I was able and I felt that I was able to express all the things I needed to express and I appreciated that somehow I didn't feel confined in any way . . . The issue of

being fat and thinking of myself that way and . . . just wanting to talk about it and have it right out there. Not have to just negotiate the pain and fear internally . . . I love myself more from having negotiated that internal boundary in a public space.<sup>20</sup>

*Annie at center of stage says:*

If it's my mind,  
and I can change my mind,  
does that make a boundary false, or temporary?

There is a constant niggling.

It screams under  
my skin, tells me: I am fat

*Everyone mimes exaggerated horror—from the sidelines*

I wonder sometimes if I haven't thought about it enough . . .

or, maybe

I've thought too much:

Uh, Oh . . .

Boundary Alert!!!-

Intellectual vs. physical.

O h W e l l . . . .

Does my fatness *really* create a boundary

behind which I can hide?

Does it work to think that

potential intimacies are interested in

who I am

since it can't be my body?

Or, then again,

is it really,

that I attract misogynist manipulators



who can sniff insecurity from ten miles off?

What if it's my mind that attracts them?

Perhaps the boundary of my fat  
is only in other people's minds  
and it is *that* that bothers me.

What about this:

what if it's the case that fatness,  
or race,  
or any other of the boundaries  
that divide us,  
are so internalized that  
dismantling the social construction is not and can  
not be an intellectual matter?

What then?<sup>21</sup>

*At this point Anna, Kristin, Lucy, Julie, – the chorus – has moved as far off stage as they can – away from Annie.*

*Annie finishes and drifts off ...*

Julie<sup>22</sup>: For me it was very difficult to do this  
with the group because I had to give up  
my sense of what this was about . . .  
a big part of dealing with the group  
was just being able to give it up,  
to let go and be in a group  
without being in control of the group . . .  
because I wanted to get closer to everybody,  
to find a way to be more public

Annie<sup>23</sup>: Whether acknowledged and enforced  
or unacknowledged and imposed,  
boundaries imply constancy.  
The boundary  
between mountain and ocean  
reflects my internal strains . . .  
What is, or is there, a difference  
between the ridge of the mountain at sunset,  
and the lip of the wavelet on a pensive sea?

about my private self.

Earthly boundaries are more porous than here.

Allowing the dancer back in.

My meaning obliterates them.

The melding of my mind and my physical being

The process of engagement and collaboration for the

into a communicative whole was perhaps

purpose of this performance was for me a revealing

There is a secret universe in me and through this

and liberating one.

project my secret universe was privileged and awed

to make the acquaintances of the secret universes of

my collaborators.

*Julie is dancing.*

*Annie, Anna, Lucy and Kristin are on the perimeter of the stage.*

Julie:

Contact . . . . .Improvisation

Pedagogic metaphor.

Semi permeable tissues

Intersections, spaces

Eyes – hands

Earth – selves

Loving and fearful

Self-conscious

Unabashed

Improvise

*Anna, Annie, Kristin and Lucy are moving.*

*Movements are large, slow purposeful – in contact*

Unrehearsed, spontaneous

Ten . . . ta . . . tive

Wide opened

*Anna, Kristin, & Lucy begin improvised movement outward from center stage –*

*Annie towards downstage center*

Energetic responding

*Julie ends in downstage right corner*

*Pause 2 beats after Annie arrives at her perimeter position*

**All:** VICTIMS

*Each of us is running to the center until we 'bounce off' one another*

**All:** Lovers

*Turning into the circle our arms encircling our neighbors' bodies*

**All:** Radicals

*Jumping backwards - arms raised shoulder height and bent 90 % at the elbows, hands are clapped together and held to form open circle.*

**All:** Ssssinners

*Annie holds still.*

*Chorus raises shaking hands above their heads in parody of revival movement then we bring our palms together, prayer fashion and settle in our chairs*

*Annie at center stage says:*

Just now I am immersed in an intellectual conundrum – about religion.

Why?

Three things:

Reading 35 of Dwayne Heubner's essays

Living currently in the Bible Belt . . . and

Growing up as something definitely NOT religious,

though it was never named.

Religion, when it came up,

was invariably connected to stories

of oppression, slaughter and hypocrisy.

Now, I am feeling ***boundaried*** (that's a verb)

The boundary between Heubner and I  
is as small as a three letter word,  
and as large as thousands of years of history.

As I pass the surface,

I see the *Other* within myself

And I understand more clearly *your* Other.

Internal struggles illuminate those that take place  
between peoples, and nations.

Boundaries that seem impervious  
crumble under the scrutiny of a human eye.

If I understand . . .

only partially, or if I reject - mostly,

this does not diminish what I gain.

It is the language of the history of oppression  
that says I must choose.

The power to recreate at every moment is transcendental.

We can merge,

And differ

Heubner and I,

and **both** gain.

Now I am free to explore my own perspective,  
without the pressure of proving something - or '*choosing*'.

Now, I am less likely to adhere to or veer from,

a belief

A way of thinking due to some intellectual defense,  
or need.

Now, I CAN follow Heubner on the journey to cultivating openness and vulnerability.<sup>24</sup>

In and throughout this work we attempted to be art-full in our exploration of both the methodology of research and the articulation of our research. The construction of boundaries that separate researcher from the person she is in the world are actively transgressed and reassessed in the process and responses to this work. As Buttingol, Jongeward, Smith & Thomas (2000) expressed, “who we are as individuals and who we are as teachers – or researchers- needs to make essential sense; the frameworks by which we organize our lives or the lenses through which we view life need to reflect the processes of inquiry that we use in our professional lives” (p. 81). We theorize because we desire to understand what is important to us, to recover meaning and establish a platform or frame for new knowledge, understanding and meaning (MacDonald, 1995).

*Julie dances as others speak her words for her (there are 2 beats silence after each word)*

*Kristin, Annie, Lucy, Anna speak*

With our bodies in space – in time

Present

Relationally

Embodied

We disrupt academic encounters with text

Boundaries

Not ex-plaining.

Divulging

Including

Our bodies

Exuding potent energy

Sweaty palm, knobby knee,

big breasts, soft hips

These ‘things’ we relinquish

Entering the dialectic

Academic Boundary<sup>25</sup>

Kristin: It wasn't just us it was everyone there I was connected with.

*Julie steps back to her chair.*

*We all sit, except Annie.*

*Four voices speak in unison.*

*Julie standing, lunging-opening arms, circling torso from waist*

I, thou, us, we

In space in time

With the complexity of complexities

*Julie running to embrace Anna*

Neither consuming nor obliterating

*Julie and Anna move together momentarily*

Generating/regenerating our differences

Sensing changes in qualities of effort, time, place

*Julie is running to dance with each of the other dancers*

Our presence woven with pasts

*Around, under, through and then to –*

Balanced on earth - with worlds

*Long, slow, side attitude, center stage*

Barefoot

Rooted – not stuck

*Spring from standing foot to step back –*

Graciously bordered

*into dancing with all*

Dirty soles, ancient grooves

In visceral

<p>Lucy; I think that being together is one of the things that made it so easy for me. And not even thinking about the risk. . . . We were doing it together and it was ok.</p>
---

Spiritual

Relation

Give and go

Stop and hold

*Joining hands, catching breathe –*

Moving faithfully

*we walk towards you, the audience, boldly, together, with strength and calm conviction*

***We raise our held hands high***

Annie: Intersubjectivity, mutuality and that sense of community are things that I would say I got out of that experience. Those things are so precious to me I cherish my independence and I cherish my space of being alone, but I crave community . . . and I think that is something we achieved and it is something I will always carry with me, Precious, precious thing.<sup>27</sup>

Anna: I think there was a real connection with the audience. I felt that they really took from us what we were trying to do and also brought in their own experiences.

Annie: The thing blossomed out of our mutual-ness that would never have been there if we had individually done presentations.

Julie: Some people were in tears, you know?

Anna: I think of Sally Fields, "You liked me, you really liked me. You really, really liked me!"

**All say: EPIPHAMANIA!**<sup>26</sup>

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Curriculum Theorizing Bergamo Conference is held in Dayton, Ohio as an extension of the academic forum provided by the journal. The conference is meant to engage educators in "scholarly discussions of curriculum. Aligned with the "reconceptualist" movement in curriculum theorizing, and oriented toward informing and affecting classroom practice, JCT presents

compelling pieces within forms that challenge disciplinary, genre, and textual boundaries.” (From JCT home page online at [www.jctbergamo.com/confs.html](http://www.jctbergamo.com/confs.html))

<sup>2</sup> My desire to empower my students in healthy ways, giving them permission to think, write, experience readings outside of the established boundaries within the academy emerged, in part, from Janet Miller’s work “a consideration of ‘selves’ and curricula as sites of ‘permanent openness and resignificability’” (1998, p. 367). Concurrently, my reconceptualizing my own role as professor, teacher, learner, collaborator, friend with my students was influenced by F. L. Greene’s (1996) approach to curriculum theorizing as practices that help to “dis-identify and to denaturalize, to make one’s object un-natural [so as] to strategically produce difference out of what was once familiar or the same” (p. 327). I wanted my students, and myself, to experience ways of being neither binary nor oppositional, but rather “nuanced, plural, and proximate” (p. 326). I knew we were on a journey that, hopefully, would never end.

<sup>3</sup> Some examples of the authors we were discussing and learning from were; Mary Aswell Doll, Dwayne Heubner and William Pinar. To these we each brought our own references both experiential and scholarly.

<sup>4</sup> Now that the paper is in its final iteration some things have changed. While we retain our identities we also change our positions, relations and locations. Julie is currently a visiting assistant professor in Educational Studies at Guilford College, Lucy is currently a literacy specialist facilitating writing through the science curriculum in the Durham Public Schools, Kristin also has moved to a central office position in the state department of public instruction working in the field of literacy. Annie is a visiting assistant professor in Educational Research, Leadership and Policy at North Carolina State University and Anna is an assistant professor in the School of Education at Chapman University in California .

<sup>5</sup> From email

<sup>6</sup> From email

<sup>7</sup> We indicate all along our own fear and trepidation about pushing our own theoretical, personal and intellectual boundaries. Not only is the form this work takes physically demanding, our efforts to confront our selves within the context of social institutions that both embrace and defile us take courage. We made a commitment to perform this research in a venue which invites us to be free and yet our courage was challenged as we accepted this invitation with serious intentions of making the work meaningful to our colleagues in academia, particularly in the field of education.

<sup>8</sup> From email

<sup>9</sup> From email

<sup>10</sup> The following section is from conversation in the van

<sup>11</sup> Kristin: At this point I was truly struggling to find my voice within the academy and was unwilling to share the reasons for those struggles with anyone, including my presentation colleagues, until required. I lacked the collaborative spirit. Though I believed that my research informed my practice, I remained distant in my academic pursuits and from my intellectual community. In doing so, I didn’t really understand how studies in curriculum studies offered a transformative space . . . until reading Doll’s text and participating in this collaboration. Our work encouraged me to manipulate the protective boundaries I’d crafted and allowed me to read myself into other theoretical texts to come to a deeper understanding of the ways those theories could inform my research agenda and practice.

<sup>12</sup> Closetedness is a series of silences, where coming out is the voice of finding itself, perhaps for the very first time (Sedgwick, 1993). Both the act of coming out and closetedness have features of “linguistic performativity” (p. 11).

<sup>13</sup> Sexuality is a passion within and between people, a force that allows for the capacity of passion, interests, explorations, drama and disappointment. Sexuality is the first force of learning:



the desire or passion for knowledge-“the desire to be touched by people, by ideas and by living” (Talbot 2000, p. 38).

<sup>14</sup> Phenix (2000) described utilizing boundaries to transcend the narrowness and stasis of the status quo. According to Phenix boundaries serve to situate our understandings. They are permeable and sustainable; protective and transcendable – for stepping out of and back into – a provision for sharing views. Constructing borders as points of intersection and internal territories and/or as meeting places, serves as a means to avoid retreat to the poles of “dogmatic finality” and the desolation of an interminable trek through the seamless, textureless, unmarked plains of the infinite. Tensions between safety and risk, ritual and novelty, who I am and who you are becoming push and pull and thus stasis is disrupted by the force of movement.

<sup>15</sup> From the conversation in the van

<sup>16</sup> From the conversation in the van

<sup>17</sup> From email

<sup>18</sup> From the conversation in the van

<sup>19</sup> Kristen: Dr. Wilson pushed us to engage theory. Simply working to understand theory or the way she interpreted the theory was never the goal. Her charge was to get us to interrogate the theory and ourselves simultaneously. Interacting with the text this way, learning to deal with the intertextuality, was uncomfortable for me. Collaboration (the performers and audience) eased that discomfort and provided models for different ways to engage text. In our own ways, each of us is interrogating the text and self in our presentations. We are presenting our moments of revelation. My moment of revelation appears here – applying Doll’s theoretical framework to my work and life gave me permission to articulate my ideas as a means to better understanding them. Her quiet focus from the audience (she was physically present in the audience) that evening offered greater assurance that thinking aloud is a powerful vehicle for understanding.

<sup>20</sup> From the conversation in the van

<sup>21</sup> Giroux (1980) explains that when students learn about critical conceptual categories and begin to confront internalized and previously unexamined views that the process “should not be reduced to a mere celebration of subjectivity, i.e. ‘you have your views and I have mine.’” (p. 20). Calling the latter a form of “bad subjectivity” Giroux warns that to disregard the distinction leads to false consciousness and a “mystifying form of cultural relativism” (p. 20). We attempted to avoid this by engaging with each other in an autobiographical performance that modeled its own subject by pushing at the boundaries of typical academic research. As Wexler (1982) put it, the ideal of individuality and self-realization is consistently reinforced by the sociocultural patterns that define any self-respecting free market economy. In our collective approach we resist the traditional ideal, opting instead for a version of our own internal boundaries that intersect and mesh with each other, but also with the audience.

<sup>22</sup> From the van

<sup>23</sup> From email

<sup>24</sup> Morris (1996) writes that:

A subjective aim is my freedom. But freedom is not radical or simple because I am embedded in my own complex past, my own personal history, and that past shapes my present, and writes and rewrites my future. At each and every moment

I

appropriate that past into my present and this affects my possibilities. (p. 412)

The embedded nature of our own individual and collective past creates a wall of silence around identity that precludes growth and obscures intersubjectivity. Collective inquiry generates a perspective otherwise unattainable in that it requires of us that we not only express internal boundaries publicly, but also because the audience receives and perceives anew. Collective autobiography resists the fear of freedom, questions the comfort of silence and encompasses an

act of resistance larger than our individual subjective embeddedness can understand. See also Hillis (1999).

<sup>25</sup> Julie: At this point a very telling and embarrassing event occurred. In entering into this research I had put myself forward as someone I had all ways felt I was, that is I believe I am a dancer through and through. However, I had long ago given up the outward public self of dancing in favor of the inner dance of teaching/learning. I had segregated my beings in an effort to be accepted or acceptable in school. Now, here, in this space filled with the gaze of intellectual scholars I exposed my sensual , dancing self and as I worked to overcome the age I had procured to jump and spin and run I came down with, what seemed to me an elephantine THUD. Indelicate, ungraceful, technically abysmal – but real. Landing. Shattering. Exposing the effort and gravity of becoming, constantly, in the public spaces of teaching/learning/being.

<sup>26</sup> We remain amazed at the ways in which our audience participated in the performance. We were all engaged in finding and sharing our voice using theories that served as inspiration.

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Ann G. Winfield received her Ph.D. in Curriculum Studies in 2004 from North Carolina State University. Using memory theory and a critical historical approach, the primary focus of her research is the manifestation of eugenic ideology in policy and practice within social institutions in the United States. Ann is an Assistant Professor of Social and Philosophical Foundations at Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI.

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