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TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT
AND
THE HIDDEN BACKGROUND
OF EMPOWERMENT ENCOUNTERS

A dissertation submitted
by
KELLY RAE REINEKE
to
THE FIELDING INSTITUTE

in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Human and Organizational Systems

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ABSTRACT

Two-Way Empowerment and the Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters

by

Kelly Rae Reineke

Too often after face-to-face encounters organized for empowerment, both the more and less powerful feel ineffective, disrespected, resentful, and disempowered *despite* the intentions of dedicated practitioners to be effective and respectful.

In this thesis, I argue that part of the problem is that those of us in the more powerful positions often focus exclusively on empowering the less powerful. We are then not open to being empowered ourselves (as individuals and as members of groups). Further, we are often unaware of what we bring to the encounter and how that affects the way we think, feel, and interact.

The goal of this dissertation is to explore "two-way empowerment," in which both the more and less powerful are empowered (individually and as members of groups) and feel empowered, as a way of increasing respect and effectiveness.

My theoretical framework is critical theory informed by feminist and postcolonial theories. I used an intensive research design and case study method. The case is a girls middle-school. At the school, predominantly White, middle-class teachers work to empower Latina, working-class students. My principal participant was the only Latina with a working-class background on the faculty. The methods I used included participant-observation, feminist postcolonial ethnography (Kondo, Visweswaran), interviewing, and James Scott's transcript analysis.

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Findings:

Practitioners can encourage two-way empowerment by being open to learning, and to being changed, while working with people who have less power and status.

If we do not work with what is often hidden in the background (affecting how we think, feel, and interact), it is easy to unintentionally reproduce disrespectful and ineffective day-to-day practices that trigger vicious cycles and near double-binds. I analyze hidden background dimensions of:

- differences in status, power (Foucault), privilege (Bourdieu's "habitus"), cultural histories, interpretations of power and empowerment, interpersonal styles, and biography;
- desires for status (Goffman) and recognition (Jessica Benjamin) intertwined with deception.

Expecting and being open to "critical feedback-up" (critical feedback from the less powerful) is crucial to encourage two-way empowerment and can transform potentially draining vicious cycles into energizing learning cycles.

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DEDICATION/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to Nova Gutierrez, my teacher and guide. Nova, your openness to learning and to sharing made this study possible.

I also dedicate this thesis to colleagues in Brazil, Honduras, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and the United States who encouraged me to initiate this study, and whose day-to-day social change practice continues to inspire me.

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that sustained me during this process. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with you, and with interested social change practitioners, in transforming the ideas in this thesis into experiential, practical, and accessible training.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why Do Practitioners' Day-to-Day Practices Often Contradict Intentions to Be Effective and Respectful in Empowering Others?

After diverse experiences[1] in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States working with international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),[2] a local indigenous federation, and American nonprofits, I was surprised to discover a troubling contradiction: Despite the intentions of many of us to be effective and respectful in empowering others, too often after face-to-face encounters, both those of us who were practitioners, and the people we worked with, felt ineffective, disrespected, resentful, and disempowered. Some of these disempowering encounters led valuable colleagues to drop out or burn out. This left already strapped organizations without the human resources they needed for crucial struggles—especially organizations that depended upon volunteers. Yet even when situations did not reach burn-out levels, there were costs. Feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment drained away the crucial energy we needed to be effective in our day-to-day empowerment practice and in achieving longer term social change goals.

---

[1]For example, some of the empowerment encounters I have participated in as a volunteer included the following: American nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Latin America (Brazil and Honduras) whose purpose included the empowerment of the rural poor and national staff; an Ecuadorian indigenous federation whose purpose included the empowerment of its member communities and of the federation and to change unjust status-quo systems; an American nonprofit in Washington, D.C. that sought to empower communities and address environmental racism, and another in Florida that worked toward empowering immigrant farm workers and local staff and toward changing unjust policy.
[2]This is not a study of NGOs. My remarks about NGOs will not deal with the complexity of their makeup and the many theoretical and practical aspects of NGOs in international development. Readers interested are recommended to read Thomas Carroll's *Intermediary NGOs* (Carroll, 1992) and an article I co-authored with Steve Arnold, "Responsibilities without Resources: Dilemmas of a Grassroots Manager" (Arnold & Reineke, 1996).

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Based on these experiences, I wanted to learn as a practitioner and a scholar why some of us who are interested in empowering others effectively and respectfully can contradict our intentions in our day-to-day practice. I wanted to learn why it was so much easier to *talk about* empowering others effectively and respectfully, rather than *being in* the face-to-face encounters themselves.

This thesis, therefore, is for empowerment practitioners across disciplines and fields of practice who are concerned that day-to-day practices too often contradict intentions to be respectful and effective in the face-to-face encounters I refer to as "empowerment encounters."

For this study, I distinguish empowerment encounters in several ways. First, empowerment encounters are organized by a more powerful institution to bring the more and less powerful (referring to the relative institutional power that can be wielded) together in face-to-face encounters for empowerment. That is their reason for being: to increase the less powerful's power. For example, empowerment encounters bring together international development practitioners and national staff; social workers and clients; nonprofit staff and community colleagues; teachers and students; social change activists and local partners; trainers and participants; volunteers in literacy, housing, and health and the people and communities they work with; and researchers and participants.[3]

Empowerment in this study refers to empowering people in empowerment encounters. Even when the purpose of the encounter is to empower a collectivity, I am interested in what takes place between the more and less powerful in the face-to-face encounters themselves. I will not be addressing the legal and political forms of

[3]While therapists (physical and psychological) do not initiate encounters with clients, therapists and clients may find useful similarities in this study.

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empowerment that can increase power with the stroke of a pen, the passage of legislation, or the devolution of governmental responsibilities and resources.

How empowerment is defined, who it is for and through what processes, depends upon the interpretation of the practitioners and the organizations. (The different interpretations of empowerment will be addressed at length in chapter 8.) Some practitioners and organizations may seek to empower the less powerful by increasing their skills, esteem, know-how, and self-awareness (individual, psychological empowerment). Others, working together with the less powerful, may first analyze why the less powerful are disempowered to increase sociocultural awareness and then discuss what individual empowerment and collective action needs to be taken to transform unjust relations (collective, political empowerment).

A second way I distinguish empowerment encounters is by differentiating empowerment encounters from support groups or encounters of the less powerful without a facilitator organized by the more powerful. I am interested in empowerment encounters that include the *presence* of a more powerful practitioner who works for the organization or institution that organized the empowerment encounter itself.

Our presence is important because those of us in the more powerful positions can exercise relatively more organizational power in a directly personal way—for example, NGO staff can decide on funding, levels of participation, and other resources (training, credit, projects, connections, travel, jobs, recommendations, etc.); social workers can provide access to benefits and jobs, and can terminate benefits; teachers can discipline students, make decisions about grades, make assessments about behavior, and decide whether to give praise or punishment; social change activists can decide on jobs and resources; volunteers can decide who will get the help and resources; and as researchers we

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can offer resources, and we can decide what to include and exclude in the final report or thesis.

Those of us in the more powerful positions are also often sustained by institutional, structural power as members of more powerful groups (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, age, etc.). This indirect form of power gives us privileges that our less powerful colleagues do not experience. For example, my blue United States passport entitles me to share in the power of the U.S.[4] indirectly, even though I am not wielding power personally. If I am working in a country outside the U.S. and there is a life-threatening situation, one of my privileges as an American is to know that I can be transported to safety while my local colleagues are left in danger. Because we are sustained by this indirect structural power or privilege, our way of being (how we think, feel, and interact) in the face-to-face encounters is often different from our less powerful colleagues.

In empowerment encounters, membership in these different identity groups creates cleavages based on status (structural power) in addition to the cleavages based on organizational power. For example, teachers are more powerful than students, but White teachers tend to have more privilege in current U.S. society than Latina teachers. White teachers do not have to face the day-to-day poor treatment faced by Latina teachers. Therefore, in addition to teacher-student, an additional cleavage in a school might be White-Latina. It is important to keep in mind that *both* the more and less powerful are members of different identity groups (race, class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual identity, age, religion, etc.) *and* they are diverse individuals with their own interpersonal style and unique biography.

[4]For example, the military, global domination by U.S. corporations, the economy, American culture, technological advances, legal institutions, and so on.

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While it is important to bring attention to the difference between the more and less powerful, in empowerment encounters it is also important to realize we are often both more and less powerful simultaneously: We report to a superior and work with less powerful subordinates, communities, clients, participants, and so on. Whether we are more or less powerful, or both, in a specific encounter will vary depending upon the context.

Throughout this thesis, I will focus on the more powerful. Too often, as I describe below, we tend to leave our awareness of our presence out of the encounter and focus exclusively on the less powerful. The observations and analysis in this study, however, may also be useful for practitioners who are in less powerful positions to better understand what is taking place in face-to-face encounters.

The Problem: Practitioners Who Focus *Only* on Empowering the Less Powerful in Face-to-Face Encounters

In this thesis, I argue that part of the reason we can be unintentionally disrespectful and less than effective is that we often focus exclusively on the people we seek to empower and leave our presence out of the face-to-face encounter. This creates two problems. First, we are often not aware of or are unwilling to acknowledge what we bring to the encounter with our bodies (our embodied power, status and privilege, interpersonal style, unique biography, etc.) and how that affects the way we think, feel, and interact. Instead, what we bring, our presence, is often hidden in the background of empowerment encounters.

The second problem is that by leaving ourselves out, we are then not open to being empowered. This creates an immediate one-up, one-down: The less powerful are viewed

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as the only ones with problems and in need of empowerment. In this one-way empowerment posture, those of us in the more powerful positions send signals (both verbally and nonverbally) that we have nothing to learn (that we have the whole picture), and that our behavior is respectful and effective and does not need to change.

For example, if we are unaware of our privilege, we can distort our own and the less powerful's strengths and weaknesses. Underestimating how we are buffered by privilege, we can underestimate how tough the situation is for our less powerful colleagues (what they face that we do not—e.g., logistics, day-to-day poor treatment) and how resourceful they are (what they have achieved in spite of the obstacles). If those of us who are practitioners focus only on empowering the less powerful, we are then not open to learning about and being empowered by the less powerful's different strengths (skills, experience, and knowledge): What they know that we do not know, what they are better at than we are. We are also not open to increasing our awareness of the multiple realities that exist within the empowerment encounter. As a result, we can underestimate time and obstacles, and ignore the people who have the expertise. This not only undercuts our effectiveness, but it is profoundly disrespectful.

In another example, if we are unaware of our power, status, and privilege, we can make unintentional, disrespectful comments. We may complain about being broke to colleagues who are struggling to survive. We may view our less powerful colleague's ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting that are different from our own as not appropriate, less than, or wrong. We may claim that "we are all equal," yet only some of us make the decisions and assessments, some are treated better than others, and some live more comfortably and securely. Our status, power, and privilege may be invisible to us, but they are in NEON to the less powerful. These unintentional, disrespectful comments

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can then trigger feelings of disrespect and resentment. Again, if we focus only on empowering the less powerful, then we are not open to increasing our awareness of our unconscious ways of being (e.g., unintentional insensitive remarks; misrecognizing our norms as universals, when they were acquired, and using them to classify and judge) that embody our privilege (similar to what Bourdieu refers to as "habitus," to be discussed in chapter 3), and to changing our behavior that is less than effective and disrespectful.

Because of our more powerful positioning, our status and privilege, and our unique biography, it is not possible for us to have the whole picture (an understanding of all the multiple realities in the empowerment encounter and expertise in all areas). It is also not possible for us to see what we cannot see (our unconscious, ingrained ways of being that are disrespectful and less than effective). Therefore, we need to be open to learning, to being changed, to being empowered. Yet, if we focus only on empowering the less powerful, we will continue to unintentionally reproduce disrespectful and less than effective practices, *despite* our intentions.

The Goal: To Explore Two-Way Empowerment and the Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters

The goal of this dissertation is to increase respect and effectiveness in the face-to-face encounters organized for empowerment by exploring two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters.

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Two-Way Empowerment

By exploring two-way empowerment, I recognize the presence of those of us in the more powerful positions (international development workers; social workers; teachers; grassroots organizers; trainers; volunteers with agencies in housing, literacy, ecology; health workers; and researchers) in the encounters. In exploring two-way empowerment, I also recognize that both the more and less powerful need to be open to being empowered while working together in empowerment encounters.

I define two-way empowerment as a goal for empowerment encounters by responding to two questions: Empowerment for whom? And empowerment for what? Two-way empowerment takes place when:

- Both the more and less powerful *are empowered individually and collectively* (increased sociocultural and self-awareness, skills, esteem, and organizational systems) to be more respectful and effective in working together and in reaching social change goals;
- Both also *feel empowered* in the process: energized, effective, recognized, respected, valued (less drop-out and burn-out).

To learn how interested practitioners can encourage two-way empowerment, in this inquiry I explore what I am calling a two-way empowerment way of being. A two-way empowerment way of being tries to capture the more powerful practitioner's manner, the way she thinks, feels, and interacts as she is working toward encouraging two-way empowerment.

I am using "way of being" in this thesis because in empowerment work, "doing" is often valued and given more attention, while "being" is often devalued and given less attention. In some organizations, paying attention to how we *are* in empowerment

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encounters in addition to what we do is seen condescendingly as "touchy-feely" and not the "real work."

When I refer to our way of being, I include much of what Bourdieu describes in his interpretation of habitus (ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting that embody privilege yet are unconscious, second nature, and "misrecognized"; described further in chapter 3). But I also address several dimensions Bourdieu mentions only briefly or does not explore. For example, I include the interpersonal and the intrapersonal[5]: our different interpersonal styles and unique biography. I recognize that what we bring—especially our emotional triggers and limitations—also affects the encounter.

I also address our different and complicated selves that we bring to the encounter. Differences go well beyond class. Many of us are privileged in some dimensions while disprivileged in others. Our fractured and contradictory selves can then perform in various ways. We have different ways of being in empowerment encounters and other settings—especially those shaped by power. Because we live in different contexts, our ways of being are complex (Kondo, 1986; Kondo, 1990; Visweswaran, 1994).

The Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters

In exploring the hidden background of empowerment encounters throughout this inquiry, I seek to partially illuminate and increase our awareness of the often hidden sociocultural and personal dimensions that shape the way both the more and less powerful think, feel, and interact. (In chapter 3, I analyze our desire for status intertwined with deception, our "umbilical cord of privilege," habitus, interpersonal style, and unique biography. In chapters 6-10, I analyze our desire for recognition, historical and cultural

[5]While these are not addressed in the dissertation at length, they are included in my interpretation of a way of being.

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context, different interpretations of power, Foucault's "disciplinary power" and the "normalizing gaze," reproduction and resistance to power, different interpretations of empowerment, and communication systems [notably vicious cycles and double-binds], and values and affiliations.) I want to make visible the often hidden dimensions that we bring to empowerment encounters with our bodies: our *presence*.

I chose the phrase "empowerment encounter," based on Erving Goffman's interpretation of "encounter," to convey that there is more going on in the face-to-face interactions than the foreground view of people talking. Goffman recognized that at the core of face-to-face encounters, two bodies come together and rituals are carried out. The ritual dimension, often hidden from consciousness, relates to our *striving for status that is intertwined with deception* (to be discussed at length in chapter 3).

Goffman emphasized the importance of studying face-to-face interaction, noting that scholars often neglected the "social situation." He defined a social situation as

> an environment of *mutual monitoring possibilities*, anywhere within which an individual will find himself accessible to the naked senses of all others who are "present," and similarly find them accessible to him. [It] arises *whenever two or more individuals find themselves in one another's immediate presence* [italics added]. (Goffman, 1964, pp. 134-135)

As soon as we enter empowerment encounters for the first time, we are engaged in the ritual dimension. Goffman stated that when we are in the immediate presence of another human being,

> It is not only that our appearance and *manner* [italics added] provide evidence of our statuses and relationships. It is also that the line of our visual regard, the intensity of our involvement, and the shape of our initial actions, allow others to glean our immediate intent and purpose, and all this whether or not we are engaged in talk with them at the time. Correspondingly, we are constantly in a position to facilitate this revealment, or block it, or even misdirect our viewers. (Goffman, 1983, pp. 2-3)

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Goffman distinguished between two types of social situations. The first type are the more unfocused "gatherings." The second type of social situations are the more focused "encounters" whose members share a "current orientation" and "organized interplay" requiring a "greater structuring of conduct." While both social situations abide by cultural rules, Goffman noted that encounters are monitored through a system of "ritually governed face-to-face action." The ritual dimension of encounters again means that they are *status-driven*—for example, who defers to whom, who talks to whom (Goffman, 1964, pp. 134-136).

Because empowerment encounters are status-driven, "we track one another and act to be trackable." Similar to other animals, we "check for possible threats and allies" (Collins, 1994, p. 282). Therefore, Goffman saw the "bedrock of social interactions" as the "physical copresence of people warily attending to each other" (Collins, 1994, p. 289).

In addition to the ritual dimension, the hidden background of empowerment encounters also includes several contextual layers. For example, empowerment encounters are embedded within layers of different cultures; an organization's culture; an organization's hierarchy (local, regional, and national); larger systems (of education, health, agriculture, etc.); coalitions, political movements; communities; cities; regional and national programs and politics.

Empowerment encounters are also situated historically in a specific time and place. For example, an empowerment encounter described in the case study of this thesis between a teacher and her student in an outer borough of New York City is situated historically at the end of the 20th century, at a time of increasing globalization and U.S. economic and cultural domination during late capitalism.

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As I noted above, throughout this inquiry I seek to partially illuminate the significant hidden background dimensions that, if not recognized and worked with, can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being.

The hidden background dimensions (notably status, power, and privilege) of empowerment encounters add complexity to the interactions between the more and less powerful. In the international development literature, some practitioners recognize this "complex relationship between unequal partners" as "tending" (Ritchey-Vance, 1991), "assisted self-reliance" (Carroll, 1992), and "sensitive guidance" (Uphoff, 1986). Yet many scholars and practitioners are mystified by what needs to take place in the encounter itself; what "qualities of sensitivity and interpersonal skills are essential...some of the key questions for which there are few answers at present" (Carroll, 1992, p. 115). Lorraine Gutierrez, Kathryn A. DeLois, and Linnea GlenMaye in a study comparing empowerment theory and practice in the field of social work also discovered that "contradictions and tensions of empowerment practice, especially worker-client issues, need further analysis and research" (Gutierrez, DeLois & GlenMaye, 1995, p. 541).

This study seeks to directly address these questions by asking three questions while exploring two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters. First, what is a two-way empowerment way of being? Second, why is a two-way empowerment way of being difficult in empowerment encounters (i.e., what we are up against given the hidden background dimensions). In other words, what can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being? And third, how can interested practitioners embody a two-way empowerment way of being to encourage two-way empowerment?

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Why I Was Encouraged to Initiate This Study

As a more powerful practitioner, I wanted to understand why my day-to-day practices too often contradicted my intentions to be respectful and effective. I wanted to learn how those of us in the relatively more powerful positions could become more aware of our presence to minimize the disrespectful acts and comments (often unknown to the speaker) that can trigger vicious cycles leaving both the more and less powerful feeling disrespected, resentful, disempowered and undermining effectiveness. I wanted to learn how those of us in more powerful positions could better recognize the different strengths of the less powerful and be empowered by them when there were differences in power, status, and privilege.

These questions have been my on-the-side passion while I have been working on different projects. During breaks and in side-bar conversations, I have talked to colleagues about my concerns. More than once I was encouraged by colleagues, especially those in less powerful positions, to work on increasing the awareness and skills of the more powerful: a "conscientizição[6] of professionals," as one colleague put it.[7]

As a White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, professional, American woman, many colleagues believed I was well situated for the task. I have experienced disprivilege in the area of gender, but in all other areas I am privileged. And although I was not a member of the less powerful who the NGOs and nonprofits I worked with sought to empower, I experienced being in a less powerful position as a volunteer in the organization in addition to my more powerful position in empowerment encounters.

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[6]Referring to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's consciousness-raising method aimed at the oppressed, first introduced in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1993/1970).

[7]Thanks to Caesar Peres, director of the Equipo de Investigaciones Sociales (EQUIS) at the Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC) in the Dominican Republic.

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One of the advantages of this contradictory social and organizational positioning is that I can draw on my knowledge of being less privileged, and to a degree of being relatively less powerful, to be more respectful and effective in the areas where I am privileged when I am in the more powerful position. Therefore, given my positioning and my long-standing concerns, I set out on this dissertation inquiry to explore two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters.

How I Will Explore Two-Way Empowerment and the Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters in This Thesis

This thesis has four parts. In part one, "Exploring Two-Way Empowerment: the Need and the Challenge," I first describe in more detail my concerns as a practitioner with empowerment encounters leading to this study (chapter 2). Then, in chapter 3, I draw on the literature to address the three questions I mentioned above: First, what is a two-way empowerment way of being? Second, why is a two-way empowerment way of being so difficult in empowerment encounters? And third, how can interested practitioners embody a two-way empowerment way of being?

In addressing the second question (what can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being), I analyze the often neglected yet critical dimensions of the hidden background of empowerment encounters (the desire for status intertwined with deception, the "umbilical cord of privilege," Bourdieu's concept of habitus, style, and biography). This is crucial. Rather than talking about what we should do, by exploring the hidden background we can increase our awareness of what is actually taking place in face-to-face encounters. In order to better appreciate the case study in part two, I encourage the

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reader to review the two critical sections titled, "Why The Umbilical Cord Image? Bringing Attention to the Body, History, the Desire for Status and Deception" and "Why is our Umbilical Cord of Privilege and Our Way of Being Embodying Privilege (Our Habitus) Often Invisible to Us (Misrecognized) but in NEON to the Less Powerful."

In part two, "Case Study: Exploring Two-Way Empowerment at a Girls Middle School in New York City," I first describe in chapter 4 how I developed an intensive research design and case study methodology at the sociocultural mediation level (Morrow & Brown, 1994) for exploring two-way empowerment in day-to-day practice. In this chapter, I also describe my research methods (feminist, postcolonial ethnography, participant-observation and videotaping, interviewing, a photography activity, James Scott's (1986) transcript analysis, and double-bind analysis), and introduce the case. I was fortunate to find an excellent case in an outer borough of New York City. At the school, the majority of the faculty/staff were White, middle-class women and the students were Latina, working-class girls. I explored two-way empowerment between teachers and students, Whites and Latinas, and middle-class and working-class.

Maria, a seventh-grade teacher and the only Latina with a working-class background on the faculty, brought me in to the school and worked closely with me as the principal research participant. Because of Maria's contradictory positioning, she easily related to and was eager to explore a two-way empowerment way of being.

In chapter five, I present the heart of the dissertation, the ethnography and case study analysis. In the rich ethnographic descriptions, I note how the observations (of all the participants including myself) surprised me and changed my thinking. Following the ethnography, I again encourage the reader to review a critical section, "Why This Case Study is Significant: Maria's Openness To Critical Feedback-Up" (critical feedback from

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the less powerful). (For practitioners who want to grasp the gist of this thesis, I recommend reviewing chapter 2, the critical sections in chapter 3 noted above, the case introduction in chapter 4, then the ethnography and the section on why this case is significant in chapter 5.)

During the case study intensive research period, the participants and I bumped into additional hidden background dimensions that got in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. These additional hidden background dimensions needed further study.

Therefore, a case-driven theoretical analysis of the additional hidden background dimensions takes place in part three. I first describe why I use critical theory informed by feminist, postcolonial theories as my theoretical framework. Then in chapters 6 through 9, I go deeper into the hidden background dimensions that emerged in the case that needed further theoretical work: the desire for recognition (chapter 6), power (in chapter 7, I analyze interpretations of power, Foucault's disciplinary power and the normalizing gaze, and reproduction and resistance theories), empowerment interpretations (chapter 8) and interaction communication systems (notably vicious cycles and double-binds). Chapter 10 outlines the beginning of a synthesis for working with the partially illuminated hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters.

In part four, "Conclusion: *Encouraging* Two-Way Empowerment," I conclude that as practitioners we can only *encourage* two-way empowerment by being open to learning, and to being changed, while working with the less powerful. In chapter 11, I discuss what I take away from this inquiry process and what I most often share with interested colleagues: Expecting and being open to critical feedback-up is crucial to *encourage* two-way empowerment. In the final chapter (chapter 12), I offer this study to interested practitioners and scholars to explore, critique, and expand. I first outline

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implications for scholars. Next, I briefly describe two current practitioner applications. And finally, I outline the next steps: to continue creating experiential (mind-body), practical, and accessible training methods with interested practitioners.

In an afterword, I include an update on where Maria is now. I also briefly review how Maria and the principal each responded to the research findings.

Limitations of this Thesis

In this dissertation, there are five major limitations. The first limitation is that this dissertation is based on a specific case, located in an outer borough of New York City in the United States, interpreted through theoretical lenses that are heavily weighted by Western scholars (European and American). Even though I use a critical theory framework informed by feminist postcolonial scholars (to be described in chapter 6), many of these scholars were trained in the U.S. and continue to serve on faculties in the U.S. academic community. Therefore, this dissertation is limited by not bringing in more of the voices (more literature and examples from practice) from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

A second limitation is in the limited analysis of empowerment literatures across fields of practice. There are many empowerment discourses that I left out—especially in the international development field and in organizing. A thorough analysis of empowerment discourses merits a study of its own. Here, I selected a few discourses that addressed the contradiction of day-to-day practices to intentions. I also left out several literatures dealing with the specifics of the case study—for example, teaching in middle school and the psychological literature of adolescent girls' development (notably Carol

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Gilligan's recent work). This limited my contextual understanding of the case as noted by the participants at different points in chapter 5.

Methodological issues are the third limitation. During the intensive research and case study, I tried to "walk my talk," working toward a two-way empowerment way of being as a researcher. This involved careful attention to observing myself in the encounters themselves. Despite my intentions to be respectful and effective and despite my research focus, I was surprised to discover subtle forms of paternalistic, disrespectful, and ineffective practices. As a result of these practices, I had to drop one of the two cases due to a failure in rapport. These observations of my own behavior, in addition to the observations of others, will be described and analyzed throughout the thesis. Yet because only the girls middle school case was included, the thesis relies on limited case study findings. In this case, more interviewing and more focused observation would have been helpful. For example, the patterns to be described in interviews were not all observed and required more interpretation. I would have preferred to have seen more of how people behaved rather than listening to what they said about how they behaved (more of a Goffman approach).

A fourth limitation is the exclusion from this thesis of one of my initial concepts: the "social justice personality." The social justice personality describes a type of person drawn to social justice struggles because of early exposure to injustice. Those of us drawn in this way may bring emotional baggage that can lead to burn-out for ourselves and our colleagues. Each individual's cultural and family history, and the type of injustice experienced, may produce ineffective and disrespectful work habits that can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. Practitioners and scholars have noted the irony of individuals committed to social justice who treat their colleagues, especially their

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subordinates, in an unjust way (Arnold & Reineke, 1996; Britell, 1992; Paul, 1993).

While I recognize the significance of the social justice personality for two-way empowerment, I have not included this conceptual work in the scope of this thesis. I will address some of these issues briefly in the thesis (what I refer to as the limits and triggers of our unique biography), but there is more depth at the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. I excluded this work in part because the tendency in empowerment encounter analysis is to focus on the interpersonal level. Therefore, I have consciously focused on the more intercultural level to address structural issues—especially power, status, and privilege. Also, the "social justice personality" is another topic that deserves a dissertation inquiry of its own.

A fifth limitation is that my findings are limited, situated, partial, and relational. My thoughts, feelings, assessments, and way of interacting were affected by the hidden background dimensions (differences, desires, and deception) of the specific research encounter between myself (a White, middle-class, 35-year-old nonreligious Ph.D. student, and American woman), my principal research participant and colleague (a Latina, working-class background, 23-year-old woman, graduate student, and teacher), the students (Latina, working-class, seventh-grade girls), the faculty (majority White and female, middle-class, in their 20s, and a few older nuns in their 50s and 60s also White and middle-class, one with working-class origins) and the administrators (White, middle-class women in their 40s) at an innovative girls middle school in an outer borough of New York city run by nuns of an order of the Catholic Church.

This thesis is partial because it does not tell everything about the case study, the relevant research, or my researcher insights. I have selected what to include and what to leave out, and I still struggle with those decisions. For example, my intention in entering

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the school was to find positive examples of two-way empowerment as exemplars for practitioners and to minimize the critique. In Maria's examples, I found powerful ideas for practitioners, yet I decided to bring in more critique than I intended.

I realize that this document, like empowerment encounters, will be affected by my unconscious self-deception and the specifics of the research encounter (differences, desires, deception). What I will try to do throughout the thesis, when possible, is to make these differences, desires, and deceptions visible so the reader can make a better assessment.

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PART I

EXPLORING TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT: THE NEED AND THE CHALLENGE

CHAPTER 2

MY CONCERNS AS A PRACTITIONER WITH EMPOWERMENT ENCOUNTERS

In this chapter, I will describe three of my concerns as a practitioner with empowerment encounters: first, putting the less powerful under the microscope and leaving out the more powerful; second, viewing empowerment encounters only interpersonally and leaving out status, power, and privilege; and third, the result of the first two that I refer to as "complainin' in the kitchen." Inattention to these concerns reduced our effectiveness and often generated many of the feelings of resentment, disrespect, and disempowerment further undermining our effectiveness.

Putting the Less Powerful Under the Microscope, Leaving Out the More Powerful

My first concern with empowerment encounters was the way many of us in the relatively more powerful positions (international development workers, anthropologists, organizers, social change activists, teachers, social workers, etc.) focused intensely on the less powerful while downplaying or leaving ourselves out of the empowerment encounter. This tended to produce two blindspots.

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Being Blind To or Underestimating What we Bring to the Encounter

The first blindspot occurred as a result of viewing ourselves as interchangeable[8] practitioners. By putting the less powerful under the microscope and leaving ourselves out, we did not pay attention to what we brought to the empowerment encounters with our bodies (our interpersonal style, unique biography—personal triggers and limitations) and how that affected the encounter itself. Some of us viewed ourselves as nearly invisible—that is, we could interview community members but believed they did not see us, have an opinion about us, question our research and projects, or note our funny clothes and odd habits. We could see the relatively less powerful, but talked and acted as if we were not seen except for our role as the interchangeable empowerment practitioner (development worker, anthropologist, teacher, etc.).

This approach set up an immediate one-up, one-down with less powerful being the only ones with problems and in need of empowerment, while the more powerful often assumed greater competencies in most or *all* fields[9] because of their privileged position. Even though it was often glaring where some of us needed empowerment personally, organizationally, and as members of different identity groups, we focused on empowering the less powerful. This often generated disrespect and resentment.

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[8]I later learned that Bourdieu also pointed out this tendency in objectifying power relations (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 187).

[9]In this study, I am concerned with the empowerment encounters where individuals and groups coming together are working with both temporary inequalities (skill gaps, education, self and group awareness) and with historical inequalities (race, class, gender, etc.). As Jean Baker Miller (1976) noted in *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, the phenomenon of seeing the less powerful as being "less than" in every domain is striking in that it even takes place in empowerment encounters that are based on working with temporary inequalities (teacher-student, therapist-client, parent-child) that eventually change over time, it is difficult to view the less powerful person as a human being of equal intrinsic worth.

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Colleagues in Latin America helped me to see my tendency to jump in and begin problem solving.[10] They empowered me personally by increasing my awareness that the more I tried to rush in with ideas and advice, the more my colleagues in empowerment encounters felt disrespected, resentful, and disempowered.[11]

Being Blind to or Underestimating our Interdependency

Being blind to the relational nature of empowerment encounters marked by interdependency was the second blindspot. In the dance of empowerment, it takes two to tango. Yet development, organizing, teaching, training, and so on were often carried out as if we worked independently and autonomously rather than two human beings coming together in a relational encounter.

We often depended on the less powerful for getting around and for getting things done in unfamiliar environments, for understanding the culture and language, for food and accommodation, and for validating our relatively more powerful roles (as trainers, organizers, managers, teachers, development workers, researchers, anthropologists, etc.). Yet this supportive, relational work was often viewed in a condescending way as "support" rather than as strengths and competencies we could and did learn from.

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[10] Due in part to my expressive style, my history as an eldest child and my cultural habits.

[11] Harriett Goldhor Lerner (1985) has described this as "overfunctioning/underfunctioning" in her book *The Dance of Anger*. She referred to a tendency, not necessarily of those with power, to jump in, advise, fix, and in some cases rescue the other as "overfunctioning." She also noted that the more we tend to "overfunction," the more the other tends to "underfunction." I know that I'm overfunctioning when I behave the following ways: I avoid worrying about my own goals and problems by focusing on others; I know what's best not only for myself but for others as well; I move in quickly to advise, rescue, and take over when stress hits; I have difficulty staying out and allowing others to struggle with their own problems.

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Being blind to our underestimating our interdependency, we had a difficult time seeing that it was often, in fact, *the less powerful who were empowering us.*[12] My local colleagues "support" empowered me by increasing my practical and sometimes survival skills—for example, being sensitive to local cultural customs, using public transportation, working with local communities, washing clothes, practical accounting ideas, walking across a tree log above a deep ravine in plastic boots, and recognizing which insects are "friends" and others that can hurt you. My colleagues also increased my awareness of why they were disempowered, the social injustices, transforming my view of international work from "development" to "social change." The observations in this chapter would not have been possible without the patient support, the abrupt confrontations, and the many insights of my colleagues in less powerful positions who empowered me to better understand my privileged position, how that affected our working together and ideas for being more respectful and effective.

Viewing Empowerment Encounters Only Interpersonally, Leaving Out Status, Power, and Privilege

My second concern with empowerment encounters was the way many of us in the more powerful positions tended to view the encounter purely interpersonally (the foreground view), while being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging our connections to power, status, and privilege (the background view) that enabled and

[12]Craig Calhoun brought this to my attention in a meeting of sociology doctoral students at New York University (the "Wooden Fish Working Group") As he remarked, "the less powerful are empowering the powerful all the time."

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constrained our own and our less powerful colleagues' behavior. I noticed three troubling blindspots as a result of viewing encounters in this purely interpersonal way.

Claiming "We Are All Equal"

Viewing empowerment encounters purely interpersonally created the first blindspot to existing inequalities in power, status, and privilege. Working toward the goal of treating everyone with equal respect was admirable, but when some of us in the more powerful positions claimed "we are all equal," we demonstrated our first blindspot to existing differences in status, power, and privilege. The less powerful were acutely aware that some of us in the encounter had more power, status, and privilege—especially when it came to making decisions, how people were treated, and differences in quality of life (security, comfort level, and other forms of privilege). For example, while working in the Amazon my privilege was powerfully summed up by my colleagues, members of an indigenous women's organization in the Amazon. At the end of one day, when I passed on bathing in their community that had recently suffered from a large oil spill, my colleagues noted, "You passed because you know that the river is covered with oil, and that you can go back to your hotel and take a shower, but the river is the only place we can take a bath." Clearly we were not equal.

One of the common complaints I have heard over the years in Latin America comes from colleagues who either do not have access to facilities (showers or water for bathing) or do not have time (especially if they have long journeys to a nearby town or city). Just walking into meetings with "gringos" and other professionals who live in the city, they often feel in an immediate one-down position. Often, the more powerful are clean (both their bodies and their clothes) and refreshed, ready to work. The less powerful arrive, hot, and often after long journeys, tired, hungry, and so on. This difference adds to

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the power differential both in terms of how the less powerful are treated and their effectiveness.

And one final example emphasizes how those of us in the more powerful can be blind to our privilege and insulting to our colleagues. In one encounter, consultants working for large NGOs told an indigenous federation that they needed to grow crops to pay for their stipends so they would not become dependent. As the consultants began to talk amongst themselves, one of the local leaders whispered, "I wonder where the crops are in Washington, D.C. that are paying for their daily stipend and the $70 a night hotel."

Claiming "we are all equal," therefore, was often a deep insult to many in the less powerful positions who saw the very different realities.

Distorting Strengths/Weaknesses

A second blindspot in viewing encounters interpersonally was a distortion of our own strengths and weaknesses and those of the less powerful. Our more powerful and privileged positions cushioned many of us from the tough conditions and poor treatment (often due to prejudice) experienced by the less powerful as well as giving us a false sense of what "we" accomplished as "individuals." As a result, we often underestimated what the less powerful were up against and how resourceful they were. This distorted assessment of strengths and weaknesses often undermined effectiveness in empowerment encounters: underestimating time and obstacles and not recognizing different strengths in the less powerful. This inability to assess strengths and weaknesses in light of power, and privilege generated feelings of disrespect, and resentment.

An example that helped to spark this dissertation should help to illustrate this point. In a plush office setting, a representative of a multilateral development bank working

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toward empowerment of small NGOs in the Caribbean stood up from behind her large mahogany desk and leaned toward me: "Kelly, these NGOs are not like us." In a sense, she was right. As I explained above, we are not equal in terms of power, status, and privilege. But this was not what she meant. The representative went on to explain that those working in grassroots organizations were "timid, unprofessional, and often ineffective–especially in meeting 'easy' deadlines."

Assessing less powerful colleagues as ineffective rather than looking at their situation took place in many encounters—often with practitioners who had intentions to be respectful and effective. Well-funded and well-supported representatives often worked hard, yet they were only responsible for doing their jobs. The small NGOs, on the other hand, had to deal with everything the well-funded organization provides for the representatives (space, funding, support, and much more) and their jobs.[13] Not only did this blindspot undermine effectiveness, it also lead to an opportunity cost: as the more powerful practitioners, we and our more powerful groups (institution, race, gender, class, culture, nationality, etc.) missed opportunities to learn from and be empowered by our less powerful colleagues in areas where we, the more powerful, were struggling and in need of ideas.

Distorting Feedback

The third blindspot in viewing empowerment encounters interpersonally was missing or underestimating the impact of our more powerful and privileged positions on feedback. Empowerment encounters were complex because often the less powerful feared that giving critical feedback might result in losing funding, training, connections,

[13] For a description of these dilemmas, see Arnold and Reineke, "Responsibilities without Resources: Dilemmas of the Grassroots Manager" (Arnold & Reineke, 1996).

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employment, reputation among donors, housing, office space, friendship, and so on. At the same time, many of us in the more powerful positions were unaware that we often sent signals that we were not interested in critical feedback. These signals, along with the risk of losing resources, often pushed critical feedback out of the empowerment encounter and into more private spaces.

The Result: Complainin' in the Kitchen

When those of us in the more powerful positions put the less powerful under the microscope while leaving ourselves out, and viewed the encounter interpersonally leaving out status, power, and privilege, what typically followed was what I called "complainin' in the kitchen." After the more powerful left the room, office, town, or country, often feeling that the encounter went well, the less powerful tended to gather, often in the kitchen, and complain about the way they were treated during the encounter—for example, a slight to their culture or to them personally, an inability to understand local realities, a condescending attitude, domination of the meeting, an inability to listen to and incorporate the less powerful's ideas, presenting a pre-written plan after soliciting "participation," and so on.

As a less powerful member of NGOs, I participated in complainin' in the kitchen with other volunteers and national staff to air our feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment. When complainin' in the kitchen gathered enough steam to move out of the kitchen and into the empowerment encounters themselves, some of the more powerful responded angrily, "after all we've done for you" and "we've sacrificed our lives for you," generating further resentment.

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The more powerful were hurt that their hard work and intentions were not appreciated. Further, they were often mystified as to why the less powerful were so upset, and why they did not say anything earlier. The more powerful aired these concerns with each other in their own private spaces—their kitchens, behind closed doors in offices, taxis, and so on.

As both a participant in and, I am sure, a subject of "complainin' in the kitchen," I have observed and experienced how tough it is to remember that there are different ways of experiencing the same encounter. Because we all brought different personal histories, styles, limitations, and different connections to status, power, and privilege, it was no wonder that the experiential dimension of the encounter varied. There were multiple realities operating within the same encounter. Yet some of the more powerful tended to assume that their experience was "the" reality.

Complainin' in the kitchen was not "the" reality, nor did it always generate valid claims and concerns—for example, the less powerful often lacked an understanding of the more powerful's constraints. But it did serve as a place where complaints could be aired and resentment could be openly and safely shared.

Pushing much of the critical feedback—both about how people are treated and ways of getting things done—into kitchens, jeeps, and other safe sites generated feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment, draining away precious energy and undermining empowerment effectiveness.

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CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT AND THE HIDDEN BACKGROUND OF EMPOWERMENT ENCOUNTERS

(Desire for Status and Deception, the "Umbilical Cord of Privilege," "Habitus," Style, and Biography)

Based on my concerns outlined in the previous chapter, I wanted to explore two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters. Further, I wanted to explore two-way empowerment from the vantage point of the more powerful practitioner.

To address my first concern—that those of us in the more powerful positions can put the less powerful under the microscope while leaving ourselves out—I developed the idea of a two-way empowerment way of being. As I described in the previous chapter, when those of us in more powerful positions focus only on the less powerful's problems and how we can empower them, we leave ourselves out of the empowerment encounter. Leaving ourselves out, we can be blind to or underestimate the often hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters: what we bring to the encounter (our interpersonal style, unique biography); our interdependency; and our connections to status, power, and privilege (the umbilical cord of privilege).

More importantly, we can also be blind to or underestimate the way these dimensions can affect how we think, feel, and interact: seeing ourselves as interchangeable practitioners; not seeing how the less powerful empower us; claiming we are all equal; missing opportunities to be empowered by inflating our strengths, underestimating our weaknesses, underestimating how tough it is for the less powerful, how resourceful they

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are, their different competencies; seeing the less powerful as "not like us" (less than); and pushing critical feedback (of how things are done and our way of being) into complainin' in the kitchen. As a result, despite our intentions to be effective and respectful, too often both the more and less powerful can feel ineffective, disrespected, resentful, and disempowered.

In this chapter, I draw on the literature and my experience to explore three questions. The first section of this chapter explores, "What is a two-way empowerment way of being?" This includes the argument against two-way empowerment.

In the second section, I explore the often neglected yet critical question of why two-way empowerment is so difficult in empowerment encounters: what can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being? I then explore the hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters. At the personal level, I discuss the different styles and biographies we bring to the encounter. I note how too often the analysis stops here even though the interpersonal is shaped by the sociocultural dimensions discussed next. Then I explore these sociocultural dimensions (the desire for status intertwined with deception, and different umbilical cords of privilege). Critical to this chapter, and to the case study in part 3, is the section titled, "Why is Our Umbilical Cord of Privilege and Our Way of Being Embodying Privilege (Our Habitus) Often Invisible to Us (Misrecognized) but in NEON to the Less Powerful?" A large part of this section was written well after the case study took place, but I have included it before the case to give the reader the necessary theoretical grounding to appreciate what the participants did and did not do in the case study.

In the third section, I explore how those of who are interested can embody a two-way empowerment way of being. What are the challenges? I pay special attention to the

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challenges involved in changing disrespectful and ineffective ways of being. What are the ideas from the literature? Here, I also offer a few ideas from my experience.

In the fourth section, I review examples of two-way empowerment in the literature. Finally, I discuss how talking about two-way empowerment is easier than being in the encounters themselves and the need to find examples in day-to-day practice.

What is a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being?

In this section, I outline why a two-way empowerment way of being is different from a one-way or participatory way of being. Next I review the argument against a two-way empowerment way of being. Then I discuss why a two-way empowerment way of being is relational.

Different Ways of Being In Empowerment Encounters: One-Way, Participatory and Two-Way Empowerment

Of the many different ways of being in empowerment encounters in relation to two-way empowerment, two are significant for this study. I refer to these different ways of being as one-way empowerment and participatory empowerment.

A one-way empowerment way of being is a more powerful practitioner's focus on the less powerful and their problems while leaving herself out of the empowerment encounter. When those of us in the more powerful positions leave ourselves out of the encounter, we are unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge how our presence affects the encounter. When we leave ourselves out and focus exclusively on empowering the less powerful, we do not acknowledge the less powerful's strengths and how they empower us

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day-to-day. Further, we are not aware of or do not acknowledge our areas of struggle and that we also need to be empowered.

A participatory empowerment way of being is different from a one-way empowerment way of being because the less powerful are encouraged to share their ideas on how the more powerful can better empower them and how they can better empower *themselves*. Those of us in the more powerful positions may disclose some things about ourselves, but it is important to note that the focus remains on the less powerful and empowering them. The participation is not sought to empower those of us in the more powerful positions as individuals or as members of groups. Similar to a one-way empowerment way of being, a participatory way of being leaves out the following: the presence of those of us in the more powerful positions, how that presence affects the encounter, and the possibility of our being changed (empowered by the less powerful as individuals and as members of groups).

A two-way empowerment way of being is where those of us in the more powerful positions seek to not only empower the less powerful, but also to be open to be changed, to be empowered (as an individual and as a member of a group) by the less powerful. Practitioners who want to embody a two-way empowerment way of being work at increasing their awareness of what they bring to the empowerment encounter and how that affects the encounter itself. Practitioners also work at understanding why two-way empowerment is difficult in empowerment encounters (what can get in the way of two-way empowerment). Finally, practitioners work at learning new practices to increase respect and effectiveness while changing the more ingrained and often unconscious disrespectful and ineffective practices (these latter changes are often very difficult, requiring awareness, skills and courage).

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The Argument Against a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being

Several colleagues who are in more powerful positions (development professionals, therapists, social workers, and teachers) argue against a two-way empowerment way of being for the following reasons:

"I don't have time."

"My clients are overwhelmed and some are in crisis. They aren't at a place where they can empower me, they need my help much more than I need theirs."

"I'm getting paid to empower them, not the other way around."

"They can't empower me yet. They are too young and inexperienced."

Many of these arguments are valid. Two-way empowerment is not always appropriate because each empowerment encounter is embedded in context, purpose, and constraints.

There are different costs associated with each way of being. In one-way and participatory empowerment, when we enter the encounter, we signal that we are not open to being changed and empowered. This can create an immediate one-up/one-down situation generating feelings of disrespect and resentment.

In addition, we are potentially blind to inequalities, how tough it is for the less powerful, how resourceful they are, problems in giving and receiving feedback, multiple realities, complainin' in the kitchen, critical feedback, the impact of what we bring to the encounter, and our interdependency. This can decrease effectiveness and can generate feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment further undermining effectiveness. We also risk missing opportunities to be empowered by the less powerful for issues we are struggling with.

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Two-way empowerment costs include at least two things: One cost is time to become aware of what we bring to the encounter and what can get in the way, to learn skills, to unlearn disrespectful and ineffective behavior, and to practice different behaviors to move toward embodying a two-way empowerment way of being. A second cost is pride. We have to give up our status as the expert in all fields. Often, we need to get out of "helping prison" (Daas & Bush, 1992).

Practitioners choose a way of being in response to their values, context, and constraints. This thesis adds an additional way of being for interested practitioners to explore when possible in their current or future contexts.

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A Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being is Relational

By bringing in the presence of the more powerful in the empowerment encounter, a two-way empowerment way of being pays attention to the relational nature of empowerment encounters. The "doing" of empowerment, however, often overshadows the "being" in empowerment encounters. Many small, financially strapped NGOs find it difficult to justify spending time and money they do not have to address relational issues. Yet inattention to relational, process issues often results in producing ironic situations—for example, social justice organizations who are unjust to their own staff (Arnold & Reineke, 1996; Britell, 1992; Paul, 1993). The quality of the encounters is often not given the same parity as the goal of self-reliance. As one colleague at a foundation said, "it is often the 'results people' vs. the 'process people'," and in a published reflection of the Seva Foundation, this polarity was recognized as the "be-ers" vs. the "do-ers" (Daas & Bush, 1992).

Thinking, doing, and being are all important in empowerment encounters. Yet many organizations still draw on one-sided models of human development that value autonomy and devalue relationality—notably Kohlberg's model of moral development (Kohlberg, 1984) and Erikson's identity development (Erikson, 1963), where the endpoint and highest goal of development is autonomy. Feminists and systems theorists have critiqued these models for valuing separateness, agency, and independence over connection, relationships, and interdependence (Riger, 1992).[14] They noted that like other living creatures, we self-assert (differentiate) *and* relate to the other (integrate), and we do both of these in relational, interdependent encounters with the other (Belenky, Clinchy,

[14]These gender polarities (where the masculine is valued and feminine is devalued), the theorists noted, reflected a deeper dualism in Western culture: mind over nature and the body; reason over emotion; subject over object; objectivity over subjectivity; abstract and general over concrete and particular, as noted by Sandra Harding.

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Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Capra, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982; Miller, 1986/1976). As Jean Baker Miller pointed out, no one develops without interaction and words such as autonomy and fusion "do not bespeak interaction" (Miller, 1976, p. xx). These words are more static, more Newtonian.[15] When we are asserting ourselves, we still rely on the support of others and our environment.

Why is a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being so Difficult? What Can Get in the Way? (The Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters)

The second question explores why a two-way empowerment way of being is so difficult to practice in empowerment encounters. One of the main reasons I initiated this study was to move beyond the "shoulds," and to learn why it can be so easy to fall short of our intentions to be respectful and effective. I wanted to understand what is going on inside the encounters themselves. I wanted to make visible some of the hidden background dimensions that can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being.

In this section, I discuss what we bring to the empowerment encounters with our bodies (our presence). I look at what we bring both as individuals (our interpersonal style and unique biography: personal dimensions) and as members of groups (our desire for status and the umbilical cord of privilege: sociocultural dimensions). I spend the bulk of this section exploring the umbilical cord of privilege and our desire for status intertwined with deception. While both the personal and the sociocultural levels are important, as I mentioned in my second concern in the last chapter, we too often view empowerment

[15]This worldview does not take in the insights from Einstein's relativity theory (what we bring to the encounter affects the way we see it and relate in it), or Quantum theory (even as we try to measure, our relationship changes things, can't be objective in that sense all related--Heisenberg).

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encounters purely interpersonally while leaving out our connections to power, status, and privilege. Therefore, the emphasis in this inquiry is on the sociocultural level, and how it shapes the personal.

Different Interpersonal Styles and Unique Biographies (Personal Hidden Background Dimensions)

At the personal level, several obstacles can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. As I mentioned in my concerns, we all bring different bodies to the encounter. One potential obstacle is not recognizing our different interpersonal styles.[16] If these are hidden in the background, we may see different styles as "less than" or "wrong." Yet teams working together in empowerment encounters need different styles to be effective. Misrecognizing different styles as less than can generate disrespect and resentment. Further, we can miss opportunities to learn from our colleagues' different styles: They are often stronger in areas where we are weaker.

A second potential obstacle is not being aware of our unique biography, our limits, and our emotional triggers;[17] our personal issues may get in the way of a two-way

[16]Of the many different interpersonal style models, I have found the Wilson Learning Social Styles to be the most practical and accessible. Unlike Myers-Briggs, it is based on recognizing others' behavior and understanding how others view our behavior, rather than our own interpretations. There are two basic axes (assertiveness and emotional responsiveness) and four styles: analytical (less assertive and less emotionally responsive), driver (more assertive and less emotionally responsive), expressive (more assertive and more emotionally responsive), and amiable (less assertive and more emotionally responsive). No one style is better than the other. We need all of these styles to work together as a team and be respectful and effective. Each style has its strengths and weaknesses. People tend to have a home base style, a secondary style, and a backup style when they are under stress. But each of us is comfortable at different levels both in each style and in working with people of that style (and style combinations). The limitation of this model is that it does not address the sociocultural issues: history, culture, power, status, and privilege. For more information on the styles, see Appendix 6, seminar 2, flip charts and handouts.

[17]I believe developing awareness of triggers and old patterns can help practitioners work in a more direct way. Already overwhelmed NGOs struggling to keep their heads above water in social justice struggles rarely have the time or the energy to address the issue that we all bring our "selves" to the encounters. Others see it as a very low priority given the other issues, and some see it as a touchy-

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empowerment way of being. For example, as I described in my concerns, I learned from my less powerful colleagues that the more I sought to rescue, advise, and help them, the more they felt resentful and disempowered.

I also discovered other issues that can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being that I believe are a result of my biography: growing up in a German-American tradition permeated by Calvinism. These issues include: trying to prove the oppressor is wrong or bad leading to burn-out rather than expending the energy on action; feeling guilty and seeking redemption; perfectionism; nonacceptance of self; being hard on the self and hard on others; and focusing on yourself rather than the interaction, or as the Tao Te Ching says, "unless you accept yourself, you can't let go of yourself" (Mitchell, 1992).

Personal triggers (emotional unresolved issues or traumas) are like minefields just waiting to go off when a colleague steps in the wrong place. We need to be aware of these triggers, but we do not have to share them. Instead, we can work with them in everyday practice and reflection.

Interpersonal style and unique biography, therefore, are often hidden in the background of empowerment encounters. If practitioners do not acknowledge and work with them, distortions and miscommunication can get in the way of two-way empowerment. These two personal dimensions, however, are addressed at length by other scholars and practitioners and are mentioned only briefly here.

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feely waste altogether. Our less powerful colleagues, however, are often very aware of where we are struggling—both emotionally and in domains of competency. Further, many of my colleagues in Latin America noted the irony of Americans arriving on the scene to "help" them, to "develop their capacity," when it was the more powerful who, in fact, needed help in different areas.

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The problem is that too often analysis stops here at the personal (interpersonal and intrapersonal) level. Yet these dimensions are shaped by the sociocultural dimensions explored below.

Different "Umbilical Cords of Privilege"[18] and Our Desire for Status Intertwined with Deception (Sociocultural Hidden Background Dimension)

At the sociocultural level, our different umbilical cords of privilege and our desire for status intertwined with deception can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. These hidden dimensions address my second concern outlined in the last chapter of viewing empowerment encounters in a purely interpersonal way while leaving out connections to power, status and the resulting.

For this dissertation, the umbilical cord of privilege is our connection to power, status, and privilege that sustains us, permeates our consciousness, constrains and enables action, yet often remains hidden in the background. In addition to the organizational power relations, each person enters the encounter with a different umbilical cord of privilege that is "thick" or "thin" in different dimensions—for example, race, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, physical ability, age, profession, professional experience, current residence, education, and contacts/networks (both family and professional for getting jobs, information, financial and emotional support—especially in emergency situations).

In this section, I first bring my own umbilical cord of privilege out of the hidden background and make it visible to the reader. I describe my contradictory positioning and my insight into being a "father's daughter." Then I explain why I use the umbilical cord

[18]My thanks to Jeremy Shapiro for completing the name of this concept.

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image and its relation to the body, history, and the desire for status and intertwined deception. The umbilical cord image emerged experientially in Brazil 11 years ago, and over the last few years I have tried to capture that experience conceptually for colleagues to explain why I believe the umbilical cord of privilege is so important, and so often ignored, in our practice.

Next, I bring together various theories to try to understand why our umbilical cord of privilege is often invisible to us, but in NEON to the less powerful. Specifically, I want to learn why we focus where we are disprivileged, our pain, while being unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge the pain of others in areas where we are privileged. I want to learn why it is often *so* difficult to see how our way of being embodying our privilege contradicts our intentions to be respectful and effective. And finally, in summarizing this section, I discuss how our umbilical cord of privilege and desire for status intertwined with deception can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being: If we cannot see our privilege, then how can we see our disrespectful and ineffective practices shaped by privilege? Harder still, how can we change day-to-day practices that we cannot see, practices that feel natural and comfortable?

My Contradictory Umbilical Cord of Privilege and Being a Father's Daughter[19]

Because our umbilical cords of privilege tend to be invisible, as the writer of this thesis I want to make mine visible. Within my umbilical cord of privilege, I am aware of the following dimensions: class (middle-class), race (White), ethnicity (German-Scottish-Irish), gender (woman), religion (raised Protestant), nationality (American), sexual

[19] Critiquing structural inequalities from positions of structural privilege is a contradiction that requires owning up to your privilege and seeing how it impacts your work (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994, p. 145).

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orientation (heterosexual), physical ability (able-bodied), age (young in some contexts and older in others), education (B.S. information systems management, M.S. international development management, doctoral student in human and organizational systems), professional experience (prestigious management consulting firm), diverse volunteer experience (economically able to volunteer), current position (researcher and consultant), current residence (New York City's Upper West Side), and contacts/networks both family and professional (connections for getting jobs and information, financial and emotional support available if I need it—especially in emergency situations).

The way I am connected to social structures enables me to move through the world with rights and advantages not experienced by the majority of human beings on the planet. Despite the concentration of wealth and the widening income gap (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994; Egan, 1995; Ehrenreich, 1995; Korten, 1990; Korten, 1995; Krugman, 1995; Lind, 1995; Passell, 1995), my umbilical cord enables me to further accumulate privilege, or what Bourdieu referred to as the different immaterial forms of capital: cultural (information, degrees), symbolic (status, legitimacy), and social (resources and connections, group memberships) (Bourdieu, 1977; Calhoun, 1995, p. 140). My managerial capital—organizational expertise and skills as a symbolic analyst (Reich, 1991)—are in demand and add to my privilege (Enteman, 1993).

Yet my positioning is contradictory: I am both privileged and disprivileged. In most but not all contexts, I am privileged in every dimension except for gender. The gender area of my umbilical cord is weaker, thinner, and more sensitive after growing up in a society permeated by what Jessica Benjamin called gender polarities (Benjamin, 1988, pp. 49-50)—where self-assertion (agency) is valued and associated with men, and recognition of the other is devalued and associated with women. Both men and women,

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however, can buy into patriarchy by valuing agency while devaluing relationships, women (for women, themselves included), and all things "feminine." Women who value what is viewed as masculine over what is viewed as feminine are referred to by Maureen Murdock as "father's daughters."[20]

I recently discovered that for most of my life, I was a father's daughter. I bought into these gender polarities at an unconscious level, even while struggling for equal rights for women (rights I later learned were based on a male standard). After becoming aware of my one-sided development (deconstructing myself), I began to revalue what I had previously devalued in women, society, and in myself (reconstructing myself). As a recovering father's daughter, I am enjoying reconstructing myself (to be described later in this chapter). I am becoming more whole, and I have brought more balance into my life. Continuous work with this powerful process of deconstructing and reconstructing myself and social categories is something I share with others who are in both more and less privileged positions[21].

Thus my contradictory umbilical cord of privilege is both thick and thin given my advantages and disadvantage in areas of difference. Throughout the thesis, I try to write more from my privileged positions rather than my disprivileged position of gender. One advantage mentioned at the outset in my concerns is that I can draw on my knowledge of being in the disadvantaged shoes (gender) to be more respectful and effective in all the other areas where I am advantaged. Given that it is hard for members of social groups

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[20]"Father's Daughter" is a term used by Murdock (1990, p. 4); however, Benjamin (1988) and the co-authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) also pointed to this developmental path.

[21]Both Kondo (1986, 1990) and de Montis Solis (1994) have written extensively about this deconstruction and reconstruction of self process.

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who have not experienced poor treatment to get in the shoes of those who must deal with poor treatment, I value this experiential knowledge as a resource to be developed.

Empathy, however, does not mean that we can fully walk in another's shoes. Nor does it mean that we can transcend our umbilical cords of privilege. Our umbilical cords of privilege permeate our way of being (our consciousness and behavior), resulting in many of the blindspots I mentioned in my concerns.

Why the Umbilical Cord Image?: Bringing Attention to the Body, History, the Desire for Status and Deception

As a volunteer in Brazil, I became aware of my previously invisible umbilical cord of privilege thanks to local colleagues who saw it in NEON. Because of my umbilical cord, I did not have to face the day-to-day poor treatment the Brazilians encountered due to prejudice based on group identity differences. The imagery of the umbilical cord emerged when I learned a Brazilian organizer in a nearby town was shot in the face for doing a similar type of work that I was engaged in. I knew that unlike my local colleagues, my blue U.S. passport and my white skin provided a degree of safety my colleagues lacked. If things got worse, I could tug on my umbilical cord and be reeled back to safety.

I continue to use the image of the umbilical cord of privilege because, for me, it captures visually how our embodied beings are directly connected to the larger social structures that are often so difficult to grasp. These connections to status and power both constrain and enable our behavior—notably our ability to maintain and acquire further privilege—yet they are often not recognized. After I discovered my own umbilical cord, I began to notice the umbilical cords of others all around me—some were very thick and nourishing, others were thin, cracked, and barely sustaining the body.

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Bringing attention to the body was another reason for the umbilical cord image. Through this inquiry process I discovered Peggy McIntosh's work on unpacking an often unnoticed backpack of privilege (McIntosh, 1992). While I appreciate and draw on her work,[22] I prefer my original image: You can not take off the umbilical cord, it is part of the body—or as Pierre Bourdieu puts it: "The body is in the social world but the social world is in the body" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 19, f. 35).

The umbilical cord image also attempts to convey a crucial connection with our earliest human ancestors[23] —***our desire for status***. The ways to attain status vary

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[22]I discovered that my concern of leaving the more powerful out of empowerment encounters is part of a wider zeitgeist. Many of us are chewing on different questions related to this concern, influencing each other, creating interconnections, and this influence is being reflected in the cultural products of this historical moment (Sugrue, 1994). For example, President Clinton's race dialogue, the struggle over inclusivity in schools (e.g., the student committee Education Not Domination at the New School) organizations, social justice movements, the emergence of whiteness studies.

[23]Throughout the thesis I will make references to evolutionary psychology and social psychology findings as cited by Robert Wright in his popular book *The Moral Animal: Why We Are the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*. Wright's references help add to the plausibility of the two-way empowerment construct, yet I make these references with caution because I am also aware of and in agreement with much of the critique of evolutionary psychology as a science.

As Stephen Jay Gould noted, "Humans are animals and the mind evolved; therefore, all curious people must support the quest for an evolutionary psychology." But Gould believed the field of evolutionary psychology today has serious problems. Gould critiqued this field as being evolutionary "fundamentalists" who believe narrowly in only "one overarching law," that of natural selection. Gould asserted that Darwin, he and others are "pluralists." Pluralists believe there are additional laws and give "a large role for history's unpredictable contingencies."

While Gould appreciated the potential for seeing some universal differences, he believes some behavior is cultural, some is from "spangles" (the byproducts of evolving a larger brain that were co-opted much later than they were developed—e.g., reading and writing), and some is evolutionary but not adaptation (both males and females have nipples, not because men need them, but because females do and they both go through the same embryonic development). The fundamentalists in Gould's view, however, assert that all of our current behavior must have developed as an adaptation in the "ancestral evolutionary environment."

Gould agreed and applauded evolutionary psychology for stating that "some universal behaviors are not linked to reproductive success...[and that many are] *tragically out of whack with the needs of modern life*" [italics added]. For example, the desire for status. If this "out of whack" situation was advanced recognizing that a "putative evolutionary origin does not necessarily imply an adaptive value at all, then evolutionary psychology could make a substantial advance in applying Darwinian theory to human behavior." But the evolutionary psychology scholars argue that behaviors that are not adaptive now, must have been in the "environment of evolutionary adaptation" EEA. Gould's response is that it is impossible to know in "detail what small bands of hunter-gatherers did in Africa two million years ago." As a result, much of evolutionary psychology is untestable, unscientific and speculative.

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depending upon the different values of cultures and subgroups[24]. Yet, because we evolved among bystanders whose opinion mattered, most of us tend to be highly sensitive about our reputation and status (Rothman, 1978, p. 12; Wright, 1994, p. 208) . Across cultures, people are treated differently based on their status (however culturally defined) (Wright, 1994, pp. 259, 261, 414, n.4-5). *Because treatment tends to be geared to status, people will perform in encounters to ensure their status is maintained or increased* (Goffman, 1959b).

The moral rules and rituals that bind us to society are our desire for dignity, pride, and *respect* and our avoidance of shame, disdain, and *disrespect*. Again, each of these vary by culture and personality (Goffman, 1967, pp. 43-44). The interactional work, or what Goffman referred to as "face-work," to maintain or improve our place in the ritual order includes our demeanor (posture, discretion, self-control) and in the giving and withholding of deference to others (Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. lxviii). Even brief interactions in encounters—for example, passing in the hallway—are ritual, not just

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My own issues with Wright's book are the ultra determinism and utilitarianism. I agree with Gould's critique, and his assessment that Wright's work is simplistic, yet I appreciate Wright's emphasis on our desire for status intertwined with deception, his examples from different social science literature of why our practices can contradict our intentions, and some of the examples of universals (like the desire for status) across different cultures. Gould, S. J. (1997). Evolution: The pleasures of pluralism. The New York Review of Books (June 26, 1997), 47-52.

I am not interested in proving what the evolutionary baggage that we have now was used for during ancestral times. I am only interested in recognizing that we are here today with this baggage: be it adaptations, spandrels, and so on. Parts of who we are that are often ignored or downplayed exist. Our desire for status is documented across cultures, and I believe we need to recognize and work with it. Therefore, I will draw on evolutionary psychology, anthropology and social psychology as summarized by Wright when it adds to the plausibility of the two-way empowerment construct.

[24] Status refers to our positions in the different status hierarchies. Anthropologists and other social scientists have found status hierarchies in communities that were previously assumed to be egalitarian. For example, the Navajo disrespect those who seek power, but respect those who excel as teachers. What is favored and disfavored in the local social environment varies widely. The Zuni deny status to those who seek it too fiercely and give it to those who do not. Status is tied to the power of social approval (respect) and disapproval.(Wright, 1994, pp. 259,261,414, n.4-5). Sociologists have differentiated ascribed status (status by birth) and achieved status (status through economic standing, occupation), however, both are seen in NEON by those who lack status in the different dimensions.

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interpersonal (Goffman, 1956), as many of us have experienced. *Today people tend to defer to higher status people and to expect deference from lower status people* (Goffman, 1956; Rothman, 1993/1978). We tend to seek out status as a valuable resource (Wright, 1994, p. 249). Therefore, the desire for status serves to maintain and increase our accumulated privilege—the "thickness" of the umbilical cord.

In our striving for status, I believe there is a core deception and a core hypocrisy that helps to understand what can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. *The* ***core deception*** *is that* we *tend to deceive ourselves in order to deceive others for purposes of attaining and maintaining status.* We need to be able to impress upon ourselves and others through our performance that we are who we claim to be (Goffman, 1959b; Wright, 1994), and that what we are saying is credible. Deception is part of our repertoire as it is of many other animals. Being able to deceive others through deft performances, especially when we are at risk, is a capacity we need to have available (Lerner, 1993).

Yet this desire for status and the capacity for deception strengthens our capacity to *denounce others while downplaying, hiding, or denying our own faults.* This ***core hypocrisy*** is not a new observation. The Buddha put it succinctly 2,500 years ago, *"the fault of others is easily perceived, but that of one's self is difficult to perceive* [italics added]" (Burtt, 1982, p. 65). Social theorists add that *the privilege of others is easily perceived, especially those a rung above us in the status hierarchy, but that of one's self and one's more powerful group is difficult to perceive* (Wright, 1994, pp. 257, 275).

Sage wisdom addresses how desire is intertwined with deception; how *it is much easier to talk about being respectful than to practice respect day-to-day*—especially when we have developed a sensitivity to detect flaws in others we consider rivals. Some social

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theorists, such as Goffman, have also recognized "the interplay of manipulation and morality" (Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. xiv) as part of our existence as social beings. Goffman argued that *"universal human nature is not a very human thing* [italics added]" (Goffman, 1967, p. 45) , and one admirer of evolutionary psychology adds that "to be moral animals, we must realize how thoroughly we aren't" (Wright, 1994, p. 344).

The core deception and hypocrisy plant the seed of ***bias toward the self*** that can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. Social psychologists Aronson and Lerner both argued that as social beings, we strive to maintain and enhance our self-esteem and public image (Aronson, 1972, p. 162; Lerner, 1980, p. 112). This leads to perceiving ourselves more central to events than we really are, the "illusion of control" (Aronson, 1972, p. 163), and to taking credit for the good and denying the bad (p. 166). *"We need to see ourselves as good and sensible people," but we also need to see how our desire for status "frequently leads us into performing actions that are neither good nor sensible" in certain situations* (p. 169).[25] Again, as I said about deception above, these biases toward the self are also needed in our repertoire to help us overcome adversity, achieve, and improve our mental health. But these biases toward the self have major costs: a distorted picture of ourselves, empowerment encounters, and the world (p. 169). Several powerful tendencies (and their exceptions) that reflect the bias toward the self are described below.

Actor-observer bias: Not giving the less powerful the benefit of the doubt, while giving it to ourselves.

The first tendency is to assess the other's behavior as we observe it without giving her the benefit of the doubt by taking into consideration history or circumstances. Yet we

[25]One example is the Zimbardo prison study (Aronson, 1977).

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tend to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt in assessing our own behavior. This is known as the actor-observer bias (Aronson, 1972, p. 160). When we are the actor, we take for granted our contextualizing, but when we observe someone else, we focus on their immediate behavior. In social psychological experiments, Edward Jones and Richard Nisbett found that when we experience bad luck, we attribute it to the environment, but when the same problem happens to someone else, we attribute it to the weakness of that person's character (Lerner, 1980, p. 219).

For example, community leaders in Ecuador complained that when they arrived late for a meeting in Quito due to unavoidable transportation problems, the urban professionals did not give them the benefit of the doubt and ask what had happened. Instead, they angrily told them they were "unprofessional." Yet when the urban professionals arrived late to a community meeting, they quickly explained about unavoidable last minute delays.

Fundamental attribution error: Attributing the less powerful's behavior ("not like us") to personality, while ignoring power and status of the situation.

The actor-observer bias leads into the second and related problem at the crux of empowerment encounters: the fundamental attribution error. We tend to assess the other's behavior—especially the less powerful's behavior—without addressing the background dimensions of the encounter. When we make this fundamental attribution error, we attribute the less powerful's behavior to personality, disposition, capacity level, and attitudes (Aronson, 1972, p. 156), and sometimes to their lack of interpersonal style or communication skills, while we ignore the power of the situation, social roles, and other

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dimensions of the hidden background (pp. 157-158).[26] The agency representative I described in chapter 2 who told me that the grassroots leaders were "not like us" (the in-group of more powerful practitioners, p. 141), attributed the grassroots leaders' timid behavior and poor work performance to their inabilities, personalities, and "their" nature. But "people who do inferior things are not necessarily inferior" (Aronson, 1972).

The less powerful, however, can do the reverse—in studies girls have taken more blame than boys rather than bringing in the situation; depressives can also be exceptions as well as others who have fallen into a more victim mentality (Aronson, 1972, p. 297).

This primitive, self-serving, attribution process also tends to color who we blame for what in the service of making us look (public image) and feel (self-esteem) good (Lerner, 1980, p. 111). Even when we have intentions of being respectful and effective. Goffman demonstrated how often well-intentioned helping professionals (in his case, professionals working in asylums) treated people disrespectfully and sometimes cruelly (Goffman, 1959a). One explanation for this contradiction is Lerner's "desire for a just world" theory. He argued that we often unintentionally use our own standards as the default standards—the "right" way to work and live. What is deserved in our "just world" reflect our norms and the norms of our culture (Lerner, 1980, p. 15). Within our norms, the in-group/out-group phenomenon applies: Those similar to us have greater worth, and those who are "like us" deserve more than those who are "not like us" (Aronson 1972, p. 141; Lerner, 1980, pp. 16-17).[27] As a result, we become angry, indignant, and outraged

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[26] Milgram's famous shock experiments showed how the observers attributed personal dispositions as the cause of aggressive or obedient behavior rather than the power of the situation to produce this behavior. Another error is to attribute one's personality to their behavior in only one social role; this ignores the power of the social role.

[27] In-group/out-group effects include seeing the out-group as the same, but the in-group with differences. In-group favoritism backed up numerous studies that demonstrate one's group is "better" on many dimensions—even when set up arbitrarily, people act as if they are good friends or kin. There is one reality, ours, rather than multiple realities.

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when we perceive that universal norms are being violated (Lerner, 1980, p. 10). More visceral than a cognitive dissonance approach, Lerner argued that we look for justice based on our own "just world" criteria (pp. 37-38). After blaming the less powerful, to reduce our guilt, we may need to paint them as "less than" because being "less than" explains their situation for those of us who have a "desire for a just world"—that is, a belief that people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980, p. 55).

The actor-observer bias and the fundamental attribution error are the knee-jerk reactions for explaining our own and the less powerful's behavior and problems. *What is missing are empathy and attempts to get in each others' shoes.* The fundamental attribution error is a tendency exacerbated by power that is committed not only by the more powerful. The less powerful can also make assessments unaware of the more powerful's constraints.

We remember who owes us, but we tend to forget who we owe (money, ideas, support).

First, we tend to remember who owes us (time, money, ideas, support, etc.), but we forget who we owe. This tracking system tends to be biased toward the self. We can greatly anger and frustrate our less powerful colleagues by making a point, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, that they owe us (thanks to all of our hard work in the empowerment encounters), and at the same time not recognize how we owe them, what they have done for us.

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We assess taking>giving inaccurately, leading to feelings of betrayal, indignation, retribution.

Distortions in the monitoring of exchanges can also lead to a further distortion: believing that the less powerful are taking more they are giving when that is not the case. Because tracking systems tend to be biased toward the self, how much others have given tends to be downplayed, misrecognized, or not recognized. Nevertheless, the "taking more than giving" distorted assessment can trigger feelings of betrayal, moral indignation, and impulses to carry out retribution. Because status positioning has been (in our evolutionary history) and continues to be so crucial, the monitoring of exchanges is scrutinized with an acute sensitivity for perceived betrayal and a tendency to discourage all exploitation emphatically through moral indignation. Our indignation also rises with groups whose interests conflict with the groups we belong to—when our norms are violated, we want to see justice because, often unconsciously, the way our culture lives is the "right" way, and we become indignant if violated (Lerner, 1980, p. 10). In social psychological experiments, these feelings were strong even when the groups were assigned arbitrarily (Aronson, 1972).

While slights to dignity, and exploitation also summon up these legitimate feelings, we need to be aware of *how easily we can get hooked based on a biased, lopsided assessment.* Once we are triggered, our distorted claims of betrayal, indignation and retribution can be devastating to our less powerful colleagues. A vicious cycle can begin to gyrate with both sides increasingly frustrated, resentful, and disempowered *despite* their intentions to work respectfully and effectively together.

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We can misrecognize our inconsistencies outlined above using language.

In order to present the more idealized self within encounters, Goffman noted that we need to conceal a certain amount of inconsistencies (Goffman, 1959b, p. 41). To hide all of the inconsistencies and hypocrisy behind the lopsided assessments described above (the disrespectful assessments and interaction, and the feelings of *perceived* betrayal, indignation, and urges for retribution), we often use language to prove we are right, that we are good people, not to discover "the truth."

We have an intense motivation to justify ourselves; we strive to be right. At the same time, we need to see ourselves as good and sensible—that we are respectful and effective practitioners (Aronson, 1972, pp. 23,177-182). Jones and Kohler, researchers in social psychology, found subjects *tended to remember the plausible arguments agreeing with their own position and the implausible arguments agreeing with the opposing position* (Aronson, 1972, p. 183). To maintain the positive self-concept, *we will reduce dissonance—especially when the self-concept is threatened* (e.g., that I am respectful, that I empower people and I don't dominate others, etc.) (p. 202).

Further, if we did not intend to hurt someone, there is a *tendency to deny others' legitimate feelings of disrespect, anger, resentment and disempowerment:* We may think "I didn't *intend* to hurt you so you should not be upset [italics added]" (p. 397).

Another way of ignoring legitimate claims and feelings of the less powerful is through the use of what Edelman referred to as the "special language of the helping professions." In professional journals, Edelman checked for justification of power, status differentials, and authority. He found that portraying a power relationship as a helping one enabled "linguistic flexibility and potency" well beyond simple deception (Edelman, 1974, pp. 297-298). This special language works to smooth out the bumps of inconsistency; and

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when helping professionals are dealing with issues that bring in status and power, "distortion and misperception are virtually certain to occur" (p. 296). It is language that, while not being viewed as political, can structure "perceptions of status, authority, merit, deviance and the causes of social problems" (p. 296).

Using the special language, the less powerful may be assessed and categorized (under the microscope) based on the professionals' assumptions rather than their behavior (Edelman, 1974, p. 295). In other words, the behavior of the less powerful is often assessed based on who they are, their status, versus what they do (a point emphasized by many of my colleagues in the less powerful, lower status positions) (p. 308). Professionals may seek to confirm categories and ignore counterevidence with the quest for status fueling the interpretation (p. 300).

This phenomenon was referred to by Goffman as a "frame-trap"—the frame is reinforced by whatever is communicated through the frame (Goffman, 1974, p. 480). Social power is a condition of persistent misframing. People with little social power have little power to frame events or to combat interpretive frameworks applied to them (p. 445). Certain kinds of power generate persistent misframing—for example, assessing competence, protests are discounted and add to the misframing; and assessing character, the least anchored to hard reality, can easily lead to frame-traps where nothing can get through (Goffman, 1959a); and "the character we impute to another allows us to discount his criticisms and other professions of belief, transforming these expressions into 'what can only be expected' of someone of that character" (Goffman, 1974, p. 482).

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Why is Our Umbilical Cord of Privilege and Our Way of Being Embodying Privilege (Our "Habitus") Often Invisible to us ("Misrecognized") But in NEON to the Less Powerful?

Being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging our privilege can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. For many of us, the tendency is to focus on the areas where we are disprivileged, pointing to the privilege of those one rung above us, while being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging the other dimensions where we are privileged. When we complain about the privilege of others, while failing to recognize or acknowledge our own, this stirs up deep resentment. Our privilege may be invisible to us, but it is in NEON to those with less privilege in different dimensions. For example, bell hooks noted that some White feminists focus on being victims of sexism and denounce male privilege while ignoring their own privilege in the areas of class, race, and sexual orientation (hooks, 1984, p. 46).

Further, and going to the core of this thesis, if we are unaware of our privilege, we are also unaware of how we embody our privilege in our day-to-day way of being; how it affects the way we think, feel, and interact. As a result, we may be disrespectful and ineffective *despite* our conscious intentions because we do not see our privilege. In the example above, some White feminists can be blind to their racist, classist, and heterosexist behavior because they do not view themselves as being privileged.

In another example, Maria Elena de Montis Solis reported how male leaders of a revolutionary movement committed to an egalitarian society were unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge their male privilege. They were also unable to see how their privilege, embodied in sexist behavior, perpetuated the very type of unjust relations (between men and women) that their movement sought to dismantle (de Montis Solis, 1994).

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What is behind this invisible/NEON phenomenon that can get in the way of two-way empowerment? How can we better understand what is often mystifying to us about ourselves and our colleagues? In this section, I offer four points. First, I give some potential explanations for our tendency to focus on our own pain and disprivilege while ignoring the pain of others in areas where we are privileged.

Second, I draw on Bourdieu to describe how we can misrecognize (be unaware of, deny, or distort) our habitus, (our ways of thinking, feeling and interacting that embody privilege) because our ways of embodying privilege are absorbed unconsciously and become second nature. Third, I address how dispositions are part of our habitus: Our embodied privilege can dispose us to unintentionally make insensitive remarks, to feel natural doing some things and not others, and to defer to some people and expect deference from others. Fourth and finally, I describe another aspect of habitus: We can misrecognize our norms as "universals" (rather than acquired), and use them to classify experience and make judgments. Our acquired norms consist of what we believe is the "right" way to do things, the right way to be. When we encounter less powerful colleagues who think, feel, and interact differently, we can misrecognize their ways of being as less than.

This invisible/NEON phenomenon, and the ease with which we can misrecognize ourselves and the less powerful, can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. This section is important because it will help the reader appreciate the case study in chapter 5. It lays out what the participants in the case are up against in embodying a two-way empowerment way of being.

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We tend to focus on our own pain and disprivilege, while ignoring the pain of others in areas where we are privileged.

Most of us tend to focus on our own pain, where we are disprivileged, while being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging the pain of others where we are privileged. For example, when I originally introduced this concept in an essay entitled, "The Umbilical Cord of Privilege: Ideology, Critical Theory, and Critical Thinking" and distributed it to a small group in a Fielding Institute seminar, the responses added weight to this point. Despite all of my arguments that it is hard for us to see our privilege while focusing on where we are disadvantaged, two White women sent responses that they did not agree with my essay because, as women, they did not have any privilege. An African American woman, who was a senior executive in a large U.S. corporation, also sent a response that as a Black woman, she could not relate to my essay on privilege because she did not have any. This was striking coming from three doctoral students at an institution with high tuition. These colleagues misrecognized themselves as being only disprivileged, rather than seeing "disprivileged" and "privileged" as relational (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 48).

As biological beings, it is important to be extremely sensitive to our own pain for our survival. But why are we often unaware of the pain of others in the areas where we are advantaged? One intuitive reason for this phenomenon is that in the areas where we are privileged, we do not have to deal with poor treatment by others, logistical obstacles, and a poor quality of life.[28] *Without experiencing poor treatment directly, understanding the disprivilege of others is more difficult* (Aronson, 1972, p. 298) . We also tend to have more empathy for those closest to us, our families, communities and cultural groups.

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[28]Cross et al.. put it another way, to people who benefit, biases in their favor are as invisible and intangible as air, but to others who are thwarted, "biases are as tangible as a brick wall" (Cross, Katz, Miller & Seashore, 1994, p. xxvi).

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How far empathy is extended varies by cultures, subgroups, and individuals, but the tendency is to more easily feel the pain closest to you and your cultural groups.

Another reason outlined above is our often unconscious bias toward the self. *We tend to be biased toward ourselves in viewing our own pain and privilege.* This is one strategy for improving and maintaining our current status position: acquiring more privilege (better treatment), without having to give up any privileges.

Ideologies help in this process. Ideologies often mask our own privilege and structural inequalities while advocating for more privilege for us in the name of the greater good. Critical theorists point out that racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, ethnocentrist and other ideologies make three claims: first, that they represent the interests of everyone while concealing the interests of a privileged class; second, that inequality is natural rather than structured; and third, that the situation at hand is harmonious rather than conflictual (Held, 1980, pp. 183-186). For example, in the U.S. context, class privilege is often ignored because of the dominant stratification ideology that emphasizes individual effort and de-emphasizes the structural (Rothman, 1993/1978, pp. 54, 114-115). This may be one reason why some of the Americans in empowerment encounters tend to view the encounters purely interpersonally.

Our bias toward ourselves and ideologies help to make our privilege invisible to us, but it remains in NEON to the less powerful. Not being aware of our own privilege and what we do not have to endure—poor treatment, difficult logistics—we can unintentionally say and do things generating resentment among our colleagues despite our intentions to be respectful.

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We can misrecognize our habitus, (our ways of thinking, feeling and interacting that embody privilege) because our ways of embodying privilege are absorbed unconsciously, become "second nature."

Bourdieu's concepts of "misrecognition" and his interpretation of habitus help to explain why our umbilical cord of privilege and our privileged ways of being are invisible to us, but in NEON to those with less status, power, and privilege. In my interpretation of Bourdieu, we can misrecognize (be unaware of, deny, or distort) our habitus (our ways of thinking, feeling and interacting that embody privilege), because our ways of embodying privilege are absorbed unconsciously and become second nature.

Habitus is the "Latin word which refers to a habitual or typical condition, state or appearance, particularly of the body" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 74). It is our prelinguistic, embodied practical understanding of the world. Hegel, Husserl, Weber, Durkheim, and Mauss have all employed habitus in their theoretical work. Bourdieu argued that we absorbed and embodied much of our privilege unconsciously through early experiences, and we are now often unaware of our habits and biases in our way of being: how we think, feel and interact. This includes our *manner*[29] and style of talking and moving; and the ways in which we carry ourselves (our stance, gait, gestures) (Jenkins, 1992, p. 74). The Greek term for this way of being was "hexis." In habitus, Bourdieu locates the body at the center: "It is in bodily hexis that the idiosyncratic (personal) combines with the systematic (social)"(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 87). Therefore, habitus refers to our way of being that is *both* unconscious and conscious, mind and body, personal and social. Habitus is, as

[29] The word "manner" is often used by the less powerful to try and describe the elusive way of being of the more powerful that they feel is not addressed. This is a point I learned in the case study and will be described in chapter 5, the ethnographic descriptions.

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Calhoun puts it, the "dynamic intersection of structure and action, society and the individual" (Calhoun, 1990, p. 4).

Because much of privilege embodied in our way of being was absorbed thoughtlessly, it is "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—[it] is the active presence of the whole past of which is the product" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 57). *This is the* ***power of the habitus****. Rather than our consciously learned rules and principles, aspects of our way of being are so ingrained we often think, feel and interact without awareness.* The habitus, for Bourdieu, is often beyond consciousness.

Our way of being, our habitus, however, is not fixed. Instead, when we bring our bodies into the empowerment encounter, our way of being is "put into practice" (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 172-173). Each encounter has different constraints, demands and opportunities, therefore we have to improvise (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 8). *When we work with the less powerful, we are drawing on some conscious principles, but by necessity, we also have to shoot from the hip; we have to improvise in our thinking, feeling and interacting. In improvising, it is easy to reproduce ingrained ways of being without recognizing our behavior because they are "second nature."* As Bourdieu put it, "It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79).

When I refer to our "way of being," I include much of what Bourdieu described in his interpretation of habitus. But I also address several dimensions Bourdieu mentioned only briefly or did not explore. For example, I include the interpersonal and the intrapersonal:[30] our different interpersonal styles and unique biography. I recognize that

[30]While these are not addressed in the dissertation at length, they are included in my interpretation of a way of being.

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what we bring—especially our emotional triggers and limitations—also affect the encounter.

More importantly, we have different and complicated selves that we bring to the encounter. Differences go well beyond class. Many of us are privileged in some dimensions while disprivileged in others. Our fractured and contradictory selves can then perform in various ways. We have different ways of being in empowerment encounters and other settings—especially those shaped by power. Because we live in different contexts, our ways of being are complex (Kondo, 1986; Kondo, 1990; Visweswaran, 1994).

Below I develop further aspects of our habitus that are often misrecognized.

Our embodied privilege (habitus) can dispose us to unintentionally make insensitive remarks, and to feel "natural" doing some things and not others.

Being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging my privilege, I can unintentionally say or do things (or not do things) in the day-to-day encounters that generate feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment. For example, in an isolated village while waiting for a meeting to start with rural farmers and development professionals, when I joined in with the other professionals' discussion of "my favorite capital city" ("mine is Paris," "no way, mine is Buenos Aires," etc.), I helped to set the tone in pre-meeting small talk. I quickly realized that I was reinforcing power relations with my status markers ("international traveler") and excluding rural farmers when they began to show their exclusion by immediately becoming quiet and putting their heads down.

In another example, if I say, "I am SO broke," to colleagues who are struggling to survive, they may fume with resentment. They see in NEON how thick my umbilical

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cord of privilege is. Therefore, not being aware of our privilege, we can unintentionally generate feelings of disrespect and resentment.

Not only can we unintentionally say things that trigger resentment, our embodied privilege disposes us to do some things and not others; to defer to some and expect deference from others. Our histories dispose us to action that fits with our status positions.

When I began talking to colleagues about my research project, one example that generated resentment continued to be voiced by several women and in one case a gay man (in a social work agency, a private school, and a nonprofit). They noted that a few of their trusted male colleagues who were committed to radical social justice work consistently arrived for meetings after the food and other preparations were taken care of. Then, after the meeting, these male colleagues left without helping to clean up. In both cases, these men often seemed to be unaware of what they were doing (or *not* doing) or that these actions were disrespectful. Even when these actions were pointed out, some of these men refused to acknowledge their behaviors were disrespectful or sexist.

For some men who absorbed and embodied male privilege, their status positions dispose them (largely unconsciously) to physically participate in meetings, but not to prepare food or clean up. These latter actions are often not in their consciousness nor their body.[31] At a deep level I feared losing my power and privilege.) Their embodied male privilege may also dispose them to defer to some and expect deference from others.

In this example, I used "men," but it could have been any members of more powerful groups ("White," "middle-class," heterosexual, etc.). The point is that we all bring our bodies to the empowerment encounters embodied with different dimensions of

[31] Women who value what is viewed as masculine over what is viewed as feminine, "father's daughters," (and recovering father's daughters such as myself) can also display this behavior. I am grateful to the friends and colleagues who helped me to recognize and to change this behavior, and who continue to keep me accountable.

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privilege and disprivilege. Even though we have conscious intentions to be respectful and effective in the encounters themselves, and we seek to create a more just world, we often do not see our privilege and how our privilege is embodied in our ways of being, our habitus.

I became acutely aware of the potential to be disrespectful in all my areas of privilege, despite my intentions, by Pamela Fishman's work, "Interaction: The Work Women Do" (Fishman, 1990). In this powerful study, men, despite their intentions, continued to maintain their gender dominance in conversations through directing interaction and by not doing their share of the interaction work (listening, commenting, etc.). Fishman's study, and the desire for status discussed above, helped me realize that in all my areas of privilege, it is easy to dominate others despite my conscious intentions.

What I am interested in here are the minutiae of interaction in empowerment encounters. Slights to our dignity are a core offense to our desire for status and respect. The power of these unintended remarks and actions is that they are very subtle, yet they have a tremendous impact. The unintended slights can build up and sap individuals' and organizations' energy away from social justice work.

Another aspect of habitus: We can misrecognize our norms as "universals" (when they were acquired), and use them to classify and judge.

We not only are disposed to interact in certain ways, we also carry in the back of our minds an idea or template of how things are, how things should be, and how things are done. These norms often become second nature. We no longer recognize these norms as acquired: Instead, to us, we can misrecognize them as universal standards. Having a

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cultural scheme of practices allows us to recognize practically (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66), to interact, and to get things done.

Yet when the less powerful have a different way of being or habitus, we risk imposing our norms on them, given our more powerful positions. If we misrecognize our privilege embodied in our mental schemes of grids, or we do not acknowledge it, we can misrecognize the less powerful's way of being or habitus as "less than" because we do not practically recognize it. Further, we can then claim that we need to bring the less powerful's ways of being "up" to the universal standards (standards that we misrecognize as universal that are really biased toward ourselves and our more powerful groups). Rather than viewing the process of the more powerful imposing their standards on the less powerful, of exercising their power to define what is reality, both the more and less powerful can misrecognize the process as legitimate. This is what Bourdieu referred to as "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 66) As a result, we can unintentionally reproduce relations of domination generating disrespect and resentment. This reinforces the status quo, keeping in place unjust relations between groups.

In empowerment encounters, when we do not recognize that our norms are acquired, biased toward ourselves, and our cultural groups, we risk the following problems: distorting our own and the less powerful's strengths and weaknesses, ethnocentrism, and paternalism. As I mentioned in my concerns, underestimating my privilege (embodied in my internal grid of biased norms), I can distort my own strengths and weaknesses and those of the less powerful[32] in two ways. First, underestimating my

[32]Describing less powerful using incorrect or false categories leads us to see a distorted view of ourselves (Miller, 1986/1976, p. xix).

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privilege, I can inflate my capacities,[33] underestimate how tough it is for others (logistics, poor treatment), and underestimate how resourceful they are. Second, my privilege can get in the way of assessing my less powerful colleagues' behavior. I may assess the less powerful's differences as less-than, deficiencies (Cross et al., 1994) and deviations from "the" standard (stated as universal but biased toward my more powerful group) rather than assessing potential opportunities to be empowered by their differences.

Not recognizing my embodied privilege in my way of being can lead to an ethnocentric stance where all other cultural practices are assessed using my White, middle-class, American standards. As an American sitting in my comfortable office it is easy for me to have blindspots about the logistical dilemmas and daily prejudice faced by colleagues working at the front lines in urban and rural sites. In each area where I am advantaged in my umbilical cord of privilege, I may use my group or culture's standards in assessing my colleagues' different actions, situation and support. As a result I may misrecognize or not recognize at all (to use Bourdieu's terms (Calhoun, 1995, p. 145)), my colleagues' different strengths, their precarious situation and their contributions.[34] This not only reduces effectiveness, it is also profoundly disrespectful.

bell hooks' critique of the women's movement mentioned earlier demonstrates the danger of unintentional paternalism. She observed that White, middle-class, heterosexual

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[33]Where once the Englishman said, "We are the men who navigate the ocean, and have the commerce of the world; to whom the East Indies belong and their riches; who have a parliament, juries, etc." (Hegel, 1956, p. 74)., today American men and women can appropriate to themselves all the privileges that go with global hegemony: US domination of global culture, the multilateral, and global politics, transnationals that run globalization, advanced technology, democracy, entertainment, everything can be experienced as belonging to the American who holds his or her shiny blue passport--even 1st generation Americans comparing themselves to immigrants.

[34] The less powerful have historically been constructed as incapable, weak, too emotional, not disciplined, not rational, not logical, too spontaneous, etc. Larrain, J. (1994). Ideology & cultural identity. Modernity and the Third World presence. Cambridge: Polity Press, Blackwell Publishers. Miller, J. B. (1976). Toward a new psychology of women. Boston: Beacon Press.

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women imbued "woman" with their norms that they viewed as universal norms for women in the movement. The women, despite their intentions, too often made insensitive remarks, were unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge their racist, classist, and heterosexist day-to-day behavior (what they did and would not do), distorted strengths and weaknesses, and took an ethnocentric and paternalistic approach without recognizing their privilege and power to reproduce their own standards.

We need to take this danger seriously. As Craig Calhoun noted, "Our embodied and cognitive senses of identity and of "how things should be done" not only enable us to feel at home in certain settings, they encourage us to see deeply different habituses as disturbing and problematic" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 294).

Why is it so Difficult to Change Our Ways Of Being that are Disrespectful And Ineffective?

Why is it so difficult to change aspects of our way of being that are disrespectful and ineffective? I believe there are two major obstacles. First, it is very difficult to change our ways of being that embody privilege when our privilege is often invisible and misrecognized as described above. A second obstacle to changing our way of being is that we are often uncomfortable or unwilling to acknowledge that we are privileged—even if others bring it to our attention. Privilege is often invisible to us, yet in NEON to the less powerful, as described above.

Just making our different dimensions of privilege visible can be tough. For some, there is tremendous resistance. As I explained earlier, several colleagues in a Fielding Institute doctoral seminar titled "Structural Inequalities" responded to my essay on the

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umbilical cord of privilege by saying it did not apply to them. They responded they were only disprivileged (in the area of gender) and denied any privilege.

Yet it is *much* more difficult to make visible our ways of being (how we think, feel, and interact) that are disrespectful and ineffective. In fact, I believe it is so difficult that we often need a tape recorder, videocamera, or consistent feedback to make these visible. ***If we do not see our privilege in different dimensions, how can we see privilege embodied in our ways of being?*** *The tendency is to misrecognize both privilege and habitus.*

Bourdieu and other reproduction and structuration theorists have argued that making our habitus visible is nearly impossible. Bourdieu interpreted habitus as mostly beyond our consciousness, because we absorbed our privilege unconsciously, and we are now disposed to think, feel, and interact based on this invisible privilege.

While I agree with Bourdieu, in fact I *strongly* agree, that it is extremely difficult to make these often unconscious ways of being visible, I do not believe it is impossible. Again, the value of Bourdieu and the other theorists in the reproduction and structuration literatures is that they really hammer in how challenging this process is, and how we often deceive ourselves to better deceive others to reproduce the status quo and our privilege (this literature will be addressed at length in chapter 7, "Power").

Bourdieu's critical contribution is to remind us that despite our conscious intentions, we bring the same bodies, the same habitus, to the encounter that existed before those intentions. As Calhoun describes it, revolutionary actions are "still crucially dependent on the same habitus that hitherto organized reproduction. In other words, revolution does not mark a break with the habitus, but is based on it, even though it breaks the pattern of stable reproduction" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 146).

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Because it is so difficult to see our ways of being that embody our privilege, it is no wonder that there are some male revolutionaries who misrecognize their sexist behavior and some white women misrecognize their racist, classist, and heterosexist behavior. It is often invisible to them but in NEON to others. Despite our conscious intentions to work toward a more just world, toward more just relations between groups, toward more respectful and effective empowerment encounters, we also bring our bodies to the encounters. Our embodied privilege in our ways of being, our habitus, is often invisible because we absorbed much of our pre-linguistic behavior unconsciously and it is now ingrained. We can focus on our own pain, while misrecognizing our privilege (reinforced by ideologies). We are disposed to say and do things, and not say and do things—especially our unintentional and insensitive comments and actions. Finally, we can misrecognize our standards as universal norms, classify experience and make judgments based on those norms, and misrecognize different ways of being of our less powerful colleagues as wrong or less than.

A second reason it is so difficult to change our way of being that has been foreshadowed throughout the thesis is that we are often uncomfortable acknowledging our privilege. We tend not to see our umbilical cord of privilege, yet when others point it out to us or we become aware of it ourselves, why do we often clutch inside?

Admitting to our position of privilege is difficult for several reasons. First, we have to give up the "myth of meritocracy" (Cross et al., 1994; Katz, 1994), the illusion of the purely interpersonal empowerment encounter and the inflationary assessment of our strengths. Second, dealing with the historical origins of privilege and oppression is often uncomfortable and painful (Alderfer, 1994, p. 217; Locke, 1992, p. 7). Third we are often

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uncomfortable because if we acknowledge our privilege, we have to give up the moral high ground of being a victim.

A fourth reason that some practitioners are uncomfortable acknowledging their privilege may be due to their commitment to an egalitarian organization and "flat" structure. We may have to admit that we are not all equal, that we have more power, status, and resulting privilege. We may have to admit that unintentionally, we have been dominating our less powerful colleagues in our everyday practice.[35] The possibility that we could be dominating our colleagues can be horrifying to some in social change organizations and seen as impossible given our intentions. And fifth, uncomfortable feelings also arise from fear—fear of losing the status, power, and privilege the social structure makes possible. One way to deal with this fear is through silence and avoidance. Another, noted by bell hooks, is in side-stepping the political awareness work involved in empowerment beginning with an "evaluation of one's social status, values, political beliefs, etc." (hooks, 1984, p.46).

Conclusion

In summary, without paying attention to our umbilical cord of privilege, we pay the price for the distortions. The point, however, is not to cut the umbilical cord, or to transcend it, but to increase our awareness of our privilege, acknowledge where we are advantaged, and take action—especially changing disrespectful and ineffective practices. The potential danger in exploring how privilege can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being is getting stuck in navel gazing, or rather umbilical cord

[35] A point emphasized by Aaron Cicourel. in his analysis of habitus (Calhoun, LiPuma & Postone, 1993, p. 102).

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gazing—a danger noted by some scholars and practitioners of the new whiteness studies.[36] Moving beyond umbilical cord gazing to a two-way empowerment way of being is where we now turn.

How Can Interested Practitioners Move Toward Embodying a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being?

How can those of us in the more powerful positions who are interested embody a two-way empowerment way of being? In this section, I again have drawn on my experience and theoretical work to add to the exploration. This is by no means an exhaustive examination of personal transformation. Many more literatures would need to be addressed (especially in the psychological literatures). Instead, these are some preliminary ideas.

As I described above, our ways of being that are disrespectful and ineffective are very difficult to see, let alone change. They are often ingrained and feel natural. These subtle forms of thinking, feeling, and interacting are powerful because they go unnoticed, and yet they can have a tremendous impact.

While I agree with Bourdieu that it is difficult to see and change our ways of being, our habitus, I believe there are possibilities for change when we are open to being changed.

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[36]Studies of privilege are an important first step in increasing awareness. There are many overlaps with whiteness studies, however, when it comes to privilege. Peggy McIntosh at Wellesly College Stone Center for the Study of Psychology of Women kicked a lot of this off with her article on "Unpacking her backpack of privilege" (McIntosh, 1992). She said this list was very difficult to put together, because she's been conditioned to not notice her privilege. It has been used by many academics who feel like she articulated something they have always known. All agree that the key is recognizing how difficult it is to recognize privilege, as one professor at Amherst teaching a class based on McIntosh's work described, it's like having "the wind at your back." There is now also a Center for the Study of White Culture in New Jersey that is a multi-racial organization studying the effects of White culture.

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As Calhoun noted, Bourdieu's interpretation of habitus is strong on reproduction but weak on transformation[37] (Calhoun, 1995, p. 142). Bourdieu painted a bleak picture of making the habitus visible, let alone transforming our ways of being. Therefore, habitus is useful for the second question of what gets in the way of two-way empowerment, but offers little to learn how we can embody a two-way empowerment way of being.

Ideas for Deconstructing and Reconstructing Our Ways of Being that are Disrespectful and Ineffective

I believe there are four ideas worth exploring. These ideas come from my experience as a practitioner, different ideas from the literature, and my experience of deconstructing and reconstructing myself after learning I was a father's daughter.

Increase Awareness of What We Bring to the Encounter: Interpersonal Styles, Unique History, and Privilege

One idea is to work on increasing our awareness of what we bring to the encounter that can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being: our different interpersonal styles, unique histories, and umbilical cords of privilege. This could take place individually or in a group training seminar. Individuals can get to know their own and others' styles, they can reflect on their own unique histories (triggers and limitations) and the different dimensions of their umbilical cord of privilege.

In my doctoral seminar where I shared my essay on the umbilical cord of privilege, as I mentioned above, some of my colleagues focused on their own areas of disprivilege while ignoring their privilege. Yet others were able to increase their awareness of where

[37] Calhoun further noted that this is where Bourdieu shows his structuralist roots.

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they were privileged. One nurse who had written her essay on being disprivileged as a nurse and a woman focused on the privileges of male doctors and the structural inequalities she faced. After reading my essay, she said she was taken aback. She had never thought about her own privileges before as a White, middle-class woman. This new awareness enabled her to better understand the complaints of the nurses of Color (many from the Caribbean) who reported to her and motivated her to begin working with them on these issues.

Change Our Disrespectful and Ineffective Ways Of Being (Thinking, Feeling, Interacting)

A second idea is to increase our awareness of ourselves through training (seeing our privilege), talking with our less powerful colleagues, and getting feedback about our disrespectful and ineffective behavior. Because it is so difficult to see our privilege and associated behavior, getting feedback is crucial. Tape recordings, especially video recordings, can be powerful (when possible).

As I mentioned above, increasing our awareness, although difficult for some, is not nearly as difficult as taking the next and most important step: changing our way of being that is disrespectful and ineffective. To do so, we need to be motivated. We need to have an openness to being changed, to being empowered. We need to be willing to not only see our disrespectful and ineffective actions, but also to deconstruct and reconstruct ourselves. Deconstruct here means to "call into question" some of our assumptions and ways of being in the world, not negate them. It means to open our ways of being to examination so that we can make changes by reconstructing ourselves[38] (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 82).

[38] Kamala Visweswaran referred to Judith Butler's description of deconstruction. "To deconstruct is not to negate or dismiss but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that has previously not been authorized."

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By getting feedback.

There are several different ways this deconstruction and reconstruction of our ways of being can get started. One way is by getting feedback. Because our ways of being (both personal and social, conscious and unconscious, mind and body) that are disrespectful and ineffective are so difficult for us to see, it is crucial to get feedback. Colleagues (both the more and less powerful) can give us feedback. Yet, when possible, tape recordings and video recordings can be powerful ways to help us see things that are both invisible to us and things that we are uncomfortable acknowledging.

Through a conscious process.

This deconstruction process can also be initiated through a conscious process. For example, practitioners in empowerment encounters who become bothered that their practices contradict their intentions can begin to deconstruct themselves.

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Through tension in our ways of being due to contradictory umbilical cords of privilege.

Another way this deconstruction process can be initiated is by our contradictory umbilical cords of privilege. Our complex habitus (being both disprivileged and privileged) may push us in this direction. If we are treated poorly in some areas, we have firsthand knowledge of that experience, and we may be passionate about not wanting to repeat those disrespectful and ineffective patterns in areas where we are privileged.

I agree with Calhoun's take on Bourdieu's habitus here:

> But though habitus is not easily changed, it is not perfectly fixed either. It is adjusted in the course of adapting to new situations and engaging in new practical tasks. Moreover, there is no reason to think of any habitus as internally self-consistent, as though it were a perfectly logical, structuralist system. Our embodied practices, like those mediated more by discursive consciousness, change in part because they are *rent by internal tensions and we try to work those out* [italics added]. (Calhoun, 1995, p. 294)

Questions for the deconstruction process.

In this deconstruction process, interested practitioners may ask the following questions. What assumptions do I make about the right way to be and to do things? What do I see as universal standards? What do I devalue and what do I value? What do I consider fake ways of being for myself based on my group's standards? What privileges do I have that might trigger or have triggered resentment in others? What are others up against that I as a member of a group am not (logistics, day-to-day poor treatment)? What have I unintentionally said/done or not said/done? Are there biases in my group's standards and assumptions? Have I unintentionally viewed differences as "less than"? Have I missed opportunities to be empowered because I distorted strengths and weaknesses? Have I fallen into paternalism, helping prison, unintentionally? These are a

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start; however, it is difficult to make these assessments alone. Again, feedback here is crucial.

Trying out new behaviors even when they feel uncomfortable.

After getting clearer on the illusions and behavior that we want to change, we can reconstruct ourselves. We can revalue those different ways of being that we previously unintentionally devalued because of our privilege, or in the case of father's daughters, because of our reaction and desired status and privilege (for those of us who bought into patriarchy unconsciously). This involves practicing concrete behaviors, the ways we think, feel, and interact (what we say and do and don't say and do), that go against the grain, against our automatic pilot. These may feel uncomfortable, fake, and frightening, and we may reduce our privileged status as a result.

Often, this means that we have to work against everything that feels natural and instinctive. Unlike a consciously acquired habit, this unconsciously absorbed way of being is so deep that it is our way of being in the world, and it often allows us to function.

As a White, middle-class woman, I can relate to the women bell hooks described and her critique. As a recovering father's daughter, I can also relate to the male revolutionary leaders that de Montis Solis documented, and to the male social justice activists who colleagues complained did not prepare food or clean up after meetings. (I know that I have arrived late and left early for meetings especially when food was served.) Until I became aware of being a father's daughter and began the deconstruction and reconstruction process, I resisted learning how to cook and I felt uncomfortable washing clothes. Both engendered tremendous feelings of dread I could not explain. In addition, I did not have the skills or the physical knowledge of how to do either: how to cut

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vegetables, how to scrub clothes in a wash basin. My colleagues in Latin America were stunned by my lack of these critical skills.

My deconstruction and reconstruction process as a father's daughter took place when I found myself unable to comfort others. My way of being or habitus began to really bother me. Even as I sat next to people in pain, I did not know what to do. I wanted to reach out and comfort them, but I was afraid to because it felt fake—and I did not want to be fake. But after learning about being a father's daughter, I knew that all my life I had unconsciously devalued comforting as something feminine. At a deep level, I feared that comforting would reduce my power as an independent, outwardly able person. Being a father's daughter reflected my own unique biography and historical context.

Once I saw that being independent and being in relationships were not either/or polarities, but both/and aspects of being (deconstruction), I decided to try to comfort intentionally (reconstruction). Even though it felt fake and uncomfortable, I reached my arm out as it shook to comfort others. This was difficult. But, after a few times, like other skills, it became more natural.

In my own example, I had to become aware of my own unique biography, my historical context, and a form of male privilege that I unconsciously embodied. While this is very difficult, I believe with motivation, awareness and the deconstructing and reconstructing of our ways of being through practicing concrete behaviors, we can change aspects of our way of being. I do not believe we will ever reach a perfect alignment of intentions to practices. There are too many things that can get in the way. But I do believe we can improve our respectfulness and effectiveness in this continual process.

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What is the Process for Empowerment Practitioners?

Even though my own experience as a father's daughter was powerful, I needed to know about practitioners in empowerment encounters. Was there a similar process taking place? How different is this process when it takes place between the more and less powerful?

Further, I had just scratched the surface with ideas, experience, some theory, and some hypothesizing. I needed to learn how practitioners keep from reproducing disrespectful and ineffective practices; how practitioners break these cycles of reproduction once they are triggered; where are the specific points in the cycles of reproduction where practitioners can resist reproduction and transform ways of being; and what the specific behaviors are in transformation?

Two-Way Empowerment in the Literature

Many scholars and practitioners have written about the need of the more powerful to be empowered by the less powerful. For example, Matthew Fox's passionate argument that the first world also needs to be empowered by the third world (Fox, 1991) in several areas where we are struggling (teen suicide, consumerism, addiction, dominating others, etc.) resonated deeply with my experience and helped to inspire this project.

Others include the following:

- Surrey's "mutual empowerment" in which mothers can also be empowered psychologically by their daughters (Surrey, 1991);
- Robert Chambers' "reversals in learning" in which development workers learn from farmers (Chambers, 1983);

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- bell hooks' belief that middle-class women can look to working-class women as role models once we recognize that strength is not equal to economic power (hooks, 1984, p. 87);
- Ram Daas's "compassion in action" philosophy that encourages practitioners to move out of "helping prison" (Daas & Bush, 1992);
- Judith Newton and Judith Stacey's example of "studying up" with men who are cultural critics and trying to find a place in feminism by adopting "traitorous identities" that challenge their own privilege but help to build a nonsexist and nonracist society (Behar & Gordon, 1995, p. 21);
- Robert Coles' (1997) work asserting that parents can learn moral intelligence from their children;
- Behar and Gordon's belief that European women can learn from non-European women (Behar, 1995).

One of the most direct statements comes from Audre Lorde in an open letter to Mary Daly: "Have you read my work, and the work of other Black women, for what it could give you? Or did you hunt through only to find words that would legitimize your chapter on African genital mutilation?" (Behar & Gordon, 1995, p. 7).

"Talking About" Two-Way Empowerment Versus "Being In" the Encounters Themselves: The Need to Find Two-Way Empowerment in Day-to-Day Practice

The literature briefly outlined above, however, tends not to address why it is so difficult to carry out two-way empowerment. It is easy to talk about mutual respect, about being open to being empowered, to being changed, but it can get very messy in face-to-face

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encounters. For instance, in moral development theory, from Kohlberg to Gilligan, we are told how people should behave. But there is a large gap between moral theories and what happens when two bodies are in each other's presence.

In addition to what we "should" do, it is crucial to find out what we are up against. There is a lot that is ingrained in our bodies that can get in the way of two-way empowerment, as outlined above. I appreciate studies that pay attention to social context, our desire for status, and the intertwining of deception.

How we act varies depending upon the social context—the power of the situation, social approval, our social roles (Aronson, 1992/1972), power, status, and privilege. Fear of social disapproval and obedience to authority (as demonstrated in Stanley Milgram's famous electrical shock experiments [Milgram, 1965][39]) can affect many of us to behave in ways that go against our beliefs and intentions. As noted above, Goffman described how well-intentioned helping professionals (in his case, professionals working in an asylum) often treated people disrespectfully and sometimes cruelly (Goffman, 1959a).

I needed to find practitioners who exemplified a two-way empowerment way of being in their day-to-day practice. The examples in the literature cited above talked about what we "should" do in terms of being empowered by the less powerful. I wanted to learn how this actually took place.

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[39]Individuals recruited from newspaper ads were asked to participate in "an experiment in learning." The participants were seated in front of a machine that they believed administered high levels of shocks to the "learner." Each time the learner was incorrect, they were to crank the lever and administer a shock. Even as the learner played the part and shrieked in agony, the participant continued to give shocks. When the participant asked if he could stop giving shocks, he was only told "the experiment requires you continue." There were no threats of retribution. Psychiatrists had predicted that participants would not continue to the end but nearly two-thirds administered the full shock treatment. Milgram's results are persuasive reminders of the tendency to obey authority despite our intentions.

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To design this type of a study, however, I realized that I needed to find a methodology and methods that grappled with the interconnection of the intercultural and the interpersonal. Viewing empowerment encounters only structurally or only interpersonally is problematic in both theory and practice. For example, focusing only on the structural, empowerment encounters may work toward producing radical change but at the expense of the people in the organization and the coalitions that need to be built. Some radicals in social justice organizations and some structural sociological and anthropological theorists do not see the need to address the interpersonal.

On the other hand, focusing only on the interpersonal generates all the blindspots and problems noted in my concerns: being blind to inequalities in areas where we are not privileged, and to distortions in strengths and weaknesses, and to feedback. Some of the liberal social service professionals and White feminists, as well as some psychological, social psychological, and systems theories fall into this trap.

In part two, "Exploring Two-Way Empowerment at a Girls Middle School in New York City," I describe how I found a methodology and methods to work at the nexus of empowerment encounters foreground and background and how I designed the study. I also describe how I found the case study (the school) and practitioners (teachers and administrators) working toward a two-way empowerment way of being. I will describe ethnographically how the teachers, administrators, and students at this school helped me to explore two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters.

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PART II

CASE STUDY: EXPLORING TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT AT A GIRLS MIDDLE SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY

To learn how interested practitioners can work toward embodying a two-way empowerment way of being, I needed to find practitioner examples in day-to-day practice. In this second part of the thesis, I describe in chapter 4 how I chose an intensive research design and case study methodology, selected a case (St. Teresa's—an innovative girls middle school in an outer borough of New York City), designed a research project (that changed thanks to the participants), and selected methods for this task.

In chapter 5, I describe ethnographically what took place during the intensive research period among the participants, and among the participants and myself. I also describe what took place in the two seminars that bookended the research period. Then, I analyze *why the case is significant: Maria's openness to critical feedback-up.* I continue the case analysis by asking the three questions initially addressed in chapter 3. First, what is a two-way empowerment way of being? Second, why is a two-way empowerment way of being difficult? What can get in the way? And third, how can interested practitioners embody a two-way empowerment way of being? In the final section, I discuss the case-driven need for more theoretical work.

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN, THE CASE, AND METHODS

To learn more about a two-way empowerment way of being, I needed a research design, two-way empowerment practitioners, and the most appropriate methods. In the next six sections, I will address each of these issues. First, I will discuss the challenge of finding two-way empowerment in day-to-day practice and my initial research goals that limited me to exploring only one question: What is two-way empowerment? In the second section, I review how I chose my methodology: an intensive research design and case study at the sociocultural mediation level. The case itself is the third section: how I selected St. Teresa's, how I was brought in, our research exchange; the historical and cultural context, and a brief sketch of the school, the students, the teachers, and administrators.

In the fourth section, I describe how Maria, the teacher who brought me in, and the principal pushed me to expand my research goals (adding the second question of what gets in the way of two-way empowerment including the umbilical cord of privilege and beyond). I then turn to the specific methods I used for the intensive research phase in the fifth section. Finally, in the sixth section, I describe the importance of my own way of being as a researcher. I attempted to "walk my talk" and be open to being empowered by the participants in a "case-within-a-case."

The Challenge: To Find Two-Way Empowerment in Practice

My challenge in this inquiry was to find two-way empowerment in day-to-day practice. I set out to find examples of practitioners who recognized and worked with the issues of the umbilical cord of privilege, interpersonal style, and unique biography, and

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who were open to being empowered themselves—for example, where Whites were being empowered by people of Color, first world by third world, middle-class by working-class/poor, men by women, straight by gay and lesbian, able-bodied by disabled, teachers by students, social workers by clients, and development workers by community colleagues.

Yet as I began to formulate my initial research goals, I believed I needed to radically reduce my scope. I decided to just focus on one question: What is two-way empowerment? Specifically, I planned on learning what it looked like (body language, communication), what if felt like, and what was its significance. I sought to capture "moments" of two-way empowerment as interactional exemplars.

I envisioned these interactional exemplars as a resource for those of us interested in increasing respect and effectiveness in our practice. My idea was to turn the findings of several structuration and resistance studies (Fishman, 1990; Molotch & Boden, 1985; Scott, 1986; Willis, 1977) on their heads—that is, to see if the reproduction of power relations as described in the literature was not taking place in my selected case studies of exemplary two-way empowerment dyads. I planned to capture those moments on video and then use ethnomethodology and interaction analysis to learn about two-way empowerment in action.

Methodology: Intensive Research Design and Case Study at the Sociocultural Mediation Level

To be able to capture these two-way empowerment moments in the encounters, I needed a methodology that enabled me to work right at the nexus of the interpersonal and

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the intercultural—where the umbilical cord of privilege affects day-to-day practice Within critical theory, at the sociocultural analysis of mediations level, "mediational analysis...bridges the social psychological analysis of the individual actors and the macro structural analysis of social systems...best exemplified in Bourdieu's concept of habitus" (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 218). This level of analysis can involve an analysis of the actors and an analysis of mediations (the sites of social agency and institutional reproduction). In my inquiry, I include both the participants and the empowerment encounter itself. From this vantage point, researchers attempt to identify the crucial points where domination is reproduced, resisted, or transformed (p. 217). Researchers working at this level note that the transformational moments are rare, yet the literature provides examples of attempts to make visible the dialectic of domination and resistance (p. 270).

Rather than compare a large number of cases, I needed to focus on only a few cases in an attempt to grasp the complexity and the different dimensions I was interested in. Therefore, I chose an intensive research design and case study methodology (p. 250). It is important to distinguish this approach from traditional ethnographic work. Intensive research design and case study have a stronger explanatory (rather than an interpretive) focus. Therefore, my participant-observation needed to be thorough: however, it did not depend on the type of detailed participant-observations in typical ethnography (p. 251).

With this rough sketch of a research design, I began networking in New York City to get recommendations for potential two-way empowerment practitioners. To explain my inquiry to potential participants, I brought in Fishman's study, "Interaction: The Work Women Do" (1990). As I mentioned earlier, her article demonstrated how easy it is to reproduce dominant practices in the areas where we are privileged despite our intentions—in her case, men continued to reproduce dominant practices in their conversational talk.

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This example made it easier to explain how easy it is to contradict our intentions in our practice. It also helped to explain my goals for doing the research: so that others who are struggling can have examples to help them bring their behavior more in-line with their intentions to be effective and respectful.

I also expressed my own desire as a researcher to try and work and learn together in a mutually respectful way. I stressed that talking about two-way empowerment is easy, putting it into practice can be tough. I stated up front that despite my intentions to be mutually respectful, I believe that as a White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied woman, I say and do things that I am unaware of that are disrespectful to people of Color, working-class/poor, gay and lesbian, disabled and women (as a recovering father's daughter, I continue to struggle here).

The Case: An Innovative Girls Middle School in New York City—Selecting St. Teresa's

After meeting with several recommended practitioners and their organizations, I proposed working together with St. Teresa's, an innovative girls' middle school located in an outer borough of New York City. I selected St. Teresa's not because of their randomness in a sample, but because of their theoretical significance. (Silverman, 1985, pp. 113-114). St. Teresa's brings together predominantly White, middle-class faculty and a Latina, working-class student body. The school's mission is to empower students to bring about a more just society by strengthening good habits in students' hearts, minds, and approach to work. I saw the potential for observing two-way empowerment in day-to-day

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practice between teachers and students, Whites and Latinas, and middle-class and working-class/poor.

This case, a postcolonial encounter in the United States, also represented an opportunity for me to do what feminist, postcolonial ethnographer Kamala Visweswaran called "homework" (Visweswaran, 1994, pp. 102,113), rather than more fieldwork in Latina America and the Caribbean. In doing "homework," I recognized that as a White, middle-class American researcher who, in part, was privileged from years of colonizing, was working with others in a similar situation (the White, middle-class teachers and administrators), and still others from the countries or parts of the U.S. that were and continue to be colonized and marginalized in the global economy, politics, and cultural saturation (Maria, a teacher, and the students).

How Maria Brought Me In and Her Critical Positioning at the School

I was brought in to St. Teresa's by Maria Garcia, the only Latina teacher with a working-class background on the faculty. I met Maria at the New School for Social Research in January 1997. We were both taking a class on "Feminism, Post-colonialism and Literary Criticism." Maria was a 23-year-old gender studies graduate student at the New School in addition to teaching at St. Teresa's. When I told Maria about my research, she became enthusiastic. She discussed how as a teacher she learns from her students. She then explained that she tried to get this across to her colleagues at the school—about how much the kids have to offer them—but she said it was difficult.

As the only Latina with a working-class background on the faculty, Maria found herself critically positioned in-between her predominantly White, middle-class colleagues and the Latina, working-class students. Because of her positioning and her interest in my

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research, I gave Maria a copy of my early essay on "The Umbilical Cord of Privilege." After reading it, she asked if she could share the essay with her faculty who she felt were not aware of many of the issues of privilege in working with Latina working-class girls.

Through our discussions, we discovered we both had interests in working together. Maria was interested in having me facilitate seminars to explore issues of privilege with her colleagues, and I was interested in learning more about how Maria worked day-to-day in the classroom. Maria suggested I propose the idea of a research exchange to the principal. Maria also mentioned that I, as a White woman like most of the faculty, might be viewed as a less threatening facilitator to discuss differences at the school.

In February 1997, I sent a letter to the principal (see Appendix 1) proposing a research exchange: I was interested in learning how Maria exemplified two-way empowerment in her day-to-day practice, and I was willing to facilitate seminars that the school viewed as valuable in exchange for the research opportunity. I then met with the principal in person. We had a long and interesting discussion followed up by several phone conversations to address next steps.

At the school, I stressed that I was both studying two-way empowerment and trying to live it in my practice as a researcher. With the principal, Maria, and other participants, I encouraged them to let me know when I was being disrespectful. I was grateful that they took me up on it right away. When we discussed my presenting the research exchange idea to the faculty, the principal let me know that she thought it was disrespectful to only look at Maria's class: "Why does everything have to happen in Maria's class?" She was concerned that the other teachers would be disempowered if they learned they were not considered two-way practitioners. She emphasized that two-way empowerment "can happen and does happen in other classes. All the faculty need to be

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talking about issues of two-way empowerment." Further, she pushed me to see Maria in context. "Maria is part of a faculty and her seventh graders are part of a student body. What does it matter if she's two-way in class and not in faculty meetings?"

The principal's feedback, expressed with emotion, hinted at a few of the tensions at the school that the participants describe in the next chapter. For the research design, I had been concerned about taking up the participants' time and had not expected this opportunity to work with other teachers. As a result, at the faculty meeting where I proposed the research exchange, I also asked if two others wanted to participate in the intensive, microinteraction classroom study (see presentation handouts in Appendix 2). Other teachers were interested and wanted to participate when possible, but they were concerned about time and did not feel comfortable committing to the same level as Maria. Later in the research, they did participate in interviews and let me sit in on a few classes.

Our Collaborative Working and Learning Agreement: A Research Exchange

Working with Maria and the principal, in April 1997, I created a draft of a "Collaborative Working and Learning Agreement" for the next 3 to 5 months. This was updated several weeks later (see Appendix 3), and continued to be updated throughout the research period. This agreement was based on an exchange of resources given each of our needs and what we have to offer each other: In exchange for the research opportunity, I agreed to facilitate two seminars to address differences at the school. This exchange was important for me as a researcher. After watching researchers in Latin America take valuable time and resources away from groups that had neither to spare, I wanted to make sure I gave something in return that was of value to the research participants.

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In the agreement, the school offered the following research opportunities. First, access for participant-observation: to attend Maria's seventh grade reading class, recess, and an assembly. Maria believed the best exchanges between herself and the seventh graders took place in her reading class, and we thought we might be able to capture some two-way empowerment moments there. The principal later decided against my attending a faculty meeting. She did not want the faculty to be holding back because of my participant-observation. The second research opportunity included interviews with interested teachers, the administration, and Maria's seventh grade homeroom.

During this initial engagement phase, I described my research goal (to explore moments of two-way empowerment), my research questions (what does it look like, feel like, and does it make a difference), and some ideas of how I might capture two-way empowerment moments using different methods (participant-observation, videotaping and photography, interviews, focus groups, etc.). We worked intensively together during late April, May, and especially in June of 1997.

The two seminars I facilitated in exchange for the research opportunities bookended the intensive research period of April 28 through June 16, 1997. These were based on the school's needs and what I had to offer. The first seminar titled "Addressing Differences Respectfully through Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills" took place on May 5, 1997 after only a few days of participant-observation in the school. The second seminar, "Working Effectively and Respectfully with Differences in Styles and Relational Power," took place on August 27, 1997 after the intensive research period and summer break. The content of and responses to these seminars will be presented in the next chapter with the ethnography.

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This form of engagement, a research exchange, was designed so that I could work collaboratively with the school while not working for them. Navigating this balance of critical distance and engagement was difficult. Yet I was able to maintain the tension, and it enabled me to give the faculty feedback and some of the findings from the research in the seminars. This critical approach differs from participatory action research where the researcher is involved in the practical decisions themselves (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 299).

St. Teresa's Empowerment Encounter Situated Historically, Culturally

The intercultural empowerment encounter at St. Teresa's took place in 1997, at the end of the 20th century as centralization of global capital and power and the globalization of American culture were in high speed (Arrighi, 1994). With Latin American and Caribbean economies struggling, even collapsing under the weight of debt servicing, and governments slashing social services to meet World Bank structural adjustment programs and the International Monetary Fund's austerity plan requirements, families from Latin America and the Caribbean go to where the jobs are and where there are better services for their children. In the United States, New York City is a major destination, especially for Dominicans and Puerto Ricans.

At the school, the empowerment encounter brings together vastly different cultural histories and histories of oppression. In the case of the Dominican Republic, U.S. marines were once the violent aggressor, sent in to put down a popular movement and keep a dictator's successor in place. As immigrants, the girls living in New York City have had experience with various types of prejudice and poor treatment. Some have had firsthand experiences with domestic violence and drugs in their buildings. On television, and in

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magazines, their cultural norms are often devalued in favor of Anglo norms. Many of the girls also live a life in flux: At anytime they may return to their countries, for some to a country they have never been to before, depending upon the job market and the parents or guardians situation.

The majority of the faculty and staff, however, came from middle and upper middle-class backgrounds. They were impressed by the girls' values: of family, expressing themselves openly, and well-being and balance in work and home life when possible. Many of the girls' Latina cultures focused on family, interdependence, group-centrality, the here-and-now, the concrete, and free expression of emotions (Locke, 1992, p. 139) different from the individualism of the U.S. The school recognized that bringing in Spanish at rituals and in the classroom was critical to affirm their culture to both the students and the families. The bond that connected the diverse cultures of the faculty and the students was Catholicism.

St. Teresa's: The School, the Students, and the Teachers

The Catholic Church in Latin America and the Caribbean has both admirers and critics.[40] In New York City, St. Teresa's was founded to be innovative and respectful. In their mission statement and promotional materials, St. Teresa's founders describe the girls' situation as severely lacking in their neighborhood located in an outer borough of New York City. The school aims to empower girls to break out of poverty's vicious cycle through education and increased self-esteem to create a more just world.

[40]The Catholic Church has a long history in Latin America and the Caribbean and will not be reviewed here. What is important for this inquiry is that the history includes both feelings of connection to the Church through faith communities, for some the influence of Liberation Theology, and for others, experience with paternalism (readers interested in a few of the critiques of this paternalism in Latin America and the Caribbean can review three resources: (Locke, 1992, p. 139), (Mirrande, pp. 137-8) and, from a postcolonial perspective, Franz Fanon (1967, p. 42).

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St. Teresa's is, in part, a response to their review of studies documenting a drop in girls' self-esteem once they reach adolescence. The school's promotional materials and mission describe how the girls are supported in a safe and stimulating learning environment; how mutual respect and trust between teachers and students, ensures learning, achievement, and safety. This environment, the school believes, gives students hope and enables the girls to become their best selves. The dream of the founders is for the students to return to teach at St. Teresa's.

St. Teresa's includes grades six to eight. Each grade has roughly 15 students with a total student body of about 45. Classes are small, between 7 and 15 students, so girls get plenty of individual attention. The students are from different countries, but the majority are from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Students take classes in reading, math, English, social studies, religion, writing, and science. In addition, arts, music, and drama help build adolescent girls' confidence and their own voice. To strengthen the girls' voices, the school brings in women and Latinos in history, and focuses on women and Latinos in their service projects (day care, elderly). As part of developing their voice, St. Teresa's emphasizes that the school encourages students to voice their constructive criticism.

How the Students Got There

I asked the principal how the school selects the students. She explained that because they were a relatively new school, they were able to be innovative. The school looks for girls who are not at the top of the class, but for those who have the potential to flourish in a more nurturing environment. Recruiting began by word of mouth and quickly spread. There is currently a long waiting list. After an application process, those who are

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selected then attend an after school program. After getting to know each other, those students with the best fit to the school's environment are selected.

How the Teachers Got There

I asked Maria how she and the other teachers arrived at the school. She described seeing a brochure when she was at Notre Dame. The brochure advertised an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of adolescent girls who were living in a low-income community. This appealed directly to Maria's passion.

She then explained that the school recruits young teachers through the Church and universities. Teachers are hired as "volunteers" receiving room and board and a small stipend. Fresh out of school, the new teachers often have little or no experience, and learn by doing their first year. Maria explained that there is a high turnover of teachers: Some struggle and cannot manage the classroom; others come just for a short term experience, then go on to graduate school or other jobs; and others decide they are not happy at the school.

As mentioned above, Maria was unique among her colleagues. She was the only Latina teacher from a working-class background. This positioned her in-between the teachers and the students. Four teachers were White, middle and upper middle-class and the fifth was half Panamanian (raised in the U.S.) and middle-class. Two of the White teachers were men; the rest of the faculty were women. All of the teachers were recent graduates from prestigious universities. Together these six lived on the top floor along with several teachers who moved on to working in different parts of the city but remained living there. The school also contracts outside teachers for music, drama, and other special courses. At that time, an Anglo drama teacher was helping with a Shakespearean

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production, and an African American woman was teaching the girls how to play African drums. Maria emphasized that the girls *loved* this latter teacher.

There are also several nuns on the faculty: two are in their 40s and two are in their 60s. The nuns are also all White from mostly middle-class backgrounds; however, Sister Helen's Irish family also lived in tenements in New York City. These nuns were brought to the school because of their interest in initiating an innovative program or for their special expertise. The nuns, including the principal, did not live on the top floor. They lived in separate residences in different parts of town.

When I proposed my research exchange to the faculty, I asked why each person came to the school. Most of them, including the two men, explained that they were concerned about adolescent girls' development. Elizabeth wanted to support an all-girls' school because of her own positive experience. Nancy wanted to support what she described as "one of the good things the Catholic Church is doing." Sister Ruth, who had lived in Chile, was transferred to the school by her order because of her Spanish language ability. Karen had worked in Central America and was interested in working with marginalized communities in the U.S. In our meeting, I was struck by how young, upbeat, and idealistic most of the staff were, similar to Peace Corps volunteers.

Expanding Research Goals: From Two-Way Empowerment "Moments" to Two-Way Empowerment in Context

My initial research goal was to explore two-way empowerment moments by observing Maria and her students. But thanks to feedback from Maria, the principal, and my experiences in the intensive research work, about midway through the research period,

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I decided to expand my study. Focusing only on moments of two-way empowerment did not address the obstacles Maria believed she was facing in trying to carry out two-way empowerment practice. The principal also kept pushing me to see Maria within the school, as part of a system. She did not believe that capturing the interactions between Maria and her seventh graders alone would address two-way empowerment. She was right.

As I began the case, even in the initial conversations, I kept bumping up against issues of power, status, and privilege. Maria also kept trying to convey to me that two-way empowerment is not always welcome. She urged me to address some of the obstacles: Why it was so difficult to practice a two-way empowerment way of being; what was getting in the way? I also realized that my research questions (what does two-way look like, feel like, and is it significant?) were not enabling me to learn more about what was taking place in the hidden background of the empowerment encounters themselves.

As a result of this feedback and experience, I expanded the research goal to exploring two-way empowerment in context. I needed to not only learn about the concrete behaviors of a two-way empowerment way of being (the first question), I also needed to address what was getting in the way that was hidden in the background (the second question).

The school provided an excellent case study of individuals and an organization struggling with the troubling contradiction where our practices can contradict our intentions. The principal referred to this contradiction as "it"—that is, a staff of majority White, middle-class teachers who were deeply motivated and had intentions of being respectful and effective, who found themselves mystified at times when their practices contradicted their intentions.

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Specific Methods for the Intensive Research Phase

The methods I used during the intensive research period reflect both my initial and my expanded research goals. The five methods include: participant-observation, interviewing, a photography activity, James Scott's hidden transcript analysis, and an initial attempt at double-bind analysis.

Participant-Observation

During the intensive research period, I was a participant-observer in Maria's seventh grade reading class, several other classes, the school play, and rituals (assembly, last day of classes, and graduation). I also took a field trip with the seventh grade to get to know the neighborhood's history, "chilled" with the teachers on the top floor, "hung out" with participants on the fourth floor, and chatted with students during breaks, at recess and in the halls. I spent most of the time with Maria's seventh grade reading class of 7 girls. I also spent time with Maria's homeroom class of 15 girls. This included the 7 I knew from her reading class, and 8 others I worked with during two videotaped activities. (See Table 1 "Intensive Research and Case Study Activities: 4/28-6/16/97," on following page for a summary of activities and their frequencies.)

In my notes, I used the following notation system: ON=observational notes; TN=theoretical notes; MN=methodological notes; PN=personal notes; and CN=contextual notes. This system is an adapted version of one by Schatzman from his book *Fieldnotes* (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The original system has the ON, TN, and MN. I added the PN and CN. I needed to add these notations to reflect the feminist dimension of my inquiry and to make this system more open to whole self-knowledge. The PN is a reflection of my agreement with Kondo that the emotions, experiences, and body

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TABLE 1

Intensive Research and Case Study Activities: 4/28-6/16/97

	Number of Observations
Participant Observation Activity	
Maria's Seventh Grade Reading Class	12
Seventh Grade Photo Activity	1
Neighborhood Walking Tour	3
Hall Encounters	1
Fifth Floor "Chilling"	3
Fourth Floor "Hanging Out"	3
Leslie's Math Class	1
Karen's Social Studies Class	1
Dave's Last Class	1
Hall Chat	2
Recess Chat	2
Assembly	1
School Play	1
Last Day Rituals	1
Graduation Ceremony	1
Graduation Party	1
Interviews	
Faculty	
Maria	2
Dave	1
John	1
Karen	1
Leslie	1
Seventh Grade Homeroom	1
Principal	1
Photography Activity	
Seventh Grade Homeroom	1

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sensations are integral to the knowledge process and should not be tracked in a separate personal journal (Kondo, 1986). I did not add the CN until too late in this study. Unlike the writing of Charles Lemert (1993) and Ruth Behar Gordon (1995), where you can feel the swirling of historical times in the writing itself, this intensive case study does not come close to making the historical and cultural contexts so visible. Next time I will track CNs from the start.

After getting permission from the students' parents (see Appendix 8 for cover letter and permission slip), I also began to take photographs and to videotape classes .

Interviewing

A second method in the intensive research phase was interviewing. I hoped to learn about two-way empowerment taking place at the school as well as becoming familiar with the way individuals and the school interpreted empowerment. For the interviewing process, I tried to glean insights from Charles Briggs' *Learning How to Ask. A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (1986). First I tried to be aware of how my presence in the interview shapes the encounter. I also tried to be aware of the communicative norms at the school, especially of the students, in designing a flexible process. Another recommendation was to let the respondents guide the interview rather than trying to force my own process on them. And finally, when analyzing the interview, I tried to analyze the interview encounter itself for data (Briggs, 1986, pp. 90, 95, 97, 100, 102, 125).

Another challenge in interviewing was to view the students, teachers, and principal's "experience" as situated accounts rather than the "truth" or "authentic." This crucial point comes from many of the feminist postcolonialists and the post-structuralists.

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These scholars stress the need to see people's accounts in context (Silverman, 1985, 1993; Visweswaran, 1994).

In my interviews with interested teachers and the principal, I asked three questions: First, what does empowerment mean to you?; second, what does empowerment mean to the institution, in other words, what is the school empowering these girls for?; and third, can you think of examples when you have been empowered by the students as a teacher, as a White person, a middle-class person, an American, etc.? Maria's initial interviews, however, were not as structured. At that time, I had not formulated the questions, and our discussions centered around issues at the school, Maria's experience that influenced her approach to teaching, and Maria's ideas about working with differences. All of the interviews were taped and transcribed into fieldnotes. Some were also videotaped. During several interviews, when my batteries died, I had to rely on note taking. Therefore, the single quotes to be used in this thesis signify quotes that are not on tape but from fieldnotes.

I also interviewed Maria's seventh grade homeroom. Early in the research period, Maria recommended that I interview her homeroom while she was not there to get the students' perspective on how teachers at the school learn from students. All 15 girls participated in the one-hour session, and the students videotaped the majority of it themselves. After explaining two-way empowerment between teachers and students, I asked the students the three empowerment questions I asked the faculty worded in slightly different ways using different expressions the girls could relate to: First, what did they think the school was preparing them for?; second, what did they hope to be prepared for?; and third, were there times when they had helped a teacher learn something they did know, or supported a teacher? I also asked about the teachers they like and why they liked them.

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(The different questions asked and the responses of.this interview are featured and woven through the next chapter's stories.)

My goal was to learn more about two-way empowerment that was taking place at the school through some concrete examples. While the students did offer some instances of helping teachers with Spanish, the history of their countries, and cheering up some of their teachers, the buzz in the classroom and the energy level picked way up when they began talking about their goals and why they are different from the school's goals, and why it was so hard to teach the teachers (two-way empowerment). Within the group, some of the students were silenced more than others, and I tried to bring them in. I was surprised by their openness and what I perceived of as our "bonding." (After reading Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1986), I realized how inflated my perception really was.) After the interview, 10 of the 15 students signed up to participate in further research activities.

Photography Activity

A third method in the research process was a student photography activity. In the seventh grade homeroom interview and group discussion, many of the students indicated that they felt teachers were not aware of many aspects of their culture or the things they have to deal with day-to-day. As a way of bringing their life more into the school, I suggested an activity based on a book I had read called *Photographing the Self.* (Ziller, 1990). The 15 students in the homeroom were all interested and were equipped with disposable cameras to take pictures of their culture and their day-to-day life (In the interview, they identified that these were the two areas they wanted the teachers to better understand.) Of the 15 students, 12 turned in their cameras and then 8 students got

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together to talk about the pictures. (This activity also plays prominently in the stories described in the next chapter.)

Scott's Transcript Analysis

The fourth method I used was James Scott's transcript analysis. I will briefly outline what I used going into the case and then in chapter 7, Scott's analysis will be described in detail. As Scott suggested, I compared what he referred to as the "public transcript" (Scott, 1986)[41] (the public power-laden encounters where the more and less powerful interact with each other) and the "hidden transcript" (the encounters that take place offstage, for the less powerful, out of the gaze of the more powerful, and for the more powerful, out of the presence of the less powerful) to gage the "impact of domination on public discourse" (p. 4). Scott's hidden transcript closely corresponds to what I referred to as a practitioner as "complainin' in the kitchen."

At the school, I compared the public events, rituals, and mottos to the hidden transcripts I had access to: students outside of the teachers' gaze, teachers' "chillin'" on the top floor outside of the students' presence, teachers outside of the administrations' gaze, and Latina, working-class students and Maria out of the gaze of the White, middle-class teachers and administration. I was only able to glimpse these hidden transcripts, at least a part of the hidden transcript they would reveal to a White, middle-class woman often with a tape recorder or videocamera.

As Scott emphasized, these hidden transcripts are <u>not</u> the truth, but just the part of the discourse pushed offstage. The hidden discourses are also fractured because of the

[41]Though he used the singular "public transcript" most of the time, he later clarified that he meant public transcripts.

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different umbilical cords of privilege. Within hidden transcripts, there are further hidden transcripts because of the power relations in each encounter. Unlike Scott and others in the resistance literature, I also used these methods to learn if and how teachers resisted dominating students, and how White, middle-class women (teachers and myself) resisted dominating Latina working-class girls.

I tried to pay attention to deferential behavior and the ways students and teachers paid respect to status—notably in language (politeness, tag question formats "isn't that right," and silence) (Scott, 1986, pp. 30-32). Did teachers and administrators recognize how deferential behavior was built into the encounters, or was it viewed as the students' personality, or the teachers' capacity? (pp. 28, 36). In engaging the case, I needed to be cautious of assuming beliefs and attitudes based solely on deferential behavior in public transcripts. For example, I was not as familiar with Scott when I videotaped the seventh grade homeroom. I perceived I had bonded with many of the girls. Yet I discovered the next week that the bond was not as tight when I went back to being more of an observer. I underestimated how being a facilitator with a "cool" videocamera shaped the deferential behavior. Bonding and other attributions needed to be qualified based on evidence outside the interaction. This is critical for researchers and empowerment practitioners, like myself, who desire to be liked, respected, and part of the group. At the time, I did not see my own power in the shaping of the bonding that went on (pp. 47-50).

Finally, Scott alerted me to pay attention to "status domination": the disrespectful practices and slights to personal and cultural dignity and reputation. These disrespectful practices and slights can trigger many of the hidden transcripts. *One of the most useful hints from Scott was to listen within the hidden transcript for "slogans that seem to be at everyone's lips," the flashpoints and rallying expressions that signify disrespect and group*

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resentment (Scott, 1986, p. 198). These slogans and expressions will be analyzed throughout the thesis.

Double-Bind Analysis

The fifth and final method I used was an initial double-bind analysis drawing on Gregory Bateson's double-bind theory (Bateson, 1976; Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1976). In the interviews and the hidden transcripts, some students and teachers described patterns similar to that of the contradictions, vicious cycles, and double-binds described by Bateson and his colleagues. Bateson's analysis and interaction communication systems theory will also be described in more detail in the theoretical section. During the intensive research period, what caught my eye were the similar feelings of disrespect, frustration, confusion, resentment, betrayal, and fear of retribution in both the case and the literature.

My Way of Being as a Researcher (Case-within-a-Case): Being Open to Being Empowered by the Participants

In addition to observing the participants, it was crucial for me to also observe myself in the research encounter as I tried to walk the talk of two-way empowerment. My observations of my way of being as a researcher, therefore, became a case-within-a-case.

Walking the talk of two-way empowerment included trying to be present in the research encounter (aware of and acknowledging my privilege, style, biography, tendency to "overfunction," etc.). It also included encouraging feedback about the research process and my interpersonal and intercultural behavior (see Appendix 3, page 4). I struggled with

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giving and receiving feedback while in the case, this issue emerged as crucial for two-way empowerment.

Feminist, postcolonial ethnography sustained me both during the intensive research period and after, as I reflected on the encounters with participants. From this literature, four recommendations helped me to develop both my way of being as a researcher, and a deeper awareness to better observe and make sense of my behavior.

The first recommendation was to become aware of the power of the participants and my desires as a researcher. Feminist postcolonial ethnographers Dorinne Kondo and Kamala Visweswaran emphasized how power relations shape our multiple identities and contradictory selves (Kondo, 1986, p. 80; Visweswaran, 1994, pp. 50-51). Depending upon the context, we are more or less powerful (or both). What is crucial to recognize, they urged, is the agency and power of the research participants in shaping the encounter—for example, for resources or to protect their identity (Kondo, 1986, p. 75).

A second recommendation was to move into, experience, and learn from being uncomfortable (mistakes, failures). This commitment to "whole self" knowledge (Kondo, 1986, p. 85) includes a willingness to be open and vulnerable, to make mistakes, reflect, and apologize when needed. In the case, my attempts to facilitate a class discussion had problems, while my facilitation of a photography project was a failure in process terms. I also discovered or was told that at times I was disrespectful working with teachers, students, and administrators. For example, when I sat in on Lindsey's class during an activity, I found myself working with the students in an old way, an overfunctioning way. I was too eager to jump in and help the students with their assignment rather than recognizing their efforts. I began to see one way that the teacher's job is tough. My presence in the class also added to the teacher's work. I wrote her an apology for

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disturbing her process. She assured me it was "not a big deal," but my awareness was heightened.

Through these experiences I developed empathy for and connection with the teachers in their day-to-day practice, and in their struggles to be respectful and effective. I eventually learned from these failures, but often my learning was not how to change the process or methods so that I could do it successfully next time. Instead, I tended to learn how my constructs, such as two-way empowerment, were off. In the *thick* of my failures, I was often bumping up against issues that signaled problems in the construct itself. Working with the participants, the two-way empowerment construct was reconstructed several times. Failures, as Visweswaran put it, "are as much a part of the process of knowledge constitution as are our oft-heralded 'successes'" (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 99). Inconsistencies and errors pushed my project and helped me acquire deeper learnings.[42]

A third recommendation was to be open to experiencing the feelings of the participants. In this case, the participants were struggling with: betrayal, anger, sadness, indignation, embarrassment, confusion, frustration, disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment. When there are unequal power relations, self-deception and the deception of others are in play, and betrayals in research are to be expected (Visweswaran, 1994, pp. 42, 134). Being open to these feelings enabled me to better understand the feelings of Maria, the seventh graders, and some of the teachers, and it motivated me to work with others at the school to transform similar contradictions (p. 19).

In this type of work, Kondo has encouraged us to make space for the possibility of what she called a dissolution and a reconstitution of the self (Kondo, 1986). Being open to

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[42]A point not limited to feminist postcolonial ethnographers. Briggs (1986) and Silverman (1985, 1993) also made this point.

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difference (even the differences within us, as I experienced as a father's daughter) can lead to a fragmentation where different parts of our selves are at odds with each other, or a questioning and shaking up of deeply held assumptions. Being willing to be uncomfortable may enable us to change perceptions about ourselves, others, and the world.

Each of the above three recommendations were in my head as I went into the intensive research phase. But I was only able to appreciate Kondo and Visweswaran's work after being in the research encounters themselves—especially the power of the participants in shaping the encounters. I also appreciated their attention to the desires of the researcher. In my case, I became aware of the desire to be liked, to be one of the group, to be respected, and to capture great learnings even when it was logistically difficult for the participants.

Finally, a fourth recommendation from the feminist, postcolonial ethnographers was to realize that, because of my way of being as a researcher, the descriptions and findings I produce will be partial, limited, situational, and relational rather than a "thick description" conveying all meanings of an encounter.

In addition to the feminist, postcolonial ethnographers' suggestions, I also tried to be grounded in my interpersonal communication. I tried to make space and listen from the research participants' frame of reference. I also tried to view accounts of their experience as situated accounts rather than viewing them as the "truth," by paying attention to context while being aware of their agency to shape the accounts (as mentioned above). And I also tried to be flexible depending upon the different interpersonal styles.

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CHAPTER 5

ETHNOGRAPHY AND ANALYSIS

(Why This Case is Significant: Maria's Openness to "Critical Feedback-Up")

In this chapter, I present the case study observations of the participants and of myself. The observations in this chapter are from participant-observation notes, taped interviews, and videotaped interaction of Maria's seventh grade homeroom.

This chapter has eight sections. The rich ethnographic descriptions (section two), the focus of this chapter and the longest section, are bookended by the more dry account of the two seminars that I facilitated in exchange for the research opportunity (sections one and three). Because I was facilitating these seminars and they were not videotaped, I was unable to take the detailed notes needed to produce ethnographic detail.

In the first section, I outline the content and responses to the first seminar, "Addressing Differences Respectfully through Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills. " Both the content and responses help to set the stage for the ethnography.

The second section is the ethnography. In the selected observations, I try to let the participants (and myself) show and describe day-to-day ways of being that relate to two-way empowerment (what encouraged two-way empowerment and what got in the way). I then follow the descriptions with my commentary: What I learned, what surprised me, and what changed my thinking.

In the third section, I outline the content and responses of the second seminar. I describe how the content to be explored emerged from the research experience itself

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enabling me to present some of my research findings right away to the administrators and faculty.

Following the above descriptions of the intensive research period (sections one to three), in the fourth section, I analyze why this case is significant: *Maria's openness to critical feedback-up.* Maria's two-way empowerment way of being stood out because some of the other teachers, administrators, and I, *despite our intentions*, unconsciously reacted to critical feedback-up from students with retribution (and we misrecognized our reaction!). This case demonstrates both what we are up against in embodying a two-way empowerment way of being (the desire for status intertwined with deception, the umbilical cord of privilege, and the power of the habitus), and the potential to transform our ways of being that are disrespectful and ineffective; in other words, the potential in the process to transform ourselves as human beings.

In the fifth, sixth and seventh sections, I work with the findings to revisit and explore the questions I addressed in chapter 3: What is a two-way empowerment way of being? What can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being in empowerment encounters? And how can interested practitioners move toward and embody a two-way empowerment way of being?

Finally, in the eighth section, I outline the case-driven need for more theoretical work. The case provided valuable learnings, but also created many more questions—especially in exploring further why a two-way empowerment being is so difficult in empowerment encounters. The case provided examples of what can get in the way. During the intensive research period, I kept bumping into issues of power, interpretations of empowerment, recognition, and communication that I needed to explore more in-depth in the literature.

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Rather than "findings" that have been verified and cross-verified, these descriptions and analyses need to be taken as they are: as my own interpretation, based on the interpretations of the different groups at the school. My thoughts, feelings, assessments, and way of interacting were affected by the hidden background dimensions (differences, desires, and deception) of the specific research encounter between myself (a White, middle-class, 35-year-old nonreligious Ph.D. student, and American woman), my principal research participant and colleague (a Latina, working-class background, 23-year-old woman, graduate student, and teacher), the students (seventh grade, Latina working-class girls), the faculty (majority White and female, middle-class, in their 20s, and a few older nuns in their 50s and 60s also White and middle-class, one with working-class origins), and the administrators (White, middle-class women in their 40s) at an innovative girls middle school in an outer borough of New York City run by nuns of an order of the Catholic Church. Therefore, I realize that these observations, like empowerment encounters, were affected by my own unconscious self-deception and deception of others, and the specifics of the research encounter. What I will try to do in this chapter is to note the differences, desires, and deceptions I became aware of so the reader can make a better assessment. The reader, however, I am sure will discover other places in the text that demonstrate where I continue to have blindspots and distortions.

Seminar 1: Addressing Differences Respectfully through Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills

The first seminar took place shortly after I began attending Maria's seventh grade reading class. This seminar, "Addressing Differences Respectfully through Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills," addressed the issue of differences in the school

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that Maria brought me in to explore—that is, what does it mean that the school has a predominantly White, middle-class faculty/staff and a Latina, working-class student body? The contents and responses to this first seminar are described below and will help to set the stage for the ethnographic descriptions that follow.

Designing the First Seminar with Maria and the Principal

For the first seminar, I worked with Maria and the principal to develop and agree upon a process. From these initial discussions, there appeared to be *two interpretations at the school of the problems around differences and what needed to be done to address them.* The principal argued that the problem was communication (interpersonal awareness and skills), while Maria believed that the faculty needed to become more aware of how differences affected interaction and judgments (what I referred to in the seminar as intercultural awareness and skills). Despite their differences, both shared similar intentions: They both wanted to learn how to increase respect and effectiveness in the school. And both were also passionate about recognizing the different strengths at the school and to celebrate these strengths in an empowering process.

In designing this seminar, Maria impressed upon me the need to address intercultural differences first and to pay attention to how these differences shape the interpersonal rather than tacking these on at the end. Maria's reasoning resonated with my own experience working in diverse groups. As a result, in designing this seminar I was able to finally add the sorely needed dimensions of difference to an interpersonal skills course I have used in Brazil and Ecuador where the limitations were apparent. I also began to better articulate my concerns about empowerment encounters based on my experience as a practitioner and the essay I had written on "The Umbilical Cord of Privilege."

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Seminar Content

During the seminar, I shared several ideas with the faculty as a way of thinking about differences (see Appendix 4 for agenda): first, how intercultural and power differences are often hidden in the background; second, the way both the intercultural and the interpersonal are important (everyone is responsible); and third, the way I believe we can be less than effective and respectful, despite our intentions, by not seeing our privilege (generating resentment) and not seeing how our privilege affects the way we assess others (using our standards as normal, and seeing others as deficient). Because of their specific group and purpose, and because of my limited vantage point given my own umbilical cord privilege and experience, I encouraged them to work with my ideas critically and to put them into three mental baskets: useful as is, useful with changes, and not useful (Werner & Bower, 1984), (Appendix 4, Flip 3) and to share their feedback.

During the seminar, I introduced my idea of an "Intercultural Awareness and Skills" model (Appendix 4, Flip 7). This model included five processes: first, to increase our awareness of our intercultural position (our different umbilical cords of privilege) through an exercise to explore the different dimensions (Appendix 5); second, to acknowledge our intercultural position; third, to focus on the different strengths of others in our day-to-day listening; fourth, to request feedback and dialogue from the less powerful; and fifth, to listen to this feedback to learn how we can bring our behavior more in line with our intentions.

In the individual exercise, "Increasing Intercultural Awareness" (Appendix 5), many of the faculty were surprised at the many dimensions of their privilege they had not been aware of. Several reflected on the way they now realized they had been using their standards to assess students.

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After working on an interpersonal awareness exercise (including the potential to "overfunction" leading to others' "underfunctioning") (Lerner, 1985), the participants had the chance to learn about and practice the skills that at that time I believed were needed to make the model work: listening and feedback. During the listening section, the group worked at recognizing different strengths. This followed up an exercise at the beginning of the seminar where each participant contributed what they believed were the different strengths and contributions (individual, cultural, and knowledge areas) of the school (Appendix 4).

As a final exercise, teachers were invited to think of a student, especially one they have had trouble with, and focus on that student's different strengths by answering four questions:[43]

1. How tough is their situation? What obstacles do they face you do not (both past and present examples of logistics, day-to-day treatment)?
2. What they have achieved in spite of these obstacles?
3. What do the students know that you do not know?
4. What are the students better at than you are?.

Then they individually prepared a positive feedback message to this student based on her different strengths. Volunteers then read these messages to the group. Several teachers remarked that they had never thought about focusing on strengths in this way and how it put some of the students they struggled with in a different light. Several also noted how this process increased their empathy for the students and their own humility as teachers. (For more feedback comments see Appendix 4, Flip 15 "Check Out")

[43] Thanks to Marty Seldman for creating these practical questions based on the research.

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Significant and Surprising Moments

While there were many moments in the seminar that stood out for me as a facilitator, for the research project, two comments were significant. At the outset of the seminar, as we went around the group to introduce ourselves and to describe the different strengths of the school, Sister Florence, the older nun who was transferred in because of her Spanish, promptly informed me that she was angry. *She was angry that I referred to them as "guys."* She further informed me and the group that I had used it throughout my first introductory meeting when I proposed the research project. She said she did not say anything at the time, but she added, "If you would have said it one more time I would have walked out!" She then requested, "Please do not use that word anymore."

This provided an excellent opportunity, a "teachable moment" as trainers say, to show how I was unaware of my disrespectful behavior. I told her I appreciated her comment, and that I would try to say something else instead of "guys." I then referred to this comment throughout the day to challenge the faculty to think of areas where they might be making similar comments that are offensive to others that they are not aware of—especially in areas where we have more privilege. I continued to slip and used "guys" several times, but noted each time how ingrained it was and that it would take time and attention to change—it is an old habit.

A second comment from Maria was significant. Maria argued that her educational privilege was not the same because it was earned rather than unearned. While I agreed with her about the distinction, I added that it is still in NEON to others who do not have it.

These comments and the content of the seminar should provide the reader with a context for the next section. It is time to now go inside the school and hear more from the

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participants, watch our interaction, and learn from the case about a two-way empowerment way of being.

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The Ethnography

Maria and her Seventh Graders in the School and Community Contexts

Meeting Maria

I met Maria while auditing a "Feminism, Post-colonialism, and Literary Criticism" class at the New School for Social Research. During our first class, Maria arrived late (she had been in a St. Teresa's faculty meeting) and sat in the seat in front of me near the door. I noticed her readings binder for another class I was hoping to audit on "Feminism in Latin America and the Caribbean." I asked how she liked the class and we struck up a conversation. As I described in chapter 4, when I told Maria about my research, she became enthusiastic. She discussed how as a teacher she learns from her students. She also explained that she tried to get this across to her colleagues at the school—about how much the girls have to offer—but she said it was difficult. During the next few weeks, we began to discuss the possibility of working together.

I was impressed by the way Maria treated me. In the class we had together, I was one of the older and more conservative-looking students. If I had a meeting downtown, I would arrive in class wearing wool pants, a turtleneck, blazer, and my long coat. My appearance stood in contrast to Maria's youthful look: her nose ring, her long black skirts and sweaters, black platform shoes, and her leather jacket. Unlike many of the other younger students whose dress was similar to Maria's, Maria treated me with respect, even though I did not look "hip."

After Maria read my early essay for the Fielding Institute on "The Umbilical Cord of Privilege," we first discussed the possibility of working together at the New School's student lounge. At the end of our discussion, Maria pulled back her long, thick, black hair,

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her dark eyes widening with an idea: She suggested that I propose the research in an introductory letter to the principal. Maria offered to review the letter the following evening if I stopped by her place. As she jotted down her address, Maria explained that she and most of the faculty live in the same building that houses the innovative girls middle school.

Visiting the Neighborhood Where Maria Lived and Worked at the School

The next night, with my introductory letter in hand, I got on the subway to meet Maria at the school. One reason I hoped that the principal and others would agree was that I wanted to learn more about the school's neighborhood. I had friends who, in the late 1980s, lived a few blocks over, but I was not familiar with the immediate community where the school was located. The community had a reputation for being affordable for immigrants who infused it with vitality, as well as struggling artists and a young student crowd. It also had a reputation for problems related to drugs, gangs, and slowly encroaching gentrification and industrialization.

Unlike most of New York City, the school was located a good 30-minute walk from the closest subway stop. During this walk, the scenery changed dramatically. Initially I walked past artsy boutiques, a theater, well-appointed brownstones, and cafes packed with a multi-cultural crowd of artists, yuppies, and students.

Once I crossed one of the main streets, however, I noticed an abrupt change. Affordable food could be found in taco stands and small grocery stores. Merengue, hip hop, reggae, and rap wafted out of buildings, shops, and cars. Large tenement buildings loomed casting shadows over scattered but thriving community gardens. Several tenements and older shops were gutted and bordered up, with old appliances in the back. Painted on the sides of some of these buildings were bright, vibrant, colorful murals,

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paintings, and graffiti. For example, on one, a 15-foot high Mickey Mouse proclaimed the initials of the neighborhood with graffiti sprayed around its sides. Another large mural was a portrait of a Puerto Rican martyr. Some of the vacant lots were surrounded by barbed wire. Walking on, I saw auto and industrial repair shops and, in front of a vocational training school, a largely immigrant and African American crowd was taking a cigarette break. As I crossed the street to reach the school, I approached a supermarket. Long lines of homeless people, with their shopping carts overflowing with cans and bottles, waited for their turn at the recycling machines. Many had also settled in for night near the trash.

I then saw the banner identifying the school building. After I pushed the buzzer, Maria explained on the intercom that she would send the elevator down and I just had to turn the key to the fifth floor. Inside the building was dark, but I climbed in the elevator and uneasily operated it manually. Once on the fifth floor, Maria called for me to enter the room on the left.

As I walked in, I blurted out: "Oh my God, I have NEVER seen this much space in a residential building in New York City before, NEVER!" I was taken aback. My mouth was agape. I was expecting something like my friends' seventh floor walkup, but instead I entered a middle-class suburban living space. Maria, seated on a bar stool with her leg propped up, explained she had twisted her ankle and that is why she could not come down to get me.

Maria sat next to a large wooden island surrounded by bar stools in a spacious kitchen. Kitchen appliances (food processors, blenders, microwaves, etc.) gleamed on clean counters. To the side of the island, near the other wall, were a large, oblong dining room table and chairs. Opposite the kitchen were roomy, comfortable couches and other

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home furnishings—all appeared to be relatively new. In the adjoining room, teachers could relax on comfortable couches and chairs to watch a large screen television, videos, or listen to music on the stereo system. Bedrooms located down the hall, however, were Spartan.

Maria explained that the common spaces were both the teachers' breakout room and the teachers' residential common area. Living and working together was tough for Maria. Some of her housemates commented about her private life (who she dated) and her day-to-day practices (for example, the way she set the table) that were different from her culture. She also found it difficult to distance herself from the conflicts at the school.

I asked about the layout of the building and Maria gave me a verbal tour due to her injury. The top floor is solely for the teachers' residence and requires a key. On the middle floors are classrooms, the school assembly room, the computer room, the library, and a small teacher's office. On the bottom floor is the cafeteria, the receptionist's office, and the principal's office. She also said the teachers use the roof for sun, cigarette breaks, get togethers, and to take in the New York City skyline. There is also a small, concrete space in the back for the girls' sports.

As Maria was describing the school layout, I was really checking out some amazing large paintings of women leaning against the walls behind the dining table and off to one corner. They were painted in a style that reminded me of Diego Rivera's work: broad brush strokes of ordinary people, who in the rendering, become larger than life. When I asked Maria who the artist was, she smiled and said, "Me." She explained that her skills as an art teacher made her an attractive candidate to the school and she currently was teaching an art class.

Maria and I then turned to issues of privilege, from my essay, and some of the issues at the school. During our conversations, Maria's housemates began to drift into the

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kitchen to get coffee and snacks. I was introduced to John and Dave, both White, middle-class young men in their early 20s. They had helped Maria get to the hospital to check out her ankle injury. Later some of the other teachers, White women also in their early 20s, moved in and out of the kitchen. Hearing our conversation, a few introduced themselves; others did not.

As we continued to talk, I was having a hard time getting over the suburban-style living space in contrast to the neighborhood. It reminded me of an expatriate home in Latin America or Africa stocked with American, suburban, middle-class belongings. I had expected more of a modest NGO environment of cramped, narrow spaces with non-matched, old furnishings and few conveniences.

For Maria, the school accommodations increased her standard of living. But, for many of the teachers, this middle-class space was a step down. For students and their families, the "top floor" stood in contrast to the way they lived day-to-day. Maria explained that the students know how the teachers live because of a school graduation ritual. On the last day of classes, eighth graders dress up and act like teachers for a day. This includes being able to "chill" on the normally off-limits top floor. As soon as they come down, the students report back to the rest of students about how the teachers live "up there."

Initial Observations of the Day-to-Day Operations of the School and Maria's Seventh Grade Reading Class

I arrived for my first day of classroom participant-observation about a half hour after school had started. As I approached the school's façade, I noticed, now in daylight, a very large and ornate church behind the school. The church overshadowed all the surrounding buildings. Then I saw a student in what I presumed was her school uniform

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buzzing at the entrance. She wore the characteristic Catholic school uniform (white shirt, short gray pleated skirt, white socks doubled thick over her white tights), but she also wore some "hip" black shoes (hitting just at the ankle with thick waffle soles and lace-ups like hiking boots). As she was buzzed in, I ran over and followed the student in through the heavy metal door. We then entered the large, old, but well-restored building.

With the lights on, I was now able to see the first floor and the contrast from the street on which it was located. After walking to the school past the vacant lots, the brightly colored murals, the graffiti, the homeless, the Latina women wearing large hoop earrings, and the vibrant sounds of meringue, salsa, and rap, walking into the school was like entering another world: The building was very clean, organized, and conservatively decorated—for example, one small religious icon on a white wall. The quiet was palpable.

The ornate, finely carved wood banister supports and wide wood staircase revealed the building's more upscale past. As I later learned, the school had acquired the building through the nearby Catholic church. After the more affluent left the neighborhood, the building was empty, falling into very poor condition. St. Teresa's did the restoration.

I followed the student I had entered the building with into the first floor receptionist's office. Rosa, the receptionist, told me that Maria was in morning assembly and I should wait outside the assembly room on the third floor. As Rosa explained this, she pushed a book toward the student indicating where she needed to sign in as "late." As the student raced up the stairs, Rosa escorted me toward the elevator. Rosa and I passed through the cafeteria of metal tables and chairs. On the cafeteria's center wall, "Be Yourself. But Be the Self that God Wants You to Be" was painted in large green letters. I thanked Rosa for guiding me, entered the elevator, and rode up the elevator alone.

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After arriving on the third floor, I walked toward the assembly room. On my way, I saw a good-sized and comfortable library (where we eventually held the first seminar in exchange for the research). When I passed the computer room, I was surprised to see about 15 new Macintosh computers sitting on modern tables with ergonomic chairs in front of each one. The school's fund-raisers were obviously doing an excellent job because tuition was very low.

After arriving on the third floor, the late student and I sat down on a bench outside the assembly hall joining two other late girls waiting for the morning assembly period to end. As roll was being called, each girl responded with "Hello." As I waited, I noticed the inspirational stories and examples of girls and women, many of them Latina, all over the main corridor walls. One had a close-up picture of a beautiful, young Latina woman and the title, "Selena," followed by this description: "Selena was a famous singer in Texas and Mexico. Selena died in March 31, 1995. She was twenty three when she died. This was a very sad death. May she rest in peace." Also hanging outside the assembly hall were banners encouraging students to "Be Yourself. And Be the Self that God Wants You to Be" along with a quilt from a graduating class. As I continued to wait, one of the older nuns, Sister Peg, sat down next to me and explained what was happening in assembly. At the end, the girls get a chance to say prayers. "There's lots of prayers today," she said, smiling. She told me about how much she cared about the girls and their development.

When assembly ended, the girls streamed out, and the noise level gradually increased. Maria met me, gave me a warm welcome, and guided me down the hall to her class. Girls surrounded us as we walked: all of them were smiling and shouting for attention, "Ms. G!, Ms. G!" Faculty were addressed by their last names, and Maria's last name was Garcia.

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As we reached Maria's class, I was taken aback at how loud the girls were—especially after my not being around kids for a while. I was also struck by the physical contrast of the girls' bodies as they swarmed around Maria. Some girls looked much younger than the seventh grade, while others looked like high school girls and still others were in-between. I soon found myself transported back to my own seventh grade experience remembering how horrible I felt to be one of the short, nondeveloped girls. I reflected on how seventh grade and all of junior high seem to be the peak years for differences in girls with their changing bodies and heightened emotional stress wherever they are along the developmental spectrum.

In Maria's room, a thick wooden cross from Latin America, painted with colorful houses, animals, and landscapes, is perched above a display entitled "1492: The People Columbus Met." Under this banner, students stories were posted. Some of the stories recounted how Columbus had harmed the people of the island nations where the girls were from. For example, Andrea, a teacher and administrator favorite because she is intelligent, cute, and polite, read her posted story recounting how Columbus wiped out the Taino indigenous people of her family's native country, the Dominican Republic. On the other walls of Maria's class, she had posted pictures of many famous women from various cultures including Jessye Norman, Hillary Clinton, Julia Alvarez, Jody Foster, Me'shell Ndgedocello, Joyce Wallace, Nicole Breedlove, and many others. Another bulletin board reminded girls to think about "What Makes a Woman Fearless."

After the girls settled down, Maria introduced me telling the students about my study: "She's here to learn about how teachers also learn from students."

"How do they?" several asked.

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"That's what I'm here to find out," I replied. I also described my background: my age (35); that I am married with two stepchildren almost Maria's age (surprising the students); that I am originally from California, and that I had lived in Brazil, Honduras, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. I also stressed that I hoped to talk to girls from the countries where I lived because I missed the different cultures. I explained that in Portuguese it is called "saudades," to be homesick or sad being away from people, places, music, and so on. Maria and I also explained how we met at the New School, that we were students together.

One student, Nira, quickly asked where I was from with interest and a smile. I explained I was German-Irish-Scottish. "That's up there in Europe or something?" "Yep," I replied.

After my brief exchange with the students, Maria then focused the class on their task: to improve their reading, comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

For the following month, I was a participant-observer with Maria and her seven seventh grade reading students. I also participated when relevant: when I had a story, or a question, or when they asked me a question. I also participated with them in my responses to the stories and in class discussion through laughter, shock, disgust, sadness, and so on. But, for the most part, I observed taking notes and videotaping.

In Maria's reading class, the girls read about other girls and young women dealing with similar situations to their own. One story described the struggles of a Jewish immigrant girl in New York City's Lower East Side. Another story featured a young girl as the protagonist in apartheid South Africa. A third followed one girl's life as an African American in the South of the United States before the civil rights movement. A fourth was about a Puerto Rican young woman who dealt with tough conditions in her tenement

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building in Spanish Harlem and injustices within New York City's schools. A fifth followed a girl's coming of age story in Antigua. And finally, the last story detailed a girls' ability to overcome obstacles in the city after leaving her village in Haiti.

Most of the girls answered questions eagerly, asked questions when they were curious, kidded around with Maria, and felt free to interject their personal stories when their readings triggered them. For example, in one story when they asked about the meaning of the word "mausoleum," the girls started to tell stories about who had died in their family, where they were buried, and who wanted to be buried back in Puerto Rico. In the class discussions, what was striking to me was the volume of the girls' voices in cross-talk. Students' questions were asked until they said, "Oh, I get it," with a smile. Students occasionally sprinkled Spanish expressions in their exchanges with Maria.

After a few weeks of observation, I noticed there were two loose and overlapping cliques: the smaller, less developed, and often more studious girls in one clique, and the taller, more developed, and sometimes less studious girls in the other. Andrea and Patricia were in the first group, with Nira, Claudia, and Denise in the second. Andrea, Patricia, and Claudia were all from the Dominican Republic. Nira was from Puerto Rico, and Denise was from Mexico. The two students from Ecuador, Aida, and Gladys, spent time together, but they also floated more between these two loose cliques. Aida was more petite like Andrea and Patricia, while Gladys had a fuller body shape.

Most of the girls in Maria's seventh grade reading class had light complexions, with dark hair and dark eyes. Exceptions include Andrea's reddish hair and Gladys's light brown hair. Axi, a vivacious tall girl from Maria's seventh grade homeroom, who was not in Maria's reading class, stood out at the school with long blonde hair and blue eyes. In Maria's reading class, some students were a little darker with more indigenous features

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(Denise and Aida, for example). Even though Claudia was the darkest in Maria's class, she was not that much darker than her classmates. During discussions, however, Claudia pointed out issues in the stories and discussions relating to being Black—for example, she noted that at the school there are no African Americans. Claudia's friend Marjorie, who was also in Maria's seventh grade homeroom, but not in the reading class, was darker than most of the students. Maria noted in an interview that the darker-skinned students she knows do not identify themselves as being Black or of African descent.

Another difference among the students became visible to me one class period when Maria handed back assignments. When Nira and Claudia looked at their grades, they immediately put their hands to their mouths to try to hold back their laughter.

Claudia then turned to Maria, laughing, and asked, "Yo, yo Ms. G., is this for real?"

Meanwhile, at the other end of the table, Andrea and Patricia gave each other the "way to go, girl," lightly slapping each others' hands under the table followed by Patricia grabbing an air microphone and breaking into songs as if she were in a music video.

Andrea, surveying the scene around the table, commented to the class with her back to the videocamera, "It's not funny that they got bad grades."

I noticed several other student behaviors that stood out. During class, students often munched on snacks they pulled from brown paper sacks passing around food to their friends. Often, Maria is not bothered with this because she told me she knows they often do not get breakfast at home. The girls' posture is very relaxed. Students sit any which way, both on and off their chairs, and sometimes with their heads resting on their desks. Once I thought Denise was not paying attention and was possibly sleeping. When Maria asked her a question, I was surprised to see her pop up and answer it in an animated way.

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As they read, groups of two to four girls snuggled up next to each other. One student every now and then sucked her thumb. And during discussions or reading, one student frequently played with another student's hair.

With all of this background activity and the energy of the students, Maria worked at finding ways to keep the class focused for learning. When there were too many distractions, Maria gave them a look to let them know she was serious and, when warranted, moved their seats, called their names, and threatened the girls with detention . At one point Maria took away Nira's new electronic Japanese toy pet that sleeps, eats, relieves itself, and consumes students' attention.

I also had other chances to observe the student's behavior, for example, when I interviewed the seventh grade homeroom. After we were done, I announced the students had 5 minutes to videotape themselves while I cleaned up the room: "Now I turn the camera over to you." First, some students ran in front of the camera putting their mouths over the lens, while other students behind the camera watched them on the mini-screen screaming with laughter. Then Patricia, Marjorie, Axi, and others began dancing, shaking their hips, and singing, "1234 get your woman on the floor," then falling to the floor in hysterical laughter. When I requested merengue, of the students, two couples quickly broke off from the others standing nearby and began dancing the intricate steps like professionals.

Nira and a few others, however, stayed behind the camera to "get" her friends: "Claudia, we got your butt!" But the videotape, as I later discovered, also includes some painful scenes. Students behind the camera did a slow close-up of Sandra. She was heavier, taller, and not as attractive as some other students. They often picked on her. As

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the camera moves up and down her profile, her classmates can be heard snickering from behind the camera.

Learning from Maria and her Students

After observing Maria's seventh grade class, interviewing the faculty, and later trying to facilitate the homeroom interview and later photo activity, I began to appreciate how difficult it was to be either a teacher or a student. I also began to understand that Maria and her students, and some of the other teachers and administrators, could teach me a lot about two-way empowerment.

I next describe how my learning took place. I describe how the participants pushed me to see what can get in the way of teacher, administrator, and researcher openness to encourage two-way empowerment.

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"The Reason I'm Teaching is I Want to Give These Kids the Education I Wanted"

> The reason I'm teaching is I want to give these kids the education I wanted. It's kind of what I'm operating on. I had teachers that made you feel bad about who you were, bad about your parents, made you feel dumb, like, "Oh I'm in college and you're never going to get there." Teachers who were prejudiced, who were disrespectful, and I just didn't want to be in a place like that or be a teacher like that.

Based on her experience as a Latina, working-class girl who often felt disrespected in a predominantly White, middle-class school, and her current position as the only woman of Color with a working-class background on the school's faculty, Maria struggles to develop different day-to-day practices to give her students the education that she wanted. Maria encouraged me directly and indirectly to pay attention to different ways of being that I have grouped into five significant day-to-day practices: first, not punishing students when they express critical feelings toward her (what I refer to as critical feedback-up); second, giving students "second chances" and recognizing they give her second chances; third, striving to be real by sharing with her students; fourth, being open to learning from her students; and fifth, giving students space to vent.

While she articulates some of these practices, others she does without thinking. Because she is still working on the five practices, the lines are not always clear. For example, Maria continues to struggle with how much she and her students should share and vent in the classroom. Her continuing attempts to develop these practices are part of the day-to-day life in her classroom.

Students Can Express When They are Upset with Maria *Without* Being Punished: She "Hears Them Out" and is Open to Being Changed

To illustrate her first day-to-day practice, Maria described one event that took place during her reading class . While reading a story about an African-American girl in the

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South who was struggling with issues of racism in pre-civil rights days, some students sat on the floor, one on the wide windowsill, and others were lying on a table with their eyes glued to their black notebooks. Students eagerly volunteered to read parts of the story. As they read, other girls jumped in with comments and questions, added their personal stories, and reacted with shock to the treatment of the protagonist.

But Lourdes kept quiet. When Maria tried to bring her in, she said, "I don't have to read if I don't wanna."

After a few more girls had read, Maria leaned in close and reminded the girls of something she had said many times before:

> You know you can tell me exactly what it is you want to say and I'm not going to do anything to you. I'm not going to give you a detention. You can say it, whatever is going on. I promise I won't punish you.

Lourdes looked up, stared into Maria's eyes then angrily said, "It's not fair the way you pick on me."

Maria asked Lourdes if she wanted to talk about it after class; Lourdes agreed. Maria arranged a time for the two of them to talk ensuring Lourdes, as Maria put it, that "I hold my word." At the meeting, Lourdes aired her anger, and hurt feelings freely as Maria listened. Maria learned that once when she was kidding around with Lourdes, Lourdes took it seriously and was really hurt. Maria apologized for hurting her feelings and discussed with her where they would go from there.

Maria believes hearing students out is crucial in creating real relationships. In later interviews she described why she is so committed to her first day-to-day practice: not punishing students for expressing feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration.

> I know that I'm really comfortable with someone when I can go to them or I can say exactly how I'm feeling and I know that there will be no consequences that are bad, that, they won't like, y'know if it's my father, he won't take money away from

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> me or not talk to me, or the boss he won't start getting on my case all the time, or a friend..*I guess it's important to feel that if you're really gonna be honest with somebody and you're really gonna be your self, that your self is not always pleasant* [italics added]..
>
> So if you know that you can be not pleasant with that person, that way you can believe that that relationship is more real. And so I would like to have a real relationship with people and I know with a lot of people I don't have a real relationship, that I never say exactly what I think or feel because I think, it's not worth it. Or if I do it I feel I'll have consequences that are negative. Some of the other teachers only want to hear good things, not any criticism or anger. Even when they are legitimate criticisms, they don't want to hear them.

Maria Teaches About the ISMs, How Students Can Change Their World, and Gives Students Space to Vent

Maria's second day-to-day practice is to work with students so they are empowered to not only thrive and be confident in society, but also to know through examples and encouragement that they can take part in changing social injustices in their world. In her reading class, students learn how other girls in the present and past, in the U.S. and internationally, experience similar poor treatment solely because of their race, ethnicity, class, religion and gender—irregardless of who they are as individuals.

Students shared their own stories that related to the stories they were reading. (Many of these rich discussions took place before I began videotaping so these limited observations are from notes.). While reading one story about a Puerto Rican teen who lived in a building with drug addicts in the hallways, Nira cried out, "Ms. G. this is my life." This led to the girls sharing stories of their own and their family's experience with crime, drugs and the police. One student told the class, "my father was in a gang." Another described how "the cops harassed a 13-year-old for a gun he didn't have just cause of his Latino clothes and baggy jeans." A different student jumped in, saying, "my mother's boyfriend was in the Mafia." Another added, "my uncle is in jail for drugs."

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And then Claudia joined the discussion saying, "my uncle, he does drugs, hurts people, I wish he was dead."

Then Patricia took the floor. She described how her father once came at her mother with a knife. Patricia ran toward her mother and put herself between them to try and stop her father. When she called the police, she said ,"they wouldn't come!"

The students also vented their anger about racism, both past and present. In a story about South Africa, students yelled at the White masters who were oppressing the protagonist. In another story about a Chicana who was not awarded a scholarship that she deserved, given instead to a White student, the students wanted to know everything about why it happened. Girls slammed their fists on their books, hissed, shook their heads, and exclaimed, "That's NOT fair, she won it!"

While reading a story about a young African American girl growing up in the South before civil rights, the girls reacted with shock and outrage when she was taken away to jail for no reason. Maria reminded them that this was "before Martin Luther King, Malcolm X. Think about what it was like before the laws."

Later in the story, when the protagonist was killed, Aida slammed her hand on her book and said, "I bet it was White people." Denise, sitting next to Aida playing with her hair, looked a bit embarrassed. But her expression changed as she gradually smiled broadly at me.

The student's comments and put-downs about others who are different, however, do not go unchallenged. While reading a story by Amy Tan, one of the students, Patricia, mispronounced a Chinese name resulting in laughter. Maria corrected her pronunciation, but Patricia mispronounced it again resulting in more laughter.

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Then Maria said, "How about if I couldn't say Patricia and I called you Stacey." Patricia read it correctly right away.

In one of the final classes of the school year, Maria reviewed all the readings in a discussion with students that addressed the importance of the "ISMs." This was also the first day I began to videotape. As class was about to start, Denise moaned when she saw the camera. "Oh my God, not today, my hair looks terrible." A few others mumbled about their hair but they eventually settled into their routines.

Maria, at the chalkboard, tried to get them to focus: "Listen up, Nira, Aida. Think of all the books we've read." As they listed the books, Maria rewarded students with stickers for right answers.

To get the discussion going, she asked, "What did all the stories have in common?"

Andrea yelled out, "They wanted freedom and to get away from their mothers."

Maria wrote FREEDOM in large capital letters and drew a line under it for emphasis.

She tried to keep the focus on the discussion by threatening students with, "I'm going to have to move you."

She then asked the class, "What did they want freedom from? Andrea says their mothers, the house they were living in, what else was going on? What are some of the ISMs that we talked about?"

Students responded with "racism," one added "criticism" and everyone laughed, another offered "freedom from being poor," and another "not being addicted to food" (like the bulimic they read about).

Maria then asked, "Is there anything you personally want freedom from?"

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This resulted in an explosion of answers: "my house," "my mother," "my brother."

Patricia described "how one lady looked at this kid with an earring and made a face and I was like O-Kaaay (sarcastically)."

Claudia added, "Freedom from people telling me what to do."

Aida said, "8th graders." Nira added, "Teachers--especially like Ms. Smith."

And finally, Gladys began to sarcastically sing-song *"It's not a-ppro-pri-ate."* (A "flashpoint" expression to be described in length later in this ethnography).

In later interviews, Maria explained why it is important to her that her students have space to vent. Because of her positioning in the middle, as both a teacher and a Latina from a working-class background, she can glimpse the different realities of teachers and students, Whites and Latinas, middle-class and working-class.

In Maria's day-to-day life at the school, she moves back and forth between these different realities. She gave several examples:

> Like when I'm with the kids walking on the street and we can't look at the postcards cause they think we're gonna steal them. Or the next day when I walk down the same block with my roommates, who are all white, and nobody bothers us, whether we are browsing for an hour or two. I can do that in one day. Or I can be in a car with my boyfriend and cops stop us, but I can be in the same car with my white roommates and we pass a million cops and I'm not worried at all.
>
> And so the kids are aware of this, everyday, this back-and-forth. Like going home, being one way, then going to school and being another. I feel like there's no place that they can vent. They have all these expectations on both ends, don't do this, do that, act this way.

I added that "They must have a hangout with each other." She responded that "They do, but I want to give them that space too."

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Maria encouraged students to express when they felt sad, angry, frustrated, and misunderstood, both at the school and in the community. And they did. Students began to vent, not only in Maria's class, but also in other classes and encounters at the school.

In an interview, Maria said, "I feel like other teachers are angry at me for encouraging the students this way."

Because Maria set out to create a space where the kids could vent, it was no surprise that many of the kids came to her when they were upset. But this often put her in a bind:

> What do I do when I agree with the kids? Kids come crying to me all year that Ms. Smith thinks that they're stupid, she is sarcastic, is mean, doesn't let them say their opinion, the way she looks at them. And it's been more than one kid. I've been trying to dismiss it. But one of the problems is it's always the kids, like teachers never do anything wrong. And the only time teachers are wrong is when the class is out of control. But whenever kids complain about a *teacher's manner,* [italics added] it's the kids' problem.
>
> For some of the teachers, "mutual respect" means the kids never say anything mean or bad. And to me, that's not mutual respect. Just because they are not saying anything to your face to criticize you doesn't mean they're respecting you.

As Maria suspected, her encouraging the students to express when they felt sad, angry, frustrated, and misunderstood was not appreciated by some of the other teachers and administrators. During a brief chat in the hall with the principal, she let me know she was worried about how the seventh grade students related to the other teachers. In her view, "The kids are polite and respectful with Maria but not with all the teachers." She urged me to see Maria's students in other settings. This concern also came up in my interview with Karen, the social studies teacher. She stressed that, for her, one of the problems at the school was that "all the kids went to Maria with their concerns." This represented what she believed to be a "lack of teacher solidarity" at the school.

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Maria and her Students Give Each Other "Second Chances"

The third of Maria's day-to-day practices is the way she and her students give each other second chances. Unlike her relationships with some of her colleagues and superiors, Maria feels that,

> with the kids I feel like I can mess up with them, and they don't hold it against me. Like when I go in and I'm not as prepared or I'm really tired and I'm really short with them or not patient. I feel like the next day they let me go in there and they give me a second chance to do something different. Like they'll say, "Oh, you're having a bad day today, okay, let's pay attention." I mean they really will do that, and it shows me that they really, that they think of me as a person and that makes me feel comfortable with them. It makes me be able to be real with them because they won't take it out on me either in another way like "we hate her and we're gonna be mean." I mean I've never had kids do that to me.

The students have empowered Maria to see that giving each other second chances means refusing to label students—even students like Nira who have more than the average number of bad days.

> Nira knows that she is disruptive in class, and I tell her, "I know it's hard for you." Even though they think I may label them, "Oh you think we're the bad ones," and I say, "I don't think you are." It's really important to me not to label someone as "bad" or "they can't do this" because if they want to there's got to be a way. With most kids it's really important, if it's not working out, then there is something we are doing. Every kid or almost is reachable. [At the school] there are lots of good things that work, but lots to do better.

Maria Strives to Be Real by Sharing With Her Students

Maria's fourth day-to-day practice is striving to "be real" by sharing parts of her life with her students. For example, on the first day I was to begin videotaping, I arrived early. At her desk, Maria was reading, preparing for class. Girls trickled in putting their books away, shuffling around the class, slamming their desks which also served as lockers. Soon, though, all the students were clustered around Ms. G. They were telling her their woes about their mothers, uncles, and so on, trying to get her advice. Maria was

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surrounded by all the girls all talking at once, laughing, trying to be heard, asking questions, sitting on her desk, putting their arms around her, and leaning against her.

Then Andrea took center stage showing Maria and the group a picture of her dad. She laughed and pointed at the picture, saying, "He looks like a black bearded Santa Claus."

Maria laughed with the girls, adding, "He's cute and round. He looks like the guy I used to be dating."

This connection to the girls grew when Maria began dating Jorge who lived in the girls' neighborhood. As Jorge became Maria's boyfriend, she gave students updates on their relationship. By the end of the research period, Jorge was attending school events (like the graduation party) and was getting to know Maria's students.

Maria also shares how she is feeling with her students. When Maria enters the class and notices herself being short with the students or a little down, she lets the girls know that it is not them. For example, "I'll tell them I'm sorry, I'm in kind of a bad mood. I just had a tough conversation with my parents."

In addition to sharing personal information, Maria shared her feelings about race and racism, as well as prejudice about body image as a Latina woman. In one discussion, the class began talking about the new "Selena" doll. (Selena was the very popular Mexican-American pop singer who was murdered.) Aida brought up that the Selena doll has a "big butt," triggering laughter by all the students and Maria. Maria then added, "Yeah, she does have a big butt, and that's good."

Maria and the girls then talk about how Selena's fuller body shape was more realistic, more like their friends, moms, and women in the community, and more healthy.

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Several girls talked about the problems with unrealistic Barbie figures by bringing up the story they had read about one teenage girl who struggled with eating disorders.

Being "real" with the students reflects Maria's life experience, but more importantly, it also reflects her experience as a faculty member. What concerns Maria is some of the content of the teachers' hidden transcripts, and the teachers "two-faced" performances.

> What bugged me from the beginning was teachers who would sit and mock some of the kids: the way the kids talked, the weight of some of the kids, some are chubby, and wore clothes that were too tight. That kind of stuff made me really angry, really, really angry, cause even though it wasn't happening in front of the kids, y'know and I probably said some things about kids, I know I have, but the way that its done sometimes, like, it really bugs me.
>
> The weight thing bugs me because from a personal standpoint, that was me, and if you guys are sitting around and talking about this little girl, then I'm imagining that my teachers were doing that about me. And how can you do that and then turn around and tell the kid it doesn't matter. And to me when I would see *that double, that kind of two-face stuff*, it would really bug me cause, teachers who would get in front of the class and say this is not an appropriate way to treat a person, but then who go and do it, or who would act like they never curse, then outside of class curse all the time [italics added]. So I didn't want to be about being fake with the kids, at all, because that's like lying. If you curse, it's human. Just the fakeness, the dishonesty. I think the kids can see through it, that you're lying.

<u>Struggling to find a real way of being without being too open.</u>

Not being fake was also central for Dave, the sixth grade teacher. When I spoke with him, he had just been told that he was not to return to the school the next year. He believed this was due in part to his level of sharing: "I share when I have a problem but I'm seen as weak because I defy the boundaries." For example, when Dave's mother was sick they prayed in class. He also let his students know when he was having a bad day. He said that other faculty and the administration, however, "frowned upon" how much he shared; some complained that he was being too open with the students. His response was

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that "We aren't robots, we bring our human side." Yet reflecting on his openness with students, he realized that in the end he "needs to be more discreet." But for Dave, this presented a problem because, as he put it, you "have to be fake" to be discreet, and "I hate that."

Dave's interview planted a seed that changed my thinking. Up to that point, I had conceptualized that one of the obstacles to two-way empowerment rested with practitioners who were "too closed"—those distant practitioners who were unwilling to share themselves or to admit that they had issues or problems. Dave's struggle, however, presented the other extreme of being "too open." At that point I saw that there was a potential Achilles heel for a two-way empowerment way of being: Teachers who were *too* open could spend valuable class time burdening students with their problems when students had more than enough of their own and who came to the school for an education, not to comfort teachers.

Maria also struggles here, and she acknowledged that there were probably times when she shared more than she would have wanted to without realizing it. Because of her awareness of this issue, however, Maria tried to track her feelings, her level of sharing, to try to make sure she did not burden the girls with her issues. She did not spend valuable class time sharing the details of her problems. Instead, Maria focused on their education. When Maria was having a bad day, she simply acknowledged it, then tried to move on. During the reading classes, Maria occasionally added her own personal stories when appropriate, but she tried to keep the girls' stories and participation as the focus.

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Maria is Open to Learning From and With Her Students

Maria's fifth day-to-day practice is her openness to learn from and with her students. In one of Maria's reading classes, Maria gave an interpretation of the ending of a story. Nira then jumped in, quickly offering an alternative interpretation. Maria responded by saying, "Given how it was written, your ending could also be it."

In another reading session, we moved outside to the physical education area. The concrete space, set against the backdrop of urban buildings tightly packed together, looked as if it was rarely used. The girls sat on benches and the ground, huddled together, complaining about the cold. While reading aloud, Patricia noticed some backward slashes in the text. When asked about them, Maria responded, "I don't know, I'll ask someone." Then, when an animal appeared in the story that no one was familiar with, Maria again said she did not know what it was, but that "We could ask our resident animal lover, Gladys, to look it up for us and report back."

Maria acknowledges that she does not have all the answers, and she is open to learning from her students. Several other teachers also discussed learning from their students. Karen, the social studies teacher, described her learnings this way:

> [It] happens so much for new teachers, practically every class that I teach, I change every time. I constantly have to change it based on what the students tell me, redesigning the curriculum, what worked, didn't work. It's very empowering. I need to get it all from them, the skills of being a teacher and content. For example, if they bring something up from their culture that I know little about, some leaders, than you can feel the interest in the class. I have maybe a limited way of trying to develop that conversation...brings me back to research more and bringing it back to the classroom. Or if it's what they don't know, it's a continual cycle that changes based on what they bring to the class. That's the way the students empower me.

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Maria is Open to Having her Assumptions Challenged and to Being Changed About "Something I Didn't Realize"

Finally, Maria's sixth day-to-day practice is being open to her students and others when they challenge her assumptions. For example, when Maria arrived at the school, she expected to teach Latina girls. As the girls began to relate personal stories of their lives as Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Ecuadorians living in an outer borough of New York City, Maria became aware of important differences as well as commonalities within "Latina" that she had not been aware of growing up in Texas where most everyone was "Chicana." She noted that the students pushed her to question her assumptions.

Maria was pushed even further in a story she recounted about her "laser pointer." Her dad had given it to her to use in teaching. She used this small pen-sized object to point with a red beam to points on the bulletin board, maps, and pictures. In the neighborhood, Maria's boyfriend, Jorge, liked to play around with the laser pointer. As I mentioned earlier, Jorge lived in the same neighborhood and housing projects as Maria's students.

When Jorge told Maria that, "All these people in the neighborhood want to trade things for the laser pointer," Maria responded matter of factly, "Why not tell them to go to Radio Shack and get one?"

Jorge paused, shook his head, then looking her in the eye, said, "People up here don't go out of the neighborhood. They don't go to places like Radio Shack. They see it, they trade for it, but they don't go out."

Maria recounted her insight,

> I realized that there, I did it, which I didn't want to do, to assume, because for me this is logical. He pointed out that it was not that logical. It was different for me, he pointed it out. It was cool for me to, like, be on that end when I said something that I didn't realize. So that's why I can see that as a teacher, as a White teacher, that you do say things that you don't realize.

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"It's Not Appropriate"

At the school, administrators and teachers communicate the rules by distinguishing what is and is not appropriate. The phrase "It's not appropriate" often emerged in interviews with the seventh grade homeroom students and several teachers as they vented their complaints. Students and teachers take issue not only with some of the times "It's not appropriate" is used, but also with the way it is communicated.

"They Tell Me To 'Be Yourself', But When I Am Myself, They Say *'It's Not Appropriate'*"

When I interviewed the fifteen seventh grade homeroom students, I asked what the expression "Be Yourself," meant for them. Immediately many students tried to talk at once. I had to fight to get my voice above the cross-talk, pleading for one at a time.

Claudia, taking advantage of the lull, jumped in, "But they shouldn't write that, you know why? They don't want us to be the way we are."

Then Axi, raising her voice, leaned forward:

> If you want to be a professional, but you don't have to, but it's your choice. You know when you are with your friends and family, you have your own way, when you come to the school you have to be totally different, to satisfy them, in the school have to be like angels.

Off to the side, Gladys sing-songed sarcastically "A--ppro--pri--ate."

Andrea looked at me, paused, then asked me in Spanish if I knew what the word "fart" means. After I nodded, she threw out her arms and exclaimed: "Even a fart is not appropriate!"

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After hysterical laughter subsided, Andrea continued.

> ***I want to be a powerful woman, do what I want, have a good life. [She paused.] Let's say I have something to tell them, and they don't like it. They don't have to put me down. When I want to be powerful, it doesn't mean that I have to put people down*** [emphasis added].
>
> [She continued with an example.] One time we had a concert and our shirts we're opened up like this [she demonstrated by opening one button at the top of her shirt] and Sister Helen came up to me and she said [here, Andrea tightened her face, used a stern and appalled voice, and pulled at her top button with a look of disgust], "Shut that button."

"And how did that make you feel?," I asked her.

She put her head down, then slowly shook it side to side, while letting out a loud "PSSSSSSSS."

Lourdes yelled out, "Stereotype!"

I then asked the students what they thought the school meant by "Be Yourself": "What is the school preparing you to be?" There was another eruption of animated responses and my pleading for one person at a time.

Aida quickly responded, "To be like them."

Axi, with her face tight and brow furled, shouted,

> I'll tell you what they want us to be, they take us to Pine Wood. . . . [I interjected, "What's 'Pine Wood?"]. It's the other school in Westchester. We go over there to see how they are, how they live, how they behave. They're all rich people. We're not rich, we're like medium, but they got everything over there, horses. . . .

Nira then shouted out, "Yeah, but they never come over here and see how we are."

This comment was followed by a lot of tongue clicking, head nodding, "uh-huh"s, hissing, and students saying, "yup" as they clicked their fingers and swooshed their arms down, swaying with agreement.

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The students were also quick to point out some of the double-standards they observed about "not appropriate." "We can't eat junk food but they can eat junk food. We can only drink milk and juice, and they drink soda."

I found myself unintentionally being a part of this double-standard behavior. On one of the days I was observing several classes, I joined Maria after her morning reading class to walk upstairs to "chill" on the top floor in the faculty residence floor and living area. With time for only a quick break, I found myself with a full cup of tea when it was time to head downstairs. As I was about to leave the tea, Leslie, the math teacher of the class I was going to sit in on, told me to bring it to class. She was bringing her coffee. Walking quickly down the stairs, I spilled here and there, and then asked, "Are the students allowed to bring in drinks?" "No," she responded. Then she added with a smile, "but we're *teachers*!"

I clutched a bit inside, feeling embarrassed walking into the class. I sat down and felt the weight of my tea mug clunk on the desk. It was a visible symbol that I shared privileges with the teachers that the students did not have.

During this interview with the seventh grade homeroom, I expected students to list skills or knowledge that they had, that they could share with the teachers (my original two-way empowerment idea). Although they recognized their knowledge about their countries, sign language, and a few other skills, the students focused largely on what they believed the teachers did not understand about both their culture and how they lived day-to-day. What teachers did not understand about what "appropriate" means in their culture: students' clothes, body shapes, body functions, music, jewelry, behavior, and aspirations. Further, what really distressed the students was the *way* that teachers communicated "It's not

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appropriate." As Andrea described eloquently in her story, "They don't have to put me down."

"Our Girls are Not Different than the Girls at Pine Wood": Discussing Differences is "Not Appropriate"

Several faculty members described a struggle about discussing differences: what was appropriate and not appropriate. John believed the students empowered him by exposing him to different realities:

> Just by being here I've gained a greater realization of what it's really like to be a minority. I don't want to say it's given me a great understanding. They've taught me that there are, I truly believe that there are differences. Not that I think they are any different than I am, but because of their situation, their lives are so much different, I never realized the day-to-day things. I mean I knew it existed, but I never understood why. But some things kind of obvious. But just the little things, like the way people treat you when you walk on a bus or how they see you're Latina and think you are going to steal something or they have to be careful around you. . . . But I don't think I can ever understand, because I'm not them and I've never experienced it. Best I can do is to realize I can never fully understand it and try to learn about it, try to look on things from their view. So I guess for empowerment they've helped me understand people in general better. Differences are totally what society puts on them, it's a societal thing.
>
> [But] other faculty really believe that they can totally understand what is going on and they know where people are coming from because they've been here for a while, and they're open minded. I wish they could see that they can't totally understand, and I don't know why they get so defensive about that, I don't know why they can't admit that. I feel like if they admit that, "oh I can't understand that," it makes them a bad person or it makes them not as open minded.
>
> Also another thing that I have a problem with is them not wanting to admit that there are differences between these girls and other girls at other St. Teresa schools in Westchester County.

John then recounted a trip to the St. Teresa school Pine Wood in Westchester County that the seventh graders had discussed earlier with a lot of energy. When he and Dave were asked about the experience, they said, "Yes, it was a great experience, but there are differences."

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Sister Helen's response was, "There are no differences between those kids and our kids."

John said he was shocked when he heard this, and thought "maybe she wasn't aware of what she was saying."

Leslie's own personal story addresses the issue of awareness and the confusion around interpreting differences. She described how she came from a very liberal, Jewish family that stressed, "Everyone is the same regardless of race, religion, etc." But in her first week of college, she met another freshman, "a Black guy," who also went to prep school but he "was so angry." She'd say,

> you're Black and I'm White but we're basically the same people. He just kept saying to me, "No that's just not true, just not it." I didn't understand what it meant. Then we talked about it, and I said, "You're right, that's just not it, my experience regardless that I went to a prep school and you went to a prep school existing in this world you as a Black male have a completely different experience. And by saying basic humanness is a starting point and by recognizing the differences, let's figure out where that is."
>
> [I learned that] difference "is" and acknowledging difference wasn't a bad thing, or negative thing. Prior 18 years, acknowledging the differences is where the prejudice started. I learned that wasn't the case, prejudice doesn't come from acknowledging difference, it comes from dwelling on it in a hurtful way. I learned so much living in [that college's] diverse community. It had to reflect the same ratio of society.

Leslie's insight around interpreting "differences" helps to make sense of the struggle with differences at the school. Teachers often deny differences because they view their students as people of equal worth as those in the Pine Wood school playing down or leaving out the different realities of the students.

Leslie then reflected on the differences between herself and the girls at the school.

> [It's] just amazing the girls can function given where they are coming from, even the base level, getting dressed, going to the school. So much more tragedy in so many of their lives, so many small things to deal with. Thankfully I never had to. They have resilience and strength, but that can't be an excuse and expectations still

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> have to be high. Recognition of the hardships but not a lowering of the expectations.

How teachers explain *why* students experience these different realities, however, was also debated at the school as described in the next section.

"Teaching the ISMs Takes Away the Girls' Hope": Studying the ISMs is Not Appropriate

Finally, a third struggle took place at the school around what is appropriate and not appropriate to teach the girls—the curriculum at the school. This struggle can be seen in the teachers' and students' responses to my question, "What does empowerment mean to you and to the school? What is the school empowering the girls to be?"

John saw empowerment this way:

> To educate them and inform them of what they need to know to succeed, you have to tell them what they are going to be encountering, so they can be ready to deal with those things. I'm not saying don't give them hope, but I think besides all the three R's, they really need to, um, know what's going on out there and recognize it when they see it. To be able to deal with it when they encounter it. That is the best way to empower somebody. If you set them off with all this information, but if they are clueless about what they are going to be encountering, it's going to be a big shock for them. Let the girls know what they will face, I'm not saying don't give them hope.

I asked John what he meant by "what they will face." He replied, "sexism, racism, and I'm referring to more like institutional racism, think that's right word, not people overtly or directly but misunderstandings and peoples' ignorance, gross generalizations." But John believed that at the school,

> People are afraid to tell people that, for here, when these issues are brought up, they say you are taking away their hope, defeating them before it starts. If you give them the knowledge and help them fight their way through to empower them in that sense of the word, the way I believe, they'd go "that's taking away their hope, they're children, if you do that, they feel defeated before it begins" and I don't agree with that. They [the girls] are aware of it already, totally aware, they're not stupid. And I feel if you tell them how they are going to get through this, that is going to give them hope, not by keeping them in the dark.

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I then asked what he believed the school meant by "Be Yourself." He thought that the school wanted the girls to graduate, go to college, get a good job, get off welfare, and be "successful productive citizens" in the United States "and not deal with problems they have now...It's hard for me to say because everybody is so vague I feel..." I asked him what he meant,

> I feel like they...want them to become empowered and I think they really do but they view certain things as being too radical. For example, telling them like it is, telling them that you're going to have to deal with this or that, preparing them, teaching them to confront those issues, because I know it's a big thing and I don't even know how to go about it, but they don't want to really address it.

Dave also believed that there was a lot that students and teachers were not allowed to talk about. For Dave, empowerment means

> letting them [the students] learn about being Latina, about racism...[It is] hard for us with privileged backgrounds to know what is important to them...[Also to be] open to other cultures. The school says they are not old enough to deal with racism [and is not open to] the kinds of things we need to be open to that are really important to the girls. Some teachers say the kids get enough culture at home, they don't need it here. Most teachers here are not really aware. These kids are not "Spanish" culture. You need to recognize different cultures.

Karen responded that she saw empowerment for herself and the school "on different levels."

This includes the

> student having some control in the classroom in what is being taught; the way it's going to work, running the lesson, taking care of class, decision-making and carrying out activities. Feeling empowered as being important, getting recognition for progress, [the] interior level in the classroom, being able to recognize their own progress and by others. In the bigger picture, giving kids tools for working in the community, different styles, [it's] the goal of the school. Trying to get [kids] back involved in the community, to interview people in the community, service work, to see themselves as community leaders, building up folks as actors, so they can act in the community. Another way is to say let's focus on skills to give them better options in academic settings, and more options in life.

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The principal and founder of the school interprets empowerment and what needs to be developed in the learning environment this way:

> Each person has a unique role, unique place, and finding ways to grow, is really critical for the functioning of an organization. Everybody can't be doing same thing the same way, a seventh grader is a seventh grader, a teacher is a teacher, each person has their part so that to me is...is that part found, is that *unique contribution valued and understood.* Usually when it's not valued, not understood, there is a lot that we don't know about the other, others, their challenges, both wide and immediate sense, in our little small setting here. What kind of environment allows for that kind of appreciation, that for me is what we are trying to create here, is an environment that values each unique individual, goals and philosophy, we state this, very student focused. [In our] mission statement, [a] *reverence for the individual,* that goes for the whole learning environment, one of the most important things in [the] school setting is that everyone is valued. I've never learned more profoundly than starting this school, how much I didn't know...the most humbling experience of your life, recognizing that there's so much more to a situation.
>
> As the director, I'm faced with reality all the time, I have to come in on the difficult situations. I have to face them with the things that aren't working, to make decisions, and they are challenged, and okay to be challenged, but I have to make them out of my own judgments that are not liked, that is my unique role, place, and important that that be, that I be empowered, as everyone else is. So easy to just perpetuate old style of authority.
>
> Three times I had to ask students to leave school. Each time...girls knew from their perspective, knew why the girl had to leave, but will be interpreted as, "Sister Kate kicked her out." Ultimately, a quick response, in minds of students. No connection between students' actions and consequences, each person needs to claim their responsibilities.

I asked her if "that [is] one of the things that empowers you to see that claiming?"

> Yes, very much so, very much so, and it disempowers me to see when it doesn't happen, or disempowers, or upsets me, or pisses me off or whatever you want to say because I know we've all learned to operate that way. But I really want us to work hard at *claiming individual responsibility versus finger pointing,* versus a power-authority structure.

I then asked about the expression "Be Yourself." She responded that it goes with their "philosophy, focus on the individual, and unique contributions." I tried to get more specific by asking, "What is that 'self'? Do you have a feel for what you are shooting for?" She responded,

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> There is "no finished product," instead it is. . . what your best response to a situation could be, your unique and best response. Listening to graduates of the first class, they view the school as a "home"; a place that encourages them to be their best selves. It's whatever it takes to make the best choices, intelligent choices, reflective choices. We are trying to generate a reflective stance.

I asked the principal to address the student's concerns with "Be Yourself" that they described in the homeroom interview. "If a student burps," I said, "They'll say 'I'm just being myself', so how do you communicate that difference?" She thought that was a good example of the frustration she feels around action-oriented ethics.

> Is it right to burp or is it wrong to burp, and if I'm going to get in trouble for burping, then I'm not going to burp, which is so ridiculous. Or tell me is it right to steal or is it wrong to steal, or is it right to have an abortion or is it wrong to have an abortion, so we're still wanting those answers rather than reflecting.

I asked if the school sets aside time to discuss the phrase "Be Yourself." She said she hears them refer to it in formal settings. Then she added that she was sure they misused the phrase and that it could be used against the school. "But," she added, "I wouldn't hear a lot of that of the misuse of the beauty of the phrase, or the challenge of the phrase. Things like that I don't hear a lot of [as principal]."

These responses point to one of the core struggles at the school: Some teachers and administrators see empowerment as developing the students' capacity to make the best, reflective, individual choices through increasing their knowledge, skills and esteem ; others, however, also include helping the girls to deal with life that is, as John puts it, "not fair and not easy."

Why Do Administrators and Teachers Unintentionally Put Others Down Using "It's Not Appropriate"?

During the group interview with the homeroom students, I asked, "What do you know that the teachers don't know?" Most of the 15 students tried to talk at once.

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Nira, who loved to get things going, threw in "that they are cockroaches." The students went into near hysterical fits of laughter.

I then followed this up by asking, "Do teachers know about living in the Dominican Republic?" A loud "NOOOOOOOOOO" rang out in unison.

Then Nira shouted out, "They don't know our culture."

Claudia added, "They don't know like racism what it's like for us, teachers don't know what it's like."

Andrea said, "The teachers upstairs, they don't know what it feels like to be treated badly , like we're Latinas and they are White so they don't get treated like us."

Aida followed up Andrea's comment with, "Like a lot of them have always had a rich life, they've had everything they always needed. Not all of them, but some of them, most of them."

And Gladys supported Aida with, "There's a difference between the way they grew up."

If teachers are not aware of the students' culture and how they live and are treated, it may be easier to put down students' behavior, appearance, likes, and dislikes as "not appropriate." They may not be aware of the different realities.

Maria also has her own take on why administrators and teachers unintentionally disrespect others—often when using "not appropriate." Her hunch comes from her own insight that she described in the story about her laser pointer.

> It was cool for me to, like, be on that end when I said something that I didn't realize. So that's why I can see that as a teacher, as a White teacher, that you do say things that you don't realize.

In Maria's interview, she described one teacher that the kids had been venting about. "Elizabeth doesn't intend to do it, but her experience, all upper middle-class White

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education, and it's just things that you do being in that category that might dismiss. . . ." I interrupted Maria and asked her to draw on her own experience to describe what those "things you do" are like. Maria's first example was in defining

> what's appropriate and not appropriate. Like that dancing is inappropriate, clothing. I always felt bad about not having the right clothes, but right for who? In the school we make all these rules but we don't see the bias in the rules that we are making, like hair, speech, what's proper English, shirts tucked in a certain way, what's tacky and not tacky.
>
> I feel like the kids are made to feel like the way they dress is bad, the music they listen to is bad, the way they spit on the street is bad, the way they hang out at home is bad. They are often made to feel everything about them is bad. How are they going to feel good about themselves? Or they have to change street speech to proper speech, change clothing, music tastes so not so sexually suggestive, everything to be proper. Not about being themselves then.

Maria also discussed a crucial issue that students bring up in the space she creates for venting—that is, the way "not appropriate" is communicated. She explained that there is a difference in the ways you could explain to a student why large hoop earrings are not appropriate for school. One way is to explain safety concerns and the concerns of kids who could not afford them who would feel excluded. The other way, one that often triggered the hidden transcript, was to explain they were "slutty or tacky."

As a Latina from a working-class background, Maria identified with the students who felt put down. In her case, she was given both direct and indirect signals that who she was dating, her body image, the way she set the table—all were "not appropriate." In addition, Maria's commitment to the type of education she wanted—where students can express their critical feedback toward her and to vent their frustrations without punishment, where she and the students give each other second chances, and where she shares and learns from her students, and her choice of curriculum that includes the ISMs the girls face day-to-day—is also often viewed as "not appropriate."

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Karen, Empowered by Students, Challenges a Standard of "Not Appropriate"

In responding to my question of when she had been empowered by the students, Karen described one example that goes against the grain of distinguishing what is and is not appropriate.

> [I am] working with kids who aren't measured well with the standards that we've had, because their intelligence doesn't come out, due to English standards...My whole idea of what's correct, right, excellent has been challenged at a strong level by the students.
>
> I had to grade social studies exams and they had all these really regimented grading scales. I read through one exam and it was amazing, so well done. It was on the effects of stereotyping and racism on people and what they have done to overturn it. It was so deep. And I looked at that grading scale with all these things and it came out really low, because if people added personal experience that was negative because it was digression. So I just realized the insights that some of the kids have, their family history is so rich, they have a lot of narratives that they build upon that isn't recognized. That's transformed me. I'm really interested in other people's stories, and my ears don't prick anymore [she laughs] to misuses in what's considered standard English. And I think that's the way that I've really changed.

Students empowered Karen to see shortcomings of a grading scale. Yet some seventh grade students and teachers found it difficult to empower teachers and administrators to be aware of their behavior—especially their disrespectful behavior. Teachers and administrators communicating what was and was not "appropriate," notably the *way* it was communicated, often triggered feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment. But in some cases when students and teachers tried to express how they felt "dissed," "put down," and treated unfairly, they were punished: Teachers and administrators told them they lied, some were punished, and others were told that their critical feedback itself was "not appropriate."

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Nira's *Critical Feedback-Up:* How Maria Consciously Responds, Gives Her Space, and How I Unconsciously React with Retribution

The School Heart Activity: How Maria Models Being Open to Nira's Critical Feedback-Up Without Retribution

On the last day of Maria's reading class, she took the students out to a park to review their final projects: Each girl had written a play. After lots of positive feedback as the students took turns reading them aloud, we all had a fun walk back to the school with Claudia and Nira narrating for the video.

Once inside the school again, Maria and the girls settled into the cafeteria. They continued to look at term projects, laughing and sharing illustrations. Maria then began preparing for the next task. Earlier in the week (when I was not there) Maria had explained to the class that the last day of school included a school-wide prayer service. For this ritual, each student needed to complete the sentence, "St. Theresa's is a home because..." After deciding how to complete the sentence, based on what it meant for them, each student was to write their sentence on a colored cardboard heart, and then present it the next day in the ritual.

With the prayer service the following day, it was time to do the heart activity. Maria turned away from the table where the students were reviewing and sharing their work and reached into a bag. She turned back around to the girls holding out assorted colors of cardboard hearts spread out like a hand of cards. As soon as the girls spotted the hearts, their faces and bodies immediately dropped, tongues clicked, most sighed loudly, and began moaning, "Oh no Ms. G." Then they began complaining LOUDLY and all at once: "OH NO....," "but Ms. G, it's NOT a home," "a home is a place you live."

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Maria's face maintained a neutral expression. She continued with the task. When one student continued to detail the arguments of exactly why this was not a home, "we don't live here, our families aren't here," Maria leaned down to her and said quietly but firmly, "Aida, Aida, Aida," until she settled down.

Then Maria gave the instructions, "All right, now you have to fill out the sentence, 'St. Teresa's is a home because...' The students interrupted her instructions in voices that both whined and flared, 'IT'S *NOT* A HOME, IT'S *NOT* A HOME..." Maria tried to continue with the task by getting the students to see how they could complete it:

> There are a lot of reasons it could be, think about your friends, okay, you just need to complete the sentence with some way, ...because our classes are small, do you get to know people really well, better than a school where there are maybe a thousand people?

Seated close to Maria was Nira, the student who Maria referred to as needing second chances, and who likes to play class clown when she can. After hearing Maria's instructions, Nira was quiet. She sat still with a look of concentration starting at the heart. Then she looked up, resting her forehead in the palm of her hand as she tried to do the task. Nira began to repeat outloud to herself, "The school is a home because everyone is ....." She did this several times trying hard to figure out how to complete the sentence. When she drew a blank, she sighed loudly, fidgeted, then she scrunched her face, put her hand through her hair, pulled it back, and kept it there for added concentration. Nira then looked up at Maria with her brows pinched together, stroked her hair again, and as her friend looked over, she tried to finish the sentence for Maria, as she was instructed, by saying, "tries hard."

Immediately after Nira said "tries hard," Maria quickly leaned down to her and whispered that the principal was in her office and could hear her, pointing her finger down

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the hall. As Maria whispered to Nira, Nira kept her hand over her forehead with an intense stare and a look of disbelief at what she was being told. She then EXPLODED: "BUT MS. G, I WAS JUST TRYING TO..., UH." Nira then twisted her body away from Maria so her face was to her friends and her back was to Maria. As she twisted, she knocked some markers and hearts to the floor.

At the same moment Nira exploded, Maria tried to explain in a soft, gentle voice, what she meant in her whispered message: "No, I know, I know, I'm just saying..."

Nira, with her back to Maria, put her elbow on the table and leaned her head against her hand. She rolled her eyes several times for her friends, sighing loudly and blowing out her lips. Then she imitated Maria talking to the class by scrunching up her nose and shaking her head side to side, while mouthing Maria's words. Her verbal imitation was audible, and audibly sarcastic. She then gave a last roll of the eyes, brought her hand down, and turned her head more toward Maria. After blowing off some steam, Nira began to pay attention to the group activity.

Maria asked , "Aida do you want to pick a color?"

Aida responded, "Um green. No."

Maria interjected, "you have to do it." Aida, deciding, "Okay. Blue."

One by one, Maria handed out the cards.

When she came to Nira around the table, Nira was busy fixing her hair up into a ponytail. Maria handed a heart to her as she did to the others, saying, "Okay. Here." Nira grabbed it, gave her a searing look with pinched eyes, then threw it down on the counter with a slap.

The cafeteria then became quiet as the girls, including Nira, settled in to write their sentences on the hearts for the prayer service the next day.

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Surprised by Maria's behavior: she responded versus reacted.

What surprised me from behind the videocamera in this very brief, but crucial scene, was Maria's response to Nira's behavior. Throughout Nira's display of her feelings and thoughts—her loud voice, body language, sarcastic imitation—Maria's facial expressions and body language remained the same: She stayed connected and continued on her task.

I, on the other hand, felt myself from behind the camera reacting to Nira's behavior that I perceived of as being disrespectful to Maria.

Maria did not react to Nira's reactions with either indignation, "How dare you!", or retribution (detention, moving her, etc.). For example, after Nira twisted her body away from Maria and materials fell on the floor, Maria said calmly, "Okay, I think one of the cards dropped."

Maria's behavior was not planned. It emerged spontaneously and took place in only a few minutes amidst the activity. I was finally able to see Maria's mode—what she had been so passionate about in her interviews: the need to create space for anger or frustration or laughter or sadness, and then respond rather than react to that behavior.

I was also surprised to find significant discrepancies between what I thought had taken place based on my memory, and what I had later seen when reviewing the videotape several times. During the scene described above, I thought Nira was taking out her irritation with the task on Maria. I thought that she really overreacted to Maria who I believed was justified in her whispered warning. But after reviewing the video, frame-by-frame, I saw that Nira had a right to react to the *way* Maria whispered her comments—Nira was just doing what she was told.

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What makes this worth noting is that after Maria whispered her warning to Nira, with the intention of preventing her from getting in trouble with the principal, she quickly realized that Nira was just trying to do the assignment and then felt unfairly disciplined. So Maria gave Nira the space to air her complaint of being treated unfairly both verbally and nonverbally rather than reacting to Nira with retribution.

Maria's response was also notable because, as I experienced during the activity, it was difficult to track who was doing and saying what. I also learned, based on my own reaction, how easy it could be to misrecognize students' behavior—especially students with a track record that may be labeled in some way. For example, Nira's struggling for an answer could have been misrecognized as not taking the task seriously, being rude, or of trying to stir things up.

Teachers might react to this misrecognition through punishing the student. If the student voiced her feelings of being treated unfairly, verbally or nonverbally, further retribution could be given.

Why Maria's conscious response to critical feedback-*up* was significant and stood out: others at the school tended to react unconsciously.

Maria's response to Nira's critical feedback is significant. During the interviews, seventh grade students and some of the teachers continued to bring up the difficulties in making suggestions and in letting teachers and administrators know when they felt put down. At the school, these participants believed that many of the teachers and administrators tended to react with retribution to critical feedback (especially when the students brought up their feelings). Maria helped me to understand the crucial difference here was power. From that point on, I began to call this ***critical feedback-up***—that is, the giving and receiving of critical feedback when there are differences in power.

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"Some of the teachers and administrators say they want feedback, but they get angry, take it personally and then use their power over you." (Maria)

From the beginning of the research encounter, Maria had been trying to convey to me how difficult it was to give critical feedback "up." For example, a week after the first seminar, "Working Effectively and Respectfully with Differences," during one of our meetings, Maria sighed with a pained expression on her face. She let me know she was upset about several issues at the school.

I quickly jumped in to offer a suggestion (my overfunctioning once again kicking in): "Hey, this is an opportunity to use the feedback skills we worked on at the seminar. The teachers and administrators at the seminar stressed their openness to learning through feedback."

Maria looked at me nearly exasperated. She then told me why she was upset.

During Women's History Month, Maria was surprised to see Sister Helen had decorated the bulletin board with all White women. Maria recounted that when she suggested to Sr. Helen that she include some women of Color, Sr. Helen shot back at her, "They get that at home." As Maria tried to talk with her about it, the discussion became heated. Sr. Helen finally ended up shouting at her, "What are you doing here?" This was followed up by unannounced visits into Maria's classroom, extra monitoring of her work, and icy stares in the halls.

Maria noted that this was a big problem: ***"Some of the teachers and administrators say they want feedback, but they get angry, take it personally and then use their power over you."***

In another example, when Maria tried to explain to teachers and the principal why some of the girls were feeling disrespected and resentful after the visit to the White, upper-

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middle-class school, Pine Wood, in Westchester, the teachers and principal reacted angrily. They disregarded the criticism, saying that it was not really the girls' complaints. Instead, the principal accused Maria and the girls' families of pushing their own agendas.

A few weeks later, Maria described what happened after several of these incidents piled up. She said that she "just blew up" at a faculty meeting.

> I hadn't said anything to them for two years, for whatever reason. For whatever they said it would be okay to say something, give your ideas, I never really did. But I did say it this year, but it didn't come out in the most constructive way, but...

As Maria described her frustration, I began to realize what she was saying. I interrupted Maria to go back to the first seminar about giving feedback:

> You could present that feedback in a very straight way without loading it, making it nice and clean, we could work through those messages, but I really think, it is such a two-way street, you could make your feedback as clean as a whistle, but if they are, all these three things, if there is one, retribution, two, no second chances (in terms of being labeled and all that other stuff) then if they don't have that spirit, then listening to your feedback then how are they gonna listen?

Maria's observations pointed to a serious flaw in most of the interpersonal skills training modules—including the one I used in the first seminar. The first seminar I gave did not address giving feedback-up. Unlike giving feedback to peers or subordinates, people with more power can not only reject the feedback, but punish you for giving it. The difference, as Maria pushed me to understand, is power.

> *"We can't tell them what they did wrong, because they feel that they've been disrespected"*
> *"She said I was lying" (seventh graders).*

At the end of the seventh grade homeroom interview, with only a few minutes remaining, I got the girls together for one big group shot in front of the videocamera and

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then I asked the final question: "I'm asking you, how can I as a middle-class White woman be more respectful in things I say and do?"

Aida and Axi, looking frustrated and tired, said, "You don't need to..."

Being behind the camera (and the power figure in the room), the lack of responses was not surprising, so I asked, "Okay, think of other teachers and give them some suggestions."

The group exploded. Here are a few of the responses that made it through the cacophony of voices.

Andrea suggested, "Don't say that we lie and stuff, and no put downs, or like, 'Look what you're wearing.'"

This struck a chord with Denise, who after nodding fervently, uncharacteristically jumped up and took center stage: "Yup...one time, he told me I was full of crap."

I posed the question again to get their suggestions, "So if you could say..."

Axi, interrupted my question with her story: "One time I did try to say something. I told Sr. Helen it wasn't right what she said to me. She said, 'Don't come to me with that and she made me leave.'"

I then tried a different question for those teachers the students really think have the intentions. "Think of one teacher who made a mistake, who did one thing by accident, didn't even know that they did it..."

One student says softly, "Ms. G."

I continue, "how would you tell them 'Hey I know you didn't mean it but when you did this it made me feel bad'..any suggestions for teachers?"

Again, there was such an explosion, that I could only capture a few responses.

Claudia said, "They never hear us out about what we have to say."

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Aida added, "They don't even give us a chance to talk."

And Andrea forcefully concluded, "We can't tell them what they did wrong, because they feel that they've been disrespected."

I asked, "What will they do?"

Several students, notably Nira, shouted out, "Suspend us!"

Claudia then restated the feelings of many in the group: "They would listen to us, but they wouldn't be believin' what we say and stuff (lots of "uh-huhs" in the background). She said I was lying."

Claudia and the other girls tried hard to get me to understand how painful it was to be accused of lying when they tried to let their teachers know that they felt disrespected. (While I heard them at one level, I did not fully appreciate the excruciating pain many of them experienced in trying to give critical feedback-up until later in the research project.)

"They get defensive, like we were attacking who they were." (some of the teachers)

During John's interview, he sighed and commented that there were a lot of things that really bothered him, but he said he held back his comments. "I should say something before I leave, but I don't want to cause a big ton of animosity."

I asked if he had ever given feedback-up.

"Yeah, but not as much as I would have liked to. I wished I would have." I asked how it was received.

John believed it was "either just missed or a little, um, defensiveness." He added, however, that he was never confrontational.

Dave, as someone who was leaving the school, had a lot of energy on this point and continued to bring it up throughout the interview. He noted, "They say we have so

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many forms for expression, but we have none. The director says she wants to hear from us but only if it's good, if it's what they think." He added that others get "defensive, like we were attacking who they were, and condescending."

Learning About Receiving Critical Feedback-Up Versus Being In The Encounters Themselves

In the heart activity, Maria "walked her talk." She modeled her first day-to-day practice—that is, she did not punish Nira when she expressed her anger both verbally and nonverbally. As a participant-observer, I was able to see how Maria responded to Nira. I also observed how some of the teachers and administrators reacted with retribution to critical feedback from the seventh graders, and some of the teachers (John, Dave, and Maria). But as a facilitator in the next activity, the photo activity, I was unable to see myself react with retribution to Nira's critical feedback.

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The Research Photo Activity: How *I* React Unconsciously to Nira's Critical Feedback-Up With Retribution

Setting up the activity.

Because the seventh grade homeroom did such a good job videotaping and participating in the two-way empowerment interview and discussion, I suggested a follow-up activity. I had read the book *Photographing the Self* (Ziller, 1990) and thought this could be a great exercise for the homeroom to address their concerns. The students agreed. On the next-to-last day of classes, after finishing an interview with John on the roof, I scaled the fire escape stairs, and ran to Maria's homeroom. I arrived with a memo on how to take the photos, and with 15 disposable cameras.

As Maria did the videotaping, I reminded the class of their concerns in our videotaped discussion: The teachers do not understand their culture, and the teachers do not know what their day-to-day life is like. I asked them to take pictures that will help the teachers understand their culture and the way they live. To help make this concrete, Maria and I worked with the students to think of examples: "For example, how different is your lobby from the top floor?" The class exploded. Claudia broke through the roar and said, "Oh, up there they have a dishwasher, a microwave, nice furniture..."

Everyone agreed to take the pictures and to be ready to give the cameras back to me at graduation (only 2 days away) for processing. They also agreed to come to school for an activity in 5 days, the first day of summer vacation, to present three or four of their best photos for Maria and me. Even though I knew I was pushing it, given the VERY limited time, I wanted to take advantage of this research opportunity.

At the graduation party, as I picked up the cameras, the principal commented, "Always the researcher." Before leaving, I thanked Maria for the significant learning for

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me during the videotaping of the heart activity—her ability to make space for anger in her classroom. It was beginning to sink in. It seemed to be big for the dissertation, although I was not quite sure how. I began to truly realize that being open to critical feedback, both verbal and nonverbal, was something Maria had been trying to get me to see from the beginning.

After developing the pictures, I was amazed at the quality of the students' photos, and the many different ways they took on the activity. They obviously put a lot of work into a very short period of time (only a day and a half to take the photos!!).

Early spontaneous sharing of photos.

When I arrived at the school, Maria was not there, but three of the girls had already arrived. Nira also brought along her 5-year-old sister for whom she was babysitting. We headed upstairs, and I set up the videocamera and the flip charts. It was a gorgeous New York day—and the first day of summer vacation—and I began to doubt if anyone else would come.

I quickly gave the girls the instructions, and Aida then repeated them into the videocamera, "We pick three or four pictures and put them on the flip chart, explaining why we picked them." When I handed out the photos, they screamed, laughed, asked questions, described what they did, and begged to get copies.

The three students, Nira, Aida, and Gladys began the selection process. Then more students arrived and ran up to get their photos. A few students who came did not turn in their cameras, and Patricia, who turned in her camera that day, also arrived. There was a lot of spontaneous sharing and discussion.

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Claudia, smiling broadly, explained that in one photo, "We got one of Marjorie's sister who knows a cop to pretend to be getting arrested. We were going to go to the station house and get her fingerprinted but we didn't have time."

Andrea described how several of them got together and scoured her bathroom to perfection, then took a picture saying, "That's what we think the top floor looks like."

Maria and her boyfriend, Jorge, arrived after most of the students were there, and many of the girls ran up to Maria eager to share their work. Everyone, including me, ran around looking at the different photos, laughing, discussing what was behind them, and having a good time. When some more students arrived, it began to get a bit wild. Girls were pushing each other into lockers, running around, playing with a basketball, playing with the 5-year-old, and talking and kidding around with Maria's boyfriend leaving their photos and markers spread out on the floor.

Maria left to get them some treats and drinks to help them get focused and do their flip charts. But as they attempted to write up their flip charts, it became obvious to me that it was much easier for them to talk about the pictures in a more spontaneous way. Writing why they chose certain pictures on a flip chart did not flow as easy as their spontaneous descriptions. (I violated their meta-communicative norms, as Briggs would say. I asked them to do an adult activity rather than let them use their norms for presenting.) After much effort, they did finish the activity, and it was time to present their work.

Students presenting their photos.

By this point, more than an hour had gone by and many of the students were very restless after working for so long on one activity. With all the cross-talk and joking, it was difficult for the students to present their flip charts. The students were not eager to present,

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saying they felt "dumb," and "let me get it over with," and "I'm shy." Eventually, several of the students did their presentations, making excellent points.

Aida talked about the importance of the first Latina doll that reflects her culture instead of the blond-haired, blue-eyed dolls. She also pointed out that Latinas like to wear big earrings, that it is part of their culture. Another photo showed graffiti in her neighborhood to give the teachers a better sense of how they live.

Gladys then presented a picture of her pet hamsters and explained she wanted to be a vet. She also discussed the plants in her house and explained their medicinal value. She also talked about why students love rap and how teachers could understand them better if they listened to rap. These two presentations launched many discussions, including one where the students made fun of the teachers' taste in music and earrings. "They like rock and wear these little earrings."

The volume of cross-talk and laughing became so loud and difficult to manage that we asked anyone who did not want to participate to wait in the hall. About half the students left. Things immediately calmed down inside, while the thump of the basketball off the walls went on outside in the hall.

Next, Claudia talked about her "arrest" picture. She said that the teachers think that "cops are good, but we think they are the devils."

Gloria then described the mural of a Puerto Rican hero, "He's from my country Puerto Rico, RIP." She then explained some teachers see it as graffiti, and think it is ugly. "It's a picture, and we can't do it in school."

But Patricia, who had been taking in all the discussions, then interjected, "Yes we could."

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I asked if teachers see that mural as a work of art. Gloria responded, "They'd probably want to paint over it, it may be a work of art but they don't like it." Claudia added, "Ms. G., she likes that type of thing, but others might be thinkin', they should not be doin' that on the wall, that it's pollution." I asked, "Do you think if you told that to the teachers they'd..." Claudia answered, "NO, they'd take it personal."

Nira then presented her pictures. The first was of a toilet. She chose that photo to describe "how the poor people live." She explained, though, that in the Dominican Republic where it is poorer than here, they just "have a hole and when that gets filled they make another hole." At this, Maria's boyfriend in the back made a joke in Spanish and everyone cracked up.

Several students presented photos of Latino music stores, "They'd be like, oh how could those Hispanic people listen to that?" I asked, "Do you really think they'd be like, oh gross," Claudia jumped in, "No just they'd be like how could they hear this."

Someone in the back threw in "like Ms. G....."

The rest of the students yelled "SHHHHH."

Maria then addressed the class, "No it's okay, you can say bad things about me anytime."

Nira then said to her face, "She is not the coolest teacher."

Quickly the conversation moved to another photo about food, "They know about our kind of food, they just don't eat it."

All through these discussions, Patricia was pacing back and forth studying intensely the six flip charts taped to the chalkboard. She then said, "I don't get it. Is this for like the teachers?" Maria then explained that the photos were to describe something about students' lives for the teachers to learn about their culture and how they live.

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Patricia looked around and said, "Then why do you keep talking about White people? I thought this was for the teachers."

Maria asked Patricia and the class, "Why?"

She and others responded, "Because they are White."

Patricia qualified the discussion, "Yeah but not all are like that. I think some would like the art in this picture," walking over to Gloria's photo of the Puerto Rican mural.

Maria responded with enthusiasm, "Okay good, that's good that you said that, so the one that Aida showed was messing up the wall but that's different."

Patricia continued, "Some White teachers here are different. Some teachers here are more open to listening to merengue, rap, etc. than teachers in other schools." Then she analyzed Claudia's "arrest" photo: "And that picture with Marjorie's sister being arrested, it's not always all Latinos getting arrested. They just make it *seem* like it is, like in the TV and the newspaper always Latinas' pictures but it's mostly White people."

Suddenly, Gladys jumped in front of the camera, almost like she was rapping. "I can tell you the difference right? Next week I'm going to Westchester County and I want to take some pictures of Westchester and here, and I can show you the difference. 'Cause here they have roads and, um, streets, um whatever, in Westchester they have gates and houses."

I asked, "What do you mean gates?"

Claudia jumped up and stood next to Gladys,

> Oh yeah, gates and big houses and a big gate around the houses and big driveway to your car , and they have like a garage and grasses and trees and everything like that...pool in the back of their house.

Maria asked, "Do you think that all people with houses are the same?"

Gladys looked puzzled: "What are you talking about?"

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Maria clarified, "Do they all look the same, do poor people have houses?"

Gladys then said, "Yeah my aunt has a house, and she's poor, well not poor really, but she can't afford that much food."

A loud thump came from the halls where the other students were running around throwing the basketball. I looked at Maria and said, "Oh they are all dying to get out of here, we just need to decide what to do with all these photos."

Maria turned, "I'll settle them down." They all came running in, including the 5-year-old and Maria's boyfriend.

Maria then announced, "I can give you all detention" as several girls were rocking each other out of the rocking chair onto the floor.

"Nira, Cristina (the 5-year-old) is acting better than you are."

I then asked, "Do you think the teachers will get something out of this?

Claudia responded, "If they want to they could, but if they don't want to they won't."

<u>"Be yourself" debate.</u>

Maria pushed them to think from another perspective: "Do you feel you know where the teachers are coming from?" Gloria: "Yes, we learn about them all day." Gladys added, "How they live, that is obvious."

Then Maria asked, "How do you like the rules of the school?" Several made remarks similar to Gladys's, "They tell me to be myself, but then they don't like it."

Gloria, with an expression that looked as if a light bulb went on over her head, said, "I know, they should say 'Be Your Second Self,' which we have to be here."

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All the while, Maria struggled to hear the students over the roar of background noise.

> Class I'm trying to listen to you. I brought you the food, you made a mess on the floor, the least you could do is listen to my question and answer it. The question I have is: Do you believe what we tell you to be in school? What way of life is that promoting? Is that the life that you've shown in your pictures, or is it another way of life? What way is that, somebody answer, did you hear my question, if you listen to the question I know you all will have excellent answers, because you all are smart and you make those connections.

(By this time, Maria's boyfriend Jorge was behind the videocamera. When I later reviewed the video, I learned how carefully he was documenting the scene. I, on the other hand, was no longer paying attention to the videotaping. At this point, I began to consider the activity a disaster. I did not believe I would end up using the video for the research project.)

As Maria talked to the class, my body language in the video was tense. I was feeling way off task and I was taking the tension in the room personally, in addition to their nonattention. I also was worried that they were going to get in trouble (detention, get yelled at) for participating in my research and helping me out.

Andrea then addressed Maria's question: "I think in the school, I think they want us to be like good, because if we act like we are acting right now, then we're not gonna get a job, cause people are gonna think we're like too rowdy to even get a real job...(her voice shaking slightly, her face serious). So they want us to be good and educated so when we get a job we get a good one."

Patricia then said something to Maria in a very low voice: "I have a question, why do you think the teachers are bad?" Maria responded, "Who, me?" Patricia turned to the other side of the room and said, "No, them."

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Reviewing the video, I noticed that the girls who took pride in their grades and who did not get in as much trouble as the others sat on one side of the room and the others faced them. This split in the class was explained to me by Patricia very early on, and now here she was dealing with it head on.

Claudia, Nira, and others mumbled, "I don't think the teachers are bad."

Patricia, eyes growing wide, blurted out: "Well then what the hell are you guys talking about?"

Andrea added to Patricia' point: "You guys are the ones acting bad, then they give you detention, and then you think the teachers are bad."

Maria then tried to engage the other side of the circle, "I want to hear from someone over here, answer my question, what is the life that the teachers are asking you to be, trying to get you to focus."

Instead, Patricia kept talking, explaining some of the teachers' decisions about what was and was not appropriate.

> I understand the thing about the earrings. What if other people don't have big earrings or they can't afford it, is it fair? Cause then people might start making fun of them. Maybe one of those things, maybe cause it's not appropriate for school, or having your shirts all tight and tied up (she pulls her shirt tight), but not good for school. If you go outside, but you have to understand it's what they think because it's a school...

As she's talking, something happens in the back corner of the room. Maria's boyfriend was playing with the 5-year-old and Claudia. Claudia then said, "Ms. G...hey you're supposed to be a role model," laughing. Jorge laughed, "Oh yeah, uh-huh."

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Taking things personally and reacting with retribution to Nira: threatening to take her off the participation list.

As time was running out, I asked three times, each time in a more frustrated tone, about showing these pictures to the teachers. The students all agreed the teachers could see the pictures. I tried to get students, who by that time had little energy or attention left, to verify their commitment to work together the following semester by analyzing the videos. Interested students had signed a list a few weeks before.

I was getting discouraged. I was taking their inattention personally. I thought it was a sign that they did not want to participate further in my research. Maria sensed this. She tried to tell me, "In summer it's hard."

Maria then called everyone over for a final chat. She pulled all the students into a tight circle and leaned in:

> I asked you, we asked you, you volunteered, but it was very difficult. A lot of you were not giving your attention, and I know you're capable but you are not four years old. I just want an answer from you, is this fair?

With this, the students screamed, "OH NOOOOOOOOOOO."

Maria then threatened to send Gladys and Nira to the hallway, but they settled down. Again she repeated, "Is this fair?"

"No," they responded.

Maria then asked, "Who bought the cameras for you?" I clutched inside. They did me the favor by participating in the research. I stood there with my face tight as a board.

Andrea answered, "Kelly, and then we come here and we acting all rowdy and stuff."

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Maria continued, "I'm not saying you had to come in here and be totally dead silent, that's not what I'm asking for. Were we being respectful of each other in what we had to say?"

Students respond with, "NOOO..we weren't listening."

Maria reminded them, "Do you like for people to listen to you? Like when you go 'Ms. G, Ms. G, Ms. G,' it bugs you right?

They laughed and said, "Yeah."

> You all had amazing pictures, you had thoughts behind them, and we even had a debate going on. People in this room disagreed about things we're looking at, that is so important! This is what is what I want to see. I want to see somebody saying, "you know what I think you're saying is not right, and I don't think what you're saying is right."
>
> Do you all want a better education than the one you have? You got a chance to give input to how you're educated and what your school is like, on the way you learn, do you all want to do that? Right, this is one chance to do it, take these chances because a lot of people don't have them right, okay, so can we agree that the next time we come together we'll have cooperation. Okay? So let's clean up the mess. If you want to take some stuff home with you, you can.

I *again* tried to see if students wanted to continue to participate in the research. I announced,

> The main thing is if people want to continue, like I've taken all these videos to understand what's going on, you signed a list, there were like 10 of you, but it doesn't look like too many people are interested today.

Maria asked the students, "Would that change on a different day?"

Claudia said, "Yeah, cause it's summer."

But during the event, I did not hear this. It seemed to me that the students were no longer interested. I continued to look for confirmation that the students were still interested.

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Feeling they were not, I announced again, "I'm asking should I still keep you names on the list?"

Andrea reminded me, "I'm not gonna be here." Several students rushed up and hugged her.

I continued, "Right. But anybody else."

Claudia added, "Not for 2 months."

I then tried to see about getting the photos to girls who just turned in their cameras. Maria asked, "Could I have permission to give Kelly the class phone numbers?"

Claudia responded, "Yeah, but you need to explain why you are calling to our mothers."

Nira then began flagging me over to the bulletin board, saying, "Hurry up and take my picture so I can go."

I again took this personally. Behind the videocamera, Jorge zoomed in and caught our interaction. On the video my face is tight, stern. I kept saying she didn't seem interested and that maybe I should take her off the list. She looked confused by my behavior and became more impatient and irritated as I became more insistent about getting her commitment.

After the activity: feeling it was a "disaster."

After I took a photo of each flip chart, I began packing up while the girls ran around trying to figure out how to get copies of each other's pictures. "Write your name on the back." "No, you'll ruin it."

As I left the building, the students were gathered around Maria and her boyfriend enjoying the sun. I waved to Maria, feeling that the activity was a disaster and I had lost

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my connection to the students. I felt bad that I did not give them a process to channel their energies. Instead, they were threatened with detention and reminded of the White lady who gave them cameras.

Here was a perfect example of an exercise set up to be empowering, but it felt disempowering. Riding the subway home, I thought there would be nothing to salvage from the day for the research project.

Five days later, I called Patricia to drop off her photos. I first spoke with her mother in Spanish and told her a little about the research. She said she would like to get the parents more involved at the school to discuss some of the same issues. When I spoke to Patricia, I apologized for not doing a good job as a facilitator. She told me not to worry about it and that they just got too rowdy.

The same day, I sent Maria an apology as well and reflected on three areas where I made mistakes. First, my expressive impulse: When I saw how good the students did videotaping the homeroom, I rushed into the camera idea without thinking through the logistics. A second problem: This was a last-minute idea and very unfair to Maria who was leaving to go home and should have had that time with her boyfriend. And third, the process was unfair to the students: They did an amazing job; they came in on summer vacation; and *then* I had them do an adult activity. I realized I violated the meta-communicative norms.

I thanked Maria for trying to get the process going and in helping me when I got "bummed." I also stressed that no one owed me anything for the cameras. I chose to do it, and it added to the research. Finally, I let Maria know how much I had learned from her and how hard I saw her job was. I also related how talking about how tough the experience was seemed to build trust with other faculty members—that is, getting in their

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shoes and seeing the challenges and the uncomfortable feelings that go along with them. Overall, I let Maria know I was sorry to be so selfish in my research role.

In my interview several days later with the principal, I conveyed what I perceived had happened. Later in the conversation when she was describing what "Be Yourself" meant to her, she emphasized making reflective choices. Then she added, "Now my guess is that when you were with the seventh grade on Monday, you didn't see much reflection going on." I disagreed.

> No, wait, there was though. I really think there was. But the process didn't allow them. . . in the first homeroom, I didn't have to do anything. They were making these incredible comments and being much more respectful of each other. I had a better process. They were being very reflective. There was some class clown stuff, but I was blown away. I don't remember thinking like that when I was in seventh grade.

<u>More than just poor facilitation skills, I reacted unconsciously to critical feedback-up.</u>

It was not until *a year later,* when I reviewed the photo activity videotape for this chapter, that I saw myself reacting to Nira's critical feedback-up with retribution! After becoming aware of how easy it is to get hooked unconsciously, I better appreciate the difficulty involved in Maria's ability to respond to Nira's critical feedback without retribution.

I thought this activity was a disaster due to my poor facilitation skills. I also believed the video of the activity would have nothing to offer the research. But over a year later, after carefully reviewing the video, frame-by-frame, I saw the students' important contributions, debates, and the amazing amount of work for the research project. By not

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valuing the work of Maria and her students in this activity, I disrespected the group and was not effective as a researcher.

I also began to see that many of the valuable learnings for the research project were in the parts of the video where I was most uncomfortable—where my face was tight and my body rigid. Despite my intentions and my research focus of two-way empowerment, I took Nira's critical feedback-up personally and unconsciously reacted with retribution. My behavior stands in contrast to Maria's behavior when she responded to Nira's critical feedback by giving her space to express her feelings without punishment.

(*Why* I reacted and Maria responded to critical feedback-up will be analyzed in the section of this chapter called, "Why This Case is Significant: Maria's Openness to Critical Feedback-Up.")

In this case study, I was fortunate. Maria tirelessly tried to get me to understand how crucial it is to not punish students when they express critical feedback. She modeled how to respond versus react. While I understood it conceptually, I did not have it in*corpo*rated in my day-to-day practice, my bodymind, my way of being, or habitus as Bourdieu called it. It was only through reluctantly seeing myself on video that I was able to see myself react to Nira after being unaware for more than a year. This pushed me to learn more about why receiving critical feedback-up was so difficult, and how I and other interested practitioners could learn from her about encouraging two-way empowerment through practitioner openness to critical feedback-up.

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After *Experiencing* Retribution Myself, I Contacted Maria to Develop the Second Seminar on Responding Versus Reacting to Critical Feedback-Up

Shortly after the intensive research phase at the school ended with what I considered the failed photo activity, I found myself in a situation similar to what students and teachers at the school had described. When I was asked for feedback by my supervisor in a work setting, he became very upset when I gave critical feedback-up. He protested that he had never disrespected me and that my feedback was not valid. Instead, he yelled, "That's your crap." I experienced confusion, questioning myself, anger, sadness, frustration, the experience of having to walk on egg shells in the office, and the pain of being told I was lying.

Reflecting on the experience, I gained a new appreciation for the comments of the students and teachers who described the pain of not being heard, being yelled at, and accused of lying as they tried to let others know about their feelings of disrespect.

I immediately contacted Maria. I described how it took my experiencing retribution myself to finally understand her first and crucial practice: creating space for students to express critical feedback-up. We discussed ways of developing the second seminar for faculty to address this critical issue: How to respond versus react to critical feedback-up.

I felt this sense of urgency to develop the second seminar based on my own experience of retribution. Yet all the while I was still unaware of how I reacted to Nira's critical feedback-up with retribution!

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Maria's Ideas for the Second Seminar: How White, Middle-Class Teachers Can Signal Openness and Better Respond to Critical Feedback-Up

As I began to sketch out ideas for the second seminar, I remembered an earlier interview with Maria. During one of our first interviews, I asked if she thought trying to get in other folks' shoes could make a difference. She replied,

> Yeah, it might help. My boyfriend points out all the ways I'm White, what I say and do. But he feels *comfortable* enough telling me. And the teachers he is comfortable around are the same ones as me and the kids are comfortable around. So there is something there.

I pushed Maria to think about what is that "something there"? "How do you signal openness to learning, and how have others—especially White, middle-class people—signalled openness to you?"

Maria first described how one of her old roommates at the school, a White, middle-class woman, signaled that she was open to learning.

> [She] had friends from many cultures, [and she] listened to kids, really. She drew out conversation in a way I'm not that good at, with cab drivers, homeless person. She'd talk to them, with kids' families, really curious, her questions were not fake. They were too thought out, really long, showed she was really listening. She'd really want to get to know them and to create relationships with them. She was creating relationships, not [doing] service [projects] or saving them in a nursing home. The same with the kids. She saw them on equal terms. Everyone she met.
>
> [She signaled she was open to me] because she saw me as an equal person. She was interested regardless who the person was, not friendly in a fake way. With others I don't feel that way. They are really friendly to the Harvard graduates who came by to visit, but not friendly to, like, the unemployed bartender. I noticed it wasn't across the board. And that there were judgments on the way people dressed, looked. Not joking around, but they held to them. Like fat people shouldn't wear mini skirts, but said with real conviction. She [my old roommate] never made those kinds of comments about the kids, so I'd watch the stuff and listen.
>
> Like the guy I'm going out with now, he's been in jail, he's unemployed. . . some people I know their first question is, "Where did you go to college? Where do you work?" Those status kind of questions. I see who asks those and who doesn't, and I'm uncomfortable around those who do because people in my family,

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friends before I went to college, could be judged on those answers. Rather than asking questions to help me get to know who the person is.

I asked Maria to talk more about "on equal terms." She then recounted the "fondue" story.

[Treating me on equal terms means] treating me as someone with something to say, someone who can think, someone whose experiences are just as valid. [During my undergraduate experience at a prestigious university] I always hated feeling like, when people would say something like "fondue" and I didn't know what it was and they'd say, "You don't know what that is?" [Maria imitates this person using a condescending tone and an appalled facial expression]. But that shouldn't be because I could say something that they wouldn't know anything about. But I never felt that I could because I was always surrounded by people who did know what that was about [and they were] not validating your experience. [They were] making you feel dumb cause you don't know what something is that everyone *should* know. If I was afraid to say something, one time or two times, I can't be myself with them. They only accept me on the level I'm acting. If I know the things that they know, then they are comfortable around me and it's okay. But I'm not being me with them.

[At the school], I just kind of see where their priorities are. Is it where people go to school? Is it making connections? Or is it, like, being yourself with people, and giving people chances, and treating them the way you want to be treated?

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Seminar 2: Working Effectively and Respectively with Different Styles and Differences in Relational Power

Going into the second seminar, I had just come out of a double-bind in a work situation. My focus was on my own pain and how easy it is to put others in a double-bind despite our intentions (as I saw with my supervisor). But at that time, I was still unaware of my own reactionary behavior with Nira.

In this section, I will outline how I planned the seminar with Maria and the principal. Then I will briefly describe the content of the seminar. And finally, I will summarize some of the participants' questions, concerns, and interesting comments.

In this second seminar I finally addressed power! Thanks to Maria, I saw the limits of increasing our awareness of our privilege without addressing the relations of power (in a transitive sense: who has power over who). This helped to explain the contradiction at the school. Despite the school's philosophy of "encouraging constructive criticism," receiving it is very tough to do. The reason: in a power-laden encounter, the more powerful cannot only receive it, but retaliate and oppress the person for giving it.

Planning the Second Seminar with Maria and the Principal

As I described in the last ethnographic description, it was only when I was in the *thick* of a double-bind situation myself that I could finally begin to appreciate what Maria and the students had tried so hard to get me to understand: Even when those of us in the more powerful positions say we want feedback, we tend to react with retribution.

During the interviews, I was still focused on capturing two-way moments. While the problems around feedback-up seemed very important, they also seemed to be outside

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of my research scope. Yet after I became sensitized, I also began to see that this issue threaded throughout many of the interviews. Maria explained that giving critical feedback-up to people you do not care about is easy. Giving critical feedback-up to people you care about (like her colleagues), however, is tough. The worse situation is being misunderstood and then punished for it.

After my realization, and my dialoguing with Maria, we began to think of how we could present the issues of giving and receiving feedback-up in a spirit of learning rather than of blaming. At the same time, the principal communicated that she wanted to bump up the intensity notch from the first seminar that was pretty safe to get at some of the more thorny issues. With this encouragement, I designed a seminar based on the school's needs: a seminar to directly address the issue of critical feedback-up drawing on what I had learned to date in the research process. I also offered to facilitate an interpersonal social style seminar that the faculty was interested in. Together, the seminar addressed differences in styles and relational power.

In designing the second seminar, I saw the case-driven need to further explore the literature that addresses our desire for status intertwined with deception, and communication theory—notably the double-bind analysis. Because of time constraints, I was only able to scratch the surface. In doing so, it became clear that I needed to go deeper into areas pointed to by the case.

Seminar Content

The seminar took place in August 1997 before the fall semester. The location was a very comfortable Catholic convent where a few of the nuns resided in a comfortable part

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of New York City. Several new teachers on St. Teresa's staff attended as part of their training.

Differences in Interpersonal Styles

In the second seminar, before working with the issues of power and feedback, we addressed another dimension of difference: interpersonal style (see Appendix 6, Seminar 2, Handouts, Flip Charts). I noted how when these styles are in the background, it can add to miscommunication While noting the limitations (again to context and culture), many in the group found them practical. Several commented on how easy it is to misjudge someone who is more or less assertive or more or less responsive (showing feelings). Several teachers also noted while these differences increase the complexity of communication, by understanding these differences, the team can become aware of their interdependence and can take advantage of their different strengths.

Differences in Relational Power

In the second part of the seminar, we moved into the more difficult area of differences in relational power. I warned the group that unlike the previous part of the seminar on styles, a tested seminar in use for many years, my work on differences in relational power came from the research at the school, and was just recently formulated. One of the goals of this seminar was to give the group some of the findings from my participant-observation in Maria's class, other activities at the school, and the interviews.

Rather than just criticizing the more powerful in the group, I wanted everyone to take a step back and see the whole empowerment encounter (see Appendix 6, Flip Chart 12, "Differences in Relational Power"). I commented that both enter the encounter with intentions to carry out empowerment effectively and respectfully. Everyone enters the

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encounter with their intercultural advantages (umbilical cords of privilege), their interpersonal style, and unique history, and their institutional, relational power. I also commented on the other relationships that exist, both horizontal and vertical, inside and outside the school, and how the system is open to larger relationships of the education system, the Catholic Church, the local community, and so on.

Rather than looking causally, I asked the teachers and administrators to look at it from a more systems perspective. I asked them four questions.

First, "who has the whole picture?" One participant responded the less powerful because they have to understand both the more and less powerful. Then another disagreed and said neither had the whole picture. I agreed that the subordinate does have that double consciousness, as DuBois called it, but that she is not aware of all of the constraints and relationships of the supervisor.

Then I asked a second question, "what does each have that the other is unaware of?" The group discussed information, constraints, then I added feedback and the hidden transcripts. When I explained the concept of the hidden transcript came from a book titled *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, several of the participants were shocked; they could not understand what domination would have to do with their environment that stresses mutual respect. I explained more about the hidden transcripts by citing an example at the school, "chillin' on the fifth floor" with the teachers. Then several participants offered examples of the different hidden transcripts at the school: the students', the volunteers, and so on. After better understanding the hidden transcript, the participants who had expressed concerned were O.K. with us moving on.

When I asked the third question, "What is a potential problem in giving/receiving feedback?" one of the older nuns piped in immediately and said "you can get punished!"

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"Exactly," I agreed. I discussed how I did not see this in the first seminar, how important it is for the whole system, and how it will be a focus for the remaining time.

And finally I asked, "What are the advantages of seeing others' perspectives?" Responses ranged from empathy, community, and the ability to get in their shoes. I explained that giving and receiving feedback was crucial for being both effective and respectful to learn from, be empowered by, and have empathy for each other.

While both the more and less powerful need to learn about the other's perspectives and constraints, I noted that the difficulty involved in the more powerful receiving feedback from the less powerful is rarely addressed. That was my big learning from working with Maria. I discussed my belief that for an organizational cultural change to take place, those in charge need to be on board. Those in the more powerful positions need to set the tone by modeling.

This provided a segue to reintroduce the model from the first seminar as the "Two-Way Empowerment Evolving Model." (See Appendix 6, Flip Chart 14). I pointed out how the model had evolved since the first seminar thanks to Maria's modeling the giving and receiving of feedback—notably critical feedback—in the classroom interaction. .

Why is it so difficult to receive critical feedback-up?: sharing research findings.

For the rest of the session, we concentrated on why it was so tough to receive critical feedback-up. I shared some of the very initial stages of research in three areas I was working with. First, I outlined the potential knee-jerk reactions due to our desire for status intertwined with deception that can trigger reacting with retribution versus responding to critical feedback (see Appendix 6, Flip Chart 15). Here I covered what we are up against in

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receiving critical feedback-up that I outlined in the section on the umbilical cord of privilege and our desire for status.

Then I addressed what I believe are some of the vicious cycles triggered by disrespectful practices that are often unintentional resulting in resentment on both sides and can lead to a near double-bind (Appendix 6, Flip Chart 16.)

- A disrespectful comment or action is made often unintentionally.
- This triggers resentment in the less powerful shown in their body language, their actions, and nonactions.
- The more powerful, unaware that they said and did something disrespectful, views the resentful behavior in the less powerful as disrespectful and rude, and the more powerful feel disrespected and resentful.
- Then the more powerful, with good intentions, say, "I want your feedback," but when they receive feedback "up," they may react to the feedback (including nonverbal signals like sadness) as a betrayal, and in some cases respond with retribution (consciously and unconsciously).

Asking for feedback, yet reacting with retribution if it is critical, puts the less powerful in a near double-bind. As double-bind theorists note, the only way to escape the double-bind is to comment on it, but when the contradiction is pointed out, the more powerful often see it as a slap.

Maria pointed out that these tendencies are important for the group to pay attention to because many of the teachers work as volunteers. Therefore, they may be sensitive to all that they are sacrificing leading to biases in the tracking of exchanges.

Finally, I offered some initial ideas for giving and receiving feedback when there are differences in power from one of my colleagues who works for a consulting

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company:[44] setting the tone, getting centered, and receiving feedback (see Appendix 6, Flip Chart 17). I told the group that what this really takes is courage (or heart work, courage from corazon-heart) to be more centered and responsive rather than reactional. The principal chimed in that we also need forgiveness of self and others.

Comments and Concerns

During the seminar, four key concerns emerged. In the next two parts of the thesis, I return to these concerns in both planned and unplanned ways.

"Educational Privilege is Earned Privilege"

First, as described above, Maria was concerned that her earned privilege in education and other unearned dimensions of privilege need to be viewed differently. While privilege is seen in NEON whether it is earned or not, Maria's point needs to be addressed further in developing the individual exercise.

"Critical Feedback from Adolescents Needs to be Seen Differently"

The second concern came from the principal. When I began discussing receiving feedback from students, she argued that feedback from adolescents needed to be seen differently. I agreed and let the participants know that they need to adapt these findings because they were much more familiar with adolescent girls' development.

But I also tried to get the teachers and administrators to think of the range of potential critical feedback from students. I gave an obvious example of critical feedback that would be disregarded: seventh graders complaining that not having beer in class was disrespectful. This is obviously not legitimate. Yet other feedback messages may *feel* like

[44]Thanks to Rich Carson who works for Monitor Company for sharing these ideas based on Chris Argyris' work.

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attacks, and without legitimacy, when, in fact, they may contain critical information for the teachers and the school. They may be able to help us learn how we can be more respectful and effective. Students may see disrespectful and ineffective practices that we cannot see.

This triggered a discussion as several teachers jumped in with examples. At the end of this discussion, we agreed that the key issue was to be able to discern legitimate critical feedback. The crucial dimension here was to be aware of how easy it is to get triggered when receiving critical feedback and to react with retribution.

"Women Historically Tend to Take All Feedback: Valid and Invalid"

Another concern by one of the teachers was that many women historically have tended to take in and uncritically believe all the feedback whether it was valid or invalid. Again, we saw the need to be able to better discern feedback in a more conscious way.

This teacher's point addresses the concern of being too open. The potential Achilles' heel of a two-way empowerment way of being.

"Why Would a Book on Domination Have Anything To Do With Us?"

As I explained earlier, one of the most striking responses during the seminar was the shock of many of the participants that I drew on the book, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. Several gasped, sighed, and said, "What?!" Domination tends to be seen as master-slave relationships, as physical domination. Yet, as Scott noted, ***status domination*** is often not recognized. That many of the faculty do not see domination as a possibility is significant because then domination is not tracked. Like many nonprofits, some of the participants here believed that because of their intentions, they could not dominate others.

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Why This Case is Significant: Maria's Openness to Critical Feedback-Up

Despite our intentions to be respectful and effective in day-to-day practice, some of the teachers, administrators, and I reacted with retribution to critical feedback-up. In several examples, we not only reacted, but we also were unaware of our reaction.

I did not become aware of my reaction to Nira's critical feedback-up until I saw myself on videotape over a year later! I was blind to my own behavior despite my intentions, my research focus, and several experiences: my recognition of Maria's first day-to-day practice ("students can express when they are upset without being punished") as crucial, my experience of being punished for giving critical feedback-up, and my designing and facilitating the second seminar that urged St. Teresa's faculty to respond versus react to critical feedback-up. If Maria's boyfriend Jorge had not captured my reacting to Nira on videotape, I would have written a very different thesis, unaware of my behavior (my habitus), and missed a crucial learning opportunity. While I know there were other moments I am still not aware of (when the videotape was not rolling), I am grateful to Jorge for capturing at least this one.

When some of the teachers, administrators and I unconsciously reacted, we demonstrated how difficult it is to practice an openness to critical feedback-up—even when we were committed to doing so. Why? I believe part of the reason is that the hidden background of the empowerment encounter shaped our behavior. Despite our intentions, we reacted and then misrecognized our reaction due to our desire for status intertwined with deception, our umbilical cords of privilege, and the power of habitus.

This case is significant because Maria did not react. Instead, she was open to critical feedback-up. Even though Maria had more in common with the students, and her

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umbilical cord of privilege was thinner than that of her colleagues and I, she *still* had to resist tendencies associated with her desire for status intertwined with deception, her thicker umbilical cord of privilege relative to the students, and her more powerful position and habitus as a teacher.

Maria was not perfect, nor was she a saint. Yet as a Latina working-class woman, she knew what it was like to be on the receiving end of disrespectful behavior. She knew the gut-wrenching pain of being punished for giving critical feedback-up. Maria also had a theoretical understanding of structural inequalities as a graduate student in gender studies. Maria's positioning and her experience can help those of us with thicker umbilical cords of privilege learn how to be more open to critical feedback-up.

Learning from Maria's example, however, is a challenge. Like an athlete or a skilled facilitator, Maria made something difficult (being open to critical feedback-up) look easy, natural, and, at times, unnoticeable. As a result, it is difficult to see both what she did (her way of responding), and equally important, what she did *not* do (her way of resisting the tendencies linked to the desire for status, the umbilical cord of privilege and the power of habitus)—especially for those of us who have thicker umbilical cords of privilege.

As I discussed in chapter 3, while it is difficult and resisted by some practitioners to see our different dimensions of privilege, it is much more difficult to see how we embody privilege in the ways we think, feel, and interact (our habitus). ***If we misrecognize our privilege, we will misrecognize our ways of being that embody our privilege.***

In this section, I will first make visible the results of Maria's openness to critical feedback-up: Maria transformed a potential vicious cycle with Lourdes into a learning cycle, encouraging two-way empowerment; and Maria acknowledged her disrespectful behavior and made space for Nira's critical feedback-up, preventing a potential vicious

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cycle. I contrast these results with the vicious cycles and near double-binds that some of the faculty and I triggered by not being open to critical feedback-up.

Then I analyze how Maria was able to be open to critical feedback-up in two-ways that interested practitioners can learn from. First, how Maria interpreted critical feedback-up differently: as expected and crucial to be heard out and discerned. And second, how Maria responded: How she resisted reacting based on her desire for status, her umbilical cord of privilege, and her habitus as a more powerful teacher.

Maria Transformed a Potential Vicious Cycle with Lourdes into a Learning Cycle, *Encouraging* Two-Way Empowerment

By being open to Lourdes' critical feedback-up, Maria transformed a potential vicious cycle into a learning cycle and encouraged two-way empowerment (see Figure 1). In Maria's description of this example, Lourdes was not a victim. She constructed her feedback so Maria learned from and was empowered by it. Maria cannot make two-way empowerment happen on her own by being open, but she can create the conditions in the interaction that may foster both her self and Lourdes being empowered and feeling empowered in the process. Maria's openness, therefore, *encouraged* two-way empowerment, a critical distinction I did not make until I began to write this thesis.

Maria's openness to critical feedback-up stood out against the behavior of other teachers and administrators at the school. In introducing the case in chapter 4, and in the ethnography and the seminars above, we learned about the intentions and passion of the administrators and the teachers to be respectful and effective in empowering the girls. As an innovative school, they sought to empower the girls to break out of poverty and create a more just world by increasing their self-esteem

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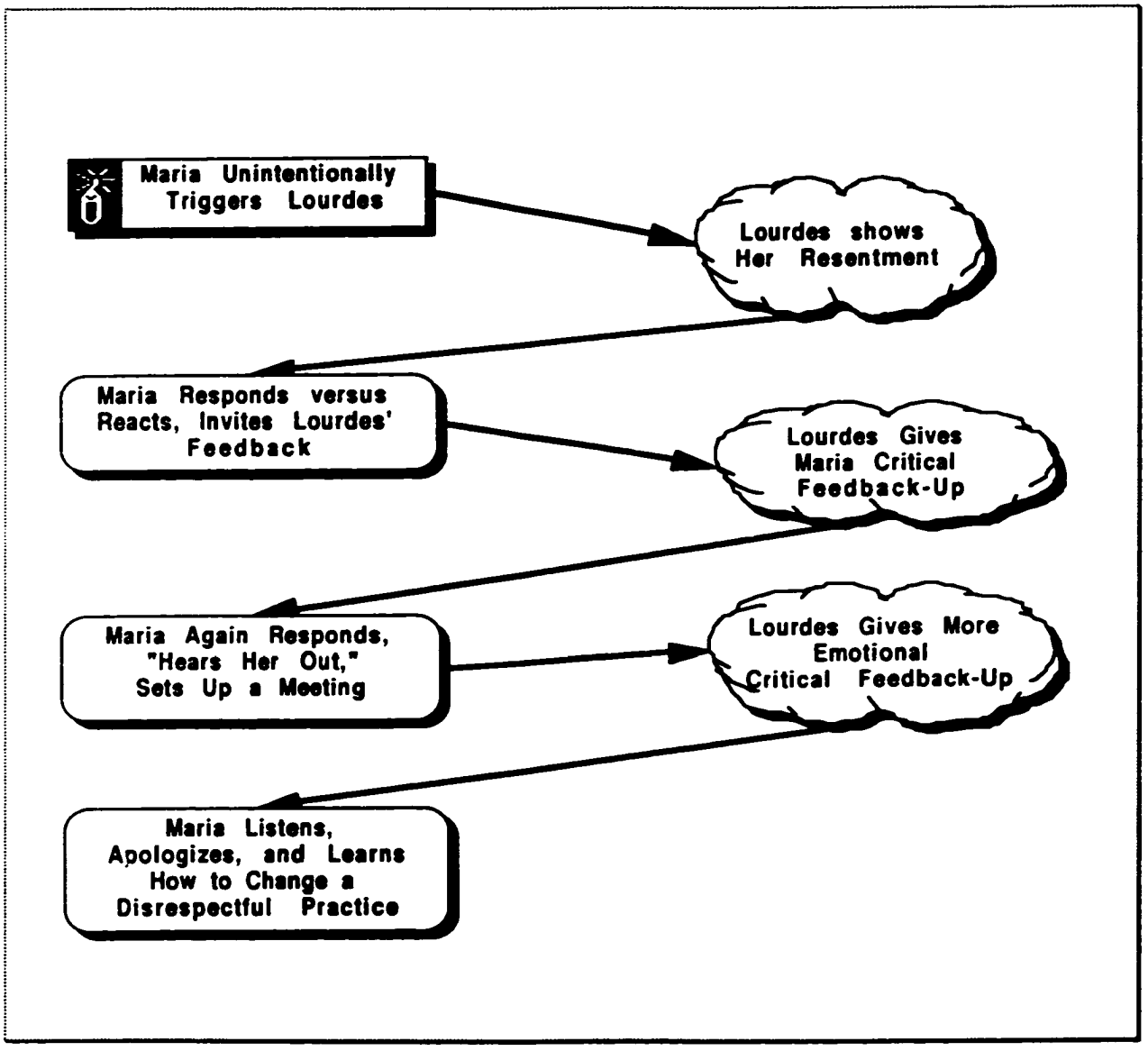

Figure 1. Maria's openness to critical feedback-up transforms a potential vicious cycle into a learning cycle, encouraging two-way empowerment.

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and education. They sought to build the adolescent girls' confidence and their "voices." This included *encouraging the girls to voice constructive criticism.*

The school was designed to be a safe environment where mutual respect and trust between teachers and students would give the girls hope and empower them to be their best selves. The decor inside the school is inspirational and seeks to build confidence for girls and women. Posters, quilts, and student-made reports line the hallways, and illustrations or photographs of diverse women peer out around most every turn. Classes were kept small to give the girls plenty of individual attention.

As part of the approach of this innovative girls school, the faculty and staff were highly focused on gender. Most of the teachers either had firsthand knowledge of what they perceived as the difficulties of being a girl in a mixed school, or for others, the benefits of an all-girls school. Several of the staff were well-versed in adolescent girls' development, and gender and human development; Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1 982), and Belenky et al.'s *Women's' Ways of Knowing* (1986) were on the principal's bookshelf. They put into practice many of the recommendations cited in these texts, for example "connected teaching" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) , and balancing autonomy and relationships. The methods they used included both rational and nonrational (expression of feelings, empathy, relationships, support in day-to-day interaction, and drama, music, and art).

The school also tried to be culturally sensitive—notably in their school events and rituals. The school play (Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream") creatively weaved in the Spanish language and Latina culture. At the school graduation, the ceremony was bilingual for the families. At the party following the ceremony, the

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festivities reflected Latina culture in music, food, dance and decor. As I mentioned earlier, the school also makes a point of highlighting Latina artists and Latinas in history.

The mission of the school is to work with girls in a caring, supportive way, and the teachers' empathy was deepened after home visits and getting to know the obstacles the girls face daily. Several of the teachers and staff (including Maria) who had grown up or lived and worked in working-class or historically marginalized communities also brought this sensitivity and shared it with their colleagues.

Maria was drawn to the school because of its intentions outlined above. In the ethnographic descriptions, we learned why Maria is teaching and her commitment to six practices. She consciously developed different ways of being so she would not repeat the disrespectful and ineffective practices that she experienced as a student. As she put it, "The reason I'm teaching is I want to give these kids the education I wanted."

Yet in the descriptions of "not appropriate," we hear concrete examples from students, teachers, and administrators who feel disrespected, resentful, and disempowered. Often, an unintentional disrespectful comment or action (due to differences in power, status, and privilege) triggered these feelings which then festered in hidden transcripts (see Figure 2, "Potential Vicious Cycles and Near Double-Binds").

When some students and teachers tried to express parts of the hidden transcript by giving critical feedback-up, they were ignored, yelled at, accused of lying, or of being disrespectful. Sometimes they were punished. These students and teachers then found themselves stuck in near double-bind situations. When they felt badly about they way they were treated, or had a critique of the way things were done, they could not give the constructive criticism that the school encouraged. How could their situation then improve? On the other side, by not being open to critical feedback-up, how could the teachers and

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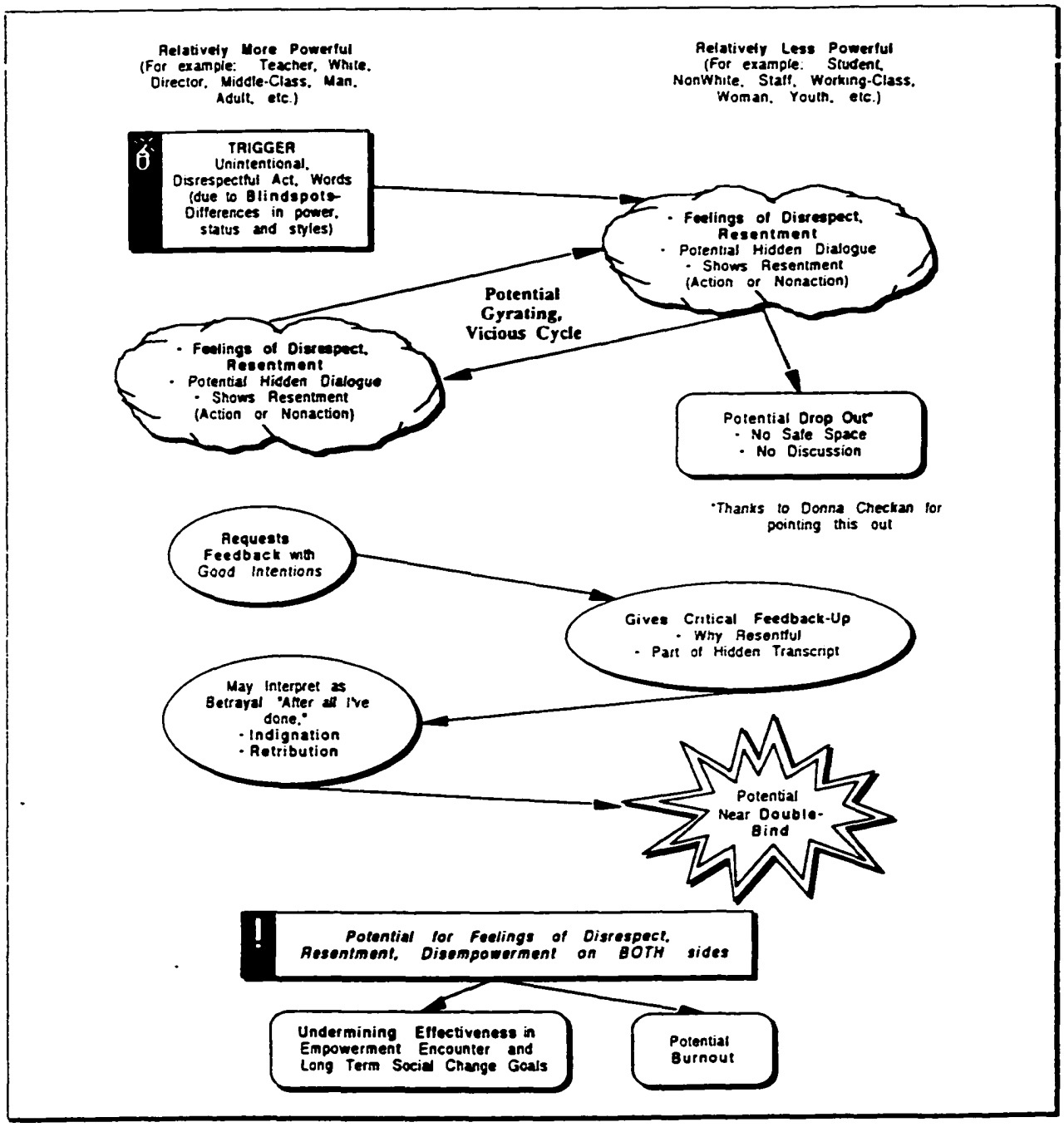

Figure 2. Potential vicious cycles and near double-binds.

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administrators become more respectful and effective in their day-to-day empowerment practice and longer term social change goals?

Therefore, this case gives an account at the micro personal level of how disrespectful and ineffective patterns continue to be reproduced *despite* the participants' clearly articulated and conscious intentions. At the school, too many on both sides often ended up feeling disrespected, resentful, and disempowered, draining away precious energy from teaching, administrating, learning, and empowerment (for all the participants).

By contrasting Maria's capacity to transform potential vicious cycles into learning cycles with the behavior or some of her colleagues that too often led to vicious cycles and near double-binds, we can better appreciate both what Maria did and did not do. (Compare again Figure 1 to Figure 2). *Maria did not make a difficult situation worse*; an extremely valuable practice in and of itself. Instead, she learned from and was changed and empowered by her interaction with Lourdes. She also felt energized by the interaction (this came through in her description). Maria's freed-up energy was now available for her day-to-day empowerment practice and in working toward her longer term social change goals.

Maria's description of her interaction with Lourdes is impressive. But it is a description. In the next example, the videotape captured Maria modeling her openness to critical feedback-up while working with Nira and the other students in her day-to-day practice.

Maria Acknowledged Her Disrespectful Behavior, Made Space for Nira's Critical Feedback-Up, and Prevented a Potential Vicious Cycle

During the heart activity, Maria quickly acknowledged her disrespectful behavior with Nira and apologized. When Nira voiced her anger and sadness both verbally and

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nonverbally, Maria gave her space in the class public transcript (Figure 3). As Maria explained during her interview, "If I'm rude to them sometimes, I would understand that they are going to be rude back. It's only a given." Maria's openness to Nira's critical feedback-up prevented a potential vicious cycle and maintained a connection with Nira.

Maria's response to Nira's critical feedback-up is significant because I believe it is one of those rare transformational moments ("ruptures of social reproduction") noted by Morrow (1994).[45] In the video, when she unintentionally accuses Nira of not doing her work (when Nira was, in fact, trying), Maria lets Nira express her anger at being treated unfairly and her feelings of disrespect. As Nira expresses herself verbally and nonverbally, Maria does not react to Nira with retribution; she does not reproduce this disrespectful and ineffective way of being.

Maria's response stands in sharp contrast to my unconscious reaction to Nira's critical feedback-up during the photo activity (see Figure 4). I took her expressions of being tired and ready to go home personally and then threatened to take her off the list of students interested in continuing the research activities.

After catching myself on videotape, I began to appreciate Maria's response as amazing for two reasons. First, in the ethnography above, we heard from some students and teachers (including Maria) who argued that they were unable to give critical feedback-up because in the past they were ignored and sometimes punished (yelled at, accused of lying or being disrespectful, etc.). When they tried, they often found themselves in near double-bind situations.

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[45] "Only in crucial conjunctures do the ruptures of social reproduction become studiable in the mediations between systemic structure and social action....It is here [at the sociocultural mediation level] that the dialectic of domination and resistance becomes momentarily visible in forms that reveal the fragile foundations of social order and potential change" (Morrow, 1994, p. 270)

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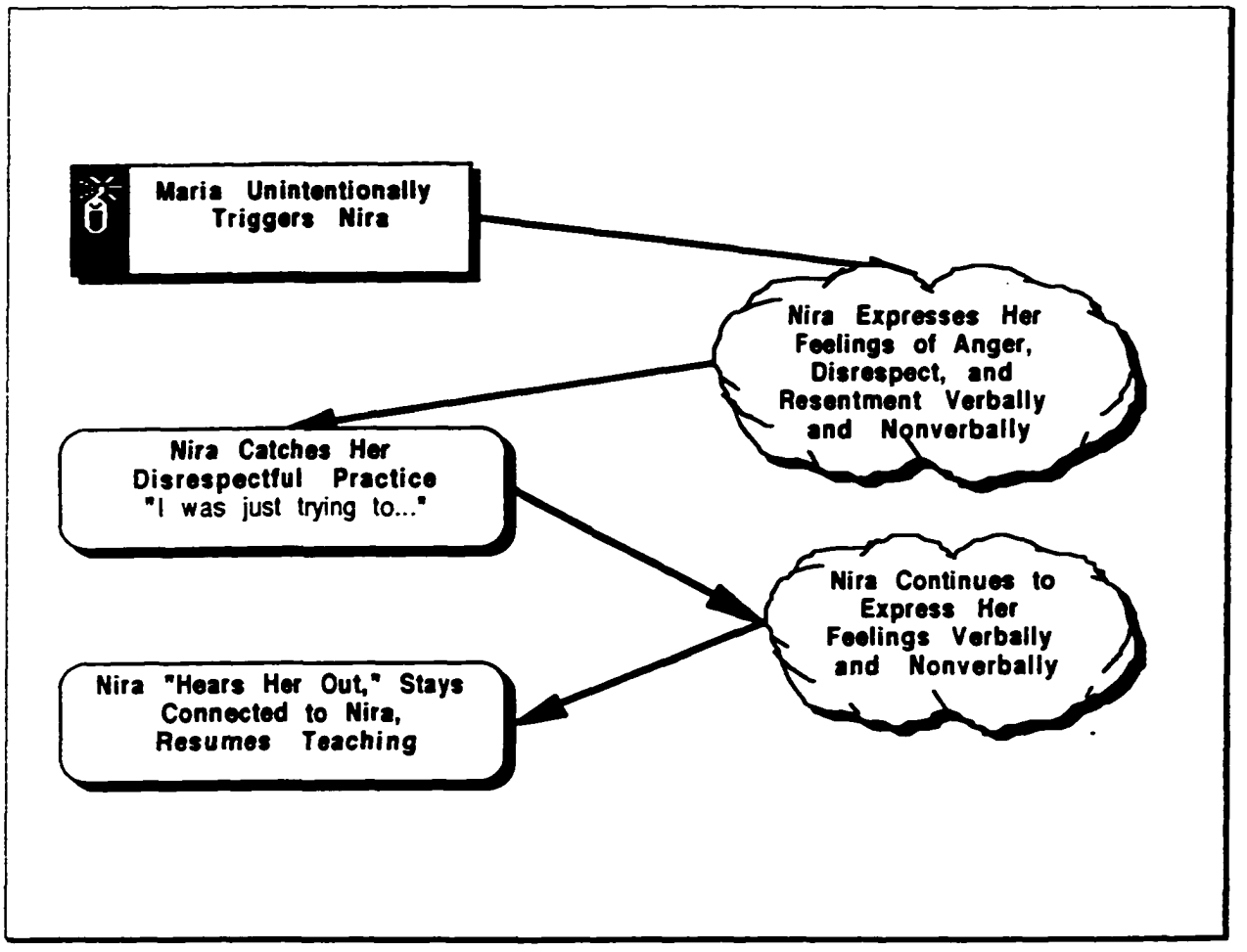

Figure 3. Maria catches and acknowledges her disrespectful practice, responds to critical feedback-up, and prevents a potential vicious cycle.

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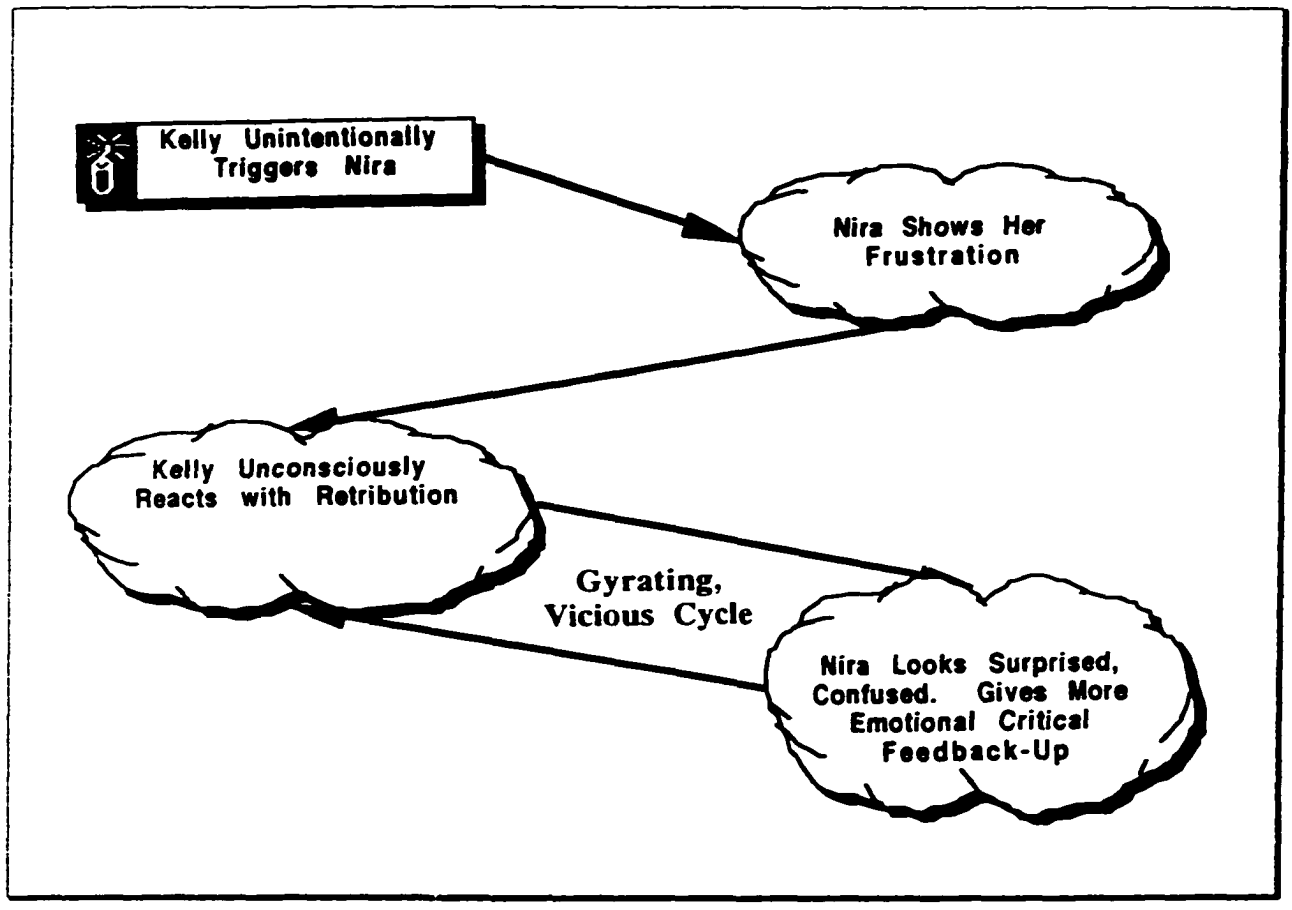

Figure 4. Kelly's unconscious reaction to critical feedback-up triggers a draining vicious cycle.

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And second, until I saw myself on videotape, I remained unaware for more than a year of my disrespectful behavior as a more powerful researcher, despite a number of factors:

- my intentions and my research focus;
- my commitment to a two-way empowerment way of being as a researcher;
- Maria's passionate attempts to drive the need for critical feedback-up into my consciousness;
- Maria's modeling of a responsive way of receiving feedback, and my acknowledging her behavior in the heart activity;
- and my designing and facilitating a seminar on how to receive critical feedback-up without retribution.

What we can easily miss in Maria's response is how Maria nipped in the bud a potential vicious cycle. She again did *not* make a difficult situation worse.

How Maria was open to critical feedback-up while resisting the tendencies to react is discussed next.

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Maria Interpreted Critical Feedback-Up Differently (As Expected, Crucial, to be Heard Out, and Discerned)

Maria interpreted critical feedback-up differently than some of the teachers, administrators and I. Her openness to critical feedback-up is reflected in the continuum below.

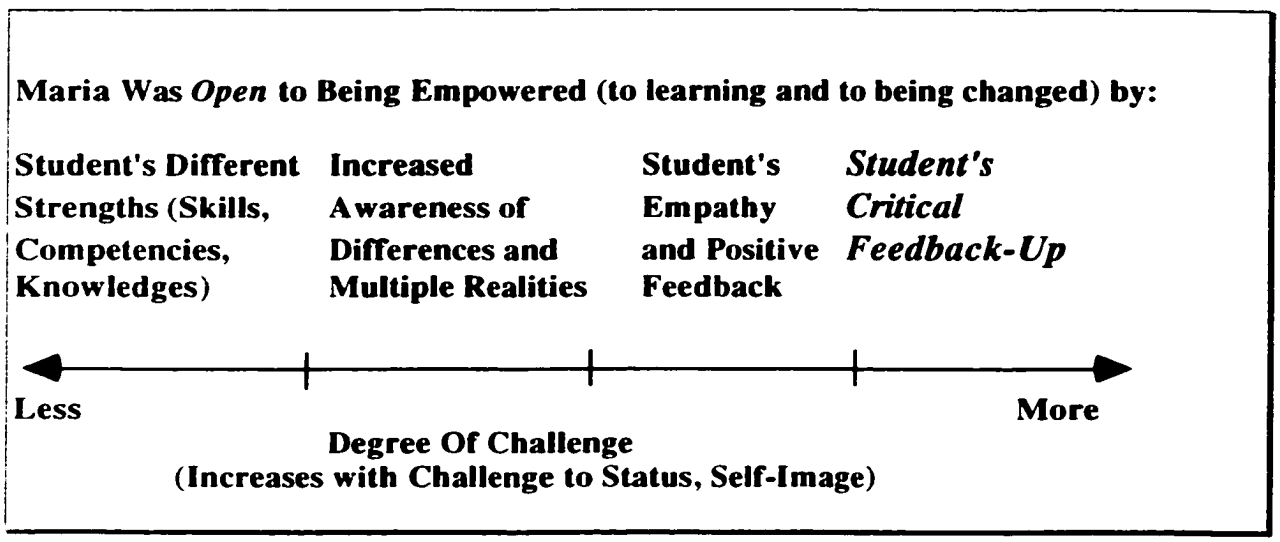

Figure 5. Range of what Maria was *open* to being empowered by and degree of challenge.

Maria recognized that being open to critical feedback-up is the most challenging aspect of a two-way empowerment way of being because of the threat to status and self-image (as she said, "Because it involves me!"). She emphasized in the second seminar that this point is even more critical for practitioners in non-profits, and even more so for volunteers (like many of the faculty), who are often working for low or no salaries and are compensated in part by seeing themselves as ethical, respectful, and effective practitioners.

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Maria recognized critical feedback-up not only as the most challenging, but also as *inevitable:* given her more powerful positioning and different life experience, ***she expected it rather than reacted to it with surprise, shock, and retribution.*** She expects that she will say and do things that she is unaware are disrespectful and ineffective. She expects that norms and standards she has acquired, that she may view as universal, are biased (remember the laser pointer example). And she expects feelings of anger and sadness when the critical feedback-up is delivered.

Maria also viewed critical feedback-up as *crucial:* crucial to her students' empowerment and her own. By hearing out and discerning students' critical feedback-up, she learned how she needed to change to be more respectful and effective. *Discerning* here is the key word. Rather than creating a hard and fixed rule, Maria worked at finding a place where she was open to critical feedback-up, but not too open (see Figure 6: Openness to Critical Feedback-Up Continuum). She heard out students because she recognized that "the self is not always pleasant" when you work toward creating real relationships. Then she discerned what were the legitimate complaints. *What would give her more choices to be respectful and effective in her day-to-day practice?* (Seashore, Seashore & Weinberg, 1992).

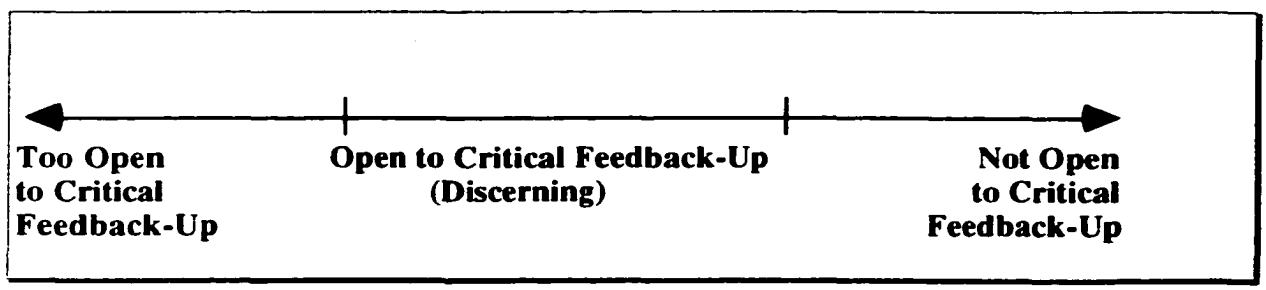

Figure 6. Openness to critical feedback-up continuum

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If we are not open to critical feedback-up, we cannot learn about, and change, disrespectful and less than effective behavior. But if we are *too open*, if we act on all the critical feedback-up without discernment, we can change current ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting that are currently respectful and effective. Maria and others noted that they struggled here. In this thesis, I have only identified the continuum of openness, the problem of not being open, being too open and the need to be open yet discerning. Further research is needed to learn *how* practitioners discern critical feedback-up: ideas, processes and guidelines from both theory and practice.

Maria Responded, Resisted Reacting (Due to her Desire for Status, Her Umbilical Cord of Privilege, and Her Habitus as a More Powerful Teacher)

Maria had a lot to go up against. As outlined in chapter 3, most of us tend to be:

- biased toward ourselves and to react given our desire for status;
- unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging our umbilical cord of privilege;
- and unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging our ways of being that embody our privilege (our habitus).

The last two tendencies exemplify the process of misrecognition outlined by Bourdieu. The power of habitus in education rests in this misrecognition as noted by Cicourel:

> The general idea is that force is displayed unconsciously by the agent with power. Agents with power may not be self-conscious about the violence they are able to accomplish. The agent of power who is accomplished at his performance should be *genuinely mystified by anyone calling attention to his or her power.* Misrecognition, therefore, enables objectivity to become subjectivized by agents of power [italics added] (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 102).

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While Maria had more ways of being in common with the students (more commonalities in their habitus) than did the other faculty and myself, we all had desires for status, more power, and privilege. Being in the more powerful positions, we can put students down (as Andrea reminded us), react unfairly to students, ignore students, punish students, and give students orders. We can do so, as Scott pointed out, because students often do not have the right to return an insult for an insult for fear of being punished. And in this case, students were also punished for critical feedback-up.

Maria's way of being in face-to-face encounters, however, was not just a conscious application of her six day-to-day practices:

- being open to critical feedback-up;
- teaching about the ISMs and giving students space to vent;
- giving her students "second chances" and vice versa;
- being real by sharing;
- learning from and with her students;
- and being open to having her assumptions challenged and changed.

She also had to shoot from the hip in every interaction. As I discussed in chapter 3, Bourdieu pointed out that it is in improvising, or shooting from the hip, in the interactions themselves that it is easy to fall into and reproduce the habitus of power as "teacher." Maria recognized this without the Bourdieu frame in her statement, "If I'm rude to them sometimes, I would understand that they are going to be rude back. It's only a given." She also emphasized, however, that by being open, she could improve her behavior and grow as a human being.

How then did Maria resist the powerful tendencies associated with her desire for status intertwined with deception, her umbilical cord of privilege, and her habitus as a

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more powerful teacher? Maria bucked the core hypocrisy (hiding our own faults, while pointing out the faults of others) and encouraged her students to give her critical feedback-up. When they did, her interpretation of critical feedback-up as expected and crucial enabled her to hear them out and discern the learnings.

She could better hear and respond to critical feedback-up because she better recognized her students' different strengths, her areas of weakness, and how she was empowered by them. As a result, she did *not* assess their critical feedback-up as taking more than they were giving, resulting in indignation (e.g., "After all I have done for you") and as a betrayal. She continually let me know how much her students did for her including supporting her emotionally and professionally, increasing her awareness as an individual and as a more powerful and privileged member of groups—notably the biases in her standards. Therefore, recognizing how her students empowered her, she reduced the bias toward her self in the monitoring of exchanges. By reducing the bias toward her self, she did not falsely perceive unfairness, feelings of indignation, and betrayal.

In discerning the critical feedback-up, Maria did *not* react based on her umbilical cord of privilege. She did not focus on her own pain and disprivilege, ignoring the pain of the students in areas where she is privileged. Instead, she acknowledged her relative privilege and heard out their complaints.

Maria also did *not* fall into the pitfalls of language that service the desire for status interlaced with deception. Maria listened for the strengths in her students' comments and recognized the weaknesses of her own defenses, even when her self-image as a respectful and effective teacher, individual, or more privileged person was being questioned. She acknowledged biases in her standards and was empowered by a new frame of reference.

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Maria did not deny her students' feelings of anger or sadness. She did not say, "You have no right to be upset because my behavior was not intentional." Instead, she acknowledged and apologized when she was disrespectful.

Maria did not ignore or rationalize the critical feedback-up of students like Nira who struggled in class. She was passionate about refusing to label her students (putting them in frame-traps as Goffman noted). Instead she gave her students second chances and recognized that they do the same for her.

Finally, Maria's self-awareness and awareness of structural inequalities triggered fewer disrespectful comments and actions. She gave students the benefit of the doubt (versus the actor-observer bias), she recognized the power of the situation students were in (versus the fundamental attribution error), and she recognized the differences, "ISMs," and multiple realities within the empowerment encounter itself and society.

Again, it is difficult to see the continuous work that Maria did through her way of being that did *not* trigger feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment: Feelings that can grow in hidden transcripts, siphoning away energy. It is a challenge to see the energy saved for Maria and her students that was harnessed for teaching, learning, and empowerment.

In this section, I argued that this case is significant because of Maria's openness to critical feedback-up. Maria's critical contribution to this study was to drive home this crucial aspect of two-way empowerment way of being. After all, how can we be respectful and effective in our empowerment work if we are not open to learning when we are contradicting our intentions? Because it is so difficult to see our ways of being that are disrespectful and ineffective, we need critical feedback-up from the less powerful who often see it in NEON.

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In the next three sections, I analyze the other valuable learnings from the case. I went into the case exploring one question: "What is two-way empowerment?" I tried to learn how the teachers and students, White and Latina, middle-class and working-class, empowered each other based on their different strengths. I also wanted to know how the students, Latinas, and working-class participants helped the teachers, Whites, and middle-class participants to see how they were being disrespectful and ineffective.

Maria's way of being in the classroom expanded and fleshed out "what is a two-way empowerment way of being." Again, referring to Figure 5, Maria was open to being empowered by:

- students' different strengths (skills, competencies, knowledges);
- increased awareness of differences and multiple realities;
- students' empathy and positive feedback;
- and students' critical feedback-up.

Maria and the other participants of the study have a lot to teach practitioners. The students, other teachers, and administrators contributed to the learnings that follow, but my intensive work with Maria will remain the focus. Because of her positioning and experience, she helps to make visible what is often invisible to those of us with thicker umbilical cords of privilege. She helps us to recognize what we tend to misrecognize. By being open to learning and to being changed while working with her students, and by not reproducing disrespectful, ineffective ways of being, Maria demonstrated a two-way empowerment way of being.

Maria and several of her colleagues provided concrete examples we can learn from that I described earlier in the ethnography. Below, I summarize and review each of the three questions initially explored in chapter 3: What is a two-way empowerment way of

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being? Why is a two-way empowerment way of being difficult in empowerment encounters (What can get in the way?). And how can interested practitioners embody a two-way empowerment way of being.

What is a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being?

Several of the teachers reported and modeled an openness to learning and to being changed. I asked these teachers for examples of when they had been empowered as an individual or as a member of a group (male, White, middle-class, American, etc.). The teachers reported being empowered through the following three ways: by learning from and with their students, by recognizing how their students empowered them emotionally, and, as Maria emphasized, by receiving critical feedback-up from her students.

Some of the teachers were empowered by what their students communicated to them (the content); others were empowered just by being in the encounter itself (for example, John's description of how he was changed just by "hanging out" with the students).

Learning From and With Their Students

Increased Competency, Skills

Teachers described being empowered by learning from their students in two ways. first, by recognizing and learning from their students' different strengths. In these examples, the teachers who were open to being empowered by their students increased their know-how and their skills.

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Several teachers discussed learning from their students' different strengths in their own areas of weakness. Karen was empowered by her students who knew more than she did about social change leaders in Latin America. She was also empowered by learning what worked and did not work in the classroom from her students. Dave and John learned from their students about the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and other countries. Dave also learned sign language, merengue dancing, and Spanish.

The students' work also pushed Karen to question and change her standards of what is "right" and "excellent" in grading written exams. Being empowered in this way, she challenged the standard of personal experience as "not appropriate."

Increased Awareness of Different Realities, Assumptions

The second way teachers reported being empowered and changed by their students was by learning about their students' and others' different realities. John reported being changed as an individual and as a White, middle-class male by getting on buses with the girls, walking down the streets, and seeing how they were treated ("the little day-to-day things"). This experience increased his awareness of his own privilege, of the different realities of the students, of society, and about the meaning of differences ("it's what society puts on me and them").

Maria was also changed when her boyfriend questioned her assumptions about buying a laser pointer at Radio Shack. She thought it was "cool" to be on the other side, to see how her relative privilege affected her way of thinking. This also helped her understand and have empathy for her White, middle-class colleagues because she understood how easy it was to be unaware of how our standards that we presume to be universal often reflect our own cultural standards.

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Maria also felt empowered by learning from the girls about the diversity of Latina culture and about the specific class situation of the girls who were immigrants in this neighborhood. As a Chicana from the West, she became aware of some of her previous assumptions.

My initial conception of a two-way empowerment way of being stops here. I envisioned those of us in the more powerful positions learning from and with the less powerful's different strengths in areas where we are struggling, and increasing our awareness as individuals and as members of groups. But thanks to the Maria and other participants, two crucial aspects were added below.

Recognizing How Their Students Empowered Them Emotionally

Maria, Dave, and John recognized how the students empowered them emotionally. Their students gave them empathy when they needed it (after a tough phone call, or when they were just having a bad day).

Maria also recognized that her students empowered her emotionally by giving her *second chances*. This was a powerful experience for Maria who felt she did not get that type of treatment by her colleagues. In turn, Maria tried hard to do the same for her students.

Receiving Critical Feedback-Up Without Retribution; "Hearing Them Out"

Maria's most emphasized tenant in her day-to-day practice was to be open to her students' critical feedback-up about her way of being (both what she does and how she does things—her "manner") as a teacher. As described at length in the section above. Being open to critical feedback-up, however, does not mean accepting and acting upon all

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feedback. Being open means "hearing them out," and then reflecting on the feedback to see if it is valid and demands action.

Maria was changed by Lourdes's critical feedback. She learned about some of her ways of being that were disrespectful. Maria let Nira vent her anger after she unintentionally and unfairly accused Nira of not working on an assignment. More importantly, she did not punish Nira for expressing her feelings. As she put it, "If I'm rude to them sometimes, I would understand that they are going to be rude back. It's only a given."

Maria and John were also open to negotiating with the students about assignments (a point greatly appreciated by the seventh graders in their interview). Yet other times, when some students complained that Maria was being unfair in assigning work, she listened to their complaints, maintained connection, and then let them know they needed to do the assignment.

As the teachers expressed in the second seminar, the challenge is to learn how to discern critical feedback.

Why is Two-Way Empowerment So Difficult in Empowerment Encounters? What Gets in the Way of a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being?

In the case, despite our intentions to be open to being changed and empowered by the less powerful, why was it easy for the participants and myself to reproduce dominant ways of being (thinking, feeling, and interacting) that are disrespectful and ineffective in empowerment encounters? Why did we, often unconsciously, maintain power and status relations? In other words, why was it so easy to impose our way of being on others, and

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maintain that our way of thinking, feeling, and interacting was viewed as the right way and other ways as less-than? Why was it difficult to be open to being empowered by students through learning from and with them, recognizing how they empowered us, and receiving their critical feedback-up? By making visible some of the hidden dimensions of this case's empowerment encounters, I believe we can better understand what made a two-way empowerment way of being difficult?

Coming into the case, I believed that what we bring with us to the encounters (our different umbilical cords of privilege, interpersonal styles, and unique biographies) provided the challenge to two-way empowerment. During the case, these often hidden background dimensions were important. But the participants and I kept bumping into others.

Within the case, I bumped up against what I perceived as six hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters that made a two-way empowerment way of being tough: different empowerment interpretations, the desire for status, deception and the umbilical cord of privilege, problems in recognizing differences, power, vicious cycles and double-binds, and styles and unique biographies.

When we do not recognize or misrecognize these intersecting and overlapping dimensions, I believe that biases, blindspots, distortions, and miscommunications can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being.

The hidden dimensions were made visible through participant-observation, interviews, reviewing the videotaped interaction, observations of myself (the case-within-a-case), and through hidden transcript analysis. What I began to notice in the hidden transcripts were the different phrases, expressions, and mottos that "seemed to be at everyone's lips" (Scott, 1986, p. 198): Students sing-songed them, others rolled their eyes,

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some flashed anger, or expressed their feelings through their pointed intonation. These "flashpoints" within the hidden transcripts of administrators, teachers, and students, indicated the built-up resentment, pain, feelings of being misunderstood, and disempowerment on both sides. I used these flashpoints as signposts in the ethnographic descriptions. In this section, by identifying the hidden background dimensions, we can make better sense of the four flashpoint expressions from the case: "not appropriate," "we are all equal here," "I want your feedback," and "be yourself."

Different Empowerment Interpretations: Two-Way Empowerment Goes Against the Grain of Dominant Empowerment Discourse

The different empowerment interpretations were the first hidden background dimension I began to bump up against. For this case, this difference was significant. In other social change organizations where there is more alignment, this dimension may not emerge. Yet it is important to learn about because two-way empowerment goes against the grain of dominant empowerment discourse (to be discussed further in chapter 8).

No Mental Hooks To Hang Ideas Of Two-Way Empowerment On

Although some of the faculty discussed their openness to being changed in their interviews, it was still difficult for some of them to see how the students can and do empower teachers. I believe this is due, in part, to professional training that tends to assume a one-way or participatory empowerment way of being. Despite the teachers' intentions, from within a "helper" mindset, it is difficult to see how students can and do empower them. Without a two-way empowerment interpretation, there was no mental "hook" for these ideas to hang on.

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Goal of "Empowerment": "Individual vs. Social Justice"

What were different teachers empowering the girls to be? What was the school empowering the girls to be? What did the students want to be prepared for? In the interviews, I asked these questions, and I brought in one of the flashpoint expressions: "Be Yourself." I asked if being yourself was the point of empowering the girls. And further, what is that "self"?

Responding to these questions revealed differences between faculty and students, between the administration and some teachers, and between different teachers. Because the participants did not recognize these different interpretations, and how they affected the encounters, they sometimes ended up talking past one another, struggling with each other in debates, viewing the other's behavior as "not appropriate," and feeling frustrated, ineffective, disrespected, resentful, and disempowered.

A cleavage quickly emerged between participants who viewed empowerment more individually, and others who took a social justice perspective. When I asked participants about their interpretation of "be yourself," this split was made visible. Some believed the goal was to empower the girls to thrive in society. Others argued they wanted to empower girls not only to thrive, but to change unjust social structures.

This significant difference stayed hidden in the background, but it created many miscommunications and misunderstandings. Recall that some participants believed there were no differences between the students at St. Teresa's and Pine Wood because they were viewed as equal individuals. Yet others saw the need to recognize these differences. Within this group, some had empathy for the girls' tough lives and family situations, while others looked to structural reasons. This debate played out in the curriculum. Some believed that talking about the ISMs would take away the girls' hope, while others viewed it

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as empowering. This split also affected how participants viewed being open to feedback: Some interpreted this as being open to mutual empathy (psychological), while Maria pushed the faculty to be open to critical feedback about their "manner" (their ways of being).

Maria's social justice interpretation clashed with the school's individual interpretation of empowerment. Working in this environment made Maria's two-way empowerment ways of being stand out and often viewed as "not appropriate."

This helped to explain some of the frustration participants felt in trying to talk to each other. It was as if they were talking past one another, not being understood, and mystified at what was taking place. Following are a few examples.

Gender Sensitivity: Voice vs. Sexism.

As women, the majority of the faculty and staff had a heightened sensitivity to gender. For many, gender was the only dimension of their umbilical cord of privilege where they were disadvantaged (similar to my own position). For faculty and staff whose interpretation of empowerment was individual empowerment, the goal was to raise the girls' self-esteem, skills, and efficacy. They worked to develop the girls' voice and capacity to participate in society. Many of the teachers were very sensitive to working with girls after experiencing poor treatment as adolescents. Many also value a more relational approach to education. The school exemplifies the self-in-relation approach advocated by the Stone Center. These teachers worked hard to listen from the students' frame of reference, and at "believing versus doubting" (Belenky et al., 1986).

The faculty and staff who drew on a collective interpretation of empowerment also worked to develop the girls' esteem, skills, efficacy, and voice. But they also brought in the

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issue of the ISMs. They brought in readings and reflected with the students on why it was the girls were disempowered in the first place, and what girls and women are doing about it to change things. Because of the age of the girls, there was an objection to one teacher discussing sexism in his fifth grade class. How old girls need to be will be influenced by the different interpretations and experience with teaching. *What is important to notice is how the umbilical cord of privilege, the personal histories, and the different interpretations of empowerment affected day-to-day practices in terms of what they chose to teach and how they went about teaching.*

Increasing Cultural Consciousness and Skills

In increasing the cultural consciousness and skills, there were two approaches drawing again on different interpretations of empowerment. Teachers adhering to an individual empowerment interpretation tended to stress the accomplishments and gifts of different leaders from different cultures, different music, and an appreciation for the contributions of diverse cultures in learning and life to give the girls hope for the future.

Teachers adhering more to a collective empowerment interpretation also stressed the accomplishments, gifts, and contributions of diverse cultures—especially women. But they also believed it was important to address the daily poor treatment that the girls experienced in the neighborhood, and especially when they went out of the neighborhood. In Maria's reading class, the girls read about other girls like themselves but in different periods of history, who had different religions, or lived in different countries. In these stories, girls often saw their own situation, "Oh no Ms. G, this is my life!" These readings led to reflections about why some cultural groups are in a better place (empowered) than others (disempowered) and the different ways people are treated day-to-day (racism,

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classism, sexism, ageism, etc.). The readings also included girls and women who decided to take action to improve their lives and the lives of other girls and women.

This difference between the individual empowerment and collective empowerment interpretation is not only reflected in the choice of curriculum and the way it is taught, but also in the debates among the faculty, staff, and administration. Some of the faculty who saw the goal of the encounters as individual empowerment were afraid that talking about the "isms" would take away the girls' hope for a better life. Others who saw the goal of the encounters as collective empowerment believed that the girls were already living in the "isms" in their daily lives. These teachers saw hope in raising the girls' consciousness about *why* they as members of different groups were treated poorly, rather than their personalities or being "less than." They hoped to show the girls that they could take part in changing their world. Part of what took place in these classrooms was an analysis of some of the hidden background dimensions discussed above that affect the way people act, are unable to act, and how to better assess their own situations.

The Desire for Status, Deception, and the Umbilical Cord of Privilege

The second hidden dimension that became significant in the case was one I was looking for going in: our desire for status, intertwined with deception, and our different umbilical cords of privilege.

Hypocrisy and Double-Standards

Several students and teachers were angry about the double standards at the school. Maria gave the example of teachers criticizing students for making fun of overweight girls, and then doing the same thing in the teachers' hidden transcript. Students noted teachers told them not to eat junk food and drink soda, and then did it themselves. We can see her

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examples of the core hypocrisy noted by sages: Driven by the desire for status, we tend to fault others publicly, while hiding our own faults.

Invisible/NEON Focusing on Our Own Pain

Several of the faculty were sensitive to gender issues where they were disprivileged (remember Sister Ruth's anger at my using the term "guys"), but they were not as aware of the different realities of the students, how they live day-to-day and their culture, as the seventh graders voiced in their interview. Not being aware of these different realities made it easier to put down different ways of being as "not appropriate."

The school itself was set up because the school's review of the literature showed how girls were getting short-changed and needed more attention to strengthen their self-esteem in adolescence. Human development theory showed girls' and women's behavior as "less than" or inappropriate—for example, emotions and connecting with others rather than separating. The school transformed some of the disrespectful practices toward girls in education. Now the cultural resistance (in the race, ethnicity, and class dimensions) is putting the school in the midst of these struggles.

The invisible/NEON effect also became apparent in preparing the first seminar. The principal viewed their problems as interpersonal communication issues. Maria, on the other hand, saw the main issues were around differences of race and class.

Finally, one of my own examples shows the power of this tendency. I focused on my own pain of experiencing retribution after giving critical feedback-up, while misrecognizing how I had reacted with retribution to Nira's critical feedback-up. And I did so despite my intentions and research focus!

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Bias Toward the Self in Monitoring Exchanges

To prepare for the second seminar, I began to see the need for more case-driven theoretical work. In trying to understand why we react to critical feedback-up, I learned how easy it is to react because, again, of our bias toward the self intertwined with deception. In the monitoring of exchanges there are two potential problems that can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. First, we tend to remember who owes us, yet we forget or hide who we owe (for time, money, ideas, support). Then, we tend to be biased toward ourselves in our assessment of how much others take relative to how much they give.

Therefore, putting these together when we get critical feedback, we can react unconsciously based on a biased assessment (they are taking more than they are putting in) by seeing this as a betrayal. We can dish out retribution by telling the less powerful how they should feel (happy and grateful), by not giving them space for sadness (sadness associated with badness and ingratitude), by telling them their perception is distorted (this is your crap, your emotional problems), by saying nothing in the encounter but then punishing them later, or by firing them.

Problems in Recognizing Differences: Misrecognizing Differences as "Less Than"

Interrelated to the above is the crucial problem articulated by many of the participants: the inability to recognize differences. I began to see that the problems involved in recognition, especially when there are differences, was a third hidden background dimension.

What frustrated some of the teachers and the students was the inability of others to not be able to recognize differences: in status, power, and privilege. Some claimed there

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were no differences between the girls at St. Teresa's and at Pine Wood. The seventh graders felt strongly that their culture and the way they lived day-to-day was not recognized by some of the faculty.

Again, this was often driven by intentions. Some wanted to say they viewed the students as being of equal worth and not less than. Yet by underestimating differences in privilege, they distorted strengths and weaknesses and generated resentment. They also did not see how these differences affected their way of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the students.

Even those teachers who did recognize differences, however, had different interpretations. Leslie was struck by the poverty of the girls and wondered how they can even function. She attributed most of their different realities to living in a community with drugs, violence, and domestic abuse. Others, while acknowledging these realities, saw these differences were due to larger structural issues: racism, sexism, classism, and so on.

Teachers and administrators who did not see the biases in their standards (privilege embodied) triggered vicious cycles of disrespect and resentment. This resentment was located in the hidden transcript flashpoint expressions of "not appropriate" and "be yourself."

Some of the less powerful (students and teachers) perceived that the more powerful made biased assessments of what was "appropriate" and would not acknowledge their bias. The expression, "it's not appropriate" was frequently used in both the public and hidden transcripts—although one was said seriously, the other often sarcastically. Students sing-songed "it's not appropriate" in the hidden transcript. Assessments of what was and was not appropriate and the way those assessments were communicated at times seemed to intensify the contradiction of practice/intentions generating disrespect,

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resentment, and disempowerment. This included what was the appropriate music, choice of the school play, choice of readings and the curriculum, dress, jewelry, language, gestures, manners, and deferential behavior.

Administrators or teachers need to make critical judgments—anything does not go. Without limits, you do a disservice to the students as well as to the teachers. What bothered some of the teachers and students was the unwillingness to look at the bias involved in some of these assessments; the claims that the norms they are drawing on are universal norms rather than their own cultural groups' norms. What bothered them even more was the way these assessments were communicated in a condescending way, both personally and culturally, although often unintended. For example, there is a difference between saying that "it is not appropriate at the school to have two of your shirt buttons unbuttoned," or saying, "large hoop earrings are not appropriate at the school because people might get hurt and some people might not be able to afford them," and "those big earrings are tacky and slutty." Students noted similar slights made by teachers about reggae and rap music, graffiti ("some of it is beautiful, inspiring and shows a really talented artist, not a bad neighborhood"). In the seventh-grade homeroom discussion, many of the students noted these slights and wished their teachers better understood their culture. In the photography activity students tried to capture their culture and day-to-day life. Students took pictures of Latin food, music stores, the first Latina doll, hoop earrings, graffiti, and so on.

The norms we use may be based on our own cultural groups but delivered and misrecognized as universals. Other ways of being and acting can then be seen as "less than."

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The resistance to the disrespectful communications and acts of "what is appropriate" was sometimes stigmatized by seeing the student's complaints as a teacher's or the parent's agenda, or by criticizing the way the complaints were delivered. Nonverbal resistance in the way students interacted or did not interact with teachers also had the potential to be misrecognized as the students' individual and psychological problems with potential punishment.

The students, however, are also resisting in ways that are complex and ambiguous. While they are passionate about this issue, even the more quiet girls in the group, are also torn by desires to be a good daughter, a good student and a good Catholic girl. Within the peer groups they can be tough, can describe being "dissed," but they also appreciate the school's attention to the creative aspects and experiential aspects of education. They enjoy the small groups, personal attention, empathy, and caring the school is very good at.

When our umbilical cord of privilege makes it hard for us to recognize differences, we can distort our own and the less powerful's strengths and weaknesses. Further, by not recognizing our biased standards, we can reproduce ethnocentric and paternalistic practices.

At the school, administrators, teachers, and students faced what Calhoun noted are,

> problems of recognition because socially sustained discourses [as outlined above in different empowerment interpretations] about who it is possible or *appropriate* or valuable to be inevitably shape the way we look and constitute ourselves with varying levels of tension...sometimes concerns expressed give rise to identity politics" [italics added]. (Calhoun, 1995, p. 213)

Power

Power was the fifth critical hidden background dimension of the case. Because I was not expecting many of the issues related to power, I had my biggest surprises, failures,

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and learnings dealing with this dimension. Due to my own privilege, I misrecognized much of power's effects until I experienced them myself.

"We Are All Equal"

First, throughout the case, several faculty downplayed or denied their power. Claims that "we are all equal" triggered a flashpoint in the hidden transcript of teachers and students. This was one of the same issues that I took issue with as a practitioner, and I picked up on it in the hidden transcripts of the administrators, teachers, and students. Students and some teachers were very sensitive to the ways people at the school with less status and power were treated. While the goal of equal treatment and recognizing equal human dignity through respect is to be admired, there were significant differences in power: who did the cleaning of the school, who made the decisions, who could expel people, who sat on the floor and who sat in chairs during assembly, who can bring drinks in the room and who cannot, who judges what is "appropriate," who gets heard, who gets a nice bathroom, and whose bathroom has just a little "cortina" (curtain) for privacy between the stalls.

The volunteer teachers live in a very nice and large living space (by any standards in an outer borough of New York City) with all the conveniences (TV, VCR, microwave, etc.), and the students knew it. In the photography activity, several girls showed their own living conditions and three got together to make one of their bathrooms very nice, saying, "This is what we think the top floor is like."

Further, for the students, the claim that we are all equal can be stinging. Many of the girls are familiar with their cultural histories of oppression and violence, and in the case of the Dominican Republic, the U.S. role in a violent episode and the putting down of a

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popular movement for change in favor of the status-quo heir of a dictator. Some of the girls have witnessed violence, domestic and political, close up, and have been through tough immigration journeys into the U.S. followed by discrimination and poor treatment. They are also aware that their parents' jobs are constantly in flux and they could be removed at any time to an uncertain future.

The less powerful, less privileged girls and teachers were not complaining about the privileges themselves; that goes with being a teacher. What got them was the claim that they were all equal. Everyone at the school may have capacity to exercise power, but those with thicker umbilical cords of privilege can wield more power and make different decisions: about hiring and firing and who gets expelled. Equal rights in a conversation does not mean teachers and students are recognized in a respectful way.

The different interpretations of empowerment also enter into this flashpoint expression. There is a yearning of some of the teachers and students to acknowledge that there are multiple realities in the encounter because of differences. ***Not clarifying the different relations of power, for whatever reason (including a distaste for hierarchy and desire for egalitarian relations), can lead to the abuse of power by not paying attention to how power is exercised through disrespectful practices.***

The claim "we are equal" to some is a contradiction when they examine day-to-day practices in the school. If the contradiction is denied or downplayed, it can lead to a similar vicious cycle of resentment outlined in the "appropriate" example.

Putting Students Down in Communicating Standards.

Teachers and students both emphasized that they did not have a problem with communicating standards. It was the way that standards were communicated that often

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triggered the hidden transcript. The crucial point here is that those of us in the more powerful positions can put the less powerful down, knowing that they risk punishment if they return the insult. Being in this position, it is easy to slip despite our intentions. The same applies here for the double standards of teachers noted above by the students and some teachers as two-faced behavior.

As Patricia explained she could understand why the school needed some rules about hoop earrings (not everyone can afford them, they might be dangerous during recess). But others pointed out that it was the way it was communicated that was a put down: saying they are "tacky and slutty." This was a slight to the girls' cultural dignity: many of their moms, aunts, sisters, and grandmothers wear large hoop earrings. As Andrea said, "When I want to be powerful, it doesn't mean that I have to put people down."

This comment, and others like it were often unintentional, but these subtle forms of status domination triggered feelings of disrespect and resentment that showed up in the students' hidden transcript, and often led to vicious cycles.

Reacting to Students' Critical Feedback-Up with Retribution

This point has been described in detail in the section on why this case is significant. But it merits repeating. One of the flashpoints in the hidden transcript was "I want your feedback." Some of the teachers and students complained that despite the school's policy to encourage constructive criticism, when some students tried to let teachers or administrators know that they felt disrespected ("that what she said wasn't right"), or that their process was ineffective (verbally or nonverbally), some reacted with retribution.

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It is easy to put the less powerful person in a double-bind. I learned about this myself, both being in the double-bind, and then realizing how I had put Nira in one. This crucial issue helps us to understand why and how the draining and gut-wrenching cycles get started and can sometimes gyrate to burnout.

In the first two "flashpoint" examples ("not appropriate" and "be yourself"), some of the teachers and students saw in NEON what they perceived as biases and contradictions that the more powerful either did not see or would not acknowledge. These practices of judging what was appropriate and claiming that "we are all equal" triggered some vicious cycles of disrespect and resentment, often with the more powerful teacher or administrator mystified about the problem. Again, the practices that trigger these cycles are often unintentional and often traced to privilege and power in the background. This practice of requesting feedback then reacting with retribution, however, can put the relatively less powerful in situations that near the intensity of a double-bind.

Administrators and teachers made a point of requesting feedback, with intentions of learning from both ideas and critical concerns. Sometimes the critical feedback was integrated—especially around issues that did not address the teacher or administrator's way of being. Yet other times when the critical feedback tried to address assessments ("appropriate") or communication ("we are all equal"), this feedback was sometimes viewed as a betrayal (the less powerful taking>giving), seen in comments such as, "after all I've done for you." Feelings of betrayal sometimes led to conscious or unconscious poor treatment of the person who tried to give feedback. Signals are sent that critical feedback is not appreciated and not useful. Maria described holding back for almost 3 years until finally she "just exploded" at a faculty meeting and much of the Latina hidden transcript

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became public for the first time. After this incident, there was a lot of confusion, anger, resentment, and feelings of disempowerment.

Responding to a request for feedback, then getting retribution in return can be gut wrenching. Some of the students and teachers said they did what was requested of them, then they were punished for it, while being told they were not being punished, that instead they were the ones being disrespectful in getting upset, sad, and angry. If you don't say anything, you sit and stew in resentment, draining your energy and undermining your effectiveness. Meanwhile, the resentment is triggering cycles of resentment. As described above, the only way out of this near double-bind is to describe the situation, to name the contradiction (I want your feedback/retribution), but this may be taken as a further slap and betrayal.

In this case, I say near double-bind because teachers and students do not have to give feedback, and the teachers can "leave the field," in this case, the school. The girls, however, are more vulnerable. And leaving the field is tough when you care about the school, when you care about the committed and well-intentioned administrators and teachers and the students. Teachers and students also had ambiguous motives and performances. The situation was described as really painful for some, but there were reasons to stick it out—for example, friends at the school, the kids, not to mention a great location and living space.

Again, it is often those with very admirable intentions who are working hard to be respectful and effective that, like most human beings, can get triggered.

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Labeling, No Second Chances

Maria also called our attention to labeling. If we label the less powerful, this can get in the way of seeing their strengths, how they empower us, and being open to their feedback (we are prejudiced). Without second chances, the less powerful can drop out or burnout.

Easy to Reproduce Disrespectful Interaction Despite Intentions. (The Little Day-to-Day Things)

The theme of this section is that it is easy to reproduce disrespectful interaction despite our intentions. I felt this when I brought in my cup of tea to class; the little, day-to-day things that hold power relations in place.

Even more powerfully was my reacting to Nira's critical feedback despite my intentions, my research focus, and my facilitating a seminar on the topic. I need to return to Scott's status domination. The issue here is that often we cannot return a slight to our dignity. At the school, Maria noted that students cannot complain about a teacher's manner (way of being). If there is a problem, they tend to blame the student. They also tend to view teacher's problems as restricted to classroom management.

Maria mentioned that to many teachers, mutual respect means that "the kids don't say anything bad." But just because they aren't saying anything, she added, does not mean they respect you.

My Paternalistic Practices as a Researcher: Not Recognizing the Less Powerful's Power

In this study, I discovered two paternalistic practices despite my intentions to be respectful and effective, and despite Kondo and Visweswaran's warnings. This gets at the

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heart of the case-within-a-case—that is, my experience as a researcher in the different research encounters trying to walk the talk of two-way empowerment. The first disrespectful practice was the withholding of critical feedback. I rationalized that the participants were too overwhelmed. Obviously this depends upon the context, but in these cases, I believe it was paternalistic. The second and related disrespectful practice was reacting to the participants' capacity to exercise power-over.

Withholding critical feedback.

The first paternalistic practice was withholding critical feedback from the research participants. I did not expect to be giving feedback-up in this inquiry, or being the less powerful, because I assumed that as the researcher I would always be worrying about exercising power. Yet it became clear that I would be subject to power of the principal who controlled access to the research site. Maria also had influence whether I stayed or left. My mutual rapport with the principal was definitely aided by our commonalties: White, middle-class women. With Maria, we had several differences in ethnicity, class, and age. I caught myself holding back critical feedback (minor issues) to Maria because I was grateful for all of her hard work on the research project and because I believed she was under so much pressure that she did not need more feedback from another White, middle-class woman. This withholding was unfair, disrespectful, and paternalistic. I did not recognize what we share in common: the ability to receive critical feedback. I underestimated her strengths and overestimated mine, masked by my intentions to be respectful.

As I mentioned in the introduction, due to my failure in rapport in the second case, I did not include it in this thesis. This was due, in part, to my withholding feedback-up. I

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was attached to the case: I believed in the project, the director, and saw valuable lessons for other practitioners. Giving feedback-up entailed the risk of losing the case and a friendship. Again, I thought that the director was so overwhelmed that holding back the feedback until her crises were over would be better. I was clearly wrong, disrespectful, and paternalistic.

By withholding feedback, my resentment built up and was palpable in the interaction. This triggered the generation of a vicious cycle of resentment similar to those I was studying in the cases. By not giving my colleagues critical feedback in a timely, specific way, I treated them as "less than."

Reacting to the participants' capacity to exercise power over me.

A second researcher insight was more experiential. I went into the case very aware of my power as a researcher, being cautious not to abuse that power, and trying to be open about it with my colleagues. What I was not expecting, however, was power being exercised over me. I experienced how intensely power being exercised over our bodies can be felt. During the case work, my most heightened experiences that I can still feel in terms of the body sensations were those times I could feel someone exercising their power over me. Even the smallest moments stung. My indignation rose immediately (usually unfairly).

This experience reflects my leaving the power dimension out of analysis until more than midway through the research process.

Vicious Cycles and Near Double-Binds in Communication

The fifth and interlocking hidden dimension discussed in several of the above points relates to the interaction communication systems: vicious cycles and double-binds.

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When the teachers, administrators, and I did not recognize or misrecognized the different interpretations of empowerment, problems in recognition, our desire for status and our different umbilical cords of privilege, and differences in power, it was easy to unintentionally trigger a vicious cycle of disrespect and resentment (see Figure 2, "Potential Vicious Cycles and Near Double-Binds").

The hidden dimensions listed above can all affect the interaction and, despite the intentions of the teachers and administrators, kick off a vicious cycle.

- Unaware of their umbilical cord of privilege, a teacher or administrator may make a disrespectful comment, look, or assessment as perceived by the teacher or student.
- The teacher or student feels disrespected, but as Scott noted, they may feel unable to trade an "insult for an insult" because of power differences ("they can kick you out," as one student put it bluntly) and a fear of retribution from watching others try or previous bad experiences. ***Resentment, literally a "sending back" of the disrespect***, is signaled in interaction and nonverbals. (This disrespect and resentment grow often by being shared in the hidden transcript with others who have had a similar experience.) The more powerful administrator or teacher can then feel disrespected and resentful by the way she is being treated, again, often without knowing what kicked off the cycle. This vicious cycle of resentment can gyrate leaving both sides feeling terrible and draining their energy.

This vicious cycle that I shared in the second seminar has been documented in different ways by many of the theorists cited in Scott and others—notably Willis (1977) discussed further in chapter 7. I believe that this is at the core of many of the struggles around recognition especially in the United States but also taking place in frontline offices of NGOs and in the field offices of U.S. nonprofits. Explaining this to the school, some of

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the faculty seemed to feel better knowing that they were not alone in trying to lessen this contradiction and deal with "it." And when I explained the analysis to Maria, she exclaimed, "That's exactly what is happening at the school."

Styles, Unique Biographies

The sixth and final hidden background dimension was at the interpersonal level. While there were some issues of style and unique biographies (failing to see the multiple realities, talking past each other), these were overshadowed by differences in the different umbilical cords of privilege. Even though they did exist in the background and affected the interaction, they were not the flashpoints of the hidden transcripts.

How Can Interested Practitioners Work Toward Embodying a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being? Learning from Maria and the Other Participants

Increasing Awareness

For those of use who are interested in embodying a two-way empowerment way of being, we can learn from Maria and the other participants in the case. First, we can increase our awareness of a two-way empowerment way of being. A second learning is to increase our awareness of what we are up against, taking in all of the lessons outlined in the above section.

We can also study the examples of Maria and others who developed day-to-day practices. Maria's six conscious principles included:

- students can express when they are upset with Maria without being punished: she "hears them out" and is open to being changed (she is open to critical feedback-up);

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- Maria teaches about the ISMs, how students can change their world, and gives students space to vent (about the obstacles they face and how they are treated);
- Maria and her students give each other "second chances";
- Maria strives to be real by sharing with her students;
- Maria is open to learning from and with her students;
- Maria is open to having her assumptions challenged and to being changed about "something I didn't realize."

Maria and Karen showed they were open to seeing the bias in their standards. Maria paid attention to the way standards were communicated.

In the seminars, we tried to increase our awareness of differences in privilege and power and how easy it is to react with retribution to critical feedback. We also tried to increase our awareness of the different realities of the students and their different strengths.

Most of the faculty were able to see that they had privilege, and that there were different realities. By recognizing different strengths, some of the teachers were changed in the way they viewed their students and themselves.

Becoming aware of our privilege and being able to get a less distorted picture of our strengths and weaknesses is a first step. Leslie in her interview indicated that she had used the two-way empowerment questions from the first seminar to recognize the different strengths of her students. Leslie's example is interesting because she admires the girls' different strengths, but she can go further: She can also learn how they can and do empower her. During the first seminar, the participants had little resistance to this process.

After the first seminar with the faculty, Maria vented her frustration, "What good does it do to say, 'Oh I am privileged because I am Catholic.'" She went on to explain that

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just recognizing where we are privileged does not address the disrespectful and ineffective practices that are really taking place day-to-day.

Awareness, making visible our umbilical cords of privilege, our different styles and histories and how they shape how we think, feel, and interact is only the first step. Even this is challenging for some practitioners. But as I mentioned before, recognizing how we embody privilege is difficult to impossible for many practitioners—in my own case, I had to see my example on video. In the seminars, while the White, middle-class faculty gained new insights and increased their awareness, Maria was frustrated. Reflecting on our privilege, recognizing others' different strengths, and becoming aware of how we can react rather than respond to critical feedback did not enable participants to see their more ingrained behaviors and give them ideas for changing themselves.

Signaling and Being Open to Learning and to Being Changed

What the participants described and modeled were ways of being to signal openness, to be open to learning, to be changed, and empowered, *while working* with students who had less power and status.

Some teachers were not stuck in a "helper" mindset that can immediately create a one-up, one-down situation. Instead, they acknowledged they also had problems, areas of weakness, and needed to be empowered. They modeled this openness through listening, empathy, curiosity, and creating relationships (notably, Maria's old roommate's example). They also just "hung out" with the students to get to know their different realities. They were open to negotiating on tasks.

They signaled they were open to learning by saying they did not know. They signaled an openness to learn about the students' different realities. Maria and some of the

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other teachers signaled an openness to being empowered emotionally by being real: sharing their lives, limits, and problems with their students, not being two-faced, and not being fake by "putting on airs." Maria signaled an openness to receiving critical feedback-up by modeling she would not punish students, even saying, "You can say bad things about me."

Being *Too Open*: the Potential Achilles' Heel of a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being

Openness in each case, however, can be taken to the extreme. As discussed above in the section on why this case is significant, Maria and others struggled with finding an openness to critical feedback-up that was not too open (refer to Figure 6, page 202). We can accept all the less powerful's feedback without discerning what we need to improve our respect and effectiveness. As noted above, without limits, we can hurt both ourselves and the people we work with.

An important learning from the case is that teachers can also be too open to learning from students, to hearing about students' frustrations and issues (venting), and teachers can be too open in sharing about their own lives, problems and passions (see Figure 7 on the following page).

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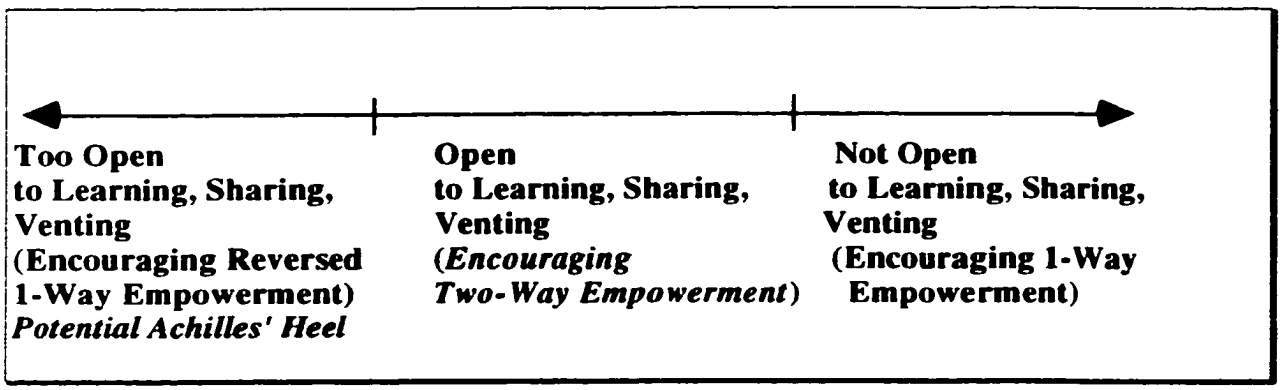

Figure 7. Openness to learning, sharing, and venting continuum.

Being at either end of the spectrum, however, can get in the way of two-way empowerment. In the case, near one end of the spectrum were teachers who were not open to learning, sharing, and venting. Teachers near this of the continuum encouraged one-way empowerment. At this extreme end of the continuum, teachers spend the class time and energy focusing on student empowerment, but teachers are not open to recognizing how they are and can be empowered both individually and collectively (one-way empowerment). Teachers at this end of the continuum do not learn from and with students, share with students, let students vent, or give critical feedback-up. Teachers who were not open generated resentment from students. Students in the seventh grade homeroom interview let me know how they felt about teachers "not sharing," "They don't trust us."

But being too open, the other end of the continuum, often puts the burden on the students to spend their valuable time empowering teachers rather than learning and being empowered themselves. If teachers spend the bulk of class time learning new skills from their students, sharing about their lives, and letting students vent, then in the extreme cases,

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during valuable class time students are empowering teachers, but students are not being empowered (reversed one-way empowerment).

Finding this balance is not easy. Maria acknowledged she continued to struggle here. The danger is that students, clients, and community colleagues can end up spending the majority of their valuable time venting, taking care of, or, empathizing with us, rather than being empowered in the encounter.

Teachers also choose to move along the continuum depending upon the situation. I observed one of the teachers making this choice (this was not described in the ethnography). Dave, who emphasized that he did not want to be fake, chose not to share with his students the real reason why he was leaving the school. He wanted to save face. The students, however, did not believe him. Because Dave was leaving, the students were more at ease in expressing their point of view. They pointed out how Dave's explanation did not make sense. Then, they pushed him, in blunt terms, to admit that he was asked to leave. But Dave continued to stick to his story and then told the students that their accusations were "not nice" and "not fair." Therefore, Dave was open with his students in some situations and not others.

Being Open to Encourage Two-Way Empowerment: A Challenge Worth Exploring

Being open, and encouraging two-way empowerment, however, is a challenge for practitioners worth exploring. We can increase our awareness and learn from Maria about

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the range of what we can be open to being empowered by (Figure 5). This includes being empowered by:

- the less powerful's different strengths (skills, competencies, knowledges);
- increased awareness of differences and multiple realities;
- the less powerful's empathy and positive feedback;
- and the less powerful's critical feedback-up.

A two-way empowerment way of being does not mean that all of the above need to take place in each interaction. Instead, it means that the practitioner is open to all of the above taking place. It means that the practitioner works at being open, but not too open.

With this awareness, we can then interpret our interactions with the less powerful in empowerment encounters differently. We can better recognize how we are empowered and opportunities for being empowered. We can interpret critical feedback-up as expected and crucial. And we can discern critical feedback-up by hearing out our colleagues. learning about legitimate complaints, learning how to change our behavior so that we have more choices for improving our day-to-day ways of being, and then making those changes even when they feel uncomfortable. This deconstruction and reconstruction process involves truly going against the grain, and resisting the tendencies to react. We may need to work against what feels natural and instinctive. Maria's example outlined above in the section on "Why this case is significant" gives us one example.

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The Case-Driven Need for More Theoretical Work

The intensive research and case study produced some insights, but many more lingering questions. New hidden background dimensions emerged. I learned that much more was hidden in the background of empowerment encounters than what I believed we bring to the encounter (our desire for status, privilege, style, and biography).

In part three, I explore these case-driven theoretical issues. I began some of this work by necessity as I prepared for the second seminar. Yet in that rushed effort, I really just scratched the surface. I needed to explore in more depth the questions and hidden dimensions the case revealed that get in the way of two-way empowerment.

In chapter 6, I try to better understand recognition. Why was it so difficult for the case participants to recognize differences? Why was it so easy to misrecognize the background dimensions themselves making them hidden? Why was it so easy for me to misrecognize my reaction to critical feedback-up, and be unaware of this reaction for over a year?

Then, in chapter 7, I explore power. Why was power hidden, denied, and downplayed? Why was it so easy to reproduce domination in our day-to-day practice despite our intentions? And why was it hard to recognize the power of the less powerful?

Next, in chapter 8, I review the different interpretations of empowerment that are significant for two-way empowerment. What are the major cleavages? In addition to the split between the individual and social justice interpretations within the empowerment discourse, what can affect empowerment encounters? How many interpretations include empowering the more powerful? How many include the more powerful's presence and the hidden background dimensions?

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In chapter 9, I try to better understand the vicious cycles and double-binds from a communications theory standpoint. What keeps these cycles in place, what makes them worse, and how can we break them?

During this theoretical excursion, I try to learn about how the larger historical and cultural contexts shape the empowerment encounter. I also try to understand of one of the interesting aspects of the case: Maria's closest allies were the two White males on the faculty. Their politics and their way of being were more in line with Maria's. I needed to explore these types of alliances and coalitions that cross differences.

And finally, in chapter 10, I synthesize the theoretical learnings. I present how we can work with the hidden background analysis to increase respect and effectiveness in empowerment encounters, encouraging two-way empowerment.

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PART III

THE HIDDEN BACKGROUND OF EMPOWERMENT ENCOUNTERS: A CASE-DRIVEN THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

In the case, some of the participants and I demonstrated why a two-way empowerment way of being can be difficult in empowerment encounters. Despite our intentions to increase respect and effectiveness through two-way empowerment, we continued to reproduce disrespectful and ineffective ways of being (not recognizing our biased standards "not appropriate" and "be yourself," double-standards, putting students down, reacting to critical feedback with retribution, etc.). We unintentionally made disrespectful comments and actions that sometimes triggered vicious cycles of disrespect and resentment. I also discovered how easy it is to unintentionally put the less powerful into near double-binds and remain unaware for over a year.

Why? What happened? I believe that when the participants and I misrecognized or did not recognize the hidden background dimensions operating in empowerment encounters, we ran into trouble. Unaware of how these hidden dimensions affected our way of being (how we thought, felt, and interacted), it was difficult to be open to being empowered by the less powerful (learning from and with them, recognizing how they empower us, and receiving their critical feedback-up) *despite* our intentions. It was even more difficult to see how we were reproducing these disrespectful and ineffective practices and how we could change them, again, *despite* our intentions, and in my case, my research focus.

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In this case-driven theoretical analysis, I will explore the hidden dimensions revealed in the case and how they affect a two-way empowerment way of being. In chapter 3, I outlined what I initially believed to be in the hidden background of empowerment encounters, what we bring with our bodies: our desire for status intertwined with deception, and our different umbilical cords of privilege, interpersonal styles, and unique biographies. The case study revealed several other critical yet often hidden dimensions that if not recognized, can get in the way of two-way empowerment: the different interpretations of empowerment, problems in recognizing others and ourselves (especially when there are differences), power, and the potential for vicious cycles and double-binds in communication.

This third part of the dissertation will add depth to the second question I am exploring in this thesis: Why is a two-way empowerment way of being so difficult in empowerment encounters? What can get in the way? In this case-driven theoretical analysis, I will track how each dimension affects our way of being in everyday empowerment practice: how we think, feel, and interact. Why is it tough to be open to being changed, to being empowered by the less powerful? What gets in the way of learning from and with the less powerful, recognizing their power and how they empower us, and receiving critical feedback? Why do we put the less powerful down instead of just letting them know the standards? What is behind our paternalistic and ethnocentric practices besides the umbilical cord of privilege? Why is it so difficult to embody a two-way empowerment way of being, even if we are aware of the hidden dimensions? Why do we reproduce disrespectful and ineffective practices despite our intentions, focus, and awareness?

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This case-driven theoretical work will also help to give interested practitioners ideas for embodying a two-way empowerment way of being. How can we be open to being changed, to being empowered by the less powerful? How can we break the cycle of reproducing disrespectful and ineffective ways of being?

In chapter 6, I will outline my theoretical framework for this analysis, "Critical Theory Informed by Feminist, Post-colonial Theories." I chose this framework because at its center is the challenge of recognizing differences. The problem in recognizing differences is attributed by several theorists to our desire for recognition. Exploring this new and critical hidden background dimension helps us to understand why it is so difficult to recognize the less powerful in a respectful way. A core problem identified in the case. Theorists within this framework also help us to understand how the empowerment encounters are historically situated and culturally contexted and how this impinges upon our way of being.

In chapter 7, "Power," there are three sections. The first section, "Power Interpretations," analyzes the following questions: What are the outcomes of power? What is the nature of power? Who (or what) exercises power? And why is power hidden? Foucault, Janeway, Kondo, and other feminists have described why many practitioners hide, deny, redefine, and are blind to power (fear that power corrupts the self, knowledge). These theorists also help us understand how the less powerful can also exercise power in different ways.

The second section, "Foucault's Disciplinary Power-Knowledge and the Normalizing Gaze," also explores why power is hidden—namely, disciplinary power. Foucault argued that one reason why it is so easy to reproduce domination in our day-to-day practice, despite our intentions, is that many empowerment interpretations justify a

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"normalizing gaze." We exercise disciplinary power through the normalizing gaze when we only put the less powerful under the microscope, when we judge them based on our standards, and when we view encounters purely interpersonally. Because we are often unaware of this gaze, Foucault pointed out that we can look to the less powerful's resistance to offer some clues as to how power is being exercised disrespectfully and ineffectively in everyday encounters.

The third section, "The Reproduction of and Resistance to Power Relations," brings in examples from conversation analysis of how easy it is to reproduce dominance in the areas where we are privileged despite our intentions. It also explores the resistance literature including Paul Willis, James Scott, and Kondo's critique of the former two. The resistance literature, however, is focused more on the resistance of the less powerful. Willis and Scott did not address the more powerful's resistance to reproducing unjust relations. Kondo addressed some of the complexities, but much of this literature needed to be inverted—in other words, I found it useful when analyzing the case to see if reproduction of dominant practices was not taking place.

In chapter 8, "Empowerment Interpretations," I explore several different interpretations of empowerment that relate to two-way empowerment. First, I identify the cleavage in the literature that I noticed in the case between the individual and social justice interpretations. Then I review selected interpretations from different fields of practice by asking four questions. First, does the interpretation address the feminist insights of including nonrational methods? Second, does the interpretation address the feminist and postcolonial insights of including multiple forms of oppression (beyond class)? Third, is the more powerful open to being empowered and changed in this interpretation? And fourth, does this interpretation include the more powerful's presence and the other hidden

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background dimensions in the empowerment encounter? Finally, I summarize how a two-way empowerment way of being differs from, and can build on, the interpretations explored.

In chapter 9, "Interaction Communication Systems," I explore contradictions, vicious cycles, and double-binds from a communications theory standpoint. I will describe why theorists (Bateson, Watzlawick et al.) have viewed the nature of communication as a two-way process. I will describe the circular nature of communication, how intensifying contradictions can easily lead to vicious cycles and to putting the less powerful in near double-binds.

The synthesis of this case-driven theoretical work will be presented in chapter 10. First I will summarize each of the hidden background dimensions mentioned throughout the thesis. The, I will describe how each hidden dimension can affect encounters, and get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. Finally, ideas for practitioners to work with the hidden background dimensions toward embodying a two-way empowerment way of being are initially sketched out.

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CHAPTER 6

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL THEORY INFORMED BY FEMINIST, POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES

(Desire for Recognition)

This critical, feminist postcolonial framework puts at the center the challenge of recognizing differences. Guided by this framework, I was able to better address why it is often so difficult to recognize the less powerful in a respectful way. I was also able to make visible the often hidden dimension of "the desire for recognition." This framework also continually pushed me to look at how the empowerment encounters are "historically situated and culturally contexted"; another hidden dimension only gently nudged in the case.

In this chapter, I will first describe why I chose this framework, followed by my assumptions and critical ontology. I believe we can transform the contradiction of our practices to our intentions, but we cannot transcend it. Then I will outline why critical theory is crucial for this inquiry: how critical theory illuminates contradictions, emphasizes transformational practice, and anchors theory to capitalism's structuring of daily life. How the feminist and postcolonial theories inform critical theory by bringing attention to differences, recognition, and the partiality of theory is addressed next. This includes the limitations of feminist, postcolonial theory that are addressed by critical theory. And finally, I will give a summary of the theoretical framework.

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Why I Chose a Critical Theory Framework

To better understand the contradictions of practices to intentions in empowerment encounters, critical theory appeared to be the tradition best suited for the task. Critical theorists work toward emancipatory practice by illuminating and transforming (not transcending) existing contradictions. Yet, as Craig Calhoun pointed out, critical theory emphasizes universals without seriously addressing the challenge of difference (Calhoun, 1995)—and addressing differences is at the center of this study. To address this shortcoming, I sought out feminist and postcolonial theories.

Feminist and postcolonial theories helped me to better understand the complexity around differences, and how the partial, relational, and situated knowledge I generate will always be filtered through my own multiple, contradictory positions (as a White, middle-class woman with different privileges). Given my positioning, and the theories in these frameworks I chose to guide me in my study, feminist and postcolonial theories helped me to understand that I will be able to only partially illuminate the practices/intentions contradiction. Some feminist and postcolonial literature, however, can drift from the way capitalism, in its current global form, shapes much of our day-to-day lives and social encounters. Therefore, for this study, I needed feminist, postcolonial theories to inform critical theories in the areas of difference and partialness. I also needed critical theory to anchor the framework with its commitment to illuminating contradictions in the current global capitalist system.

Much of the work to "remake uncritical theory as critical theory" (Calhoun, 1995, p. xix)[46] has already been done by Craig Calhoun in his book, *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History and The Challenge of Difference*. Calhoun's study, however, is a very

[46]Calhoun looked to feminist and poststructural insights to remake critical theory.

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thorough analysis of critical theory, feminist theory, poststructuralist theory, and postmodernist theory, and how they influence what he referred to as critical social theory. I will only be referring to selected theories within feminist and postcolonial theory to work with the contradictions in empowerment encounters.

Critical Ontology: Transforming vs. Transcending Contradictions

My core assumption underlying this study is that as human beings we have the potential for both treating others respectfully and for dominating others—in other words, as human beings we are a mixed bag. In empowerment encounters, where unequals come together face-to-face, the situation is ripe for this mixed bag to reveal itself despite our conscious intentions. By increasing our awareness of practices that are disrespectful and ineffective, we can transform rather than reproduce those disrespectful practices. Yet I do not believe that we can transcend existing conditions—for example, our umbilical cord of privilege that permeates our consciousness and behavior. I believe the condition is paradoxical: We are free, yet we are also limited (Schneider Ph.D., 1990). Every empowerment encounter is different and always limited due to context.

Therefore, I agree with Roy Bhaskar's critical ontological view that "society is both the condition and the outcome of human agency, and human agency both produces and reproduces (or transforms) society" (Bhaskar, 1993, p. 413). As scholar-practitioners we can reproduce preexisting structures, practices, and conventions (Silverman, 1985, p. 35), or we can choose to transform them in our day-to-day practices. Again, the key term here is "transform." Rather than transcending preexisting structures, differences, constraints, and contradictions, my question is, "How can we lessen the existing contradiction of practices/intentions when we are the relatively more powerful in empowerment

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encounters?" Claiming that we can transcend existing differences, rather than acknowledging and working with them, can, as previously mentioned, generate resentment and undermine effectiveness.

Bhaskar's ontology and transformational model of society is also relevant to my study for three reasons. First, the transformational model is relational rather than solely individualist (Voluntarism) or collectivist (Reification) (Bhaskar, 1993, p. 413) getting at the in-between. Second, Bhaskar's work includes unintended consequences and unconscious motivations in encounters. And third, critical realist ontology has a non-teleological character that resonates with my deep belief in evolutionary history.[47]

Bourdieu and Giddens, who along with Bhaskar all trace their heritage to Marx, have each separately developed a transformational model of society. I have found Bhaskar's the most accessible and the most aligned with my assumptions.

Critical Theory Illuminates Contradictions, Emphasizes Transformational Practice, and Anchors Theory to Capitalism's Structuring of Daily Life

Critical theory aims to illuminate contradictions between ideas and reality (theory and practice) in their social and historical contexts in a process of immanent critique (Held, 1980, pp. 183-186). Part of this illumination process is pulling the often invisible

[47] Rather than a teleological approach to history, science, and consciousness of increasing complexity, increasing compassion, and wisdom with all evolution consciously leading up to human beings as the pre-planned end product (much in vogue in the New Age literature—for example, *The Celestine Prophecy)*, I agree with existentialists, Buddhists, evolutionary social scientists, historians, and philosophers of science (Darwin, Gould, Kuhn) and others who view evolution as random and in a mixed state where anything is possible: progression, regression, mixed states. Foucault articulated my position well: "[the] principle [is not to] regard the point in time where we are now standing as the outcome of a teleological progression which it would be one's business to reconstruct historically: that scepticism regarding ourselves and what we are, our here and now, which prevents one from assuming that what we have is better than—or more than—in the past." Foucault added that he is not saying "humanity doesn't progress," but that "what happens now is not necessarily better or more advanced, or better understood, than what happens in the past." (Foucault, 1980d).

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background into the visible foreground for analysis, critique and action. A difficult task given the ease in viewing direct interpersonal relationships and the difficulty in grasping the indirect and more "experience-distant" (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 287, 291) social relationships (privilege due to status and power, institutions, global economy, etc.) that I discussed in my concerns. What makes critical theory critical is a commitment to theory that is self-reflexive, value-oriented, interdisciplinary, historical (with attention to how current global capitalism structures everyday life), aware that social facts are created and recreated by human beings ("we create society at the same time as we are created by it" is Giddens' phrasing), and infused by a critical imagination (Morrow & Brown, 1994, pp. 6-15). Critical theory's focus is the problematic of domination. This is not just a simplified notion of overt oppression, but a more complex concept "based on a concern with the ways social relations also mediate power relations to create various forms of alienation and inhibit the realization of human possibilities" (Morrow & Brown, 1994, pp. 10-11). (This is especially relevant for my study given most practitioners believe they are fighting domination and do not see the possibility that their practices may dominate others.) What I appreciate about critical theory is that unlike other forms of critique, critical theory emphasizes emancipatory practice (Held, 1980, p. 169), to move beyond umbilical cord gazing as it were, to political action.

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How Feminist and Postcolonial Theories Inform Critical Theory by Bringing Attention to Difference, Recognition, and the Partiality of Theory

In this section, I will describe two significant contributions from feminist and postcolonial theory for my inquiry. First I will describe the feminist and postcolonial argument that draws on Hegel's struggle for recognition (the master-slave dialectic)—briefly, *in encounters where there are differences (of status and power), rather than mutual recognition, the more powerful only looks to the less powerful for a positive reflection of the more powerful's work and status, negating the less powerful's differences and identity.* In this first section I will also describe how I interpreted and extended these theories to address a topic not often discussed among empowerment practitioners: our desire for recognition, the blindspots it can produce, and suggestions from theorists for recognizing the less powerful as "maximally human."[48]

A second significant contribution from feminist and postcolonial theory that I will describe is working with the awareness that the knowledge I generate in this study will be partial, situated, and relational. I will outline the feminist and postcolonial argument that the data I generate will be partial and situated rather than universal; given our differences (our different umbilical cords of privilege, selves, theoretical frameworks, etc.), rather than fully illuminate the contradiction, I will partially illuminate the contradiction.

The Desire for Recognition in Encounters Where There are Differences

Feminist and postcolonialist theories argue that Marxist and critical theories have neglected and need to pay attention to the way universals, especially the universal "Man" of

[48]I will be using this phrase throughout the dissertation. more in the meaning of fully recognizing the other. Perhaps there is a better expression. The original cite comes close. It is from Calhoun's book where he discussed cultural difference and historical specificity. He noted "Hillary Putnam's idea that we should always prefer interpretations that encourage us to regard others as maximally human" (1995).

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humanism, hide privilege and ideologies (Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, etc.) that negate the differences and identity of those with less power and/or status. These theorists note that rather than mutual recognition, when there are differences in power and/or status (e.g., between men and women, between Europeans and non-Europeans), the pattern has been that the more powerful is the one who is recognized, while the less powerful is recognized only as the mirror she or he provides to reflect back a positive reflection to the more powerful. In this one-sided relationship, differences, identity, and I would add, critical feedback-up are negated.

In this area of recognition and differences, feminists and postcolonial theorists draw on and interpret Hegel's dialectic of development and Hegel's struggle for recognition (master-slave dialectic). Therefore, below I summarize and greatly oversimplify Hegel's theories to give the reader unfamiliar with Hegel's work a reference. Then I will present two interpretations: first, by postcolonialist Franz Fanon (a psychoanalyst from Martinique), and second by critical feminist and psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin. Next, I will describe my own interpretation and extension of this theoretical work as it applies to the umbilical cord of privilege and two-way empowerment. And finally, I will outline some suggestions from theorists for working toward mutual recognition by recognizing the other.

Hegel's Dialectical Movement and Struggle for Recognition

The dynamic for all movement, development, and change was considered by many, including a materialist version for Marx, Hegel's dialectical movement. According to Hegel, "The principal of development involves...the existence of a latent germ of being--a capacity or potentiality striving to realize itself...*Freedom* is the leading principle of

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development" (Hegel, 1956, pp. 54-55). For freedom to realize itself in dialectical movement, Hegel envisioned the following process (greatly simplified): first, an understanding (categories are defined and distinct from each other); second, contradictions emerge spurring dialectic or negative reason; and third, the stage of speculation, the "unit of opposites" when the result sublates (includes and surpasses rather than purges) the previous stages "exalting itself to a new grade" (Hegel, 1956, p. 73; Inwood, 1992, pp. 80-82). The development dynamic is the self-awareness of the contradiction between inner potentiality and explicit actuality and the developmental impulse toward perfection (Aristotelian notion of *teleology*) and self-recovery (Platonian). (It is important to take note of Hegel's view of freedom as the leading force in development, and the developmental impulse moving toward perfection; a teleological view of history. Both will be questioned by postcolonialists and feminists.)

Hegel's struggle for recognition (master-slave dialectic).

In Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, recognition was associated with self-consciousness (Inwood, 1992, p. 246). Hegel believed that "self-consciousness exists only in being acknowledged" (Hegel, 1996, p. 29). In other words, the self is dependent upon others to recognize both the self's actions and, more importantly, to acknowledge the self's status as a human being (Inwood, 1992, p. 245) . But the self's need to secure recognition from the other clashes with the self's desire for absolute independence (freedom) (Benjamin, 1988, p. 32). Because the self cannot eliminate the other (the self must have his acts recognized by the other to be meaningful for the self), the self recognizes the other by negating the other, recognizing the other only for the self's external reflection of his own freedom (O'Neill, 1996, p. 7). The "life-and-death struggle" (Hegel, 1996, p. 31) ensues as

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the other fights in defense of his identity. The resulting situation then becomes one of "extremes...opposed to one another, one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*" (Hegel, 1996, p. 30).: independent consciousness (the lord) and dependent consciousness (the bondsman) (Hegel, 1996, p. 32). (This situation and struggle for recognition is also referred to as the master-slave dialectic by postcolonialists and feminists. What these theorists pay attention to is the way the self looks to others for a reflection of the self that is the *same* by negating the identity and *differences* in the other.)

But Hegel did not stop at the master-slave transition in the dialectic. Instead, he continued the dialectic by explaining that the other becomes gradually aware of his own self-consciousness and eventually, in defense of his identity, refuses to be an object, refuses to be a slave. As a result, the master is not longer the master of the slave. All of the above transitions in the dialectic lead up to Hegel's notion of intersubjectivity, mutual recognition—where self and other "recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another" (Hegel, 1996, p. 29)—replaces the one-sided forms of recognition (O'Neill, 1996, p. 7).

Hegel believed that the struggle for recognition emerges because, while the self only needs recognition in the sense of acknowledgment as a person (to ensure our self-respect, status among the group, to be confirmed by others), it also seeks special status "motivated by a *desire* to be seen to be behaving in a certain way and thus to acquire unilateral recognition [italics added]" (Inwood, 1992, pp. 245-246). It is important to note that Hegel did not create the master-slave phenomenon in social life; Hegel articulated what he believed and observed. Hegel's belief that the combatant self only needs acknowledgment, but desires special status over the other makes sense, given the evolutionary triggers I outlined in chapter 3—notably, the tendency to seek out status, put

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down others while obscuring our own faults, play up our own feats while downplaying those of others, and especially in the case of recognition, to remember who owes us, but forget who we owe.

Hegel's thoughts on transitioning from the master-slave to mutual recognition, however, are very limited. In fact, the struggle for recognition and mutual recognition are separated spatially in his work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (O'Neill, 1996, p. 7). Hegel's view of others (women and other cultures) also raises questions. For example, Hegel believed that acknowledging others unilaterally actually enhanced their self-consciousness--for example, the self-consciousness of the slave and in the modern state the child (Inwood, 1992, p. 246).

The master-slave phenomenon as I am trying to work with it here has been applied to a number of dyads—colonizer-colonized, male-female, parent-child, teacher-student, etc.—where one is "reflected" and the other is negated. Theorists work with the struggle for recognition because, as critical social theorist Craig Calhoun put it, "the Hegelian dialectic of the master and slave was and is among the most powerful representations of the non-autonomy of recognition" (Calhoun, 1995, p. xiii). Below, Franz Fanon illustrates the master-slave phenomenon in the case of the relationship between colonizer and colonized followed by Benjamin's analysis of gender and the struggle for recognition.

Fanon's Analysis of Colonization and the Struggle for Recognition

Fanon described the struggle for recognition in the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The colonizer looks to the colonized for a reflection of his self that is the same by negating the identity and differences in the other. Far from mutual recognition, the one who is recognized is the colonizer, and the one who recognizes (who reflects the

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colonizer) is the colonized. Fanon made this point through immanent critique in the postcolonial classic *The Wretched of the Earth* by describing how the colonizers dehumanized the colonized populations while justifying their action with Western humanism. Fanon compared the ideology of humanism to the violence of colonialism and revealed the Eurocentrism and racism upon which the universalism of "Man" and "humanism" of the West were founded (Bhaba, 1994, p.237). As Fanon made clear:

> Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them...in the name of a so-called spiritual experience...today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind. (Fanon, 1967, p. 251)

Other thinkers joined in the critique of man in an anti-humanist movement to deplore humanism's implication in colonialism and neo-colonialism. ("Anti-humanist," is a regrettable term given Fanon and other's sought to make humanism more human rather than abolish it.) The problem with humanism was that universal 'Man' was based on the exclusion of the 'others' (women and non-Europeans) (Young, 1990, p. 122). Sartre's realization that the humanistic Marxism he had been working on was still deeply flawed is revealed in this account he wrote for the preface of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*:

> For we in Europe too are being decolonized...that is to say that the settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out. Let us look at ourselves, if we can bear to, and see what is becoming of us. First, we must face that unexpected revelation, the striptease of our humanism. There you can see it, quite naked, and it's not a pretty sight. It was nothing but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage; its honeyed words, its affectation of sensibility were only alibis for our aggressions. (Fanon, 1967, p. 21)

Fanon's deconstruction involves the decentering and the decolonization of European thought (Young, 1990, p. 18). Fanon illustrated how the master-slave dialectic in colonialism takes place despite the West's bourgeois ideology of freedom, justice, and equality of "man." Bourgeois ideology proclaims an essential equality between "men," but

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Western bourgeois racial prejudice treats the colonized with violence, and can do so because they are not "men" but sub-men. The colonized can then find themselves in a double-bind. The colonizer who views the colonized as sub-men, invites the sub-men to become human (Western bourgeois ideology), but even when the colonized negates his differences and identity (becomes the same), he is given signals that "you will never be one of us" (Fanon, 1967, p. 131). Fanon sought to create a new humanism that did not define "human" against sub-human; instead, driven by his own desire for recognition, he sought to create a "human world that is a world of reciprocal recognitions" (Fanon, 1986, p. 218).

Fanon also articulated the problem with universal theories, especially of progress, development, and reason, that located Europe as the center, the place where history takes place, and the other localities as peripheral. Marxism is also implicated in this universal and Eurocentric logic viewing non-European conquest and destruction as means for progress (Young, 1990, p. 6). Development theories have tended to construct the other as one who has to be saved (Larrain, 1994, p. 141). The premise of development historically has been to bring the backward, inferior nations up to the level of the colonizer. What is important to note, as Fanon discovered, was the way in which the other was constructed as both inferior and often with an immoral character. For example, Hegel saw South America as "physically and spiritually impotent." And early in their careers, Marx and Engels "condoned the forcible subjection of backward nations for the sake of progress" (Larrain, 1994, pp. 20-21).

Benjamin's Analysis of Gender and the Struggle for Recognition

Benjamin analyzed the struggle for recognition in relationships between men and women. Many of the points Fanon made above apply here: First, that universal "man" of

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humanism historically did not apply to women; second, that women who negate their identities and differences to be the same as men are told in different ways " you'll never be one of us" (as I discovered as a father's daughter), finding themselves in a double-bind; and third, Benjamin, like Fanon, stressed that the less powerful (in her case women) "must claim their subjectivity" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 221) to break this master-slave dialectic and move toward mutual recognition.

Benjamin was helpful in clearly describing her interpretation of mutual recognition. She argued that mutual recognition is the ability to maintain a fundamental tension between self-assertion and recognition of the other (Benjamin, 1988, pp. 49-50). But as Benjamin pointed out, this tension often breaks down into a master-slave dialectic where typically men are recognized by women, and women's differences and identities are negated. In Western culture, self-assertion has been valued, idealized, and associated with men, while recognition of the other has been devalued and associated with woman (pp. 50, 184-185). Although, as Benjamin pointed out, there are exceptions (and I am one of them): Women who fear being dominated can (often unconsciously) value what is associated with men, and devalue what is associated with women—even themselves (pp. 96-100).

I agree with Benjamin that "recognition is...central to human existence" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 15). Unfortunately, because recognition of the other has been devalued, many of us, especially those of us who bought into the one-sided ideology and models, are not familiar with what Benjamin believed is involved in recognizing the other. Recognizing the other, for Benjamin, involves recognizing:

- how we are dependent on the other for recognition (our interdependence);
- how the other is independent of us;
- how we are both different; and

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- and how we are similar (not the same) (p. 36).

Both the more and less powerful need to recognize each other in this way for mutual recognition to take place. For empowerment encounters, this means recognizing the multiple realities that come together.

Extending the Theories: Desire for Recognition and Empowerment Encounters

Fanon, Benjamin, and other critical feminist, postcolonial and feminist postcolonial theorists offer valuable contributions to my inquiry—namely, adding the desire for recognition in empowerment encounters. In addition to the umbilical cord of privilege permeating consciousness and behavior resulting in blindspots (or misrecognitions of our habitus) as outlined above, our desire for recognition produces different blindspots that affect the empowerment encounter, the less powerful, and ourselves. Again, as a result, our practices may contradict our intentions to be respectful and effective.

Where I extend Hegel's struggle for recognition and the interpretations is by looking closely at what Hegel observed: Even though we only need acknowledgment from the other of our status as a person, we desire special status and recognition "to be seen to be behaving in a certain way" (Inwood, 1992, pp. 245-6) that is superior to the other; we desire (consciously or unconsciously) to be seen as doing a good job in the empowerment encounter, and we look to the less powerful to recognize us doing a good job. In the process, however, we may not recognize the less powerful as fully human beings, we may only look to them to recognize us. *But what we may desire is a not full recognition with our warts and all—instead, what we may desire is a positive reflection. In other words, some of us desire that the less powerful hold up a warped mirror into which we can see our flattering reflection. Critical feedback-up, concerns, the other's*

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differences—all may be recognized or misrecognized (to use Bourdieu's terminology) because of our desire for recognition and the other blindspots produced by the umbilical cord of privilege outlined above. I discussed some of the problems of giving and receiving feedback in my concerns section. While this is an issue of power (to be discussed in the next section), it is, I believe, also one of recognition and desire. Given some of us prefer to see ourselves as interchangeable and almost invisible practitioners, being recognized is not always welcome—we tend to prefer to put the others under the microscope.

There are four potential blindspots created by our desire for recognition identified by different theorists. The first blindspot is misrecognizing our dependency on the other (less powerful or disadvantaged in a status dimension) for recognition. We are not used to seeing our dependency on others because, as Benjamin noted, in Western culture, autonomy has been valued and idealized (along with rationality), while recognition of the other—including our dependency on them—has been devalued (Benjamin, 1988, pp. 184-5). Hegel's "freedom," in this sense, is a denial of dependency, a fear of dependency, and an attempted escape from dependency that plants the seeds of domination (p. 221). As I noted earlier, my ontological assumption is that we are free yet limited. As more powerful practitioners, we may be blind to what systems theorist Erich Jantsch referred to as the *"autopoietic paradox: the greater an organism's autonomy, the more feedback loops required both within the system and in it's relationship to the environment"* (Briggs & Peat, 1989, p. 165).

Empowerment theory and methodology have been influenced by one-sided individual human development and communication models.[49] For example, Erikson's

[49]Carol Gilligan made many of these initial critiques in her book *A Difference Voice* (1982). Many feminists have developed her critique—for example, the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al, 1986). While Gilligan's work is not critical feminist nor postcolonial feminist, it has been elaborated on and critiqued by both, including Benjamin. My own critique of Gilligan and the

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model of identity development progresses through separation culminating in autonomy and achievement over relationships and responsibility (Erikson, 1963); Kohlberg's highest stage of moral development is universal moral reasoning over contextual and concrete considerations and issues of self-interest (Benjamin, 1988, pp. 193-195); and Habermas' communication theory brings in intersubjectivity but mutual understanding is based on formal, abstract universals (p. 191, n. 17). In each of these highly influential models, it is important to note that "the impact with the other's difference is never really felt" (p. 195); the self never changes despite the encounter with the other. The self in these models can only relate to the other through abstract universals rather than seeing it from the other's frame. This is one reason, I believe, why the notion of two-way empowerment for some is so foreign. Two-way empowerment, as one colleague who works in a progressive think tank said, "goes against the grain of development."[50]

Therefore, *the first blindspot and danger for empowerment practitioners is to not recognize or misrecognize our dependency on the less powerful for recognition, falling into the illusion of the autonomous individual.* For example, being blind to the ways the less powerful recognize our actions day-to-day through positive gestures, facial expressions, sounds and comments, all encouraging us to keep going and letting us know (whether it is true or not) that we are doing a good job. This "interaction work," as Fishman called it, or "emotional support work," is often not recognized or misrecognized as a character attribute of the less powerful (nice, friendly, shy, etc.).

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work from the Stone Center is that rather than seeking the balance Benjamin talked about, the relational side becomes more valued than the assertion side.

[50]John Cavanagh used this vivid phrase a few years ago when we met to discuss the idea of two-way empowerment. John is now director at the Institute for Policy Studies and warned me that it may be hard for a lot of practitioners in the development field to understand two-way empowerment.

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The second blindspot due to our desire for recognition is misrecognizing the independence of the less powerful. As Benjamin pointed out, the self needs to see the other is not just there for them (Benjamin, 1988, p. 36). As practitioners, we need to see the less powerful are not just there for our projects—they live in many different worlds and our interaction with them is only one of those worlds. We may not see that they have their own constraints, information, ideas, feedback, concerns, and jokes that we are not a part of—for example, complainin' in the kitchen. We may also be blind to the less powerful's capacity to exercise power. Feminists and postcolonialists emphasize that the less powerful can tell us to pack up and go home; they can disagree with our assessments of them; they can decide not to participate and to be silent; and they can shape the encounter through their performance to their advantage and in "crafting the self" of the researcher (Kondo, 1990). This point will be further elaborated in the next section on power.

The third blindspot is misrecognizing as well as not recognizing the less powerful's differences. We may constitute the less powerful as less-than (weak, slow, irrational, ineffective, unprofessional)(Larrain, 1994). When the less powerful act, it may not be recognized at all or be misrecognized. For example, women's empowerment efforts were initially misrecognized as passive versus active (Miller, 1986/1976, p. xx). In empowerment encounters, strengths may not be recognized when the less powerful is constructed as only in need of empowerment. Rather than recognizing the less powerful's different strengths and resourcefulness and their difficulties, we may desire to see the less powerful reflecting us in their goals and their behaviors (interpersonal and cultural).[51] This

[51]For example, Howard Gardner (1983) discovered that recognizing different strengths is a challenge in the American educational culture where the logical-analytical intelligence is the standard by which all of our multiple intelligences are measured. As a result, the other intelligences are often misrecognized as problem behavior, or not recognized at all..

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exacerbates all the blindspots that the umbilical cord of privilege can create by permeating consciousness and behavior.

And finally, *the fourth blindspot is not recognizing and misrecognizing our commonalties with the less powerful.* Jorge Larrain noted that one of the dangers of postmodern theory, and I would add of empowerment practice, is particularism—seeing the other as only other. For example, in the domain of intelligence, Donna Haraway noted that in the safaris of the 1920s when Euro-Americans were completely dependent upon Africans for their survival, any sign of intelligent thinking in the Africans was misrecognized as the result of being "literally moved by the spirit of the master" (Haraway, 1989, p. 52).[52] A second example comes from Jorge Larrain of constructing Latinos as only emotional and incapable of rational discourse[53] (a charge often leveled at women as well). A third example is one of my researcher insights from the case-within-a-case. I found myself withholding critical feedback, believing my Latina colleagues were too overwhelmed and under pressure. Even though it may seem as if I was being respectful to not lay more concerns on them, given their tough and stressful positions, in this case it was still putting them in a one-down position, and "*paternalista*" (paternalistic). Giving critical feedback to the less powerful, however, depends upon the context.

Given all of these blindspots, how do we recognize the less powerful and those in disadvantaged status positions in a way that is maximally human? One idea I suggested

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[52]Haraway quoted one of the women in the safari party, Mary Jobe: "It was as if the spirit of this master had descended upon him, activating him to transcendent effort." The Whites had difficulty seeing the Africans as more than children or wildlife. This is similar to my own observation of development experts treating local people like pets and expecting them to behave that way.

[53]Jorge Larrain (1994) related the story of a "well-meaning Englishwoman [who said that] democracy is all right for us Britons who have stable and moderate personalities, but when it comes to the passions of the Latin character you need dictators or authoritarian regimes to cope—democracy will not work in your part of the world." Per Larrain "this is a more profound form of racism: it is to say that certain peoples cannot reach the same degree of rationality that others have; that they are too different"

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above in the umbilical cord of privilege and two-way empowerment sections is paying attention to our presence and how it affects the empowerment encounter. The postcolonial and feminist contribution working with Hegel's struggle for recognition is to pay attention to our desire for recognition. As Calhoun succinctly summarized Hegel: "[Although] the master's standpoint offered an illusory autonomy, it was in fact both distorted and dependent on the recognition of the slave" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 164). Getting clearer on how our desire for recognition can lead to these distortions and to our masking of our dependency on the less powerful is a start.

Thanks to Benjamin's articulation, we can ask the following questions to improve our recognition of the less powerful: Are we able to see the less powerful's independence, our dependence on them, and our interdependence? Are we able to see how we are similar (not the same) and how we are different? Are we looking for a positive reflection that we are doing a good job as practitioners, or are we open to being fully recognized ourselves? Are we treating the less powerful as maximally human or seeing them as less than and unable to take feedback?

By bringing the desire for recognition from the often invisible background into the foreground (as I also suggested with our umbilical cord of privilege, interpersonal style, and unique biography), I believe we can better address ethnocentrism and paternalism in our day-to-day practice. In recognizing differences, this does not mean "suspending critical judgment" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 81). Instead, those of us in the more powerful positions can try to understand the less powerful from the less powerful's "own terms." Teachers can question their standards for biases in judging their students from different cultures. International volunteers can reassess how long it takes to get a report done, or a copy of a document made in a remote village before judging the effectiveness of their local

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colleagues. Researchers can recognize the commonalties we share with participants in the giving and receiving of feedback and our capacity to be both respectful and disrespectful. The crucial challenge here is to recognize others as maximally human and to be willing to be recognized ourselves—not just positively reflected. In empowerment encounters where this mutual recognition takes place, both the more and less powerful are affected by the exchange (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 80-82).

Knowledge that is Partial, Situated, and Relational

The second way feminists and postcolonialists contributed to my theoretical framework was in emphasizing that the knowledge I generate in this study will be partial, situated. Theory that represents the totality of social life and complete illumination of contradictions is not possible given my social positioning. Additionally, because of my chosen framework and methodology, I will focus on some areas and exclude others (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 48). In this section, I will briefly discuss why it is important to recognize the effects of my positioning for this research project. Then, I will describe further my goal of partial, situated, and relational knowledge.

Complex Positioning and Partial Understanding

As I noted above, the relatively more powerful's presence includes our umbilical cords of privilege and personal style, biography. I also noted that our umbilical cord of privilege may be fractured and contradictory. We may be privileged and disprivileged at the same time relative to others—for example, White woman. Similar but not the same to my notion of presence, postcolonial theorists refer to social location and subject positioning to try to capture the complexity of our vantage points that we bring with us to encounters—

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including our blindspots and baggage. Rather than single categories such as class, race or gender contemporary postcolonial theorist Homi Bhaba argued that there is a shift to an awareness of subject positions including "race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation," and so on that infuse claims to identity (Bhaba, 1994, p. 1). Other postcolonial theorists argue for adding political ideologies, affiliations, and values. While our umbilical cord of privilege may produce some blindspots, it does not determine our values, our political beliefs and action, the knowledge we generate, and the way different discourses shape our practice.

Positioning tries to build on the earlier work of a poststructuralist theorist, Michel Foucault, who is central to feminist and postcolonial theories. Foucault expanded the categories for power and resistance from the oppositional politics of Marx of oppressor versus oppressed with class as the single category. Foucault recognized the micropolitics and the multiple sources of power and resistance in the many categories. (Foucault's analysis of power, that there is not one single source of power we can just reverse, is outlined in greater detail in the next section.)

Our complex positioning strengthens the argument that there are multiple realities in empowerment encounters. And given multiple realities, perfect mutual understanding is not possible nor ethical. As Calhoun argued, "because we engage multiple projects and inhabit multiple social worlds, we cannot arrive as simply self-identical beings at the outset of any encounter" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 292). Rather than being interchangeable practitioners, given the partialness of our vantage point, we need others to further our understanding and make better critical judgments. We are interdependent with others for getting a hold on better and worse understandings. This theme of interdependency will be echoed throughout this study.

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Situated, Relational, and Accountable Knowledge

Feminist and postcolonial theorists offer six suggestions for creating knowledge that is situated, relational, and accountable. The first suggestion is to keep Foucault's insight central regarding the connection between power and knowledge and the ways all knowledge is made suspect (Foucault, 1980c). Within every discourse—including empowerment—Foucault showed us there are multiple and competing interpretations, each one intimately related to power. Often, despite the competing interpretations, the discursive regimes (those that are relatively more powerful) create "truth" rather than a continuous history of advances and increases to knowledge bases. Drawing on Foucault, Edward Said showed *Orientalism*, the way the social sciences of the West created knowledge that often paved the way for the West's political efforts and other desires (Said, 1979, p. 238).[54] Foucault and postcolonialists seek to develop ways to construct knowledge that recognizes and respects the other without incorporating it into the SelfSame (Young, 1990, p. 71). This challenge, and ways of doing it, however, are the topic of much postcolonial debate.

This leads to the second suggestion that takes up the challenge of the first—that is, to be aware of and try to avoid getting caught up in the desire to saturate the context with our meaning.[55] In other words, to try as a researcher to fully illuminate what is going on inside empowerment encounters, every dynamic that is taking place within the case, every interpretation of events and causes for patterns; to create an ethnography that is complete. By working within the social sciences, and with an unawareness of our blindspots from the umbilical cord of privilege (including our evolutionary status triggers) and of our desires

[54]"The main issue...was preserving the Orient and Islam under the control of the White Man." "A new dialectic emerges out of this project. What is required of the Oriental expert is no longer simply 'understanding': now the Orient must be made to perform, its power must be enlisted on the side of 'our' values, civilization, interests, goals."

[55]Class Lecture and discussion, during professor Amit Rai's class "Feminism, Post-colonialism and Literary Criticism," at the New School for Social Research.

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for recognition, we are ripe to do just this type of saturation. Dorinne Kondo suggested thoroughly grounding ourselves in context to become more humble in our research efforts and to be open to the possibility of difference and otherness rather than looking for Sameness to develop what she referred to as located understandings (Kondo, 1986, p. 86).

Visweswaran continued on this theme and made a third suggestion. She suggested that we try to do what Haraway called "accountable positioning" for what we have learned to see and do (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 48). Visweswaran's idea of a partial account includes our presence as researchers in much of what I envision in two-way empowerment—that is, including our presence, for Visweswaran, our positioning. She suggested a deconstructive approach versus a self-reflexive approach to "confront the plays of power in our processes of interpretation. If the self-reflexive mode emphasizes not what we know but how we think we know, the deconstructive mode again emphasizes how we think we know what we know is neither transparent nor innocent" (pp. 79-80). Visweswaran drew on Kondo's approach of "deploying what is known as antihumanist discourse for humanist ends (Kondo, 1990, p. 301). I feel aligned with Visweswaran and others because they pay attention to the intertwining of power, status, and deception. Rather than just listing my umbilical cord of privilege and biases at the outset of this dissertation to give the reader a frame of interpretation, my own accountability in this dissertation depends on marking for the reader my desires, my constructedness, and my relationship to the readers. The places in the study where I fail in the research help to highlight this marking process.

As a result of the above, I am aware that the knowledge I generate in this effort will be partial, that I have to work hard to keep it accountable, and as a result for my colleagues and others, I may create what Gayatri Spivak called "provisional generalizations" that do

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not try to transcend the historical conditions of their creation (Spivak, 1986, p. 208). As Calhoun put it, "to leave the field of struggle for the umpire's chair is to try to adopt the Cartesian view from nowhere" (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 10-11). Feminists and postcolonialists build on this tradition by also bringing in the bodies of the theorists and their positioning. I appreciate the emphasis of these theorists to see ourselves as a visible participant in the discourse because this study is about bringing the relatively more powerful's presence from the background into the foreground to be looked at and worked with. Therefore, as an empowerment practitioner with my umbilical cord of privilege and other aspects of self and social location, I can engage in the empowerment discourse as a participant rather than an observer, challenge the discourse from within, and create alternative interpretations.

Differences and Concerns with Feminist Postcolonial Theory

Where I differ from postcolonial theorists is on the subject of human nature. Historically, human nature, like "man" and "humanism," has been used to put men before women, Europeans before non-Europeans, and so on. Because of this history, bringing in the commonalities (not sameness) we share as human beings with a long evolutionary past has been subject to the same criticism. I believe this is throwing the baby out with the bath water. There are some commonalities in the human condition studied by evolutionary social scientists that I believe can help us to learn more about both our intentions and our practices. For example, a tendency to desire respect, recognition, status, and to avoid disrespect, disdain, to feel guilt and compassion, indignation, betrayal. As Chandra Mohanty noted, mothering is universal, but what is important is the value attached to mothering in different cultures (Mohanty, 1991); the same for some of these tendencies.

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They are present but valued differently by different cultures, the environment, the historical situation, and so on.

While some postcolonial theories illuminate the continuing neo-colonial relations in the context of globalization and the international division of labor (Bhaba, 1994, p. 6), others are not as anchored.[56] I am cautious about working with feminist, postcolonial theory (especially those that draw on postmodern theories) given the potential pitfalls outlined by Larrain: particularism (not seeing commonalities), essentialism (fixed different nature), relativism (inability to create better understandings), and irrationalism (throwing in the towel on reason); and for claiming there is no ideology while reintroducing a neo-liberal ideology through the backdoor (Larrain, 1994, p. 32) while drifting away from the anchored position of capitalism's influence in daily lives.

Some of the feminist and postcolonial theory can also get stuck in describing injustice with little emphasis on action pointing to all the forces lurking in the background (including impersonal indirect systems of corporate, market, and state forces) (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 283-292), and viewing intentions for emancipation (the crux of this study) as many postmoderns do as "intentionalist illusions" (p. 112).

Summary of Framework

In both engaging with different empowerment encounters in the research phase and in the literature review, I need critical theory informed by feminist and postcolonial theories. Empowerment encounters today bring together people from both colonizer and colonized countries: international development encounters in developing countries; schools

[56] Spivak, who is also a Marxist, is not in the category of drifters.

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in New York, Paris, London, and so on, where schools must deal with the influx of their previous colonies' migrants; and research projects in New York where the researcher's country once invaded her colleague's country (Bhaba, 1994, p. 6) . This requires that I attempt to get at the place where the many different levels meet in these empowerment encounters—especially the sociocultural and the interpersonal, past and present, private and public. This place is what Bhaba referred to as the "in-between" (p. 13). This means questioning the binaries and working at the spaces in-between, as Fanon and Benjamin showed above, where issues of disrespect are at the heart of many of the struggles of recognition (a similar finding to what I observed in my practice). Because of the diversity of categories, and the diversity within groups that are "less powerful," empowerment encounters are both more complex and conflictual. Therefore, the challenge is to create forms of dialectical thinking that "do not disavow or sublate...otherness" (p. 173).

Critical social theory, as described by Calhoun, emphasizes the need to understand how empowerment encounters are culturally specific, historically situated, and permeated by power. What historical processes brought the participants into an intercultural exchange within the empowerment encounter? How is it that empowerment encounters are organized by these specific people and groups who are now more powerful with the goal of empowering the less powerful? Why are there often feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment undermining effectiveness that are not addressed by interpersonal communication skills courses? Because, as Calhoun put it, ***"power is not simply a distortion of the conversation, it is its occasion"*** (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 51-52).

What I appreciate about critical social theory for this inquiry is the attention to how the hidden background affects our bodies in the empowerment encounters. In the theory I

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will attempt to produce in this dissertation (an additional empowerment discourse), I will try to remember Calhoun's reminder that:

> Theory is produced by people with bodies, with investments in specific webs of interpersonal relations and categorical identities, with their orientations shaped by their cultural and historical contexts. We need to take on critical theory in a spirit of reaching out from those bodies, those relations, those identities, and those contexts, but not in a spirit of imagining we can universally transcend them. (Calhoun, 1995, p. 295)

In the following chapters, the reader will be able to see this framework in action within the power and empowerment literature. "Critical" ensured that the literature was not what I referred to as "empowerment lite." Empowerment lite literature tends to leave out history and power. Empowerment tends to be defined rather than viewed as multiple interpretations shaped by different discourses. And finally, empowerment lite, neglects critical questions such as empowerment for whom?; and for what?

Feminist postcolonialists ensured that I addressed the complexity of empowerment encounters by addressing differences in privilege, power, desire, and deception. In the following chapters, I will also try to address the differences between critical feminists and feminist postcolonialsts and where these theorists are aligned. The cleavages between these positions, and other positions as well, helps to guide us through the debates.

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CHAPTER 7

POWER

(Interpretations of Power, "Disciplinary Power" and the "Normalizing Gaze," Reproduction and Resistance

Power relations permeate empowerment encounters from the start. The encounters are organized by the more powerful's institution to empower the less powerful. The more powerful can exercise institutional power (both power-over and power-to as explained in the first section of, "Different Interpretations of Power"). Often the more powerful are also advantaged in several dimensions of the umbilical cord of privilege. As a result, dominant power relations outside of the encounter in society are often reinforced inside the encounter itself. In international development encounters, for example, those often in charge are relatively high-paid European and American professionals in contrast to their Latin American, African, and Asian colleagues who are often struggling-to-survive grassroots leaders, managers, and community members (Arnold & Reineke, 1996); in U.S. social service work, White, middle-class, social workers often work to empower working-class and poor individuals and communities of color (Simon, 1994).

Empowerment encounters are complex because they bring together power and status unequals. Just arriving on the scene as the development worker, anthropologist, teacher, social worker, organizer, researcher, and so on (those who are not seen as needing empowerment), gives those of us in these more powerful positions a psychological edge and self-confidence that can reinforce existing power relations; in other words, it sets up an immediate one-up, one-down relationship (Collins, 1994, p. 234). Yet because many of us in the more powerful positions are working on "empowerment" and involved in helping

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professions, we are often unaware of or are unwilling to acknowledge the following: the institutional power we exercise (especially power-over); the ways the less powerful also exercise power (including resistance); how power and knowledge that we both produce and draw on in our different disciplines (our discourses of "expertise") are mutually involved with each other; and how easy it is to reproduce the power and status inequalities from outside the encounter in the encounter itself.

Being blind to power, misrecognizing power, builds deception and resentment right in to empowerment encounters. Part of this blindness to power can be attributed, I believe, to the fear that power corrupts as discussed by Janeway and Starhawk below. As a result of this fear, many of us are ignorant about power relations. I know I have been. I did not pay serious attention to power until midway through the case, thanks to the urging of a key participant and colleague. For practitioners like myself who are interested in improving our practice to be more respectful and effective, I believe we need to ask the following questions: How do both the more and less powerful exercise power and resistance (what does it look like? how can we see it?); how is power intertwined with knowledge? how are power relations easily reproduced despite our intentions? how can we resist dominating others when we are in the more powerful position to transform relations of power? and how can the resistance of our colleagues in less powerful positions assist us in both increasing our awareness and changing our behavior?

Fortunately, there are four theoretical areas that enable us to pursue the above questions in the next three sections. In the first section, I will try to make the different interpretations of power at the conceptual level visible. Then in the second section, "Foucault's Disciplinary Power-Knowledge and the Normalizing Gaze" I will describe the emergence of disciplinary power and the social science discourses that justified and

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continue to justify an asymmetrical, one-way visibility (putting the less powerful under the microscope). I will also address what Foucault referred to as normalizing judgment (viewing the encounter only interpersonally, and using the more powerful's standards as THE standards to assess behavior and push conformity). Foucault, and the many theorists who have built on his work (especially critical feminists and feminist poststructuralists), have directly addressed *how* power has historically been and continues to be exercised and resisted in institutions—including helping institutions (schools, hospitals, charities, etc.).

The next section, "The Reproduction of and Resistance to Power Relations," brings in examples from conversation analysis of how easy it is to reproduce dominance in the areas where we are privileged *despite* our intentions. Then, I will review selected studies in the resistance literature including Paul Willis' *Learning to Labor* (1977), James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1986) and Kondo's critique of the former two.

For my inquiry, however, Foucauldian literature and the selected literature in reproduction and resistance of power relations does not address three crucial areas: First, while there are hints of transformation, most of these studies tend to get stuck in resistance; second, only the less powerful in these studies resist domination; and third, some of the resistance literature does not capture the complexity and ambiguity given our differences (our different historical, interpersonal selves, different umbilical cords of privilege) and the different empowerment encounter contexts. Kondo addressed some of the complexities, but much of this literature needed to be inverted—in other words, I will use the analysis to see if reproduction of dominant practices is not taking place in the case study.

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Power Interpretations and Selected Discourses

In this section, I try to make the different interpretations of power visible because I believe this often hidden dimension affects day-to-day practice in empowerment encounters. I also attempt to create a vocabulary for the following chapters—especially for empowerment. What is the power that empowerment practitioners seek to increase? What is the power that was so often denied, downplayed, and hidden in the cases? What was the power that prevented critical feedback-up? Why is power felt so intensely in our bodies? Why is power such an intimidating topic and one that makes the more powerful so uncomfortable in empowerment encounters? These were a few of the questions I had coming into this analysis.

As Lukes noted, power is a value-laden concept (Lukes, 1974, p. 27), and the search for a single definition is a mistake (Lukes, 1986, p. 4). But we can work with the theories at the conceptual level and try to map out the relevant territory. After working with the literature, I began to see some of the cleavages and debates fell around the following questions: What are the outcomes of power? what is the nature of power? who (or what) exercises power? (Lukes, 1974;1993); and why is power hidden? Studying the different interpretations of outcomes helps to build the power vocabulary—for example, differentiating interpretations that are power-over, others that are power-to, and others that view power paradoxically. Some fear power and then do not track whether they are using or abusing power.

In the nature of power debates, some interpret power as fixed, while others claim it is infinite and produced in interaction. Some see power as a one-way process, others a two-way process. A one-way power interpretation will affect an empowerment interpretation and not in the direction of two-way empowerment. Who (or what) exercises

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power in empowerment encounters tends to be assumed: the more powerful. Fortunately, feminists will outline several ways the less powerful exercise their power. At the end of these debates, I will make my own interpretation of power visible.

Purpose of Power (For What Outcome?)

In the first debate over the purpose of power, there is a major cleavage between "power-over" theorists and "power-to" theorists. Power-over theorists argue that power is the capacity to adversely affect the interests of others through coercion, authority, force, manipulation, domination, control, violence, and some argue influence. This includes the following four selected interpretations: first, exploitative economic structures (Marx); second, domination by powerful bureaucracies and "individuals [intentionally] realizing their wills despite the resistance of others"(Lukes, 1974, p. 22) (Weber); third, individuals both making decisions (first-dimensional liberal power) and preventing decisions from being made (second-dimensional reform power) on issues over observable conflict of interests, and the ways social forces, political systems, and institutional practices can "prevent demands from becoming political issues or even from being made (Lukes, 1974, pp. 23-4, 38) (third-dimensional radical power) (Lukes); and fourth, the positive, productive force of power (rather than the repressive use of force) (Foucault, 1980a, p. 89)[57] consisting of disciplinary techniques embodied in institutions and exercised to "subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors, etc." (Foucault, 1980f, p. 97) . Some feminist theorists view power as enabling "some to define what is or is not considered knowledge" (Riger, 1992, p. 735). Other scholars investigating the reproduction of power relations add that power is the capacity to determine not only what is

[57] "If...power is strong this is at the level of desire—and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it....It was on the basis of power over the body that a physiological, organic knowledge of it became possible." (Foucault, 1980f, p. 59)

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knowledge, but also what is reality, what is normal, what is rational, what is legitimate, and what are the rules for determining legitimacy (Fishman, 1990, p. 225; Molotch & Boden, 1985). While there are many differences between these theorists, they are part of a historical tradition that pays attention to the potential for domination given the conflict of interests in social relationships.

Power-to theorists, on the other hand, argue that power is not about domination, conflict, or control. As Lukes pointed out, some of these theorists tend to view power as a capacity rather than a relationship where conflicts are involved (Lukes, 1974, p. 31). For example, Hannah Arendt's interpretation of power is the human ability "not just to act but to act in concert" (Arendt, 1970, p. 44); leaders are empowered by people to be in power, therefore power is consensual and depends upon legitimacy. Talcott Parsons viewed power as a resource of the political system enabling authorities to pursue collective goals (Lukes, 1974 , pp. 26-29). Both Arendt and Parsons, as Lukes noted, neglected the findings from the power-over literature tradition in their redefinition of power; and both interpretations demonstrate the value-ladeness of power definitions, and the ways the interpretations contribute to strengthening the theorists' intellectual frameworks (Lukes, 1974, p. 31).

In feminist psychology, empowerment, and critical feminist literature, theorists are also reframing power. In psychology, some feminists are working to redefine individual, psychological power from conventional notions of command and control to an "energy that fuels self-expression and the ability to take action" within a supportive context (Peay, 1994, p. 3). Power, for these theorists, includes the capacity to be effective *and* to be responsible in relationships (an attempt to bring autonomy and connection back into balance). In the U.S. social work empowerment literature, power is interpreted within an empowerment perspective (where the goal is to create "changes in the distribution of power") as the

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following: "the ability to get what one needs; the ability to influence how others think, feel act or believe; and the ability to influence the distribution of resources in a social system such as a family, organization, community or society" (Gutierrez, DeLois & GlenMaye, 1995, p. 535). These theorists see the goal of empowerment is to increase this power at the personal, interpersonal and political levels.

Starhawk, an eco-feminist, activist, and author of a book exploring the nature of power (*Truth or Dare*), has influenced both practitioners and scholars—especially those that practice participatory empowerment.[58] Starhawk distinguished three types of power: "power-over" (an estrangement worldview backed up by force), "power-from-within" (empowerment), and "power-with" (wielding influence among equals) (Starhawk, 1987, p. 9). For Starhawk, power-from-within refers to a sense of empowerment by tapping our deepest potential and abilities, our creativity, our connection with other beings and capacity for bonding. Power-with is viewed as social power, the capacity to wield influence among equals and used creatively to empower (pp. 9,16). Power-with is influence rather than authority that relies on power-over to ensure obedience. Instead, power-with relies on, among other things, gossip (who to trust and mistrust) and respect (who deserves to be listened to). Through listening and suggesting, she believed we can and should wield power-with to gain influence among equals for empowerment rather than use power to enforce obedience (pp. 10-16).

Critical feminist Elizabeth Janeway, in her book, *Weapons of the Weak*, saw power as the capacity to act in both liberating (power to act: capacity, potentiality, creativity) and

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[58]For example, de Montis Solis' unpublished dissertation, "Feminism, Empowerment and Public Education in Nicaragua," uses Starhawk's definition of the three types of power (de Montis Solis, 1994); some practitioners also draw on Starhawk's definition of power and work with these different types of power in workshops (including seminars at the Fielding Institute's sessions to initiate a social change institute).

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limiting (power-over: compelling and frustrating to dominating) ways. Kondo also saw power in a more paradoxical way as both creative and coercive, yet she added that power is also "coextensive with meaning" (Kondo, 1990, p. 307) within specific interpersonal, cultural, and historical contexts.

The crucial point for Janeway is in exercising power "safely and effectively" (Janeway, 1980, p. 87). But, as both Janeway and Starhawk noted, there is fear that it is not possible to distinguish the use from abuse of power. Janeway pointed out that status-quo definitions of power in dictionaries are, to a certain degree, stigmatized: "power corrupts"(Janeway, 1980, p. 88)[59] is taken by many as common wisdom. As a result, some women and others from historically marginalized groups fear exercising power because they fear dominating others (Starhawk, 1987, p. 13).

Some of us fear even discussing power. Both Janeway and Starhawk noted how in Western culture we have been prohibited to understand how power operates through Judeo-Christian culture (an all-powerful God who demanded our unquestioned obedience) and parent-child relationships (unquestioned authority) . There are also very real fears of retribution that may include personal humiliation, losing funding, losing a job, losing a relationship, and so on. Yet, as Janeway believes, the more the less powerful (and I would add the more powerful) withdraw from power, viewing it as dangerous, the more the relationship deteriorates into domination and submission (Janeway, 1980, pp. 88-92).

What is the Nature of Power?

In the second debate, different interpretations compete for the nature of power. On one side of the debate are theorists who follow Marx, Weber, and others to analyze the

[59]Janeway pointed out Lord Acton's famous quote, "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," is often shortened to "power corrupts," dropping the "tends to."

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power of economic systems and capital accumulation, the state, classes, institutions, bureaucracies, and transnational corporations that operate in the public sphere—for example, John Gaventa's work on assessing the power of dominant elites in socialization institutions (the media, churches, schools, etc.) in an Appalachian coal valley (Gaventa, 1980), [60] Habermas' work in communicative action in the public sphere (Habermas, 1984; 1987), and Arrighi's work in the history of capitalist accumulation and connections to power (Arrighi, 1994). These theorists recognize that different entities are weighted more heavily given their power than other entities.

On the other side of the nature of power debate are theorists who argue that power is not a fixed attribute held by one individual, group, class, or institution, nor is it located in only the public sphere. Critical feminist and philosopher Nancy Fraser questioned critical theories that do not "problematize gender-associated binary oppositions" (Fraser, 1989, p. 121)—for example, the public versus the private sphere. Fraser has criticized Habermas' model because it limits the analysis of power to the public sphere and neglects the power-permeated private sphere[61] arguing that it would be a "grave mistake to restrict the use of the term 'power' to bureaucratic contexts" (Fraser, 1989, p. 121).

Another group of theorists call our attention to the ways power is produced in relationships throughout the social body. The type of power produced (power-over or power-to) depends upon the theorist's interpretation. Foucault argued that power (power-over) is diffuse (exercised in practices from a variety of points) and relational rather than something that is "acquired, seized or shared" (Foucault, 1978, p. 94); for Foucault, power

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[60] This is the third level of power relations. The first is influence and coercion, and the second is intimidation (what I have been referring to as the fear of retribution).

[61] She drew on Fishman's study that demonstrates the ways women continue to be subordinated in day-to-day interactions, even when men believe in feminist principles.

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circulates (Foucault, 1980f, p. 98).[62] Given power's productive rather than prohibitive role, relations of power are "immanent to other relationships rather than being exterior to them—for example, economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 94) (and I would add empowerment encounters). Rather than trying to get to the bottom of "what is power," Foucault urged us to look at how power is exercised in day-to-day practices. Why? Because power is relational. Rather than being top-down (a binary of oppressor vs. oppressed to simply reverse), Foucault argued that power comes from below (Foucault, 1978, p. 94) at the capillary level of power in micro relations (Foucault, 1980a, p. 39). Foucault's work on power is critical to this study because he interpreted power as a two-way process (Young, 1994, p. 87) noting that "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95).

Empowerment theorists in social work who view power as an ability argue that power is depicted as "originating from various sources and as infinite because it can be generated in the process of social interaction" (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 535).[63] Janeway, who holds a more paradoxical view of power, also argued that power is not a thing "but a process of interaction among human beings" (Janeway, 1980, p. 11). But, like Foucault, Janeway was concerned with bringing attention to the two-way nature of power. She distinguished the difference between top-down and two-way interpretations of power relations as follows: Top-down relations operate with initiative flowing only one way, top-down, and "cooperation consists in cheerful and willing obedience" (Janeway, 1980, p. 83); an alternative conception involves both the more and less powerful in an "active, two-way relationship" (p. 82). She believed this perspective, however, is often overlooked.

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[62]Similar to Mauss and other anthropologists who drew on shamanic interpretation of power as mana (energy).
[63]Citing Ricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, and Weick.

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Janeway connected this neglect of the two-way aspect of power to the fear that power is dangerous discussed above. Like Arendt, Janeway looked to the "sense of relationship and community which can license the use of power, and which operates to control its use" (p. 93). When power is viewed as being owned by the powerful (an attribute), we tend to forget the way communities can limit power. What Janeway emphasized is that we need to look at the power relationship itself rather than the individuals in it. The more powerful are not by definition less just, the less powerful are not by definition more just. What is important is the power relationship. Janeway agreed with Richard Emmerson that reciprocity (where each gets something out of it and each controls something the other wants) in balanced power relationships can limit domination (p. 158). She believes that this "mutual giving-and-getting sets boundaries to power" (p. 159).

Who (or What) Exercises Power?

Because the top-down, one-way models are so prevalent in both theory and practice, it is difficult for many of us to break out of the paradigm that only the more powerful individuals and collectivities (e.g., disciplinary institutions that Foucault addressed) exercise power. (And it adds to why it is so difficult to conceptualize two-way empowerment.) This brings us to the third debate of who (or what) exercises power. Kondo, who agrees with those mentioned above that power is not an "essential substance which some people have and some people do not," argued that there is "no place beyond power" (Kondo, 1990, p. 305). Kondo explored the way power works in a given context (in her case, a small, family-owned factory in Japan) and discovered that those who seem to "have power" may also be dominated by larger forces, and those defined as "without power" may be both "marginal and central" to an encounter and able to "assert positive

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strengths" (Kondo, 1990, p. 307). Kondo's last point addresses one of the critical contributions from feminists I alluded to earlier—the recognition of the less powerful's different strengths and the ways the less powerful exercise power. While there is much more in this debate, how the less powerful exercise power is crucial for this study and will now be addressed in more detail.

Why is it difficult for many of us to grasp that the less powerful individuals and collectivites exercise power? Part of the confusion stems from believing the only power that can be wielded is institutional power. The less powerful, however, exercise other forms of power that are often not recognized or misrecognized. That is why this contribution from feminists of different stripes is so valuable. The less powerful may be less powerful organizationally, institutionally, and in most cases structurally (being more disadvantaged than advantaged in the different dimensions of their umbilical cord of privilege), but, they are not powerless. Janeway, Fraser, Hill Collins, hooks, and Kondo's contributions have been loosely grouped into six different ways the less powerful can exercise power.

First, the less powerful can exercise power by refusing to enter into the empowerment encounter. Students can refuse to take part in empowering exercises that they feel are disempowering, and communities can tell international development workers and researchers to "go home." In U.S. social services, clients can refuse individualized psychological empowerment encounters to raise their self-esteem carried out by workers who ask but do not answer very personal questions. For example, Nancy Fraser described one case where Black teens, who in contrast to White teens, resisted entering into the therapeutic discourse and interpretation of pregnancy as low self-esteem. These teens resented the social worker's "right to question them given they couldn't ask personal

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questions of her in turn." This encounter for the teens lacked the conditions of reciprocity (Fraser, 1989, p. 179).[64] (Only the teens were under the microscope.) This is one of the relationship aspects of the empowerment encounter that brings in our desire for recognition—that is, as a professional engaging in empowerment encounters, I need the less powerful to recognize my work as legitimate. I want to make sure this involves a fair exchange of what I am giving for what I am getting. I do not want to be accused of a "power advantage"—in other words, to be seen as getting more than I am giving (as reflected in my "working and learning collaborative agreements"). This, then, is the power of legitimacy (Janeway, 1980, p. 162).

Second, the less powerful also have the power to disbelieve—to refuse the definition of themselves as defined by the more powerful. The less powerful can explore alternatives to the more powerful's stated acceptable roles and behavior (Janeway, 1980, p. 167) For example, the less powerful can refuse to believe that they are ineffective, incapable, unprofessional, irrational, weak, lacking ideas and intelligence, that they are the only ones who need to be empowered, and so on.. The students in the case study refused to accept the definition of themselves as "poor" in a newspaper article applauding the school for working in their community. They argued that their families work and are not like the poor both here in the U.S. and back in their countries. A second example is in Fraser's case: The Black teens resisted the way the experts constructed their life stories and capacities for agency using therapeutic, psychiatric discourse. These resistance strategies "blocked efforts to inculcate in them white, middle-class norms of individuality and affectivity"

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[64] The teens disliked the language game of question-and-answer, disliked the social worker's stance of nondirectiveness and moral neutrality--her unwillingness to say what she thought.

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(Fraser, 1989, p. 180).[65] In a third example, middle-class youth who were labeled as pre-delinquents let it become a self-fulfilling prophecy, but youth living in the more marginalized communities rarely bought into the stigma (Edelman, 1974, p. 305).

A third way the less powerful can exercise power is by appropriating some of the resources that are offered in empowerment encounters, and not buying into others. This builds on the above two in that the less powerful can exercise their independence and power in making use of the financial and nonfinancial resources in ways that make sense for them. For example, during the photography activity at the school, I gave each student a camera with 27 exposures and explained that they would pick the best 4 to present to the group. One student exercised her power directly: "So that's four pictures for you and the rest for me." And in the case noted by Fraser, the teens who resisted psychiatric interpretations and questioning to increase their self-esteem, did take advantage of the resources they saw in their best interest (Fraser, 1989, p. 180).

A fourth way the less powerful can exercise power is by exercising different powers and demonstrating different strengths, a point I tried to emphasize earlier and is emphasized by Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks. The less powerful can use their different strengths for resistance: for example, art, music, silence, confrontation, doing more with less, and empowering each other to resist domination in a project. Hill Collins emphasized that the less powerful are not powerless. Even those with limited resources can resist ideologies that say they are "less than" (power to disbelieve) and exercise political power. Hill Collins believes that historically marginalized groups' ways of exercising power can offer one way of

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[65] I would be cautious here. We may make the less powerful too different and not recognize our commonalities.

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> rethinking social change and *reconceptualizing the politics of empowerment*...African-Americans, Native Americans, women, Latinos, gays and lesbians, and the poor and working class have never been powerless; the question is one of *how to identify and use those forms of power that often go unrecognized* [italics added]." (Andersen & Collins, 1992, p. 454).

bell hooks' vision is that "feminist ideology should not encourage (as sexism has done) for women to believe they are powerless. It should clarify for women the powers they exercise daily and show them ways these powers can be used to resist sexist domination and exploitation" (hooks, 1984, p. 242). Janeway, echoing the themes of the thesis so far, noted that these different powers and strengths of the less powerful tend not to be recognized as real or positive powers by the more powerful (Janeway, 1980, p. 157). As I argued earlier, part of this I believe is due to the blindspots from both the umbilical cord of privilege and the desire for recognition of the more powerful.

A fifth way the less powerful can exercise power is to meet together (Janeway, 1980, p. 171). This can range from complainin' in the kitchen to air concerns safely, to clients in the case Fraser described earlier joining together "to challenge administrative interpretation of needs" (Fraser, 1989, p. 180).

And finally, the less powerful can assert their power to act (including both the limiting and liberating aspects) directly upon the more powerful (development worker, anthropologist, teacher, social worker, organizer, researcher, etc.). Kondo found herself being acted upon as a Japanese-American anthropologist working in Japan. When she found herself participating enthusiastically in recasting herself as more Japanese, she viewed this as a testimonial to her informants' success in acting upon her (Kondo, 1990, p. 14). Her informants exercised their power upon her to force her to abandon her position as an observer (Kondo, 1986, p. 79), and to negotiate and craft her identity in power-laden encounters(Kondo, 1986, p. 79; 1990, p. 17). For Kondo, this two-way process of

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"crafting selves" emphasizes the importance of recognizing "the ways in which informants are also actors and agents and that the negotiation of reality that takes place in the doing of ethnography involves complex and shifting relations of power in which the ethnographer *acts and is also acted upon*" (Kondo, 1986, p. 75).[66]

Viewing the less powerful as maximally human means viewing the less powerful as being just as capable as the more powerful to respect, and disrespect, dominate, empower, desire recognition, and so on. If those of us in the more powerful positions are only concerned with being respectful, we may be surprised when, as Kondo noted the less powerful study us (the more powerful) and may seek to dominate the encounter through control of the more powerful's behavior, the outcome of empowerment encounters, research projects, and so on, in an effort to preserve their own identity (Kondo, 1990, p. 80), or I would add to get as many resources as possible from the exchange (often urgently needed resources). I was surprised several times during the intensive research phase—especially when I found myself becoming an employee (a trainer) in the second case.

Kondo's examples illustrate the point Janeway made above: It is important to remember that the powers of the less powerful are not more just. Nor are they less just. The less powerful are mixed-bag humans, just like the more powerful, working individually and collectively. Their powers to act, and their powers to limit action, both individual and collective, are not more valid, compassionate, balanced, and so on. They, like the more powerful, also exercise power to dominate. The less powerful are not naturally kind, supportive and humble. On the contrary, the less powerful are often given signals by the more powerful to keep their place and to practice patience and humility

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[66] Italics mine.

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(Janeway, 1980, p. 157-158) (a point that will be taken up in the next section on power relations.)

Finally, the phrase "exercising power" itself also needs to be addressed. Lukes noted that this wording leads to two false assumptions: First, that exercising power is done intentionally; and second, that individuals only exercise power. Lukes pointed out that both individuals and collectives can exercise power and both can do so intentionally and nonintentionally (Lukes, 1974, 1986)

Summary and My Interpretation

There are some rich insights in the above debates that I believe are critical to get a deeper understanding of empowerment encounters. And I believe there are also some problems and gaps. In this section I will review briefly the three debates as they relate to empowerment encounters, and in the process I will outline my current interpretation of power that, like other theorist's, is value-laden and reflects my ontological assumptions.

In the first debate of power outcomes (power-over vs. power to), I agree with Janeway and Kondo that the potential outcomes of power are paradoxical: both liberating and limiting, creative and coercive. Similar to my interpretation of the human condition, I believe we are a mixed bag with the potential to both respect and dominate others. ***Redefining power in a purely positive light and excluding power-over does not prevent domination from taking place.*** As Lukes pointed out, when power-over is excluded, the relational and conflictual aspects of power can be neglected (Lukes, 1974, p. 31). *In empowerment encounters, when this one-sided positive interpretation of power is the frame, exercises of power that are power-over may be misrecognized or not recognized.* Because we bring our umbilical cord of privilege to the empowerment encounter, that

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includes our evolutionary triggers geared to maintain and increase our status, it is possible for us to argue passionately for Starhawk's power-with while at the same time dominating our colleagues. Rather than claiming we are all equal (Starhawk's power-with as influence among equals), I believe we come to empowerment encounters with different umbilical cords of privilege, different interpersonal styles, and unique biographies that need to be addressed and worked with. We can, however, work toward treating each other with equal respect and dignity.

In some empowerment encounters, all interpretations of power are excluded. As Janeway and Starhawk mentioned, when practitioners fear that power will corrupt, that in exercising power may hurt those that they hope to empower, fear can turn to silence and a withdrawal from power. These practitioners are afraid to look at power, unwilling to talk about power, and unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging that they exercise power. Again, as with the one-sided interpretation of power-to, exercising power-over is easily not recognized or misrecognized (and the resistance to that power-over can also be misunderstood).

One-sided interpretations of power, and excluding power all together, can help to explain why the more powerful are often mystified when their practices contradict their intentions to be respectful and effective. *If we back away from power, we also back away from our monitoring of the exercise of power to distinguish use from abuse.* One of the aims of this study is to learn more about how to discern the use of power from an abuse of power—especially in giving and receiving feedback, as I mentioned in my concerns (an area many would argue is not about power but interpersonal skills).

In the second debate around the nature of power, I again believe both sides of the debate bring in a critical aspect for empowerment encounters. Power is both "what is" (in

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the different weights of corporations, the state, classes, institutions and accumulated privilege in the umbilical cord of privilege, etc.) and "what can be" (power produced in the interaction and circulating in the encounter). Power in empowerment encounters is also a two-way process as Foucault, Janeway, Kondo, and others made clear. This *two-way nature of power* again reflects what I believe is the paradoxical condition of the human condition—that is, in exercising power, we are both free yet limited. *The less powerful can respond with resistance, an acknowledgment of legitimacy, and exercising their power* (both acting upon the more powerful in a power-over way and empowering the more powerful). As Janeway discussed above, she believed what is crucial is balancing this active two-way relationship of power so that the reciprocity, the mutual giving and getting in the power exchange, will limit domination. While I agree with Janeway that we need to examine this relationship, I do not believe she went far enough. What Janeway neglected is self-deception and the deception of others in assessing exchanges given our umbilical cord of privilege. Therefore, I believe that we also need to be aware of and work with our tendency to bias exchanges toward the self.

In the third debate of who (or what) exercises power, again there are various interpretations important for understanding empowerment encounters. The empowerment encounter sits within the context of global capitalist and cultural systems, and these systems exercise power that empowers some and disempowers others. Within the encounter itself, the more powerful can exercise institutional power. But, and this is critical for this study yet often overlooked, the less powerful can also exercise power that is not institutional and often not recognized or misrecognized. The feminist contribution of recognizing the ways the less powerful can exercise power is one of the most profound and practical insights in this discourse for two-way empowerment and also for research in

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general. Although I read several of these theorists prior to the research, I did not fully understand how crucial these insights were until after I had experienced being "acted upon," as Kondo put it, in the case study. I now view my inability to conceive of and recognize the less powerful as maximally human—for example, their capacity to wield power-over the more powerful—as another form of paternalism.

I believe that both the more and less powerful can exercise power; however, *we need to recognize that it tends to be easier for those with "thick" umbilical cords of privilege and institutional power to wield power than for those with "thin" cords and no institutional power.* The capacity to exercise power for both the more and less powerful also depends upon the different constraints each faces in addition to their relative privilege and disprivilege—for example, the more powerful are subject to higher authorities, budgets, the global economy, and so on. As Kondo made clear earlier, not one is beyond power.

Therefore, I believe "who exercises power" in empowerment encounters can sometimes be mystifying for at least four reasons: First, some practitioners are not aware of power—especially power-over; second, some of the more powerful practitioners believe that their power-to definition ensures that their practice excludes power-over; third, some practitioners may romanticize the less powerful and not expect the less powerful's capacity for resistance and power-over and power-to; and fourth, as Lukes pointed out, power can be exercised by both individuals and collectives, both intentionally and nonintentionally (Lukes, 1974, p. 55).[67]

In summary, I interpret power as both power-over and power-to, as a more fixed attribute and as something that is produced in two-way relationships, and power can be

[67] Lukes pointed out, however, that unlike structural determination arguments, here the agent can, in fact, act differently.

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exercised by both the more and less powerful. Within power-to is the recognition that we are free yet limited. We need to respect limits, and limits can help us to empower ourselves and others. This balance between freedom and limits takes place intrapersonally, interpersonally, between collectivities, and between human cultures and ecological systems. The less powerful and ecological systems' expressions of limits can help the more powerful and human cultures in general to recognize when relationships are out of balance and harmful for both. One way of expressing limits to power-over mentioned by Foucault is through resistance; another is the potential for transformation of unjust power relations stressed by feminists. What I would add is that we do not forget that limits are also implicit within power-to to keep things in balance. How the different theorists interpret these struggles of domination, resistance, and transformation is where we now turn.

Foucault's Disciplinary Power-Knowledge and the Normalizing Gaze

At the outset of this thesis, I described my main concerns with empowerment encounters as the following two tendencies: first, viewing encounters interpersonally while leaving out the hidden background (power, status, privilege, etc.); and second, putting the less powerful under the microscope while leaving out the more powerful's presence. Reading Foucault, I discovered that my concerns reflect what I believe is the signature practice of Foucault's disciplinary power—that is, an asymmetrical, one-way, "normalizing gaze" exercised by practitioners in the social sciences (psychologists, teachers, social workers, international development workers, etc.) that began in the late 18th century with the emergence of human and social sciences (Foucault, 1980d, p. 39). Practitioners exercise disciplinary power through this one-way, normalizing gaze by making only the

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less powerful visible, by judging the less powerful based on the more powerful groups' standards, and by individualizing and psychologizing the less powerful while downplaying or ignoring the hidden background—especially power.

Foucauldian analysis can help to partially illuminate three crucial dimensions in empowerment encounters: first, to make visible the historically situated background of disciplinary power relations that permeate day-to-day empowerment encounters (and other encounters in the human and social sciences); second, to make visible the role of empowerment discourse in maintaining disciplinary power relations; and third, to make visible the everyday exercises of power in empowerment encounters that are often denied, hidden, misrecognized, or not recognized by the more powerful generating resistance and feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment.

To bring these Foucauldian dimensions of empowerment encounters out of the background and into the foreground, I will outline four areas in this section. First, I will historically situate empowerment encounters and empowerment discourse within Foucault's notion of power-knowledge regimes. Then I will describe in more detail how my initial concerns with empowerment encounters can be attributed to the everyday exercise of disciplinary power. Next, I will add the Foucauldian analysis to the question of why and how those of us in the more powerful positions tend to push the power dimension into the background of empowerment encounters and, for some, deny its existence. And finally, I will discuss how empowerment practitioners interested in becoming more respectful and effective can appropriate Foucauldian analysis to improve their everyday practices in empowerment encounters.

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History of the Disciplinary Power/Knowledge Regime

Up to this point, I have been trying to partially illuminate what is taking place inside empowerment encounters. In trying to understand the historical dimension, I briefly discussed the different socio-cultural-political histories that are brought together in these encounters. Foucault, however, helps us address a different historical dimension: the discontinuous (Foucault, 1980c)[68] history of competing "power-knowledge regimes." Power-knowledge (Foucault, 1980c, p. 297). is Foucault's shorthand to represent the mutually interdependent relations of power and knowledge. Power-knowledge, for Foucault, means "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge, and, conversely, knowledge induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1980d, p. 52). A power-knowledge regime is a historically specific system of practices defining and producing subjects and objects of power and knowledge. Foucault's power-knowledge regimes of any historical period are more political than Thomas Kuhn's concept of a "paradigm" (Fraser, 1989, p. 20) and draw on the Nietzschean assumption that networks of power and knowledge are inextricably linked (Foucault, 1980d, p. 53).

When Foucault performed a historiography, or what he called a genealogy, of power, he discovered that the previous power-knowledge regime of sovereign power was replaced by a modern,[69] disciplinary power. This shift took place in the late 18th century as local "disciplinary institutions" (prisons, hospitals, schools) and organizations (factories) dispersed throughout the social body discovered that they were "among the first to face the

[68]In interviews, Foucault stated that he was uncomfortable being labeled "discontinuous." His only point was to get across the non-teleological nature of history, science and knowledge.

[69]Craig Calhoun (1995) noted Foucault later realized that this form of power was not just modern. I have kept "modern" because this work on disciplinary power is so useful to understanding power that developed with the emergence of the human sciences. Because my project looks at development workers, social workers, teachers, anthropologists, and so on, that all draw on the disciplines of this time, understanding this connection, I believe, is very useful.. Nancy Fraser (1989) also saw as useful for social services in bureaucratic welfare states.

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problems of organization, management, surveillance, and control of large numbers of persons" (Fraser, 1989, p. 22). Disciplinary institutions wielded technologies of power that had been developed in monasteries, the army, the workshop, and other long standing institutions (Smart, 1985, p. 85). Therefore, rather than power being imposed from above, local techniques and tactics of domination were developed and exercised within the social body at the "capillary" level of power and then later incorporated into more global strategies of domination. At the capillary level, power circulates throughout the social body in everyday micro practices and is exercised at "the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies [their gestures] and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, [their desires], their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980d, p. 39).[70]

One of the main reasons for this shift to disciplinary techniques of power, Foucault argued, was industrial capitalism. Beginning in the 17th and 18th centuries the "human body had become essentially a force of production" (Foucault, 1980g, p. 100). Disciplinary power was able to extract the time and labor from bodies rather than extracting the wealth and commodities from bodies of earlier times of sovereign power (Foucault, 1980g, pp. 104-105). Industrial capitalism needed power to circulate through the capillary levels to gain "access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions" (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 51-152) and to reduce supervisory time, effort, and personnel to discipline workers, students, and patients.

[70]Both gestures and desires noted in other Foucault citations.

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Disciplinary Power/Knowledge Maintained Through Discourses

Because of the local, capillary nature of this new, disciplinary power, what enabled practitioners to exercise, maintain, and justify their power? Foucault argued that disciplinary power-knowledge regimes operate through different forms of social constraint that can include the following: the valuing and devaluing of statements; the licensing of professionals who can then make knowledge claims and the exclusion of others from making claims; "the proliferation of discourses" (Fraser, 1989, p. 20) that focus on individuals and collectives who are both the object of inquiry and subject to power; and procedures for extracting information from individuals including coercion (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 112-113, 131, 133). All of these forms of social control and constraint constitute disciplinary power that circulates "in and through the production of discourses in societies" (Fraser, 1989, p. 20).

Professionals within the newly created human and social science disciplines exercised power by drawing on discourses and in the process generating knowledge for those same discourses. The less powerful (prisoners, patients, and students) were both the objects of inquiry and the subjects of power. The power of these discourses did not come from juridical or political rules. Instead, the human and social science discourses generated scientific statements that they claimed as natural rules or norms. Therefore, the early history of these disciplines was not to define the law, but to define what was natural, a norm; in other words, a normalizing discourse (Foucault, 1980g, p. 106) Power, then, began to be exercised through subtle mechanisms. The "battle for truth" within discourses is really not a struggle for truth but a struggle to determine the rules that will judge whether claims are true or false. Specific effects of power are attached to the truth (who can put who under the microscope, for example), and the "truth" has an economic and political role

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(Foucault, 1980e, p. 132). The early discourses included penal reform, psychiatry, and pedagogy among others.

The current disciplinary power-knowledge regime, manifest through the one-way, normalizing gaze, permeates empowerment encounters (and many other encounters in the human and social sciences) and is justified by dominant empowerment discourse; this one-way, normalizing gaze permeates both institutional (boss-employee, social worker-client, teacher-student, international development worker-community colleague, researcher-participant, etc.) and structural (American-Honduran, middle class-poor, White-Latina, male-female, Ph.D.-fourth grade, etc.) power relations. The current disciplinary power-knowledge regime also permeates the different political ideologies (conservative, liberal, and radical). Similar to my discussion of the ways of being in empowerment encounters, radicals can exercise power through the one-way, normalizing gaze and liberals may resist it.

My Initial Concerns as Real Effects of Disciplinary Power

After working with Foucauldian analysis, I now believe that my initial concerns with empowerment encounters outlined in chapter 2 reflect a concern with everyday exercises of disciplinary power through the one-way normalizing gaze. Because the disciplinary power-regime has permeated the discourses of the human and social sciences since their beginnings, it is no wonder that disciplinary power assumptions are taken for granted, not questioned, and often not seen.

In this thesis I am interested in learning how empowerment practices often contradict intentions to be respectful and effective. Foucault met this need by focusing on how power is exercised at its "most extreme points" (Foucault, 1980f, p. 96-97), in

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empowerment encounters, rather than focusing on the conscious intentions of individuals and institutions (Foucault, 1980f, p. 97). Instead of asking why some practitioners in more powerful positions dominate others, Foucault helps us to look at "how things work at the level of on-going subjugation , at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors, etc." (Foucault, 1980g, p. 97).

To better understand how disciplinary power is exercised through micro practices in everyday empowerment encounters, and how these exercises of power reflect my initial concerns, I will briefly address the three instruments of disciplinary power: hierarchical observation (surveillance), normalizing judgment (rather than repression), and the examination (normalizing gaze).

1. Surveillance (putting the less powerful under the microscope)

The first instrument, surveillance, corresponds to the practice of putting the less powerful under the microscope, while leaving out the more powerful's presence. The "gaze" of surveillance, the "eye of power" (Foucault, 1980b), is one-way and linked to power: Only the less powerful are visible as the ones with the problems, the ones that need help, and the ones who are lacking competencies in different areas and the ones who need to be empowered. In Foucault's terms, putting the less powerful under the microscope is really an exercise of power reflecting the disciplinary power-knowledge regime.

Reading Foucault, I now realize why so many of my colleagues who are psychologists, social workers, teachers, anthropologists, managers in the private sector, group facilitators, volunteers in their communities, and parents resonate so strongly with the concerns I articulated about empowerment encounters. These practices draw on

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humanistic and social science discourses that are permeated by the disciplinary power-knowledge regime and the one-way, normalizing gaze. Surveillance in all these different encounters signifies the connection between visibility and power. The connection of the humanistic and social science disciplines' power and the knowledge they generate (the science of Man), *depends upon* the asymmetrical, unidirectional character of the gaze (Fraser, 1989, p. 23).

Unlike sovereign power that exercised power openly—for example, punishment through the public spectacle—disciplinary power stays in the background, remains invisible, but those subject to disciplinary power are pushed into the foreground and made visible (Smart, 1985, p. 87). In international development, grassroots organizations and their members are analyzed, but those working with them in empowerment encounters (funding agencies, volunteer organizations, professionals) are not subject to the same scrutiny and visibility. As I described earlier, some well-intentioned and well-paid NGO consultants told indigenous federation leaders that they needed to grow some crops to pay for their own stipends so they would not become "dependent." But the consultants' own daily per diem and expenses (including the $70/night hotel) were not analyzed. What Foucault made clear is that visibility, even potential visibility, is the critical technique needed to exercise discipline over an individual.

Visibility and transparency, however, have historically been viewed from two perspectives. Rousseau and thinkers from the French Revolution argued that total visibility and a transparent society would enable all citizens to weigh in their opinions regardless of privilege and inhibit those in power and citizens in general from harming others (Foucault, 1980b, p. 153) Jeremy Bantam's idea of total visibility and transparency, on the other hand, was represented in his prison design of the Panoptican. In the Panoptican, one

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central guard tower gave the overseer visibility of each prisoner while remaining invisible. Bentham's "visibility [was] organized entirely around a dominating, overseeing gaze [where] "each comrade becomes an overseer." Rousseau had the opposite in mind (Foucault, 1980b, p. 152).

What Bentham created was a system of surveillance, through the gaze and its interiorization (internalizing the gaze), that was cost efficient and profitable in the economy of power. Previous forms of disciplinary power were too violent, incurring revolts, and too discontinuous, incurring resistance (Foucault, 1980b, p. 155; 1980d, p. 38). With disciplinary power, as Foucault noted,

> There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 155)

Foucault acknowledged that while the disciplinary gaze has been influential, other systems have been employed.

The idea of illumination resonated with Enlightenment ideals. The disciplinary gaze has also been applied to other institutions: "All that is needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker, or a schoolboy...back lighting provides captive silhouettes" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 147).

"The gaze" creates more power for those in the more powerful positions in two different ways. First, Foucault found the gaze built into architecture and organizational design ("synoptic visibility" perfected in the Panoptican). Unlike the Panoptican, the more powerful may put the less powerful under the microscope, playing down or ignoring their own presence, but they are *not* invisible—the less powerful are keenly aware of their presence. And second, Foucault noted approaches to working with institutional

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populations that employed an "individualizing visibility" (Foucault, 1977a). This refers to the detailed analysis of individuals: their histories, their behavior, and the development of individual cases. The individual case then becomes the target of power and the object of power. The classic example is the psychoanalytic encounter: an asymmetric, one-way visibility.(Fraser, 1989, p. 23). It is this second type of gaze that applies more often to empowerment encounters.

Foucault noted that Bentham's ideas sought "power thru transparency, subjection by illumination" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 154). Transparency is viewed by many in international development and U.S. social services as a requirement for working with the less powerful. For some NGOs and agencies, the emphasis is on financial transparency. Others go further. While accountability in the use of funds is definitely needed, the accountability of the donors themselves is often hidden. (No better example exists then the U.S. banks who declared "governments can't go broke," and then made irresponsible loans to Latin America and Asia whose working class and poor are paying the consequences.[71]) My goal is to partially illuminate the empowerment encounter and, in doing so, to increase the transparency and visibility of those of us in the more powerful positions, our power, privilege, styles, and interpretations of discourse.

2. Normalizing Judgment (using the self and group as THE standard)

Normalizing judgment, the second instrument of disciplinary power, parallels my concern that those of us in the more powerful positions tend to use our individual and group standards as "the standard" to classify those who are different as not normal and deficient. The exercise of normalizing judgment seeks to correct behavior through

[71]The current situation in Indonesia exemplifies this issue as noted by Jeffrey Sachs of HIID. For more, see Suzanne George, *A Fate Worse Than Debt* (1988).

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punishment (for not conforming) and through rewards and privileges. As Iris Marion Young argued, the purpose of disciplinary power's normalizing judgment is to bring the less powerful in conformity with the more powerful (Young, 1994, p. 44). Often, we judge the less powerful based on if they are or are not "like us," yet those of us in the more powerful positions are not expected to "be like them"—that is, to behave using the less powerful's norms.[72] The authority and instrument of social control that the more powerful rely on to exercise this disciplinary power are the rules of discourse, the norms (normalcy and deviancy), that the "experts" view as natural (Young, 1994, p. 43) rather than juridical-political laws (innocence and guilt).

3. Normalizing Gaze (distorting assessments: viewing empowerment encounters only interpersonally)

The third instrument of disciplinary power, the examination (the normalizing gaze), brings together the above two instruments (the gaze and normalizing judgment) to judge and classify individuals (Foucault, 1977a, p. 192). The one-way, normalizing gaze is an exercise of disciplinary power that only looks at the foreground of interpersonal interaction and ignores the background dimensions. Emerging with the human and social sciences, this one-way, normalizing gaze individualizes and psychologizes participants in empowerment encounters. This means distorting assessments of the less powerful by viewing the encounter only interpersonally. For example, a grassroots leader's cautious behavior may be analyzed interpersonally using the more powerful's standards (both the problem and the solution) as "she lacks self-esteem and needs skills to be assertive and confident," ignoring the power of the donors to cut off her funding if her performance is viewed negatively. A second example comes from encounters in Latin America and the

[72]There are very culturally sensitive practitioners, however, across fields of practice.

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case. When personal or cultural dignity were slighted (often unintentionally), the staff or students expressed feelings of disrespect and resentment in their bodies. Supervisors often interpreted students as being rude, troublemakers, having psychological problems, or being aberrations. The solution often proposed is for the less powerful to be more respectful and to get a better attitude. In both examples, when the more powerful ignore the hidden dimensions that affect how we interact and make assessments, this exercise of power can generate the disrespect, resentment and disempowerment at the heart of this study.

The new social science disciplines (psychology, social work, prison reform, pedagogy, charity work, etc.) "constituted the individual as effect and object of power and effect and object of knowledge" (Smart, 1985, p. 87). As a result, the situational and contextual factors moved into the background—especially power.

This individualizing effect was facilitated by Christian confessional discourses. Individualizing visibility took place (and continues to take place) most effectively through institutions that promote confessional discourse—for example, rehabilitation, self-esteem workshops, support groups, and so on. (Foucault, 1978, p. 63). In the welfare state of the West, Foucault noted a pervasive "power over life" that includes supervising, administering and intervening in day-to-day living. This form of pastoral caring power was, for Foucault, the key to spreading capitalist power relations and preparing individuals to participate effectively (Foucault, 1978, p. 140-141). Significantly for international development empowerment encounters, Foucault also noted this approach spread to the charitable societies.

Through the one-way, normalizing gaze, professionals created individual "cases," detailing individual histories and behaviors. Then prison reformers, therapists, social workers, educators, and those in charities began to normalize and individualize the less

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powerful, relying on their more powerful discourses for norms. The case, then, became both an object of inquiry and a target for social policy and power. The less powerful's behavior had to be deciphered by the humanist and social science experts, to understand latent realities and to assess the less powerful's capacity.

Today, Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, and others who critically appropriate Foucauldian analysis make clear that disciplinary power's instruments continue to be exercised in encounters that are considered "caring" or "helping." Attempts to normalize the less powerful can reinforce existing inequalities and privilege, and individualize the source of the less powerful's problems and their solutions (Young, 1994, p. 43).

As Foucault emphasized throughout his work, "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Therefore, the resistance to the one-way, normalizing gaze can offer some clues as to how power is being exercised through micro practices in everyday encounters. In Nancy Fraser's example described earlier, teens resisted disciplinary power by not answering questions that the psychologist herself would not answer. They also exercised their power to disbelieve by not buying into the individual, psychological interpretation of pregnancy as low self-esteem and by meeting together to confront the psychologist and social workers about the interpretation of their needs.

What Foucault alerts us to are institutions that often claim they are helping, reforming, and so on, in the best interest of the less powerful *without* exercising power. Yet examining their micro practices and resistance to those everyday practices makes visible the disciplinary methods to dominate prisoners, students, patients, workers, welfare recipients or international development community colleagues. Why and how power relations are hidden and denied is the question we explore next.

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Disciplinary Power-Knowledge Hides Power

In my previous empowerment encounter experiences, and in the intensive research phase of this study, the aversion to power was pronounced. Unlike a prison guard or a policeman who openly acknowledges their power, empowerment practitioners often claimed that they did not have power because they worked in an egalitarian way, were "helpers," or worked toward empowering others. "Empowerment" for many practitioners in development, social work, research, education, and other fields, is about collaboration and partnership—especially those practitioners who adhere to a participatory empowerment way of being. Yet when power is downplayed or denied, however, resentment brews. Like the umbilical cord of privilege, power is seen by less powerful in NEON, even when the more powerful are unaware of or are uncomfortable acknowledging power relations.

One reason that empowerment practitioners deny and hide the exercising of disciplinary power may be the fear that power automatically corrupts as outlined earlier by Janeway and Starhawk. Foucault, however, added another reason: the fear of power corrupting knowledge. Foucault pointed out that "it has been a tradition for humanism to assume that once someone gains power he ceases to know. Power makes men mad, and those who govern are blind; only those who keep their distance from power, ...only they can discover the truth" (Foucault, 1980d, p. 51). As discussed earlier, because power and knowledge are inextricably linked, Foucault argued that the sanitizing of knowledge, the separation of knowledge from power in modern humanism, is both utopian and mistaken (Foucault, 1980d, p. 52).

As a result, Foucault noted that disciplinary "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" (Foucault, 1978, p. 86). The disciplinary power-knowledge regime that

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permeates encounters and employs techniques and tactics of the one-way, normalizing gaze push power into the background while practitioners rely on and add to rules and norms within discourses to justify their actions. In empowerment encounters where practitioners often come in with intentions to be respectful and effective, Iris Marion Young explained that "the relation of power is often obscured by the [so-called] neutral knowledge and skills providers have and by the *real intentions* to be helpful and caring. The combination of expertise and care often produce situations of paternalistic power and discipline [italics added]" (Young, 1994, p. 44) .

Foucault argued that humanism, emerging with disciplinary power, is flawed because it aims at dismantling sovereign power-over (assaults on human beings' bodies and individual rights by despots) but is blind to its own disciplinary power-over. Even those critics like Nancy Fraser who do not agree with Foucault's anti-humanist argument believe we are indebted to his analysis of the ways humanism can be misused and co-opted. Nancy Fraser cited Foucault as doing probably more than anyone since Marx thanks to his "extremely keen nose for sniffing out *hypocrisy and self-deception* and the historical logic whereby modes of humanistic knowledge and practice escape the *good intentions* of their formulators and supporters [italics added]" (Fraser, 1989, p. 65).

Therefore, it is easy to see how our everyday practices in empowerment encounters can contradict our intentions to be respectful and effective when our intentions can mask power, our practices are often designed to deny and hide our power, and both are exacerbated by our fears of power corrupting ourselves and our knowledge.

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Appropriating Foucauldian Analysis

For empowerment practitioners who have the intentions and who are interested in improving their respectfulness and effectiveness in day-to-day empowerment encounters, I believe Foucauldian analysis can be critically appropriated in four ways. First, empowerment practitioners can use Foucauldian analysis to increase their awareness of the disciplinary power-knowledge regime operating in the background and the way the one-way, normalizing gaze permeates much of empowerment discourses. Therefore, as practitioners we can pay attention to norms within current empowerment discourse that justify those of us in the more powerful positions exercising disciplinary power.

The second way empowerment practitioners can appropriate Foucauldian analysis is to make the exercise of disciplinary power visible that tend to be hidden or denied. Those of us in the more powerful positions can recognize the normalizing gaze within empowerment encounters when we put the less powerful under the microscope while leaving ourselves out, when we judge the less powerful based on our standards, and when we view the encounters only interpersonally. When we find it difficult to make power relations visible, due to our empowerment discourse and own self-deception and the deception of others, Foucault offers a critical contribution—*look to the less powerful's resistance to find where power is being exercised.*

A third way empowerment practitioners can appropriate Foucauldian analysis is to invert Foucault's findings to see if there are empowerment encounters where the more powerful do not exercise power through the one-way, normalizing gaze—that is, learn more about resisting the norms in institutions and empowerment discourse through alternative practices and an alternative empowerment discourse.

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Foucault chose to base his analysis of power (power-over) "on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination" (Foucault, 1980g, p. 102) and resistance. Foucault's focus contributed greatly to our understanding the hypocrisy and self-deception of humanism, as Fraser pointed out; an understanding that partially illuminates the empowerment encounter practices/intentions contradiction. Foucault has also helped scholars and practitioners to be suspect of theories that claim to transcend power or work within power-free contexts (Deveaux, 1994, p. 232). Yet Fraser was critical of what she called Foucault's neutral stance on power, his unwillingness to make critical judgments and to discern illegitimate from legitimate exercises of power (Fraser, 1989, pp. 18, 32). This critique echoes Janeway's concern that current definitions of power focus only on power-over, neglecting power-to and a way to distinguish use from abuse of power: "Power corrupts" is assumed. Foucault did lack what Fraser referred to as an alternative normative framework. The emancipatory process required for critical theorists was not part of Foucault's project. His project was to make visible often invisible dominant power relations.

Rather than neutral, I see Foucault's approach to power as useful in understanding the limiting, coercive side in exercising power, but I recognize he neglected the liberating, creative side. Foucault focused on techniques and tactics of domination and resistance to domination by the less powerful; he did not work with the intentions of the more powerful to resist dominating others. Therefore, Foucault is helpful to see how exercises of power can be disrespectful, ineffective, and dominate others, rather than learning how power is exercised more respectfully and effectively.

Here is where I believe we can use critical theory and feminist theory, both traditions that push for alternative visions and strategies, to appropriate the rich work of

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Foucault by inverting Foucault's findings. This includes working against norms embedded within dominant empowerment discourse that help to hide and deny disciplinary power. In this way, empowerment practitioners can bring both the institutional power relations and the disciplinary power relations out of the background and into the foreground. We can also take advantage of the rich opportunities to learn by working with the less powerful's resistance. Working to understand where our practices contradict our intentions may provide us with ideas for transforming our practice. The less powerful's resistance may serve as a source for those of us in more powerful positions to resist the domination of others.

Empowerment practitioners can also pay attention to the alternative interpretations and empowerment discourses that resist the one-way, normalizing gaze of disciplinary power. It is this struggle that I tried to capture in some of my earliest conceptual work with the different ways of being in empowerment encounters: one-way, participatory, and two-way. At that time I was unaware of Foucault's work on the disciplinary power-knowledge regime operating in the background; however, I now believe that it is the one-way, normalizing gaze that was a primary object of my concern, and that two-way empowerment is one alternative discourse.

Critically appropriating Foucauldian analysis also includes recognizing problems with Foucault's analysis and the areas Foucault neglected. One precaution in using Foucault's work is to remember that different levels of interiorization (internalizing the gaze) and resistance are possible, making agency more complex by taking on multiple forms. In empowerment encounters, the less powerful may reject and resist the normalizing gaze as in the study of pregnant teens by Fraser, or the less powerful may resist parts of the normalizing gaze while internalizing other parts (including values, dress,

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speech, gestures, etc.) to different degrees: Interiorization/resistance is not a clear either/or. While I appreciate Foucault's attention to practices, I do not agree that ideologies are irrelevant. Discourse, according to Foucault, is permeated by the disciplinary power-knowledge regime's one-way, normalizing gaze, yet within the discourse competing political ideologies also struggle in the "battle for truth" (to set the rules of discourse). And from a more subjective stance, as a father's daughter I continue to resist and struggle with, albeit now to a lesser degree, internalized patriarchy ideology.

A second concern comes from a feminist critique of Foucauldian analysis. Even though Foucault is anti-humanist and pushes for a form of knowledge that would not sublate the other, his methods focus on the assertion of self and institutions rather than the recognition of others that I outlined above in reviewing Jessica Benjamin's work. Feminists critique Foucault for this one-sided approach (favoring power over recognition). *Monique Deveaux noted that Foucault's methods can overlook deep sources of disempowerment for women—for example, unreciprocated emotional labor, or as Fishman might have said, having to do all the interaction work.* I agree with feminists that recognition often falls out of the power discourse. The challenge for my project is to find a way to appropriate Foucault and others, and bring both power and recognition to bear on the case studies.

I believe we also need to be cautious in appropriating Foucauldian analysis because Foucault lacks attention to empowerment—the focus of this inquiry. While Foucault gave us excellent tools for making power visible, including looking to resistance to find power that is denied, what is missing is an articulation of empowerment processes; a gap noted by feminist Deveaux (Deveaux, 1994, p. 224). Foucault's poststructuralist approach also comes up short in recognizing the more phenomenological, experiential, and concrete

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experiences of the different historical and interpersonal bodies that we bring to encounters. Feminists like Deveaux are quick to point out that Foucault did not articulate the different concrete, subjective experiences of women (p. 234).

Therefore, to appropriate Foucault's work for empowerment encounters, we need to remember that empowerment is more than simply resisting power-over. We need to include more inquiry into the subjective aspects of power (how power is experienced, the complexity of exercising power and resistance) and the connection between social and personal power and privilege. Foucauldian analysis alone can obscure the more subjective aspects of power (Deveaux, 1994, p. 236). As Deveaux put it, the key is "whether a woman feels empowered in her specific context." Because my concern that too many empowerment encounters leave both the more and less powerful feeling disrespected, resentful, and disempowered, addressing Deveaux's point, again for both the more and less powerful, is crucial.

Reproduction and Resistance of Power Relations

Foucault's analysis makes visible the hidden dimension of the power-knowledge regime and the one-way normalizing gaze that permeates empowerment discourses, and justifies disciplinary power. In this section, we move directly into the empowerment encounters themselves to analyze the interaction (talk and nonverbals) that can easily reproduce power relations in areas where we are privileged despite our intentions. In the first part of this section, I will review two examples from conversation analysis. This includes Fishman's study discussed earlier, and a second study by Molotch and Boden.

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Both offer practical suggestions that practitioners can use to try and lessen the practices/intentions contradiction in their talk with the less powerful.

In the second part of this section, I review two studies in the resistance literature: Willis' *Learning to Labor* and Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. I will also include Kondo's critique of Willis and Scott that adds needed complexity to resistance. Both Willis and Scott, however, help to partially illuminate the troubling vicious cycle of resentment that led to near double-binds in the case study by paying attention to intercultural dynamics and what Scott referred to as *"status domination": the day-to-day personal or cultural slights to those in lower status positions who often cannot return the insult due to differences in power.* Scott also provided a crucial method of transcript analysis that I used in the case that will be explained further here. The value of this work for practitioners is that we can learn from our own resistance and the resistance of the less powerful to increase our awareness and change disrespectful practices—in other words, we can be empowered collectively by the less powerful.

Conversation Analysis Studies: How Easy it is to Reproduce Power Relations Despite Intentions

In the case and in previous encounters I participated in, how power was being exercised in talk itself was often difficult to identify. But it was felt. The umbilical cord of privilege and our institutional power guide our behavior. One way to see this effect is in our conversation. The conversation analysis studies selected enable us to make visible some of the ways day-to-day talk maintains power relations and forms of domination. In these studies, power is seen as both an "attribute of social-structural location and power as a contingent process" (Molotch & Boden, 1985, p. 273)

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Fishman's study, *Interaction: The Work Women Do*, powerfully demonstrates how power relations of gender were reproduced in day-to-day conversation between three intimate couples despite the intentions of the men (who were sympathetic to the women's movement) and the women (two of whom identified themselves as feminists) (Fishman, 1990). In the day-to-day conversations, *women not only did the interaction work more than men* (through listening by paying attention, responding, commenting on their partners' statements, asking questions based on their partners' frame), *they also had to do extra interaction work* (women used attention beginnings "y'know" and "this is interesting" more then men) in attempts to be heard in the interaction. Men, on the other hand, tended to direct interaction through their statements. Their statements tended to be received in contrast to women's statements. The men's minimal responses discouraged interaction in contrast to the women's minimal responses that supported interaction flow. Finally, the men directed conversation by not responding to women's statements or by redirecting the conversation back to their concerns (Fishman, 1990, pp. 229-231).

Fishman's study is important because this reproduction of male dominance took place *despite* the couples' intentions. Her work enables us to see the influence of the umbilical cord of privilege in action. In this case, the men's gender advantage permeated their consciousness and behavior. This case alerted me to the many areas in which I am advantaged where I probably say and do things in encounters that work to maintain my own privilege despite my intentions. For those of us in the more powerful positions, we need to ask not only if relations of power between teacher-student, volunteer-community colleague, social worker-client, and so on, are being reproduced, but also if relations of power between men-women, middle-class/working-class and poor, European/non-European, heterosexual-homosexual, and so on, are also being reproduced. *Are the less*

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powerful in empowerment encounters doing not only the bulk of interaction work, but also extra interaction work? On the flip side, are there examples of the more powerful taking responsibility for their share of the interaction work, and for not expecting the less powerful to do this by default?

The problem, as Fishman noted, is that *the more powerful tend not to recognize the less powerful's interaction work as work, but as part of their identity.* In Fishman's study, interaction work is "related to what constitutes being a woman...the work is not seen as what women do, but as part of what they are" (Fishman, 1990, p. 235); gender identity versus gender activity. As pointed out in my concerns, when grassroots leaders deferred to a foundation representative she misrecognized their behavior as personality traits: being shy, ineffective, unprofessional, incapable of making a point, and so on. Further, when the less powerful are able to also direct the conversation rather than just help move it along, they are often misrecognized as troublemakers, insubordinates, and in Fishman's case, of not being real women but aggressive and domineering (p. 234).[73] How do those of us in the more powerful positions respond to the less powerful doing more than listening and encouraging?

Fishman's work alerts us to a *tendency*, at least in her study, *that the less powerful (in her case, women) do the interaction work, while the more powerful (in her case, men) tend to make their definition of reality stick.* Several questions emerge: Is this unreciprocated interaction work responsible for generating the disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment I noted in empowerment encounters? If so, how much? It is hard to imagine that the less powerful are able to communicate how tough their situation is and the

[73] This is the phenomenon behind many of the lists posted on refrigerators and women's offices that list descriptions of men and women—for example, assertive (male), aggressive (female).

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different strengths they bring to the encounter if they are expected to be in a listening mode moving along the empowerment processes with, as Janeway said, "cheerful and willing obedience." Another question is how much the tendency of the more powerful to squelch multiple realities and get their version of reality to stick contributes to complainin' in the kitchen.

In a second study, *Talking Social Structure: Discourse, Domination and the Watergate Hearings*, Harvey Molotch and Deidre Boden investigated how power relations are reproduced through *control over everyday grounds of talk* (Molotch & Boden, 1985, p. 274). The grounds of talk include topic control, turn-taking rules, and critically, control of context to frame words, gestures, and utterances. Molotch and Boden pointed to substantial research demonstrating the less powerful tend not to have equal access to the grounds of talk—for example, women compared to men, students compared to teachers, patients compared to doctors, parents compared to school officials, interview respondents compared to social scientists, and so on (p. 274).

In analyzing the Watergate hearing tapes using conversational analysis, ethnomethodology, interpretive and ethnographic methods, the researchers found examples where "conventional rules and procedures of talk were disrupted, withheld, not reciprocated" (Molotch & Boden, 1985, p. 275). Blocking the access to the grounds of talk is what the researchers view as the third face of power because it represents the "very grounds of the interactions through which agendas are set and outcomes determined; it is the struggle over the linguistic premises upon which the legitimacy of accounts will be judged...the least visible...most unaccountable form of power" because what are manipulated are basically tacit procedures (pp. 273-274). Without access to these resources, the less powerful can not participate in claims of what is reality (p. 274).

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Instead, relations of power tend to be reproduced and multiple realities quashed, replaced by the more powerful's version of reality, setting up conditions for the next interaction that will permeate the encounter (p. 285).

In empowerment encounters, we need to pay attention to two areas. First, if unequal power relations based on social locations outside of the encounter enable some to manipulate talk at the expense of others (Molotch & Boden, 1985, p. 285), how is this being done? And on the inverted side, are there more powerful practitioners that make a point of working toward more equal access for the grounds of talk? How do these more powerful practitioners open up the debate about what is reality, and the ways claims are judged?

In summary, I agree with structuration studies that the nature of power is a both-and; it is both what we bring to the encounter (our umbilical cords of privilege and institutional power) and what is maintained and produced in an interactive sense.

Resistance Studies: Learning From Resistance of the Less Powerful to Increase Awareness, Change Disrespectful Practices

Resistance studies offer us the opportunity to explore two questions: First, how can the resistance of our colleagues in less powerful positions increase our awareness of our disrespectful practices?; and second, to transform relations of power, how can we resist dominating others through disrespectful practices when we are in the more powerful position? Two significant resistance studies help to partially illuminate these questions and empowerment encounters as well. Paul Willis' *Learning to Labor* and James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* address issues critical to this inquiry—status, deception, disrespect, resentment, and betrayal—that add complexity to and question some of the power relations reproduction arguments.

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In Willis' study, the culture of resistance itself surprisingly reproduces class relations. Willis illustrated how classroom encounters are often intercultural encounters where respect is a crucial issue. Yet responses to disrespectful intercultural behavior are assessed individually and psychologically. He also showed how teachers can easily put students (the "lads") in a double-bind and set them up for betrayal. In Scott's work, relations of power characterized by "status domination" (the way the more powerful's day-to-day slights and indignities affect the less powerful and generate feelings of disrespect and resentment) permeate encounters. Disrespect in Scott's cases generate hidden transcripts and set into motion what Scott called a "dialectic of disguise and surveillance" between the more and less powerful. This dialectic will be explored in depth because of the relevance for practitioners in empowerment encounters.

In this section I will briefly describe the relevance of Willis' study for empowerment encounters, then I will spend more time with Scott's status domination—notably his methodology for making power relations visible (in the Foucauldian tradition) that greatly influenced my own methodology for both data collection and analysis, and I will incorporate Kondo's critique of both.

Willis' *Learning to Labor*

Rather than analyzing the reproduction of class structure through education using abstract theoretical and macro data, Paul Willis' *Learning to Labor* analyzes teacher-student social relations more concretely. He studied a school in England that aimed to move kids up and out of the working-class yet continued to produce working-class youth. Surprisingly, he discovered that the working-class students themselves reproduced their class position through cultural practices of resistance in small, informal groups rather than

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being mechanically manipulated by ideology or determined by their social location (Willis, 1977, p. 128).

In Willis' study, three findings are significant for empowerment encounters. First, *Willis identified a vicious cycle kicked off by unintentional disrespectful "class insults" similar to the one in the case study. Respect and disrespect are at the center of Willis' case study*. In teacher-student encounters, the assumption of respect was central. Teachers assumed that if they respected the students, the students would then respect them and do what they said: in other words, a "fair exchange"(Willis, 1977, pp. 64,77). Yet the inability of the well-meaning staff to recognize their disrespectful practices and the students' responses to those practices showed the problems in the "fair exchange" idea. When the teachers, often unintentionally, disrespected the students through often disguised "class insults," the students responded by changing their relationship with staff—for example, not being as polite. Yet the staff misrecognized their response as rude, impertinent, *individual* bad behavior rather than a changed relationship (p. 77).

This led to a cultural understanding that was often distorted by a developmental psychological approach (with the ideology focused on the individual) rather than a social-cultural analysis (Willis, 1977, p. 188). The "lads" were assessed as rude, disrespectful, and breaking the fair exchange. Punishment was justified by the break in the fair exchange. But this analysis misses the change in the intercultural relationship and never discovers what kicked off the cycle to begin with. In Willis' case, the difference was class. For empowerment encounters that are working with many significant differences (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, education level, nationality, etc.), this cycle is even more important to be aware of. This individualizing and psychologizing echoes Foucault's analysis of disciplinary power-knowledge regime and the one-way, normalizing gaze.

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Willis' case study provides an example of a well-meaning staff at a school that were oblivious to the normalizing gaze, or of the other hidden dimensions affecting their encounters with the students.

A second finding in Willis' case for empowerment encounters is the ease with which the more powerful can put the less powerful into a double-bind. In Willis' case, as a result of differences in power and culture, the lads in this study were often put into a double-bind: The teachers and staff expected them to behave in "precisely those ways of which they are supposedly incapable of behaving" (Willis, 1977, p. 81) (A similar double-bind was reported by MacKay in an ethnomethodological study of U.S. teacher-student interactions (Mackay, 1973, p. 189) [74]). This double-bind only served to increase resistance to school ideology (that if you work hard enough, you can advance your class position), and to reinforce capitalist ideologies infused by patriarchy where being masculine and being superior meant doing manual work, not mental work.

Finally, a third finding for empowerment encounters is an awareness of *how the more powerful can set up the less powerful for betrayal.* In Willis' case, the few students who resisted peer pressure and bought into the school ideology felt deeply betrayed by the school because despite their hard work, the promised upward mobility was blocked by the reality of classism in the working world. In the case, several teachers noted that avoiding the ISMs and differences with the Pine Wood school did not recognize the multiple realities, and could set up similar false expectations.

In summary, both the double-bind and betrayal can lead to feelings of disrespect, resentment, confusion, mystification, and disempowerment in empowerment encounters.

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[74]By studying the conversations of teacher-student interactions while focusing on a particular lesson, MacKay came across what he called a paradox: Throughout the lesson the teacher treated the child as incompetent and deficient, yet at the end the teacher expected the child to understand the lesson.

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Willis' study helps us to raise some important questions: Are those of us in the more powerful position ignoring downplaying the cultural and historical context within and beyond the empowerment encounter? Are we focused on empowerment based on our standards, our cultural reality, while turning a blind eye to the "isms" that the less powerful must face day-to-day? Are we setting up the less powerful for betrayal?; Are we misrecognizing the resistance for what it has to teach us about the relations of power in the encounter itself and our disrespectful practices? Are we using individual, psychological assessments of behavior rather than fuller cultural understandings that take context into account?

Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*

At the beginning of this thesis, I described two disrespectful practices (that as Foucault made clear, are exercises of power) that I believe take place within empowerment encounters: First, that those of us in the more powerful positions tend to view empowerment encounters interpersonally leaving out privilege and power relations; and second, that we often put the less powerful under the microscope leaving out our own presence . As a practitioner I found these disrespectful practices often resulted in the less powerful complainin' in the kitchen once the more powerful left the room, office, community, and so on.

Foucault's one-way, normalizing gaze and the blindspots I outlined (due to our umbilical cords of privilege and our desire for recognition) help to explain part of these disrespectful practices, yet they do not address directly why it is so difficult to give critical feedback-up directly in empowerment encounters resulting in indirect feedback: complainin' in the kitchen. The analysis to date also does not fully address two potential

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problems in misrecognizing the deferential behavior of the less powerful: in misrecognizing the less powerful as inferior; and in misrecognizing the less powerful's capacity to shape the encounter for their purposes (a point addressed earlier by Kondo).

James Scott's analysis outlined in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* directly addresses complainin' in the kitchen and the two problems of misrecognizing deferential behavior by providing a methodology to analyze *how* power relations affect interpersonal interaction or what Scott referred to as discourse—gestures, speech, and practices (Scott, 1986, p. 28). Appropriating Scott's analysis for empowerment encounters, I can make disrespectful practices more visible.

Before doing so, however, I need to outline several differences in Scott's project and my inquiry. Scott analyzed extreme power-laden encounters within systems of "slavery, serfdom, untouchability, racial domination—including colonialism and highly stratified peasant societies" (Scott, 1986:20). Unlike empowerment encounters, status tends to be ascribed, domination is more personal (rather than impersonal domination of scientific rules that Foucault discussed), and the powerless have to deal with the constant fear of arbitrary beatings and humiliations "without the ordinary luxury of negative reciprocity: trading a slap for a slap, an insult for an insult"(pp. xi-xii). Scott did bring in other examples in gender-based domination, working class culture, education, and the helping professions but noted that in these examples, unlike his core studies, the less powerful often have more choice in their situation.

I believe Scott's analysis can be appropriated while being aware of the differences in focus. Face-to-face empowerment encounters are shot through with power inequalities and status inequalities that tend to be downplayed or denied. Complainin' in the kitchen is one

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example of how the less powerful are not always able to return an insult for an insult, or to simply share their concerns about disrespectful practices in the encounter itself.

A critical difference between my inquiry and Scott's cases (and most of the resistance literature), is that the more powerful in empowerment encounters I am interested in seek to learn about disrespectful behavior and transform their practice. Therefore, rather than focusing only on the resistance of the less powerful, I am also interested in how the more powerful can resist the discourses and supervisors and institutions that justify dominating others and take for granted disrespectful practices permeated by the one-way, normalizing gaze.[75]

To critically appropriate Scott, I need to work in three areas. First, I can extend and in some cases invert Scott's methodology by learning how to make disrespectful practices in discourse visible through an analysis of the less powerful's resistance. I can then explore how the less powerful's resistance can help the more powerful resist the reproduction of dominating the less powerful through disrespectful practices. Second, I can invert Scott's findings of how domination affects discourse to ask if these forms of domination are no longer visible, or are different, in the discourse of empowerment practitioners who are working to be respectful and effective. And third, I need to add the feminist, postcolonial lens to bring in the complexity of the multiple cleavages in power and status in empowerment encounters as opposed to Scott's powerful/powerless dichotomy.

To address all of the above, I will first briefly outline Scott's key concepts and his methodology. Then I will describe how I have critically appropriated Scott's analysis for empowerment encounters.

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[75]This is similar to Whites becoming more familiar with racism, their part, their privilege and how to change their behavior rather than doing more studies on how Blacks and others face and resist racism.

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Scott's key concepts: transcript analysis.

Scott's analysis of how power relations affect interaction includes two key concepts: the "public transcript" and the "hidden transcript." The public transcript is the "open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (Scott, 1986, p. 2). Scott argued that studying power relations using the public transcript alone is problematic because "the powerless are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful and...[the] powerful have an interest in overdramatizing their reputation and mastery." He argued that we also need to analyze the subordinate's hidden transcript: their "critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (p. xii); and the dominant's hidden transcript: the offstage discourse where the dominants can "let their hair down" (pp. 10, 12). (It is important to note that the hidden transcripts are not the "truth," they are just the discourse pushed offstage by power.) By comparing the different hidden transcripts to each other, and then comparing both hidden transcripts to the public transcript, we can assess discrepancies and "we may begin to judge the impact of domination on public discourse" (p. 5).

Although hidden transcripts are "hidden," Scott's central argument is that a "coded version of the hidden transcript is always present in the public discourse of the subordinate groups" through gestures, expressions, intonation of phrases, songs, jokes, gossip, and so on (Scott, 1986, p. 19). It is at this border zone of the public and hidden transcripts that day-to-day struggles take place (p. 14). Therefore, through an analysis of the hidden transcripts, Scott argued that as researchers, we can begin to uncover contradictions and possibilities (p. 15).

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Appropriating Scott

I agree with Scott's assessment that analysis of the hidden transcripts enables us to better understand contradictions and possibilities. While working in Latin America and the U.S., because of my social and institutional locations (a young, U.S., White, middle-class, female, volunteer and consultant, etc.), I was aware of and often generated parts of what Scott would refer to as the hidden transcripts of both the more and less powerful (what I called complainin' in the kitchen). I now realize that it was my comparing these hidden transcripts to each other and to what I observed in the empowerment encounters themselves (the public transcript) that triggered this dissertation inquiry. And I hope this inquiry will help to partially illuminate the practices/intention contradiction so that we can transform disrespectful practices.

Public transcript.

The first step in appropriating Scott is to learn how to analyze the public transcript of empowerment encounters. Examples of public transcripts generated by empowerment encounter interaction include the speech and nonverbals of meetings, trainings, projects, classroom interaction and school assemblies, awards ceremonies, year-end reviews and rituals, as well as the informal encounters around the office, on transportation, and during meals. As Scott noted, trying to gauge existing power relations through the public transcript is difficult. *In empowerment encounters, both the more and less powerful are often involved in performances of deception—especially when resources are involved.* The less powerful, often fearing retribution and desiring resources, tend to show deference and consent (the more at stake, the greater the performance). The more powerful, on the other hand, as I argued above, desiring recognition (often a positive reflection) tend to be

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concerned with performing the role of the development "expert," community organizer, teacher, facilitator, social worker, researcher, and so on. In empowerment encounters (unlike Scott's examples) the more powerful may also withhold critical feedback fearing retribution that the less powerful will tell them to go home. At the same time, both are trying to get a read on each other: for example, how much power-over can the development expert wield, and how many resources do they have to offer?; how genuine is the local staff's commitment to the goals of the empowerment project? At the core are questions of trust and fear. Scott referred to this dance as the "dialectic of disguise and surveillance" (Scott, 1986, pp. 4,11).

Attributing deference to "they're so weak."

This dynamic of deception and surveillance permeates interaction in empowerment encounters. Yet the more powerful are often blind to this impact of power relations and can misrecognize the deferential behavior of the less powerful in two ways. The first way is by misrecognizing deferential and consensual behavior as the less powerful's personality, nature, or character (often as their innate inferiority). In international development encounters, for example, deference of grassroots leaders may be interpreted as ignorance, incompetence, and weakness rather than recognizing the leaders' fear of saying the wrong thing, offending a funding representative, and losing a critical grant. Scott described this as a perverse logic that is worse than blaming the victim because:

> patterns of speech that are adaptations to inequalities in power are depicted as natural characteristics of the subordinate group, a move that has, in turn, the great advantage of underlining the innate inferiority of its members when it comes to logic, truth, honesty and reason and thereby justifying their continued domination by their betters. (Scott, 1986, p. 36)

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Misrecognizing grassroots leaders as "not like us" (in an inferior sense) often ignores the power-ladeness of the encounter itself. If the tables were turned, in other words, the more powerful could be displaying similar characteristics.

Attributing Deference to "they think I'm great."

A second way we can misrecognize the less powerful's deferential and ingratiating behavior is to attribute this behavior, "the encouraging smiles, the attentive listening, the appreciative laughter, the comments of affirmation, admiration or concern" (Hochschild, 1983, pp. 90-91), to our character and competency—that we are well liked, respected, and doing an excellent job. *This deferential behavior is seductive because it satisfies our desire for a positive reflection of ourselves rather than a full recognition, warts and all, as discussed earlier. If we are seduced, we can lose our ability to treat the less powerful as maximally human.* We can become blind to the less powerful's independence: their concerns, their ideas, their strengths, their capacity to get resources, and their capacity to exercise power—including their capacity to appropriate their performance by "the artful manipulation of deference and flattery to achieve [their] own ends" (Scott, 1986, p. 34). (A point similar to Kondo's of the less powerful acting upon the more powerful. And I believe a place where power and recognition meet.) In international development, for example, rural health workers may shape the performance to get desperately needed resources; or a local project director's ingratiating and deferential behavior for the "gringos" (his American superiors) may mask his abuse of both funds and the local staff.

When there is a substantial amount of dominance in empowerment encounters, the public transcript generated is a lopsided and partial narrative often reflecting a flattering self-portrait of the more powerful designed "to affirm and naturalize [their] power... and to

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conceal or euphemize [their] dirty linen" (Scott, 1986, p. 18). *When there is less dominance, there is more space for concerns and feedback. Aware of Scott's insight, I noticed how Maria made space for students feelings (critical feedback-up) in the public transcript of her reading class.* Scott noted that in one study of the special language of the helping professions, Edelman found that the public transcripts tended to naturalize their power by limiting the public transcript to their special language of goals and how they would meet them, while descriptions of what was actually taking place were seen as a distortion (Edelman, 1974).

In the public transcripts generated by empowerment encounters, then, it is difficult to perceive how power relations affect interpersonal interaction (group dynamics, process) due, in part, to the continual dance of deception and surveillance driven by power (fear of retribution) and interests (desires for resources, recognition, and information about the other). Rather than assessing the impact of power relations, those of us in the more powerful positions tend to judge deferential behavior interpersonally—either that the less powerful are "less than," or that we are well respected and doing stellar work. This poor assessment of power relations has costs: continual disrespectful practices (misrecognizing the less powerful and withholding feedback) and ineffective practices (notably poor decision-making because concerns, ideas are withheld).

Hidden transcripts.

To better assess the impact of power relations and to make dominant practices visible, we need to analyze the hidden transcripts that take place offstage and outside of surveillance (Scott, 1986, p. 4; Edelman, 1974). Dominant practices (intentional or not) *create* the hidden transcript (Scott, 1986, p. 27). Even though Scott used the singular of

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public transcript and hidden transcript, he clarified that there are many different discursive sites generating multiple transcripts (p. 25).. A discursive site is an encounter with a particular audience. For example, a meeting of an American NGO working in Brazil including American directors, American and European volunteers, and Brazilian local rural staff generates the public transcript. When the American directors leave the office, the American, European, and Brazilian staff begin complainin' in the kitchen and generate a hidden transcript of complaints (notably about the directors' claim that "we are all equal" despite differences in power relations), feelings of disrespect (viewing the standard as American and Brazilian ways of working as less than), and resentment (claiming "we are all equal" despite difference in privilege). The American directors, meanwhile, begin generating their own hidden transcript once they hit the street. Again, the hidden transcripts are not the truth, they are just the part of the dialogue that power relations bumps offstage "produced for a different audience and under different constraints of power than the public transcript" (Scott, 1986, p. 5)—that is, hidden transcripts are also not a site free of power relations. The staff's interactions with each other, for example, are not power-free; those staff who feel silenced by the relatively more powerful staff will meet to generate hidden transcripts within the hidden transcript of the staff (pp. 26-27).

In the case, I learned from the students', teachers', seventh graders', Latinas', and White middle-class teachers' hidden transcripts. Within each of the hidden transcripts were further hidden transcripts (e.g., the different groups within the reading class, teachers who adhered to a more social justice interpretation of empowerment, etc.) of which I participated in to different degrees or not at all.

Scott's analysis helps make visible this first institutional cleavage: All of the staff share an experience of being subject to the directors' power. But because empowerment

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encounters tend to be complex, with different umbilical cords of privilege, different historical and interpersonal selves, different political ideologies, and different interpretations of empowerment, there are many other cleavages as well. Some hidden transcripts cut across the more and less powerful divide while being permeated by it and further subdivided—for example, the hidden transcripts of women and of Americans and Europeans that both cut across more and less powerful lines while being permeated by them and each being further subdivided. In Scott's cases, the different hidden transcripts of the more and less powerful are "in most circumstances, *never in direct contact*" (Scott, 1986, p. 15). *Yet, in empowerment encounters, there are sometimes individuals who are multiply positioned participating in several different hidden transcripts. For example, Maria's positioning was pivotal to the case. She participated in both the teachers' hidden transcript, and the Latina working-class hidden transcript.*

As I noted earlier, this multiple positioning is also common in NGOs that hire a few local staff to work side-by-side with Americans and Europeans, or local leaders that are promoted to work alongside professionals. For example, on a rural micro enterprise team, where the trainers are all Americans and one Honduran, the Honduran will be aware of not only the trainers' hidden transcript but also part of the Hondurans' hidden transcript cutting across more and less powerful. Being in-between can be stressful. For Maria, it was often gut-wrenching. As someone who was often seen as a link between the more and less powerful, I can also attest to the stress in seeing the discrepancies between the hidden transcripts—for example, between middle-class White Americans and struggling Latin Americans (African, indigenous, mestizo, etc.) and between men (as a White American woman, I was an honorary man in many communities) and women.

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At the heart of the less powerful's hidden transcript is often indignation triggered by experiences of humiliation, slights to the dignity and reputation of the less powerful and their different groups (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual preference, ability, religion, age, etc.). Day-to-day indignities, insults, and "slights to human dignity" represent what Scott referred to as status domination (Scott, 1986, p. 7). Status domination is more personal and cultural than material appropriation. Therefore, rather than describing the less powerful as the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the powerless, the hidden transcript helps us learn about their daily indignities, how they feel, the shape of their indignity, the content of their anger, "in a particular culture with particular ritual decencies at a particular moment in history" (p. 113). The hidden transcript, then, is created by the less powerful as an autonomous social space for the assertion of their dignity (p. 198).

Status domination leads to feelings of disrespect, *resentment,* and disempowerment expressed in sessions of "complainin' in the kitchen." Scott also argued that the hidden transcript is the site of resentment.[76] Resentment is an important thread that we will track in this inquiry. In *The Hidden Injuries of Class,* Sennett identified the two most painful types of slights for working-class adults in the U.S. as the following: first, having to respond to constant commands; and second, not being recognized even minimally as a human being. This negation of recognition generates feelings of being exploited and cheated, as well as "stirring deep resentment and indignation." The most devastating type of slights are the public indignities in front of subordinates (Sennett & Cobb, 1972).

In empowerment encounters, however, feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment are also expressed in the more powerful's hidden transcript. The more

[76]But Scott also made a point of differentiating his form of a conscious and shared resentment from Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment* that is subconscious hatred that cannot be revenged.

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powerful may express that their hard work and sacrifice is not being appreciated, that they are being criticized and attacked unfairly and disrespectfully, or that they are being taken advantage of. As the resentment builds in the hidden transcript, feelings of disempowerment can lead to burnout. Some may feel concerned, frustrated, and mystified as to why the less powerful are sending them negative signals or not participating. The more powerful may also express their concerns about the organization's policies and what they believe are disrespectful practices.

Hidden Transcript as resistance

It is these concerns about disrespectful practices, expressed in hidden transcripts of both the more and less powerful that we will now address. As Foucault argued, "where there is power, there is resistance," and as Scott argued that where there is status domination, there is also resistance. Because power relations are often difficult to see, we can look to the resistance of the less powerful and sometimes those of the more powerful (who are at the same time in the less powerful relation to discourses, superiors and institutions). This includes the meeting together and generating of a hidden transcript—as noted by Janeway and Fraser , meeting together to share grievances is an exercise of power (Scott, 1986, p. 198). The other forms of disguised resistance, or infrapolitics, we can learn from include rumor and gossip designed to ruin reputations (p. 142), gripes, grumbling, and intonation within the public transcript that Goffman noted stop short of insubordination (p. 152), and jokes. Forms of public resistance include the less powerful's assertion of worth through their dress, gestures, and speech and their refusal to reproduce the words, gestures, and behaviors of hegemonic appearances in defiance of domination

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(p. 203) (another point noted by Janeway and Fraser). The more powerful who support these acts of resistance are resisting in their own right.

When those of us in the more powerful positions are confused about why empowerment encounters are feeling disempowering for everyone involved, resistance, then, offers us a way to make some of the disrespectful practices visible. Resistance can help us assess where we need to change our behavior to be more in line with our intentions.

In summary, *the hidden transcript, as Scott argued, is a result of "systematic frustration of reciprocal action"* (Scott, 1986, p. 37) *(not permitting an insult for an insult; and I would add, not even permitting remarks that you feel insulted).* The hidden transcript is specific to a social site and actors; it is a shared, social product, that as a "result of power relations among subordinates" includes not only speech but also a whole range of nonverbal practices; and it exists only as "practiced, articulated, enacted and disseminated." The places where the hidden transcript grows are "achievements of resistance" (p. 119). Through the hidden transcript, the less powerful constantly test the limits of surveillance (p. 193). And by learning from the hidden transcripts, we can better understand contradictions and possibilities (Scott, 1986, p. 15).

Appropriating Scott's Methodology

Scott's methodology compares the hidden transcripts to the public transcripts for discrepancies that can help us "begin to judge the impact of domination on public discourse" (Scott, 1986, p. 5). To appropriate this methodology, I need to add three areas of complexity. The first addition is to recognize that in empowerment encounters, there are not "powerful" and "powerless." Saying that some have power and others do not is a

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problem Kondo noted with the resistance literature (Kondo, 1990, p. 221). Because as Kondo and other feminists above pointed out, no one is without power. The less powerful can exercise power in different ways, including the ways Scott pointed to: generating the hidden transcript and appropriating the performance for their own ends. Building on this first point, a second addition of complexity is the recognition that power is not just coercive but can also be creative. As I described in the first section of the different interpretations of power, the less powerful can also exercise different strengths.

The third additional point of complexity, and the most significant, is that both the more and less powerful are human beings who are often struggling with contradictions themselves given their institutional roles, umbilical cords of privilege, and so on. Rather than pure resistance, the more and less powerful may be ambivalent in their relationships. For example, a Honduran trainer may be very unhappy with her American NGOs' policies and their disrespectful practices toward the rural Hondurans, and she may resist to a point, yet she struggles because she does respect much of what they are doing and she has to keep this job for her three kids to go to school. The rural Hondurans who the NGO hopes will be empowered also struggle with how much they should resist because of desires for resources, fears of retribution, hopes the project will work, and different interpretations of cultural norms to respect those in charge.

As I argued above in the section on Foucault, I do not believe that ideologies and hegemonic discourses are so easily shrugged off—especially for individuals that are both advantaged and disadvantaged in different ways (power, status). Scott argued that the less powerful do not buy into hegemonic arguments, and instead are only producing hegemonic appearances for their own interests. I disagree. I believe it is both. The line between consciousness and what we are not yet aware of is murky—whether it is American

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ideology, positivism, patriarchy, fatalism, or an eschatology promising a better life. Ideologies, hegemonic discourses, and our umbilical cords of privilege all guide our exercising of power and our performances in addition to power relations of the encounter. *I agree with Kondo that resistance is messier than Scott portrayed it, and that many of our actions express our ambivalence*, often unintentional and not fully conscious, of contradictory beliefs (from different ideologies and levels of consciousness) (Kondo, 1990, p. 220). This complexity in resistance was addressed in part by Willis by showing reproduction of class relations due to both the lads' resistance and accommodation. Willis, however, did not address resistance of either the more or less powerful that attempted to break the cycle (p. 22). The challenge, then, in appropriating this methodology is in holding these contradictions and complexities rather then portraying descriptions of the more and less powerful's resistance in simple terms.

Finally, Scott noted that there are those rare occurrences when the hidden transcript bursts open into the public transcript (Scott, 1986, p. 211). Yet because the more powerful tend to be unaware of the hidden transcript, and because they are used to the normal performances of the less powerful, the more powerful are often shocked at the outburst (p. 224). (In the case, Maria could no longer hold back after three years and she "exploded" at a faculty meeting. Her colleagues were both shocked and angered by her delivery.) Once the less powerful sense power relations have changed, discourses prepared in the hidden transcript surface and take the stage for the first time. Because these outbursts tend to generate defensiveness in the more powerful, polarization can lead to further feelings of disrespect, resentment, and disempowerment on both sides.

This vicious cycle prevents three kinds of critical learning: first, learning about unintentional, disrespectful practices and how to change behavior; second, learning about

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the less powerful's ideas, strengths, and competencies that the more powerful need which would facilitate two-way empowerment; and third, learning about the problems the empowerment encounter seeks to address and ways of going about empowerment itself. Therefore, trying to understand the level of dominance in the public transcript is critical for empowerment encounters for practitioners who want to improve their respectfulness and effectiveness, and to improve their own and the organization's capacity to learn.

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CHAPTER 8
EMPOWERMENT INTERPRETATIONS AND SELECTED DISCOURSES

One of the critical case study findings was the way the different interpretations of empowerment, often hidden in the background, guided day-to-day practice. These different interpretations made it easier for participants in the encounters to talk past each other and added to miscommunication. I went into the case believing that the important background dimensions shaping empowerment encounters were the umbilical cord of privilege, interpersonal style, and unique biography we bring to the encounter. After a brief introduction to Foucault, I decided to add some interviews to my methodology to learn more about these interpretations of empowerment and the discourses that shaped them. The case study revealed a cleavage between individual, liberal and often psychological interpretations of empowerment and collective, radical, political, interpretations of empowerment. I later discovered that this cleavage is widely noted in the literature—especially by feminists working in the critical theory tradition who appropriate Foucauldian analysis.

Returning to Foucault after the case, I learned that what I believe are disrespectful practices (viewing empowerment encounters only interpersonally and putting the less powerful under the microscope) are exercises of disciplinary power through the one-way, normalizing gaze. Because of the power-knowledge connection, it is no surprise that many of the well-funded and more powerful institutions and theorists across disciplines and fields involved in empowerment practice create discourses that are one-way, individualizing, psychologizing, and normalizing—in other words, that promote individual

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empowerment within the status quo. What *is* surprising, however, is the more powerful's one-way and sometimes normalizing gaze in many of the more collective and radical empowerment discourses that seek to transform unjust status-quo treatment, practices, and social systems. Resistance to the one-way, normalizing gaze, justified within many discourses, is taking place in empowerment encounters by both the more and less powerful across disciplines and professional fields. In response, additional empowerment discourses are joining the struggle to determine norms for respectful and effective practice within the face-to-face encounters themselves .

The purpose of this section is to make visible the different empowerment interpretations that operate in the background and affect everyday practice. A second aim is to locate two-way empowerment, and a two-way empowerment way of being in context.

I have selected a limited number of interpretations from the vast array of empowerment discourses that are embedded across disciplines and fields of practice. The selected interpretations help to see the cleavages and struggles of different empowerment interpretations related to face-to-face encounters. These cleavages are brought out by asking: Empowerment for what? (and at what level?); empowerment for whom?; and empowerment using what processes and methods? How these interpretations address the issues I am concerned with in this inquiry can also be brought out by asking: What part of the hidden background is addressed (or not addressed)?; and how does each interpretation discuss (or not discuss) face-to-face interaction—especially the giving and receiving of critical feedback-up about the empowerment encounter itself? Among these different interpretations, some are competing, some share aspects with each other (e.g., feminist insights), and some influence each other. I will outline each argument (some briefly and

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others in a more extended way) and note problems and limitations, points of overlap and contributions to a two-way empowerment interpretation.

Before addressing the different interpretations and discourses, however, I want to briefly put empowerment in context. First, I will address some of the ideas in history that have influenced empowerment. Then, I will attempt to outline the current context—notably, the perceived Bush-Kemp co-optation of empowerment in 1991.

Ideas Influencing Empowerment

What led to the proliferation of empowerment interpretations and discourses? A wide variety of ideas and movements have influenced practitioners—for social work, this process has taken place over the last hundred years (Simon, 1994). Some of the earlier influences include existentialism (taking responsibility, taking action), Marcus Garvey, Marxism, socialism, Catholic worker communities, Industrial Areas Foundation—notably Saul Alinsky's community organizing using a conflict approach to assist the poor to "organize themselves for power" with the explicit purpose of reducing the domination and power of "haves" and of expanding the share of power held by common people (Simon, 1994, pp. 93-94).

Some of the most influential ideas leading to empowerment theory and practice include: Gandhi's concept of Hindi Swarai (self-determination); Mao's consciousness-raising (an important technique to transform the painful into the political that was used by the U.S. women's movement in consciousness-raising groups); Franz Fanon's emphasis on reciprocal recognition; Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's process of "conscientization" (viewing the less powerful as knowing subjects); Jane Addams and the settlement house movement; Myles Horton and the Highlander Center for Education and Research

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(citizenship training, leadership training, self-help, cultural preservation) who focused on "having a concept of education that is yeasty, one that will multiply itself" (Horton, Kohl & Kohl, 1990) and who trained unions, civil rights activists and Congress of Racial Equality activists (CORE); liberation theology (building on Martin Buber's (1958) "I-Thou" concept and articulated by Peruvian Gustavo Gutierrez (1973) in *A Theology of Liberation*) that pointed out collusion with elites and class injustice; and the new left's participatory democracy ("becoming an actor" through direct action building on the Quaker's direct witnessing of moral injustice) (Gran, 1983, pp. 150-153; Horton et al., 1990; Simon, 1994, pp., 38-146; Zinn, 1980).

The movements that developed these ideas included the settlement house, civil rights, Black power, feminist, anticolonialist, CORE (who used direct-action Ghandi approaches), Students for a Democratic Society and their economic research and action projects, self-help groups who shunned professionals to self-reliance ("self" in self-help represents the indigenous strengths of the immediate group and larger community who experienced similar injustice), gay and lesbian, and the disabilities movements.

Post World War II Context: U.S. Power and Programs

It is crucial to see how post-1945, the U.S. hegemonic presence has shaped and continues to shape empowerment efforts. As Charles Lemert put it bluntly: "At the end of World War II, no one was left standing except the United States...[and] the one power still standing stood taller than before, taller than any other in the modern era" (Lemert, 1993, p. 291). American military might (the bomb) propelled U.S. income to support efforts in all disciplines. The U.S. began to pay attention to domestic needs with the publication of Harrington's, *The Other America*, responding with the War on Poverty and the Great

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Society programs trying to adhere to Sargent Shriver's call for maximum feasible participation, and to needs abroad through the Peace Corps under the Alliance for Progress (this AID and support, however, was often tied to U.S. business interests[77]). Both led to the proliferation of the U.S. nonprofit industry and the international development industry (including nongovernmental organizations). Riding on this wave of history are practitioners like myself who, thanks to our privilege, can afford to volunteer in the South to help "the poor." U.S. dominance continues through transnational corporations and the multilateral institutions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund working to maintain the status quo in the globalization process.

Co-optation of U.S. Empowerment by Bush-Kemp

During the Reagan-Bush era in the U.S., social spending was slashed and wealth became further centralized. It was during the Bush years that an important historical event took place for the concept of empowerment. As Barbara Levy Simon, author of The *Empowerment Tradition in American Social Work*, noted, the Bush-Quayle Republican strategists co-opted empowerment in 1991-92 from the "authentic empowerment movements long rooted in American culture [since the late 1890s]" (Simon, 1994, p. 137). How? By promoting strategies that neglected the critical component of investing in the human capital of disempowered communities (capacity development) (p. 180). Instead, Bush and Kemp (soon to create his "Empowerment America" organization) outlined two empowerment strategies: first, to help the poor "better themselves" by threatening them through economic punishment if they did not leave the welfare roles; and second, to create "empowerment zones" in poor communities by reducing companies' tax obligations

[77] (Hellinger, Hellinger, O'Regan, 1988)

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(Simon, 1994, pp. 131-136). The net result viewed by Simon was "the abolition of a government role and of professional participation in the creation and maintenance of housing, jobs, programs, and neighborhood restoration work, "an abandonment of programs and projects, viewed as turnovers, but without resources (p. 179).

A similar phenomenon is taking place internationally. With countries under increasing pressure to repay debts (often made by irresponsible U.S. banks to elites who siphoned off funds and set off capital flight (George, 1988)), and World Bank structural adjustment loans and International Monetary Fund austerity plans, countries are slashing social services and decentralizing without resources. Yet often these decentralization efforts are also touted as empowerment without the resources, and often the responsibilities, to be effective (Arnold & Reineke, 1996).

Therefore, for this study, the conservative interpretation of empowerment outlined above that does not include attention to human capacity development will not be addressed. The liberal and radical interpretations tend to operate more in the background of empowerment encounters. What these interpretations look like and the discourses that shape them will be developed next.

Distinguishing Individual and Collective Levels of Empowerment

The first significant cleavage among interpretations of empowerment already discussed above is between individual and collective interpretations of empowerment (see Figure 8, "Empowerment Interpretations and Selected Discourses"). These different interpretations are in response to the "empowerment for what (at what level?)" question. The individual versus collective cleavage hinges on practitioners' reasoning of why the

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Individual Empowerment • Individual, interpersonal, organizational capacity to participate in status-quo society.	**Collective Empowerment** • Sociocultural awareness and skills to analyze and take action against unjust relations in status-quo society: • Individual, interpersonal, organizational capacity to meet needs in context.
U.S. Social Services • Transformative Use of Power—to develop an autonomous self • *Mutual Empowerment* ❍* to develop self-in-relation * attention to gender (the more powerful here are open to being empowered interpersonally) International Development through Capacity Building (some ❍) —example: WID	Participatory Dialogue, Skills and Action • Critical Pedagogy (Freire Inspired Efforts) • Feminist Critique and Vision ❍✹ (de Montis Solis, Nicaragua) • U.S. Empowerment-Based Social Work and Social Services ❍✹, ***Simon*** (also uses *mutual empowerment*) • Grassroots Development through Group Capacity Building (some ❍✹) —example: GAD ***Ellsworth's Sustained Encounters*** ❍✹ Context-Specific Practices in U.S. University anti-racism course ***Two-Way Empowerment*** ❍✹ Ideas Being Developed in this Thesis (Goal, Day-to-Day Posture, Practices, a "Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being")

Empowerment for What?
Individual or Collective (Empowered as an Individual and Member of Groups)

Empowerment for Whom?
The Less Powerful, or *Both the More and Less Powerful* (Signified by Italics)

Empowerment Process/Methods Work With:
- ***More Powerful's Presence and Hidden Background*** (Bold, Italics)
- Nonrational: feelings, the body, nature ("❍")
- Multiple Forms of Domination: more than oppressor/oppressed ("✹")

Figure 8. Empowerment interpretations and selected discourses (some compete, some overlap, some influence each other).

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people they are working with are disempowered in the first place. Those adhering to the individual interpretation often view disempowerment (poverty, addiction, unemployment, etc.) as a lack of individual, interpersonal, and/or organizational capacity (the practical skills, know-how, and confidence to be capable). Individual empowerment for them often means increasing the less powerful's capacity to participate and thrive in status-quo society.

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Others adhering to the collective interpretation, however, argue that disempowerment (or structural inequality) is the result of unjust ideologies, practices, systems, and relations of power in status-quo society that support and reproduce relations of power and status (Rothman, 1978, p. 15). Individuals and groups need to be seen within this social context to better understand their condition of disempowerment—for example, that they are up against unjust obstacles and day-to-day poor treatment not faced by others who treat them as "less than"—and to become aware of their potential to empower themselves in the encounters. Collective empowerment means increased sociocultural awareness, skills, and group strength as well as individual, interpersonal, and organizational capacity, to collectively talk together, analyze, and take action to get specific needs met and to transform unjust treatment, practices, and systems of status-quo society. Social awareness and practical skills are *both* crucial. Practitioners working with a people-centered approach to grassroots development in Latin America note that you need to "start where the people are" before taking action on larger "social justice" issues (Bunch, 1982; Werner & Bower, 1984). Critical awareness and effective action can take place at many levels—not just a revolution or the restructuring of the global economy—because there is disempowerment at many levels.

The difference, then, between individual and collective empowerment is whether issues of structural inequality are denied, downplayed, or are seen as the crucial context for empowerment encounters. There are practitioners, however, who acknowledge structural inequality yet are working toward individual empowerment for a number of reasons including: They believe it is more effective than fighting city hall; they believe it is more effective rather than trying to deal with deep-seated prejudice; they assess the political climate is too dangerous (people can be killed); or they are working within an institution

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that is not comfortable with collective empowerment. Working in depth at the individual level, many scholars and practitioners have insights that those working at the collective level have drawn upon. Similarly, insights at the collective level are often used as is possible by practitioners working in institutions committed to the individual level. Therefore, ideas and practices move back and forth rather than a strict either/or dichotomy.

Yet the cleavage between individual and collective empowerment is reflected in numerous studies across disciplines and fields. As Foucault noted, one of the tendencies of the current disciplinary power-knowledge regime is the individualizing and psychologizing of the less powerful by the more powerful practitioners (psychiatrists, prison reformers, educators, social workers, international development workers, etc.). Iris Marion Young reported a similar cleavage of individual and collective meanings of empowerment in social services in her study titled, "Punishment, Treatment, Empowerment: Three Approaches to Policy for Pregnant Addicts" (Young, 1994). In the field of social work, Lorraine Gutierrez , Kathryn DeLois and Linnea GlenMaye sought to learn more about and further integrate empowerment theory and practice. In their 1995 study, the authors found scholars tended to define empowerment interpersonally and politically, while practitioners tended to define empowerment individually and psychologically (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 537). When Gutierrez et al. looked into why practitioners were not pushing for political change, they found one reason was that "agencies need to seek help from funders that are more comfortable with individual empowerment than with political empowerment" (p. 541). Nancy Fraser discovered a similar trend in battered wives' clinics. After the clinics became better funded, practices became more individualized and less politicized (Fraser, 1989, pp. 176-177).[78] This adds

[78] Fraser noted that after clinics became better funded, professional social workers replaced women who had experienced battering themselves. The division became obvious with clients. Practices

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an important wrinkle to the individual-collective cleavage: constraints. Some practitioners who believe in and want to work toward collective empowerment may not for fear of losing their jobs, losing funding, and so on.

This individual-collective debate takes place within other discussions of concepts that are "in fashion"—for example, discussions of "development," "diversity," "participation," "capacity development," "organizational development" and even "social change." For example, in the diversity field, the debate is between the "individual voice" and the "social justice voice" (Cross, Katz, Miller & Seashore, 1994, pp. xxv-xxix).[79] This debate spills into the research on diversity literature with some researchers studying diverse individuals and others learning about people in context (Trickett, Watts & Birman, 1994). This divide reflects the two intellectual/ideological sociological traditions of inequality: structural realism (Marx, Weber) where inequalities are directly related to structural position versus evolutionary liberalism (Parsons) that deemphasizes structural position and stresses individual accomplishment and effort (Rothman, 1993/1978, pp. 34-35). What this thesis tries to address is what Charles Lemert called one of the main dilemmas in social theory—that is, "how do structures affect actions?" (Lemert, 1993, p. 479).

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became more individualizing and less politicized. Battered women tended to be positioned as clients and increasingly psychiatrized (addressed as victims with deep, complicated selves). Rarely were they addressed as potential feminist activists. Fraser commented that the "language game of therapy has supplanted that of consciousness-raising....neutral scientific language of "spouse abuse" has supplanted more political talk of "male violence against women." She argued that the needs of women became substantially reinterpreted. The earlier clinics priority of social and economic prerequisites of independence gave way to a narrower focus on the individual woman's problem of "low self-esteem."

[79] Some of this literature is by organizational development consultants working with transnational corporations. The social justice voice for many consultants addresses discrimination within corporations, but does not address issues of social justice and social responsibility of the corporations--especially in the South.

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Individual Level: Transformative, Self-in-Relation

Now that I have given a broad brush description of the first cleavage within empowerment discourse of individual and collective empowerment, we can begin to examine the different approaches to individual empowerment and some of the discourses that shape them in more detail: their goals, methods, and processes. While conservatives' interpretations of empowerment are often at the individual level—for example, empowering people to become consumers in the global economy (think of Jack Kemp's "Empower America")—as I described above, I am more interested in the liberal interpretations (often in the background of empowerment encounters) that promote individual, interpersonal, and organization capacity building (skills, self-worth, and different types of knowledge) to participate in society. I will now discuss three different interpretations and some of the discourses that shaped them within U.S. social services and international development.

U.S. Social Services

Among the U.S. social service providers, Iris Marion Young found two different approaches that worked toward individual empowerment: the transformative use of power to develop an autonomous self (based on Wartenberg's theory); and mutual empowerment to develop a self-in-relation (based on Surrey's theory and the work of Wellesley College's Stone Center[80]). Young argued that many therapists and service providers interpret empowerment as "the development of individual autonomy, self-control, and confidence" (Young, 1994, p. 48). Even though Young's findings are based on research of therapeutic drug treatment service providers for pregnant addicts in New York City, I believe her

[80]The Wellesley College Stone Center for the Study of the Psychology of Women applied Gilligan's work and other theorists of caring into clinical applications using the self-in-relation theory.

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findings are valuable for other fields because she addresses "ethics of care" approaches by well-intentioned practitioners. Again, I am not claiming that these selected interpretations are the comprehensive and representative interpretations, just the most useful for highlighting distinctions and contextualizing two way empowerment.

Young's Critique of Individual Empowerment Interpretations

Before getting into the different interpretations, I need to give a brief outline of Young's argument and critique of the individual empowerment interpretations. In her study titled, "Punishment, Treatment, Empowerment: Three Approaches to Policy for Pregnant Addicts," she drew on feminist ethics, critical theory, and Foucauldian analysis. Young argued that "treatment often operates to adjust women to dominant gender, race, and class structures and depoliticizes and individualizes their situations" (Young, 1994, pp. 33-34). Her approach enables us to better understand empowerment encounters in two ways: First, Young demonstrated how we can critically appropriate Foucault to analyze empowerment encounter discourses; and second, she helps us to map out the individual empowerment level. Young's analysis of therapeutic treatment for pregnant addicts in the U.S. draws on Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power and confessional discourse to illustrate why she is suspicious of modern therapeutic treatment programs, and why we should keep these suspicions in mind when analyzing empowerment encounters of the helping professions.

Young analyzed the *exercising of disciplinary power* (applying norms and rules seen as natural in everyday practices) in both paternalistic and more humanistic treatment practices, and she became suspicious "when [the more powerful service providers] redefine a client's problem through the categories of expert knowledge; inhibit the client's

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freedom through surveillance; attempt to normalize her life and behavior, often in ways that reinforce privilege; and *individualize the source of her problem and its solution*" (Young, 1994, p. 43). She noted that *when working with the "self," "therapeutic norms easily become infiltrated with social norms that function to enforce and reproduce relations of privilege and oppression.*" Rather than legitimate assessments, practitioners can make biased evaluations. Individual empowerment to participate in status quo society in some of the treatment programs involved adapting to dominant social norms to be a "good" woman and a "good" worker (training was geared for low-wage work and often sex typed), the devaluation of cultural norms and practices (Young, 1994, p. 45).

As I discussed above in the structuration studies, it is often difficult not to reproduce power relations despite our best intentions. This finding is brought home in Young's study:

> Institutional racism, sexism and classism... are reproduced partly by the application of unconscious norms and stereotypes in many situations of interaction, especially between social unequals in disciplinary settings...[I]t is nearly inevitable for service providers to reproduce these structures as they may condition the lives of pregnant addicts, *unless those providers are conscious of how social norms can enter their work and can actively undermine the processes of the reproduction of structures of privilege and oppression* [italics added]. (Young, 1994, p. 46)

Unlike previous studies I cited above in the discussion of power relations (by Scott, Willis, Fishman, etc.), Young directly addressed *the more powerful,* in this case the therapeutic service providers, *to take an active role in resisting the reproduction of domination by becoming aware of the social norms embedded in their practice and changing their behavior.* In the case study, Maria exemplifies a practitioner who is actively resisting the reproduction process. Young noted that many therapists and social workers are already critical of the paternalism, disrespectful behavior, punitive atmosphere, and expert language that is taken for granted in service provision—"especially towards those defined as deviant,

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such as addicts or poor people" (Young, 1994, p. 46). Yet she argued that individual practitioners resisting is not enough.

In addition to disciplinary power, Young argued that confessional discourse also plays a crucial role in therapeutic practice and some forms of individual empowerment. Therapeutic practice has its roots in the Christian practice of confessional narrative to "root out illusion and self-deception" (Young, 1994, p. 46). The goal of modern therapeutic practice is to produce a "transparently autonomous self where the individual has internalized the skills and disciplines of self-inspection and self-direction that assure her independence and self-control" (p. 46). Much of this therapeutic talk is based on the 12-step techniques developed by Alcoholics Anonymous (p. 47). The problem with these types of programs is that they assume an "atomistic and individualizing model of the relation of person and society" (p. 47).

For Young, this self-reflective, confessional talk is depoliticizing and individualizing because the addict constructs herself or her family as the source of her problems and pain rather than viewing her life in the larger context of social structures and institutions. Recall Maria's frustration in the case with her colleagues who viewed the students as "poor things,' and others who focused their energy on the problems within the family rather than the larger structural issues.

Confessional talk also discourages the pregnant addict from "forming dialogic bonds with others in relations of solidarity and resistance" (Young, 1994, p. 47). Therefore, in analyzing these programs, Young argued we need to "view with suspicion...liberal, humanist service-providing practices...[because] contemporary structures of domination and oppression appear as often in the bureaucracy of the welfare state as in the prison, although not in the same form" (p. 48).

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Now I will outline Young's analysis of the two different forms of individual empowerment that she came into contact with in treatment programs. Young's distinction between the transformative use of power and the self-in-relation approaches, however, can help to distinguish empowerment interpretations operating in the background of other fields.

Transformative Use of Power to Develop an Autonomous Self

The first empowerment discourse operating at the individual level noted in Young's study is the transformative use of power to develop an autonomous self. Wartenberg's theory argues that the more powerful in relation to the less powerful need to exercise a "transformative use of power" over the less powerful to bring up the subordinate's skill level to that of the superior's, reducing the differences in power. The goal for the more powerful is to "work themselves out of a job" by empowering the less powerful toward autonomy and equity—a goal stressed by many NGOs working in international development.

In the "transformative use of power," disciplinary power can only be exercised to develop the less powerful's skills and resources. According to Young, this interpretation approaches a "parental model of an ethic of care" (Young, 1994, p. 49).[81] The less powerful are clearly the focus of empowerment (the response to the "empowerment for whom?"), and under the one-way, normalizing gaze of the nonpresent more powerful . Increased individual power through capacity development is the goal, but the existing

[81]The ethic of care comes from Carol Gilligan's work on moral development (Gilligan, 1982) and emphasizes "contextualized issues of harm and suffering rather than a morality of abstract principle." The ethics of care argues that the moral self stresses empathy in interdependence, that there are members of society who are needy, and that our connectedness is more than contracts and promises. (Young, 1994, pp. 33-57).

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differences in power relations within the encounters themselves are not addressed. And critical feedback-up is not addressed.

Mutual Empowerment to Develop Self-in-relation

A second interpretation at the individual level, and according to Young a second ethic of care, draws on the work of Janet Surrey's self-in-relation theory and other feminist theorists associated with the Stone Center at Wellesley College. The self-in-relation interpretation offers a relational alternative to the transformative use of power's emphasis on autonomy as separation; instead, *the autonomous self develops within supportive, caring relationships.* Young found that self-in-relation type treatment, rather than being confrontational and achievement-oriented, *emphasized empathy and seeing the client's self and problems embedded within a context of social relationships* (Young, 1994, p. 41).

Surrey's theory contributes to this thesis by deepening the psychological aspects of a two-way empowerment way of being—especially the issues involved in recognition and empathy. Further, Surrey emphasizes the need for the more powerful, in her case mothers, to be empowered by the less powerful. Based on Surrey's clinical work analyzing mother-daughter relationships, she developed the concept of "mutual empowerment" (*where it is as important "to empower as well as to be empowered"* (Surrey, 1991c, p. 59)). Mutual empowerment includes and works with the more powerful's (in her case, mothers') interpersonal *psychological* presence (other issues of difference, desire, and deception are not addressed). Because of the theoretical relevance to the case study, I will describe this interpretation in much greater depth than the other two interpretations at the individual level.

Another contributor to the Stone Center, feminist psychiatrist Jean Baker Miller, argued that historically, *women's empowerment activities, using their emotional,*

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intellectual, and social capacities to empower others, were misrecognized as passive, while men's activities were viewed as active (Miller, 1976, p. xx) She further argued that psychology and human development models devalued interaction and empowerment, while valuing independence and autonomy as the goal of the development process. Miller noted that some social service discourses (as outlined above), institutions, and practitioners base their methods and processes on this valuing/devaluing pattern that creates *one-sided models* where development *"[does] not include the ability to engage in interactions which empower others and, simultaneously, oneself* [italics added]" (p. xx). Miller and Surrey argued for mutual empowerment models that develop autonomy through connection within relationships.

Surrey's self-in-relation theory of women's development is defined as "an evolutionary process of development through relationship" (Surrey, 1991c, p. 59). This theory is based on her clinical work of mother-daughter relationships. She argued that because girls are not encouraged to separate or disconnect emotionally from their mothers, girls and women have developed relational skills and different development patterns. Surrey argued that this relational approach and experiential process implies openness, flexibility, and change (p. 59).

Surrey's working definition of the self is " a construct useful in describing the organization of a person's experience and construction of reality that illuminates the purpose and directionality of her or his behavior" (p. 52). Where Surrey's mutual empowerment overlaps with two-way empowerment is in her definition of empathy as involving the "interactive validation of the differences between self and other...[and the] recognition of the other...[and their] competencies" (p. 58). *(Two-way empowerment, however, includes differences beyond the psychological, interpersonal of Surrey's*

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approach.) Beyond recognizing differences, Surrey acknowledged that the attempt to get in another person's shoes is a "highly complex process [requiring a] high level of psychological development and learning" (p. 53) to practice the skills such as modeling and feedback, a finding that is important to empowerment encounters where critical feedback can end up as complainin' in the kitchen.

In relationships where the goal is to increase the development of mutual empathy (becoming highly responsive to the feeling states of each other), the individual self can practice and develop "empathic competencies" (Surrey, 1991c, p. 54). For Surrey, *"mutual empathy" means "being present with"* which is psychologically experienced as either self-enhancing or threatening (p. 55).[82] *In empowerment encounters, mutual empathy may be threatening to some who are not comfortable being present in the encounters and being visible.* In Surrey's study, this means mothers being seen and feeling seen by their daughters in addition to seeing their daughters and sensing them feeling seen. (*In empowerment encounters, because of the more powerful's desire for recognition, the desire to be seen may translate into the desire for a positive reflection rather than being fully recognized.*) The benefit of this emotional openness and connection, according to Surrey, is the fostering of mutual understanding. She argued that mutual empathy expands one-way parent-child models of empathy to a "*two-way interactional model, where it becomes as important to understand as to be understood*" (Surrey, 1991a, p. 38).

Surrey argued that mutual empowerment (where it is as important to be empowered as to empower) is the crucial and mutual process enabling both mothers and daughters to develop mutual empathy. When daughters are able to understand, support,

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[82]Surrey argued that, for girls, it is self-enhancing, and, for boys it is threatening; however, she left out girls who are "father's daughters" who also may have mixed feelings.

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and empathize with their mothers, they are developing empathic competencies for the future, empowering their mothers psychologically, and strengthening the mother-daughter relationship. Surrey defined (psychological) empowerment as:

> the motivation, freedom, and capacity to act purposefully, with the mobilization of the energies, resources, strengths, or powers of each person through a mutual, relational process. Personal empowerment can be viewed only through the lens of power through connection, that is through the establishment of mutually empathic and mutually empowering relationships. Thus personal empowerment and the relational context through which this emerges must always be considered simultaneously. (Surrey, 1991b, p. 164)

Mutual empowerment empowers the participants, and relational empowerment empowers the relationship itself (Surrey, 1991b, p. 163). Psychologically empowered, mothers and daughters are energized, feeling effective and motivated, and can mobilize in response to their new understandings. Applying her findings to empowerment encounters helps to develop what it means to bring in the more powerful's presence: *The more and less powerful are empowered to be both a "relator" and a "related being"; their capacity is developed to recognize the other and to be recognized* (Surrey, 1991c, p. 57). Two-way empowerment includes psychological mutual empowerment, but it also includes other skills and competencies at the individual level that can empower the more powerful. Where I differ from Surrey is that I believe the less powerful are empowering the more powerful, even when mutual empowerment is not a goal. Yet this empowerment—emotional support, logistics, getting things done, ideas, and so on—is often misrecognized or not recognized by the more powerful.

The most valuable contribution of Surrey's work for my inquiry is her identification of what I will call a potential Achilles heel of mutual empathy and mutual empowerment. In Surrey's clinical work, she noted that there are cases where "daughters are unclear about *'whose feelings belong to whom'*...with a tendency to experience the feelings of the other as

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her own [italics added]." *Roles can be reversed* with daughters becoming the mothers and the caregivers (Surrey, 1991c, p. 55).

Practitioners in empowerment encounters face a similar potential Achilles heel. Social workers, teachers, international development workers, therapists, and others in more powerful positions may be so eager to be open with their concerns and feelings—especially those who are reacting in opposition to the indifferent, cold, and remote practitioners in their field—that they unintentionally spend the bulk of the empowerment encounter time being open about their issues while clients, students, community participants, and patients listen with some becoming confused about "whose feelings belong to whom." The less powerful, with fewer resources and often greater needs (though they may have more psychological strength then the more powerful practitioner), can end up spending most of their valuable empowerment process time (that they paid for to get therapy, or need in school, or are depending on in a social work appointment, or require for meetings to discuss critical issues of a grassroots development project) providing support to the more powerful both psychologically and in their work and priorities. This is the concern that many of my colleagues expressed when they heard that I was working on developing two-way empowerment. Therefore, I believe there is a continuum of empathy and openness in two-way empowerment encounters (See Figure 3, "Empathy Continuum").

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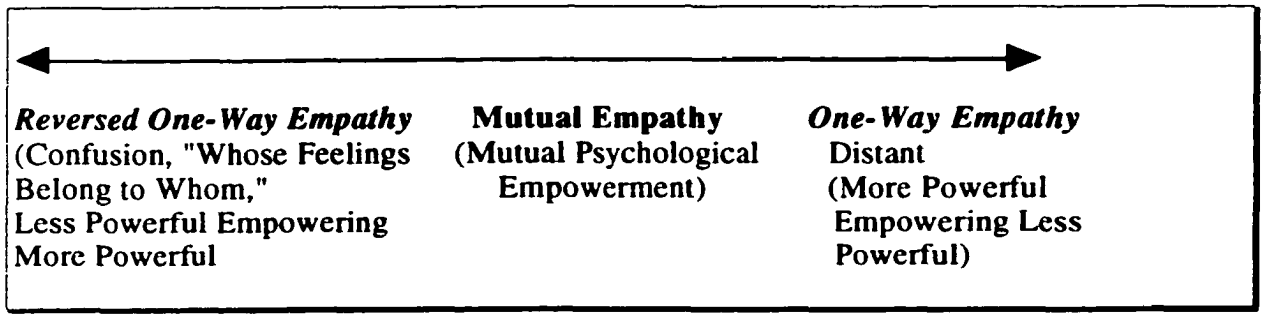

Figure 9. Empathy continuum.

In summary, understanding the self-in-relation theory contributes to a two-way empowerment way of being in the following three ways: First, it brings in the feminist contribution of attention to the nonrational (feelings, empathy, the experiential); second, it fleshes out issues of recognition and presence in response to the "empowerment for whom?" question; and third, it introduces a potential Achilles heel of being too open confusing "whose feelings are whom" and taking away precious empowerment encounter time and energy.

I believe there are also several limitations of the self-in-relation theory for empowerment encounters. First, because the theory was developed from the mother-daughter relationship, there is not a clean application to many of the adult relationships in empowerment encounters. Second, I disagree with the construction of girls and women as being relational, and boys and men as being autonomous. By studying mother-daughter relationships, Surrey and others argued that the self is relational for girls and women who do not have to separate and disconnect emotionally from their mothers (Surrey, 1991c, pp.

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52-55). As a father's daughter, I am one of many women with a different construction of self.[83]

Third, self-in-relation seems to value relationships over autonomy and agency (Surrey, 1991c, p. 63).[84] Here I agree with Benjamin, Kegan, and systems theorists that both autonomy and relationships, differentiation and integration, self-assertion and recognition are critical. I agree with other feminists that relational skills and competencies need attention, but the more autonomous skills and competencies leading to self-efficacy should not be downplayed. Surrey wrote that *"perhaps we ought to substitute 'empowerment' training for assertiveness training* [italics added]" (Surrey, 1991b, p. 180). I had a similar but different thought when studying Jessica Benjamin: *For those of us (both men and women) who are more assertive, recognition training could be just as valuable as assertiveness training is for those of us (again, both men and women) who are better at recognition.*

A fourth limitation is in addressing issues of difference. Within the umbilical cords of privilege of many of these theorists and therapists, the area where they are disadvantaged is in gender. Therefore, while there are references to the other dimensions of privilege (class, race, etc.), the focus of their work on "women" does not give enough attention to structural differences among women.

Further, despite the self-in-relation focus on relationality, Young keenly pointed out that self-in-relation interpreted by service providers for treatment programs remains firmly individualistic facilitated by confessional talk (the less powerful talk while others bear

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[83]As a father's daughter, I didn't see myself in the writings from the Stone Center, Gilligan and others, for example, "women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation and relationships" (Surrey, 1991c, pp. 52-55).

[84]She argued response-ability better for action and empowerment than agency, autonomy.

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witness) rather than dialogical talk. The goal is the development of personal growth and skills to get the less powerful, in her study addicts, back on their feet (Young, 1994, p. 49). *Kondo made a similar critique of American feminist psychologists' notion of a relational self that was restricted to interpersonal context ignoring the larger context of power, culture, and history that shapes the performance of what she argued are our different selves* (Kondo, 1990, pp. 26, 32-33, 36, 306-307).

In Young's study, she found practitioners drawing on this interpretation worked with clients within the context of significant relationships and family systems. Young argued that these efforts "stop short of a politicized understanding of the social structures that conditioned an individual's situation and the cultivation of effective action in relation to those structures" (Young, 1994, pp. 49-50). Although Surrey did offer some examples, of applying self-in-relation and mutual empowerment in a more political way to the Women Against Nuclear Disarmament (WAND) movement (Surrey, 1991b, p. 177), she acknowledged this needs to be further developed. Young makes a similar point and would like to see this ethics of care extended from face-to-face personal relationships to "interconnections of strangers in the public world of social policy and its implementation" (Young, 1994, p. 41).

International Development Through Capacity Development

The third interpretation working toward individual empowerment will be referred to as "international development." International development practitioners and others in the helping professions (social workers, teachers, international development workers, etc.) influenced by the feminists began turning to empowerment models that emphasized "capacity development" for individuals and for organizations. Insights from both the more

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autonomous and relational model of self-development are drawn upon by different organizations that I will briefly review to get a flavor of this interpretation.

The transformative use of power, and the mutual empowerment examples are a few of the discourses that helped to shape the individual interpretation of empowerment in U.S. social services practice. In the field of international development, the individual interpretation of empowerment is also prominent and, I would argue, is also tied to funding.[85] Practitioners working within institutions that are funded by the larger institutions (such as the Agency for International Development, the World Bank and the regional banks such as the Inter-American Development bank), work at all levels to equip individuals and organizations with skills (education, technical training, leadership, management, and organizational skills), strengthen basic services and infrastructure (health, education, agriculture, governance, economics), and prepare for decentralization (both politically and in the management of localities). Working on the ground in empowerment encounters, practitioners working for NGOs supported by these institutions (and those practitioners and institutions that are not supported by the larger institutions but believe in this approach), may employ both rational and some nonrational methods (e.g., people recounting personal stories while others listen empathetically, and experiential learning methods) to increase skills, self-worth, organizational unity, and team capacity to take over the projects when the ex-patriates leave.

One example of an empowerment interpretation for international development practitioners is "women in development" known as WID. In these programs, practitioners try to bring attention to women's participation in projects that are often neglected. This may

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[85]For a detailed and thorough analysis of problems in U.S. foreign aid, see the Hellingers' *Aid for Just Development* (1988)

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include building self-esteem through storytelling, support groups, sewing, cooking and other more stereotypical training, or leadership training. The point of this training is to prepare women to participate in society. It is not to question the sexism and other "isms" that they may be facing. Some practitioners may not see that option as being possible due to safety or other political constraints. Or they may not believe in it.

International Development, Feminism and Empowerment

While there are some in the international development industry who do not agree with including nonrational processes and methods, within the field of international development, feminism and empowerment made a substantial impact on the analysis of development and underdevelopment by getting some scholars and practitioners to rethink the agenda of development theory and practice including the exploration of empowerment to "express and develop the capacities of oppressed classes and groups" (Bernstein, 1993, p. 154) The goal, similar to Wartenberg's, is to work yourself out of a job or "sustainability." Yet unlike the transformative use of power, I believe that there are practitioners in NGOs and other organizations who have incorporated some of the feminist insights. Again, because the practitioners working within this interpretation have focused at the individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels, they may have methods, processes and insights to share with those who embrace collective empowerment.

Yet most discourses generated by the larger institutions and NGOs justify the one-way, normalizing gaze within empowerment encounters. Norms and rules in these discourses make it seem natural to focus on the less powerful as the only one who needs to be empowered (creating a one-up/one-down situation). While the more powerful may seek to listen to and learn from the poor, often the purpose is often more instrumental: to

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learn how to empower the less powerful more effectively, ignoring the presence and problems and the more powerful and their more powerful institutions (Salmen, 1987). If we focus only on the interpersonal foreground of the interaction and neglect, hide or deny the background of empowerment encounters (differences, desires, and deception), we can come to conclusions that the "poor" are "not like us" (they are less capable, less intelligent, a "less than" culture or group, naturally deficient, etc.)—even for well-intentioned practitioners.

As a result, these well-intentioned practitioners and their groups may be less effective in reaching their individual empowerment goals and find themselves and their colleagues feeling disrespectful, resentful, and disempowered. (This same critique can be applied to the social service discourses discussed above.)

Above I have attempted to outline briefly selected individual empowerment discourses that help to contextualize two-way empowerment in the fields of U.S. social services and in international development. Now I will explore discourses in these same fields along with others that work toward collective empowerment. Rather than social services and international development, the collective interpretation is often distinguished by references to social change, social justice, participatory development, and grassroots development signifying a commitment to transform unjust social relations.

Collective Level: Participatory Dialogue, Sustained Encounters, and Two-Way Empowerment

Practitioners drawing on and adding to the collective empowerment interpretation are decidedly more political and are often described as radical. Working at the collective

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empowerment level, radical educators, organizers, social workers, and social change activists work to facilitate consciousness-raising and collective action to change unjust social structures. For radical practitioners, this involves a questioning of the world and existing social systems—notably systems of oppression based on group identities.

For some (including many forms of critical pedagogy), class is the defining variable of oppression. Feminists and postcolonialists dispute this view arguing that there is more than the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy. Some argue that rational dialogue is the vehicle for empowerment, others believe you need to bring in the non-rational as well questioning the assumptions of "dialogue" itself where all participants are equal. Some working at the collective level do not value or argue they do not have the time for much of the capacity building at the individual level—especially for the nontechnical, "soft" skills when they are already overwhelmed with social justice work. And finally, some exclude the more powerful's presence, while others argue we need to include and work with the more powerful's privilege, power, desire, and other background dimensions of the encounter itself.

Both the more and less powerful, however, may not be eager to jump in to this type of structural, contextual analysis, nor to roll up their sleeves and carry out the difficult work of collective action. Again, as Calhoun noted, there is a "preference for individualistic, psychological solutions to problems." People respond more to individualistic appeals to self-realization rather than to strong claims of identity (Calhoun, 1995, p. 223) (by any group category). For activists interested in social change, this is a serious challenge. bell hooks underlined this challenge: "women are being seduced by models of individual change that imply that no change has to occur in larger political and social realities" (hooks, 1989, p. 34).

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One reason may be the differences in privilege between the activists and the less powerful. As mentioned above, the less powerful may be in a more precarious position socially, emotionally, or financially then the more powerful and collective action may involve more risks that they are not willing to take. Or they may not believe it is the right approach. Or they may want to get some basic needs met (that the activists may already have—the part of their umbilical cord that is in NEON) before going on to the next level.

It is in exploring these questions that a distinction crucial to my inquiry emerges: some interpretations exclude or downplay the presence of the more powerful (their interpersonal presence, their power and umbilical cord of privilege, their desires) while others include and work with the more powerful's presence. Despite the social awareness of unjust structures, the awareness of the background dimensions in the empowerment encounter itself varies among discourses. Some of the practitioners that strive for collective empowerment do not recognize the way the one-way, normalizing gaze permeates their discourse and affects their practices within the encounters themselves. In some discourses, the normalizing aspect is addressed, but the unidirectionality goes unchecked.

In describing the selected discourses, I will first work with the four approaches that stress participatory dialogue, skills, and action. The first is "critical pedagogy," and it includes Paulo Freire's process of "conscientization" (consciousness-raising) and the critical pedagogy discourse it inspired. The second discourse is a feminist critique of critical pedagogy and an alternative vision and appropriations of Freire's work from Nicaraguan Maria el de Montis Solis. The U.S. empowerment-based social work and social services discourse is third and it includes Barbara Levy Simon, Lorraine Gutierrez and her colleagues and Iris Marion Young. The fourth discourse in the participatory

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dialogue, skills and action interpretation is the grassroots and participatory development approaches.

Next, I will work with Elizabeth Ellsworth's discourse of context-specific practices through "sustained encounters" that critiques participatory dialogue and argues we need to include the more powerful's presence, along with what I refer to as background dimensions of empowerment encounters. Finally, I will locate where I am proposing an additional empowerment interpretation: two-way empowerment.

Participatory Dialogue, Skills, and Action: Critical Rational, Feminist Critique and Vision.

Discourses that shape participatory dialogue and action interpretations tend to value participatory dialogue, participatory democracy, critical self-reflection, and collective action (Young, 1994, p. 50). This includes discourses of critical pedagogy (Freire-inspired literature), U.S. organizing for social change (notably the work of organizer Saul Alinsky[86]) (Alinsky, 1969; 1971), some forms of adult education (e.g., Myles Horton's work at Highlander) (Horton et al., 1990), participatory research (Park, 1993), U.S. empowerment-based social work (Gutierrez et al., 1995; Simon, 1994), and Latin American popular education[87] and liberation theology. Below, I will briefly outline Freire's contributions to the "critical pedagogy" discourse that are relevant to empowerment encounters followed by a feminist response that critiques and appropriates Freire creating an alternative discourse.

[86] One of the limitations of this thesis is the inattention to the organizing literature and practices. Alinksy's work and groups such as ACORN could have contributed much to this inquiry.
[87] For an overview of popular education in Latin America, see (de Montis Solis, 1994).

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Critical Pedagogy (Freire)

Critical pedagogy aims to work side-by-side with the less powerful in what Myles Horton referred to as learning circles (Horton et al., 1990) and Freire called culture circles (Freire, 1970, p. 45), working *with* the less powerful, not for them. Freire, influenced by Mao, Ché Guevara, Fromm, liberation theology, and the "sociology of education" (a critical and emancipating approach in England and the U.S. in the 1970s) (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. 34), introduced critical pedagogy as an approach of unity between theory and practice (praxis: "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 33) and applied as practice-theory-practice), and a dialogical relationship between teacher and student (Freire, 1970, 1978).

Freire proposed a methodology of "conscientization" (consciousness-raising to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 17, Translator's note 1)) to transcend traditional "banking" (knowledge-depositing) concepts of adult education. Conscientization is the process "in which men, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the sociological reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (Gran, 1983, p. 157). Once the oppressed become aware of their situation, and develop a critical consciousness, they are motivated toward transformative action.

The facilitator in this process of conscientization works with the oppressed through dialogue: "a horizontal relationship of...mutual trust" (Freire, 1970, p. 72) between teacher and student. Freire argued that:

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> only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no education...which is able to resolve the contradiction between teacher and student. (Freire, 1970, p. 74)

Both participants in the dialogue need to be teachers and students at the same time (Freire, 1970, p. 53). Teachers and facilitators who draw on critical pedagogy to take this Freirian challenge "must re-examine themselves constantly" (p. 42) to make sure they are working with the people, not for them or to save them, but to "trust in the oppressed and their ability to reason" (p. 48). For Freire, the historical and humanistic task of the oppressed is to not only liberate themselves, but the oppressors as well (p. 26).

De Montis Solis pointed out that Freire's conscientization failed to address several crucial areas including: class struggle, the diversity of the teachers and students, and the "political nature of education" (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. 35). This led to a "vulgarization of the concept" and co-optation by reactionaries and some general confusion by well-intentioned grassroots practitioners (Werner & Bower, 1984).[88] De Montis Solis noted that during the Somoza era of conservative ideology in Nicaragua, North American Peace Corps volunteers, many of whom were young, idealistic, well-intentioned, and naive, worked as popular educators, some using Freire's methods, to help reproduce the values of Somoza and the elites (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. 51). Freire and others (notably Henry Giroux in the U.S.) continued to develop his methodology to deal with these critiques.

Feminist Critique of Critical Pedagogy and Alternative Vision (de Montis Solis)

De Montis Solis, who drew on critical pedagogy, has offered a feminist critique and alternative vision. Feminists are critical of critical pedagogy in two areas: first,

[88] In this practical book for rural health workers, the authors' discuss the problems of Freirian facilitators who speak Freirian language mystifying the people they want to work with.

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viewing domination only through the oppressor versus oppressed class dichotomy, neglecting the multiple forms of oppression—notably, gender-based domination (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. 36)[89] and second, valuing rational methods and devaluing nonrational methods of learning and expression (such as feelings, experience, the body, relationships to nature, etc.).

De Montis Solis, in her unpublished dissertation, "Feminism, Empowerment and Popular Education in Nicaragua," noted the above two critiques and argued that the popular education efforts in Nicaragua were limited by the focus on class and the reliance on a masculinist epistemology used by the Sandinista male leadership (she herself was also a Sandinista leader) (de Montis Solis, 1994, pp. v, 36).

She defined popular education in Latin America as the production, dissemination, and appropriation of knowledge for transformation in favor of the oppressed (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. 13, 36), as opposed to nonformal education in the U.S. that aims to develop individual and technical skills. Popular education's methodology is egalitarian and participatory emphasizing practice-theory-practice to transform participants from objects to subjects of the education process. The aim is to *eliminate the power dimension of the educator's role* [italics added] (de Montis Solis, 1994, pp. 20-21, note 1).

Her goal was to introduce an alternative feminist pedagogy to add "gender consciousness to class analysis, and [to introduce] themes such as the validation and reclaiming of women's bodies in order to reconstruct their subordinated identities" (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. vi). Current forms of popular education valued the rational and devalued "other ways of learning about experience": feelings, senses, the body, and a

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[89]Freire only discussed the rich versus poor dichotomy and used the universal category of "man" for the subject.

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relationship with nature (p. 11) . Her vision of feminist pedagogy recognizes the "multiple forms of oppression and the complexity of interconnected power relations...using power relations as a point of departure for popular education [enabling] the development of the critical consciousness, common visions, and collective will to strive for comprehensive equity in social relations" (p. vi) De Montis Solis defined empowerment for her thesis as

> the capacity of individuals and social groups to change from within, to engage in decision-making, and to build new forms of horizontal "power-with" instead of "power-over" through which individuals expropriate and dominate through controlling the wills of others. It refers to consciousness-raising processes that allows individuals to acknowledge, through group identification, their individual and common problems of oppression. It implies a permanent struggle and rebellion against the various oppressive relations and historically constructed ideologies, myths, beliefs and psychological "mandates" to which individuals are constantly submitted (de Montis Solis, 1994, pp. 12-13, note 3). (Note-De Montis Solis drew on Starhawk's definitions of power as power-over, power-with, and power-from-within.)

In Nicaragua during the Sandinista period, de Montis Solis argued popular education could have been improved by paying more attention to the training of the teachers themselves, especially in facilitating reflection. Nonrational subjects, such as the psychological aspects leading to empowerment ("dreams, aspirations, emotions") were not viewed as worthy in the discussion of reality because they were not concrete, were seen as feminine and unnecessary according to a masculine epistemological framework (de Montis Solis, 1994, pp. 74-75).

De Montis Solis noted the tremendous pressures the Sandinistas were under while developing popular education, and the strides that were made, yet her feminist critique and vision provides an opportunity to expand struggles that seek social justice beyond class. I believe her example of how other unjust relationships in society (between men and women, party leaders and the community) (de Montis Solis, 1994, p. 67) were not questioned is an *example of the umbilical cord of privilege in action: The male Sandinista*

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leaders' privilege in areas like gender were often invisible or not acknowledged, yet women saw it in NEON.

A second example may be in de Montis Solis' recounting of women's empowerment encounters in her chapter on "an educational experience with women." While not getting into the specifics of the empowerment encounters themselves, she did conclude that "the women in the workshops...emphasized immediate over strategic needs.'" She attributed this problem to the facilitators who did not go deep enough into the analysis, and also to the facilitators' reluctance to "share their own circumstances of oppression with the others." The facilitator's level of privilege was not clear, but I wonder if this may also have affected different levels of dedication.

This women's educational experience also brought out that the *"power relations between facilitators and participants should be addressed and analyzed in the educational process itself; in this experience it did not happen* [italics added]" (de Montis Solis, 1994, pp. 202-203). This "educational experience with women" contributed to the gender consciousness-raising—especially how the diversity of women can be viewed as a strength (pp. 203-205). My goal in this thesis is to expand on de Montis Solis' conclusions about the presence of the facilitator (privilege, power, and interpersonal self), her commitment to bringing in the nonrational and to push beyond class to include the multiple forms of domination while not losing sight of how capitalist structures shape our lives.

U.S. Empowerment-Based Social Work

In the U.S., empowerment practice has been explored at length in the social work literature. Scholars and practitioners in this field have a century-old tradition of paying attention to the empowerment encounter between social worker and client where there are

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power inequalities and cultural differences. Their experience and analysis offers valuable insights into the development of a two-way empowerment encounters interpretation—both what they view as the current problems, challenges, and the strengths of their empowerment theory and practice. First, I will present Young's assessment of collective empowerment in the social service treatment centers of her study. Then, I will describe more of Gutierrez et al.'s study that compares empowerment theory to practice with an emphasis on what processes and methods social workers actually use in empowerment encounters. And finally, I will outline Simon's valuable work on the century-old empowerment-based social work tradition in the U.S. that pays attention to the empowerment encounter itself: problems, challenges, and insights to build on.

Iris Marion Young

As Young noted, for many social service practitioners, empowerment at the collective level "refers to the development of a sense of collective influence over the social conditions of one's life" (Young, 1994, p. 48). Young, prefers the collective interpretation because, for her, "it includes both levels where the individual empowerment is needed for collective empowerment" (Young, 1994, p. 48). (Although I would argue, as will some of the studies in social work that follow, collective empowerment may neglect forms of individual empowerment.) Young defined collective empowerment "as a process in which individual, relatively powerless persons engage in dialogue with each other and thereby come to understand the social sources of their powerlessness and see the possibility of acting collectively to change their social environment" (Young, 1994, p. 50).

Rather than confessional, monological talk at the individual level, consciousness-raising talk is dialogical. As participants move back and forth between individual life

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stories and social analysis, each participant is viewed as being equal in their right to speak, criticize others, and be criticized. Consciousness-raising can lead to empowerment because it develops critical thinking and the capacity to question the naturalness of institutions, seeing their human constructedness that can be changed. This can only happen, as Young emphasized, with the formation of coalitions (Young, 1994, p. 50). For some of the less powerful, like pregnant addicts, this type of empowerment is more difficult but not impossible.

Young learned of individual practitioners who were aware of the normalizing and individualizing tendencies of treatment practices who resisted the institutional discourse and worked in their own everyday practice towards more dialogical relationships with their clients. But she noted that good intentions of individual practitioners are not enough, and institutions need to work toward more institutional equality between providers and clients (Young, 1994, p. 51).

I agree with Young that encounters among the less powerful can be empowering for both individuals and the group. *Where I depart from Young*, as I will in my analysis of the Gutierrez et al. study, *is her assertion that the dialogical mode will enable equality among the participants in the empowerment encounter.* Even if many of the less powerful are in the same boat, it is hard to imagine that there are not some dimensions of difference, even when the less powerful come together, because of our different interpersonal styles and strengths and our different umbilical cords of privilege. As Foucault, Scott, Kondo, and others have argued, power relations are ubiquitous. Usually there is a facilitator in the group, at least to get things started, that may be part of the dialogue; yet Young (like critical pedagogy) did not discuss the presence of the facilitator in the group discussions nor the presence of the practitioner working in everyday practice with clients.

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Empowerment Theory and Practice (Guitierrez et al.)

Gutierrez et al's study compares empowerment theory to practice to outline the processes and methods that are used in empowerment encounters. They presented the empowerment perspective "as a means for addressing the problems of powerless populations and for mediating the role powerlessness plays in creating and perpetuating social problems" (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 534). In the literature, this empowerment perspective seeks to increase personal, interpersonal, and political power enabling "changes in the distribution of power." Power is defined as the power to act and is infinite as it is produced in social interaction. More specifically, it is the ability to get what you need, to influence others, and to influence the distribution of resources.

In the literature, Gutierrez et al. discovered that while empowerment is viewed "as a goal, as a process and as a form of intervention," how empowerment is carried out, the methods involved, "are rarely presented" (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 535). Theorists promote empowerment processes and interventions at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. The subprocesses include group consciousness-raising, reducing self-blame, assuming personal responsibility for change, and improving self-efficacy The intervention methods in the literature described

> basing the helping relationship on collaboration, trust, and shared power; utilizing small groups; accepting the client's definition of problem; identifying and building upon the client's strengths, raising the client's consciousness of issues of class and power; actively involving the client...; teaching specific skills; using...self-help, or support groups; experiencing a sense of personal power within the helping relationship; and mobilizing resources for advocating for clients. (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 535)

As I mentioned above, practitioners defined empowerment more individually and psychologically than the social work literature suggests. After reviewing the literature and interviewing practitioners, the authors discussed selected shared elements and themes.

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Practitioners worked toward what they viewed as critical outcomes of the empowerment process: "control, confidence, power, choices, and autonomy" (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 537). Several selected interview excerpts stressed a powerful theme among practitioners: They believed from their experience that they could not empower their clients or give them empowerment, but that empowerment has to come from within the clients themselves. Instead, they can "structure an environment or provide opportunities...[or] provide a philosophy or *way of being with that person*...[italics added]" By working with clients to find their strengths, the clients can feel empowered (p. 537).

The practitioners relied on three mutually reinforcing, interlocking, and critical methods: education, participatory, and strength based (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 541). Educational methods included: self-awareness, skills, critical consciousness, and critical awareness through support groups. Gutierrez et. al commented that "the workers' awareness of problems as social issues helped them to raise the consciousness of clients and to structure programs to reduce self-blame as well as advocate for social change" (p. 538). Participatory methods encouraged the participation of clients to move toward autonomy and "*requires the worker to approach clients as equals* [italics added]" (p. 539). In participatory dialogue the *worker's "use of self" includes listening, "self-disclosure, identification with the client, recognition of his or her own limits, knowledge of self and willingness to risk* [italics added]" (p. 540). Strength-based methods include recognizing the different strengths of clients. Gutierrez et al. *cited examples of workers that recognized different strengths often not recognized as skills*—for example, talking your way out of getting beaten up, foreign language skills, and so on. The different strengths, they noted, can contribute to the agency and to fellow clients. As one worker described it,

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the workers need to be open to co-teaching and to learning "because they [clients] need to at times feel like they're teaching and that's part of the empowerment process" (p. 540).

Gutierrez et al.'s findings of the shared elements drawn from social work theory and practice provide another glimpse of an interpretation that may be operating in the background of empowerment encounters. Similar to a two-way empowerment way of being, the interpersonal presence of the worker is addressed (conscious "use of self" and self-knowledge, self-disclosure, recognition of self-limits), and the less powerful's (in this interpretation, clients) different strengths are recognized. Yet their descriptions of self-disclosure and self knowledge, however, did not specifically address issues of power and privilege of the workers that is central to two-way empowerment; and clients' different strengths were viewed as a resource for both the agency and for the fellow clients, but this was not extended to the workers personally and to their more powerful groups (race, class, gender, etc.)—or at least it was not made explicit. Rather than just feeling like they are teaching in the empowerment process, I would argue that the less powerful are often already teaching in ways that the more powerful misrecognize or do not recognize.

I differ in my interpretation of two-way empowerment here. I argue that we need to be empowered because we do not have the whole picture, and it is not possible for us to see our unconscious behavior. It is critical I get feedback from my less powerful colleagues. For me, being open to being empowered is a necessity, rather than an additional process we can add to give the less powerful an experience of empowering us through skills, or as Surrey discussed, through empathy. At the same time, it is valuable, and part of my interpretation, that we recognize that the less powerful can and do empower us and that they be encouraged to do so, and feel empowered in the process.

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One difference between this social work approach and that of popular education is that in social work, advocating for clients is a goal in addition to some efforts to organize for collective action that are more in theory than in practice. I believe there are two issues to consider in this interpretation. First, because the social worker facilitates consciousness-raising to bring the clients up to her or his level, the assumption is that the worker does not need to be empowered about social realities; the worker's view is seen as the default and complete view (the "whole picture") despite our different umbilical cords of privilege, positions of power, historical and interpersonal selves and ideologies. And second, participatory dialogue is seen as a method requiring the worker to treat the client as an equal. Treating the clients with equal respect is one thing, not acknowledging differences in privilege, power relations, and interpersonal styles is another. As I have mentioned, claims that everyone in the group is equal despite institutional and status realities can foster resentment.

Gutierrez et al. provided a valuable study of theory and practice in empowerment social work. They noted that social workers trying to draw on this empowerment perspective interpretation can be very difficult for some who may see the value of working collaboratively with clients, but who are struggling with "role confusion or ethical dilemmas." One of those issues, I believe, may be about self-disclosure. As discussed above, there is a continuum, and a potential Achilles heel leading to a role reversal of one-way empowerment: clients supporting, working for, and empathizing with social workers only.

Finally, this study points out that practitioners may draw on the empowerment perspective interpretation, yet face funding constraints. These practitioners may tailor their practice to the individual, psychological level, and some may try to get in the interpersonal

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and collective when possible. In the findings, practitioners stressed autonomy as a critical outcome even though they saw the value of interdependence and connection with others. Because the individual and psychological dimensions of power and not the political dimension of power were addressed, this result is not surprising. This means that the empowerment interpretation practitioners draw on may be constrained by funding and institutional requirements that may favor an alternative interpretation. This funding dilemma increases the obstacles for the more powerful in empowerment encounters who want to resist the reproduction of domination through disciplinary practices that individualize, psychologize, and normalize the less powerful.

Simon, The Empowerment Tradition in American Social Work

> Practitioners in the [social work] empowerment tradition—despite the wealth of their century-old inheritance—still lack systematic strategies for extracting paternalism from practice and for empowering themselves as workers. (Simon, 1994, p. 185)

The third and final study in U.S. empowerment-based social work is Barbara Levy Simon's rich history that is important to this inquiry in two ways: First, she directly addressed the difficult issues involved in day-to-day practice including paternalism (as referenced above), worker burn-out, and the unconscious desires of the more powerful social worker; and second, she clearly outlined current empowerment-based social work practice within the context of a century-old tradition. First, I will outline her view of empowerment practice in this field, and then I will bring in her analysis of the critical problem of paternalism in empowerment encounters.

Simon's work is the first of a recent series in social work literature entitled, "Empowering the Powerless." In this series, "empowerment practice is viewed as the process and outcome of helping clients and staff to increase their personal, interpersonal,

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and political power so that they can exert greater control and influence in their personal and professional lives." The series editor, Alex Gitterman, emphasized that building esteem and skills without increasing consciousness or organizing for change without increasing esteem and skills are both one-sided. He "emphasize(d) the integration of personal, interpersonal and political power" (Simon, 1994, p. xi).

The naming of the empowerment concept was introduced into the social work discourse during the 1970s by Barbara Bryan Solomon in her 1976 book *Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities* (Solomon, 1976). The field was ready because, in Simon's view, "the 'soil' had been plowed and readied for her ideas" through a century of empowerment-based practice known by other names influenced by ideas noted in the context above (Simon, 1994, p. 144). *Empowerment practice guidelines include: starting where the people are, refraining from jumping in and fixing; building on strengths, responding to feedback, being patient, recognizing limits, being acutely aware of the power discrepancy, being aware of the unconscious superior/inferior collusion, recognizing local knowledge, and developing an "excellent and broad set of assessment, engagement and interventive skills* [italics added]" (Simon, 1994, p. 29). Social workers work with clients drawing on the self-in-relation theory, seeing the client and the encounter embedded in relationships.

Social workers who view themselves as "nurturers" emphasize the need for self-esteem, identity, consciousness, and technical skills. "Empowerment requires the use of strategies that enable clients to experience themselves as competent, valuable, and worthwhile both as individuals and as members of their cultural group" (Pinderhughes, 1983, p. 111). These workers emphasize participation (influenced by the community development workers) and a "strengths perspective" promoted by Weick. Social workers

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in this tradition view facilitating a client's acquisition of skills as a professional responsibility. These skills include: social skills, democratic skills, community proficiencies, programs, coping skills, negotiating, promoting competence, parenting, communication, self-observation, self-recording, self-monitoring, reduction of self-blame, expanding self-efficacy, and actualizing latent powers (Simon, 1994, pp. 159-161).

Clients with high self-esteem but without technical skills (planning, leadership, and decision-making) lack empowerment as do highly technically skilled people and groups who are not aware of their worth and identities. The workers who view themselves as "organizers" (more in the tradition of Alinsky), on the other hand, want to transfer skills quickly and then get out of the way. Both agree, however, that *workers need to see the structural issues or else they will fail in being empathic and supporting clients* (Simon, 1994, pp. 165-174). Consciousness-raising enables a shift, as Germaine and Gittman put it, "from an unrealistic sense of personal inadequacy to a recognition of the sociostructural determinants in a stressful situation" (pp. 175-176).

In turning to the *problem of paternalism*, Simon viewed paternalism as the *antithetical to empowerment practice*. "Empowerment-based social work practice conceives of paternalism as alien to its essential values and purpose...[The social worker] seeks neither to lift a client 'up' to the professional's level [the benefactor approach] nor to lead clients out to a promised land mapped out previously or independently by the professional [the liberator approach]" (Simon, 1994, p. 7). She defined paternalism as being well-intentioned, but violating the less powerful's known wishes; in other words, practice is paternalistic if it is "conducted on behalf of people without their consent" (p. 7). Paternalism can include: tokenism (that can be unintentional), reductionism (labeling), and alternative victimology (getting stuck in the client's victim role) (pp. 182-183).

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To root out paternalism, this tradition seeks to *build collaborative relationships, based on reciprocity, trust, building the clients' strengths, and "most important respect* [italics added]" (Simon, 1994, p. 8). The *obstacles* to building these types of relationships are viewed as the following *"power traps":* mystifying one's skill base, distancing "against responding directly to a client's expressed need and against answering a client's questions about the professional's life," claiming equality of power in the relationship, and finally, the desire to feel superior (that can work in collusion with less powerful's feelings of inferiority).

Simon's last two points directly address critical issues in this inquiry and deserve further explanation. First, on the issue of *claiming that the social worker and client are equal:*

> The client and worker would be utopian fools to seek an equality of power...[instead they are] wise to pursue "equal moral agency.. [where] both endorse the equality of dignity and existential human worth of each while simultaneously acknowledging the imbalance of power and authority between them in their agency-based relationship. (Simon, 1994, p. 12)

And second, on the issue of addressing the *more powerful's presence* in the encounter:

> Social workers who treasure empowerment...have as much psychological work to do as their clients." [They need to] deconstruct unconscious proclivities toward psychic imperialism thru a daily and ongoing process of self-reflection. This ongoing excavation of self is 'a progressive obsession,' [quoting Freire] *the aim of which is to bring closer together one's intentions and one's actions as a professional helper* [italics added]. (Simon, 1994, p. 13)

This tradition, like others in this group of discourses within the participatory dialogue, skills, and action interpretation, values "dialogue conducted in a mutually respectful manner" to foster an environment where challenges can emerge between the clients and the worker, an atmosphere that fosters give and take (Simon, 1994, pp. 21-23).

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To increase social worker awareness of paternalistic practices, Simon developed a *"self-inventory" that a two-way empowerment way of being can build on: First, when listening check if you are discounting other's ideas and pushing for agreement without getting the client's alternatives; are you responsive to feedback and able to learn from it?; are you using special language of the social worker?; are you feeling protective of the client, underestimating the client's ability and overestimating your own?; and are you focused on the client's strengths or problems?* [italics added]. (Simon, 1994, p. 188).

I appreciate Simon's work and will build on her efforts in this thesis. Where I differ, however, is Simon's view that paternalism can be rooted out, excised from everyday practice. Because of inequalities in power and status, paternalism is possible even for the most aware practitioners. The key is to have a system where practitioners can recognize this (as Simon stated in her "self-inventory"), but more importantly a system where feedback from the less powerful about the paternalistic practices are able to be heard and disrespectful practices transformed. While she mentioned that workers need to be responsible and learn from feedback, *why this process is so hard is not addressed.* I believe that dialogue and reflection are not enough: Both the more and less powerful need to become aware of the hidden background dimensions, including more of the desires like the desire for superiority that Simon mentioned, and how they affect day-to-day practice to address paternalism at a deeper level.

Participatory Development, Grassroots Development

The local and international development practitioners adhering to a more collective interpretation, known as participatory development, grassroots development and people-centered development, place social justice, human dignity, self-determination at the center.

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For some, the analysis of structural inequality and action to transform unjust relations is the principal mission. These practitioners criticize the individual empowerment efforts, for example, women in development (WID) projects and programs that fail to address inequality (sexism). WID programs continue the status-quo gender roles setting up stereotyped programs and focus only on women without bringing in men to a discussion of gender inequality. Their alternative is more of a Gender and Development (GAD) approach that puts discussions of why women are disempowered at the center, and the collective action needed to change unjust relations.

Others, (for example U.S. foundations and large NGOs that help smaller and intermediary NGOs seek to strengthen group capacity building), strive for "mutually respectful reciprocity" (Carroll, 1992). Carroll's study of intermediary NGOs articulated grassroots capacity building as the central goal for international NGOs and local membership organizations that seek project and program sustainability. Others stress the need for local institutional development and institutional capacity development at the more regional, national, and international levels (Bryant & White, 1982; Uphoff, 1986).

The different approaches within participatory development may include the feminist insights (including the nonrational methods and getting beyond the class variable to include multiple forms of domination), but others may not. What is noticeably weak in this field is the attention to the development practitioner's presence in the empowerment encounter as I have stressed throughout this thesis. Robert Chambers began this conversation in his book *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (Chambers, 1983) and Dennis Goulet (Goulet, 1987) discussed issues of "cognitive respect," of being vulnerable, but I believe much more attention is needed, not just to improve respect, but also to be effective.

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The Problem with Equal Dialogue Among Unequals

In summary, in the participatory dialogue, skills, and action interpretation, I appreciate Simon addressing the need to acknowledge power inequalities. Like feminist ethnographer Kamala Visweswaran, I too get nervous when "dialogical solutions" are proposed for encounters where there are unequal power relations (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 80). This is a critical point because it is this distinction that was the driving force behind my distinguishing a "two-way empowerment way of being" as distinct from "a participatory empowerment way of being." Empowerment encounters are recognized as more complex, and practitioners acknowledge and work with differences. By relying on participatory dialogue alone, I believe that even well-intentioned practitioners can unintentionally disrespect others triggering a vicious cycle of resentment and disempowerment. I do not believe a perfect alignment between intentions and practice is possible. It is impossible for us to transcend power relations and privilege. Therefore, the most I believe we can do is to try to minimize the gap being compassionate with ourselves and others as we learn along the way.

Sustained Encounters (Ellsworth)

Elizabeth Ellsworth, in her article, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy" (Ellsworth, 1989), gave another interpretation of empowerment at the collective level that I am shorthanding to "sustained encounters." In sustained encounters, the more powerful's (in her case, the teacher/professor/facilitator) presence *is* included in the encounter: her privilege, power, style, desires, etc. Ellsworth's critique of critical pedagogy[90] and her alternative vision of

[90]Critical pedagogy is also called "pedagogy of student voice", "pedagogy of empowerment", "radical pedagogy", pedagogy for radical democracy" and pedagogy of critique and possibility". Ellsworth

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context-specific practices in sustained encounters are the result of her struggle to put the critical pedagogy discourse into her everyday practice as a professor of an anti-racism course. Her goal was to transform existing social relations in her class encounters (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 299).

I believe that most of Ellsworth's critique goes beyond critical pedagogy and can be applied to the participatory dialogue interpretation outlined above. Ellsworth included the complexity of both the more and less powerful in encounters including their contradictory and multiply positioned selves and their murky awareness between consciousness and unconsciousness. She took issues of deception seriously and addressed how easy it is to reproduce relations of domination despite intentions. Because of these complexities (as I alluded to in sections on Foucault and Scott), Ellsworth took "dialogue" to task: She argued that power relations cannot be transcended in encounters.

Below, I will outline the rest of Ellsworth's critique of critical pedagogy discourse that is relevant for critiquing the participatory dialogue, skills, and action interpretation. Next, I will describe her alternative of context-specific practices within sustained encounters. And finally, I will analyze the commonalities and differences between "sustained encounters" and two-way empowerment."

Critique of Critical Pedagogy

In responding to the "empowerment for what" question, Ellsworth argued that critical pedagogy answers in an ahistorical, depolitical way using highly abstract language such as for "human betterment" and "transformative social action." This broad humanist definition becomes "a capacity to act effectively" failing to "challenge any identifiable

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believes that the "key assumptions, goals and pedagogical practices" in this literature including "empowerment", "student voice", "dialogue" and even "critical" are "repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298).

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social, or political position, institution or group" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 307). As a White, middle-class woman and professor developing an anti-racist course with a diverse group of students, Ellsworth found the critical pedagogy literature too abstract and utopian to sustain her in her day-to-day practice: The "shoulds" in the literature did not address the nitty-gritty of everyday encounters. Critical pedagogy discourse, based on rationalist assumptions, generated repressive myths when her class tried to put these concepts into practice. As a result, her class experienced an increase in racism, sexism, classism, Eurocentrism, and the type of "banking education" that Freire deplored.

Drawing on a feminist, poststructural approach, Ellsworth and her class "'worked through' and out of the literature's highly abstract language (myths)" of who they "should" be and what "should" be happening in the class, and focused instead on context-specific classroom practices. They did not debate about racism's existence, instead they wanted to see how racism worked day-to-day both in the class encounters and through interventions on campus (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 299). After reflecting on her experience with students, Ellsworth outlined what she believes are two significant problems with critical pedagogy: first, the voyeuristic relation of teachers in dialogue; and second, the instrumental role of the teacher's participation in dialogue.

Voyeuristic relation of teachers in dialogue: Teachers examine the voice of the students, but the teacher's own voice goes unexamined.

Ellsworth argued that a teacher-student relationship is voyeuristic when teachers examine the voice of students, but the teacher's own voice goes unexamined (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 312) (what I referred to earlier as putting the less powerful under the microscope while leaving out our own presence.) She argued that this approach to knowledge

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generation in current understandings and uses of "empowerment," "critical," "voice," and so on masks this contradiction—what I believe reflects the one-way gaze described by Foucault that also permeates the collective level of empowerment, even though it may not be as normalizing and individualizing as at the individual level. Ellsworth believes that this voyeurism results in several problems for the rational dialogue model of critical pedagogy discourse.

The first problem is the belief that rational dialogue will create an environment where all participants are equal (in their right to speak, criticize, etc., as Iris Marion Young advocated above). While critical educators acknowledge the existence of unequal power relations, they argue that participants should engage each other as fully rational subjects to work toward ending student oppression with conflict mediated by universal standards of language and reason. Yet what the professor brings to the encounter is rarely addressed: Students and professors enter encounters with differences of privilege, institutional power, and different positions about struggles of structural inequality (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 301). "[The professor] does not play the role of disinterested mediator on the side of the oppressed group."

As an Anglo middle-class professor, Ellsworth found she could not "unproblematically 'affiliate' with the social groups" students represented and interpret their experience to them. Her privileges brought to the encounter were put at risk by the demands of the students (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 309). As facilitators with our set of privileges, our learned and internalized oppressions, she asked how we can unproblematically bring to light subjugated knowledges. Institutional roles and power always give the teacher's statements different weight than those of her students (p. 312). And even as we bring to light one set of subjugated knowledges, it is possible to reproduce

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narratives that continue to oppress others (e.g., the example of reproducing racism, classism and heterosexism in the U.S. Women's Movement example) (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 307-308) . Therefore, in a society struggling with racism, sexism, classism, and so on, Ellsworth argued it is not possible nor desirable to hold democratic debate in its idealized form because it is not possible to include all the voices and give them "equal weight and legitimacy" (p. 302).

A second and related problem is the belief that teachers and professors are generic (or as I have referred to this earlier as "interchangeable"), rational "critical teachers" versus gendered, raced, classed, rational, and emotional teachers. Without seeing these differences, the default of generic "critical teacher," relies on the generic human underlying classical liberal thought based on the current mythical norm: a young, White, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, thin, rational man. Critical pedagogy maintains that underneath we are all the same (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 310) . Ellsworth maintained that her white skin and middle-class privilege will always constrain her understanding and experience of racism. Further, her experiences with sexism may share commonalities with others, but they are not the same or "readily transferable" (p. 308).

The differences described above at the structural level shape the non-rational, emotional (both conscious and unconscious) differences we also bring to the encounter. For example, Ellsworth noted that critical pedagogy often assumes that silence means "lost voice" or "lack of social identity from which to act as a social agent [that] betrays deep and unacceptable gender, race, and class biases" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 312).[91] Ellsworth argued that denying and refusing to talk depends on who you are talking to, in what context, your

[91]Visweswaran (1994) in feminist, postcolonial ethnography work found a similar bias among anthropologists—namely Bourdieu—who do not view silence as a marker of women's agency

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energy level on that day, and "conscious and unconscious assessments of power relations and safety of the situation" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 313). She learned her class was not a safe place. Talking about democratic dialogue did not make it that way either. They had to address the power dynamics inside and outside and to reflect on the group process. Because unjust power relations distort communication, she argued that "social agents are not capable of being fully rational and disinterested;...they are subjects split between the conscious and the unconscious and among multiple social positionings" (p. 315).

In her class encounters, there were many reasons people held back: fear of disclosing and being misunderstood or becoming too vulnerable; bad memories from speaking out before; resentment that some oppressions were marginalized at the expense of others and the guilt for feeling resentful; "confusion about levels of trust" with allies of other groups; "resentment by some students of color for feeling" expected to disclose more and educate the White students/professor about White middle-class privilege; and "resentment by White students for feeling that they had to prove they were not the enemy." For the professor to be a voyeur in the relation to students (by denying her presence of power, privilege, interpersonal style, and personal biography) only adds to the fear, resentment, and feelings of disempowerment.

Instrumental role of the teacher's participation in dialogue: to be more effective at bringing students up to teacher's understanding.

Ellsworth articulated the instrumental role of teachers, professors, and facilitators as a second and related problem with critical pedagogy discourse. Critical pedagogy's strategy is to get the teacher to be a learner of the student's reality and knowledge. The purpose of this process, however, is not to be empowered by the students personally or culturally but

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of an instrumental nature—that is, to learn how to be more effective as a teacher in bringing the student up to par with the teacher's understanding (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 306-307). This implies the teacher's understanding is superior to the student's (p. 307).[92]

Yet Ellsworth "did not understand racism better than [her] students did" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 308). Critical education literature recognizes that teachers have a lot to learn from students, but Ellsworth argued it does not address that there are some "things that [she] as a professor could *never know* about their experiences, oppressions and understandings of other participants in the class [italics added]." Because of the multiplicity of knowledges within the classroom that are contradictory and partial, she argued *that no one single voice—including the professor's—can be the origin and center of knowledge* [no one can have the "whole picture"]: "a recognition, contrary to all Western ways of knowing and speaking...a situation alleviated only in part by the pooling of partial, socially constructed knowledges" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 310).

Ellsworth's Alternative: To Work Toward Context-Specific Practices within Sustained Encounters

Ellsworth's alternative is to work toward context-specific practices within sustained encounters. *Her form of struggle is more conflict-oriented than what she views as critical pedagogy's harmony-oriented approach because she rejects voyeurism and instrumentalism and problematizes the voice and role of the facilitator.* In sustained encounters, power relations, privilege and relations of domination "can not be theorized away or fully transcended by utopian resolutions." Engaging in sustained encounters means entering with what you bring to the encounter and being willing to change

[92]This is her critique of Henry Giroux's "Radical Pedagogy."

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disrespectful practices and relative power and privilege (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 308). Ellsworth drew on Martin and Mohanty to encourage working together in coalitions where the unity is "chosen and struggled for—but not on the basis of sameness" (p. 315). Below I have grouped three of Ellsworth's conclusions and ideas for working toward sustained encounters in everyday practice

Include nonrational tools to deal with risk, fear and desire.

First, Ellsworth joins other feminists in both the liberal and radical traditions by including the nonrational to the rational. She argued that practitioners need to go beyond rationalistic tools to deal with trust, risk, fear, and desire that swirl around issues of identity and politics in order to "loosen deep-seated, self-interested investments in unjust relations" (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 313-314). One idea that emerged at the end of the class was to increase the social interaction outside of class to develop more of the trust and commitment needed for a safe space (p. 316).

A second idea came from discussions between Ellsworth and some members of her class at the end of the course. They discussed the possibility of what it would have been like if they had experimented with alternative groundrules and forms of communication besides dialogue (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 317). to address the often misrecognized silence and "teeth gritting" (p. 312). Critical pedagogies talk about student voices "sharing" their experiences and understanding of oppression to expand the possibilities of what it means to be human. Yet "the speech of oppositional groups is often, as described by bell hooks, a "talking back," a "defiant speech" constructed by communities of resistance for their survival (hooks, 1986/1987; Ellsworth, 1989, p. 310). In Ellsworth's class, the sub-groups within the larger group (what she referred to as

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"affinity groups") might have had the chance to "speak out and talk back"' about their experiences inside and outside of the encounter "while the rest of the class listened without interruption." She noted that, "this would have acknowledged that we were not interacting in class dialogue solely as individuals but as members of larger social groups with whom we shared common and differing experiences of oppression." Communication within the encounter was a form of "cross-cultural or cross-subcultural exchange rather than the free, rational, democratic exchange between equal individuals implied in critical pedagogy literature" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 318).

Address the complexity within the encounters themselves: More than oppressor versus oppressed, no one is off the hook to unlearn privilege.

A second component of Ellsworth's alternative is to not only acknowledge and work with the multiple forms of domination rather than the oppressor versus oppressed dichotomy, but to also work with complexity within the encounters themselves. One of the crucial problems with the critical pedagogy literature is that it makes an assumption of a unified group of the subordinated aligned against an outside subordinator. Ellsworth argued that the sharing and trusting of participants in this dialogue results in an "us" vs. "them." But this fails to confront the dynamics of subordination within classroom participants interpersonally and within multiple and contradictory positions of power and privilege (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 315).

Instead, working within sustained encounters that refuse to transcend power relations, Ellsworth's approach "leaves no one off the hook." Working with a historically marginalized group does not exempt facilitators from looking at their own privilege and issues. Everyone needs to educate themselves about the different forms of privilege, to

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unlearn privilege, and to work at changing disrespectful practices. This work in sustained encounters is relational, historically situated, culturally contexted, interdependent, and concrete because it depends on relations with the others in the specific encounters who bring their concrete experiences and privileges. The teacher, professor, or facilitator is not "the origin of what can be known and origin of what should be done" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 323). Instead, the teacher can work with students as an ally in the struggle rather than the one-up position of the savior (p. 317).

Embraces partial narratives and interdependency.

Ellsworth's third way to work toward contextually-specific practices in sustained encounters is to embrace partial narratives and our interdependency in coalitions. She and her class discovered that their task became not dialogue but building a "coalition among the multiple, shifting, intersecting, and sometimes contradictory groups carrying unequal weights of legitimacy" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 317). Informed by feminists such as Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, Trin T. Minh-ha, and Audre Lorde, Ellsworth believes that because all of us bring "particularities of historical context, personal biography, and subjectivities split between the conscious and the unconscious" to the encounter, each narrative is partial, valid, but not without response (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 305). Contextually-specific practices, she argued, are grounded in the unknowable. Partial narratives generated in sustained encounters are partial and partisan because they are "unfinished, imperfect, limited [and]... they project interests of 'one side' over others...not because they have broken the rules of thought of the ideal rational person by grounding their knowledge in immediate emotional, social, and psychic experiences of oppression" (p. 305).. Partial narratives need to be pooled and differences need to be recognized as different strengths brought to the

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encounter, citing Audre Lorde: "Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening" (Lorde, 1979, p. 112).

Experiences of difference rather than sameness share commonalities (e.g., her experience of sexism that is not "readily transferable"). For Ellsworth, the practice of communicating across differences means:

> If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that your knowledge of me, the world, and "the Right thing to do" will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances...in which students of difference can thrive. (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 324)

A Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being Builds on Ellsworth's Ideas for Sustained Encounters

Ellsworth's sustained encounters interpretation directly addressed many of the critical issues I have been concerned with as a practitioner and a researcher. I greatly appreciate her critique of critical pedagogy (voyeurism and instrumentalism) that strengthens my own critique of what I earlier called a participatory empowerment way of being. I also appreciate her focus on the empowerment encounter itself and to bring in the presence of the facilitator. Her alternative of sustained encounters offers much to build on: working with privilege and embracing partial narratives and interdependency through rational and nonrational processes and methods.

What I believe still needs to be addressed are the following four areas. First, to try and bring more attention to the current capitalist system that permeates the encounters. This is difficult. Ellsworth already brought in substantial context. Yet some of the critical feminist theorists (Young, Fraser) are able to anchor their analysis into this larger frame.

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A second area to be addressed further is the process of critical judgments. While knowledge may be unknowable given all the deceptions, partialness, and so on, we do make claims at given points in time. Further, critical judgment is needed during different debates. For example, giving militia groups and Holocaust deniers an equal platform with Holocaust scholars just because they disagree does not make their views "equally valid." A third area is to explore what the postcolonial scholars remind us of: Social location does not dictate your empowerment interpretation and political action. We may be more powerful but identify with the less powerful and vice versa (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 343). This needs to be added to the privilege work to understand our potential blindspots.

A fourth area is to further develop the interpersonal group processes, dynamics, and skills that Ellsworth hinted at. To do so, I believe we need to address the interaction communication systems that also operate in the background of empowerment encounters that may help to partially illuminate some of the dilemmas Ellsworth described.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I sketched selected interpretations of empowerment and the discourses that shaped them to locate two-way empowerment and a two-way empowerment way of being. This may help to better clarify some of the misunderstandings when we talk about empowerment in everyday practice. But again, talking about empowerment is still easier than being in the empowerment encounters themselves. Being in encounters requires further attention to the final hidden background dimension made visible by the case. In the next chapter, we explore interaction

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communication systems that help us to better understand vicious cycles and near double-binds.

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CHAPTER 9

INTERACTION COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

(Contradictions, Vicious Cycles And Double-Binds)

One cannot not communicate
(Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson, 1967, p. 51)

The final dimension often hidden in the background of empowerment encounters is our interaction communication (verbal and nonverbal) system. I briefly addressed this dimension at the beginning of the thesis in describing the second seminar, "Differences in Relational Power" (see Appendix 6, Flip 16 "Vicious Cycles, Contradictions, Double-Binds"). Interaction communication systems work is valuable for this inquiry because of the emphasis on the vicious cycles that can be triggered, by making it clear how easy it is to put the less powerful in a double-bind despite our intentions (communication can take place unintentionally, unconsciously, and when mutual understanding does not take place) (Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson, 1967, p. 49), and finally, by the attention to feedback cycles and the potential for changing disrespectful patterns. I believe increasing our awareness of how this interaction communication system operates in the background can help to partially illuminate the practices/intentions contradiction—especially in demystifying the contradiction itself, vicious cycles, and double-binds. I will address three characteristics: first, how communication is circular, part of a system, and creates a specific interpersonal context that constrains future communication; second, how the screening and selection process of communication ensures multiple realities in the encounter; and third, how mixed messages can end up as contradictions, vicious cycles,

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paradoxes, or double-binds, and how the more powerful have the advantage in framing these messages.

Interaction as Circular Feedback Loops Creating Specific Interpersonal Contexts

The first characteristic to help increase awareness is to recognize that interactional communication systems are circular. Empowerment encounters are organic, open systems. Rather than being a one-way causal process of the more powerful affecting the less powerful, the less powerful's response also affects the more powerful. For example, it is not the statement of the more powerful that is disrespectful, it is the statement and the response of the less powerful (resentment) that classifies a message. Responses are interdependent. Yet in complementary relationships (teacher-student, parent-child, development worker-community colleague, social worker-client, etc.), as opposed to symmetrical relationships (peers), it is "easy to lose the wholeness of the interaction and to break it up into independent, linear causal units" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, pp. 68-70). Empowerment encounters are therefore two-way systems generating empowerment or resentment, often both, rather than a one-way causal action.

Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson made the above assertions after studying the *Pragmatics of Human Communication*. They built on the work of Kurt Lewin, but rather than the focus on the situation, these theorists looked at interactional patterns, contradictions, paradoxes, and Gregory Bateson's work—notably the concept of the double-bind. Taking a systems approach, these theorists viewed interaction as feedback loops where each person affects and is affected by each other's behavior (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 31). During each encounter, these communication theorists believe that we generate a specific interpersonal context (again shaped by the hidden background). The

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exchange of messages can "narrow down the number of possible next moves" within the specific interpersonal context (that may include a vicious cycle or double-bind) restricting future interaction (pp. 131-132).

Screening and Multiple Realities

A second characteristic of interaction communication systems is screening and the multiple realities that operate in empowerment encounters as a result. In the empowerment encounters we are bombarded with what communication theorists estimate are 10,000 sensory impressions per second. In this "drastic selection process, each of us decides what is essential and what can be ignored (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 95). The critical point here is that the guiding mechanism or criteria for this selection process is, to a great extent, outside of our awareness in the hidden background dimensions. Communication theorists speculate, and I agree, that underneath many conflicts is the "unquestioned conviction that there is only *one* reality, the world as *I* see it, and that any view that differs from mine must be due to the other's irrationality or ill will" (p. 95) . A point that will be addressed further in the next section summarizing the hidden background of empowerment ecounters—notably in the related blindspots stemming from the desire for status.

From Contradictions to Double-Binds

Finally, the third characteristic of interaction communication systems is the potential for mixed messages and the ease with which the more powerful can frame messages. Framing messages as mixed messages can result in contradictions, vicious cycles, paradox, and putting the less powerful into a double-bind. Messages are the content, whereas signals (tone, posture, nonverbals) and metacommunication are messages

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about the messages. The content of our message is a small part of our communication. Signals frame what we are saying. For example, while I may say, "my goal is to work with you in a respectful way," my intonation and posture may signal condescension and a one-up position (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 118) . When we are in more powerful positions, it becomes easier to frame an encounter one way (our encounters are based on mutual respect), and then despite acting differently (disrespectful practices), insist that we are acting as we framed it (in a mutually respectful way) (Sluzki & Verón, 1976a).[93] These contradictions can trigger cycles of resentment that may lead to putting the less powerful in double-binds. (A related but different practice takes place when more powerful are able to more easily frame the less powerful, then resist any evidence outside of their imposed frame, putting them in what Goffman referred to as a frame-trap.)

Double-bind theory was introduced into the social science discourse by Gregory Bateson, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley and John H. Weakland in their 1956 article "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia." Since then, it has been used widely, in other fields including sociology, education, feminist and post-colonial theory and existential psychology. For this study, I believe double-bind theory can help to partially illuminate the core contradiction: day-to-day practices contradicting intentions to be respectful and effective despite intentions. (As described earlier in reviewing the second seminar, the ritual dimension that addresses our desire for status is also crucial.) First, let me clarify between the three terms often used interchangeably: contradiction, paradox, and double-bind.

Contradictions are situations displaying inconsistencies; one assertion contradicts the other. For example, some of my day-to-day practices are disrespectful and ineffective,

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[93] Monkeys playing together can frame a "nip" in play, rather than a "bite" in fighting. But they can not do what human beings can—that is, "to frame the encounter as play, then repeatedly bite furiously and insist that it is still just play."

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contradicting my intentions of being respectful and effective. What is critical to note here is that both messages are at the same logical level. In other words, they are both assertions rather than signals. Signals are of a higher type in that they frame or label messages relying heavily on nonverbals including posture, gesture, facial expression, intonation, and the context itself. Rather than just the content, signals help us discern how to interpret the messages (the interpersonal context that signals the mode: serious, sarcasm, joke, etc.) (Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1976, p. 6; Sluzki & Verón, 1976a, p. 330).

Paradoxes seem contradictory, but may not be; the contradiction, often involving the two different levels, dissolves within a new frame. Paradoxes also give an illusion of choice, but there really is no choice involved.

Double-binds, however, are different from both of the above. First, double-binds are unlike paradoxes in that the contradiction does exist (changing frames will not change the contradiction). Second, double-binds differ from contradictions because seeking clarification of the messages and, more importantly, of pointing out the contradiction are prohibited by the double-bind rules (Abeles, 1976, p. 118; Sluzki & Verón, 1976a, pp. 330-331; Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 213).

The double-bind experientially is an "unresolvable sequence of experiences." There is no way to move. Being in a double-bind situation involves the following: First, being in an intense relationship (with one or more people), where material, psychological, or ideological survival is at stake and it is crucial to accurately discriminate the messages communicated. Second, you are caught in this situation because the other person expresses two different types of messages (one the message itself, and the other a message about the message—in some cases, forms of retribution) and one message denies the other (mutually exclusive). Yet the third aspect is that you cannot try to make sense of the

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messages by commenting on them because that is using metacommunication, jumping outside of the frame of the situation, and this is prohibited as is withdrawing. Even though this is the one way out of the double-bind, you cannot make a metacommunicative statement (Bateson et al., 1976, pp. 6-8)[94] —that is , you cannot describe what you see happening.

What do the forms of retribution look like? In the case, I described in reviewing the second seminar one example of a vicious cycle that some of the teachers and students perceived as a near double-bind (see Appendix 6, Flip Chart 16, "Vicious Cycles, Contradictions, Double-Binds"). After unintentional disrespectful acts, comments, or looks generated a cycle of resentment, some of the teachers and students tried to respond to requests for feedback. But these requests were seen as a form of betrayal (due to our biased form of tracking exchanges, seen as taking more than giving), followed by indignation and in some cases, forms of retribution. The emotional betrayal response of "how could you?" is one form of retribution within the near double-bind situation. But, as I learned from communication theorists, there are others. A second is telling the less powerful how they should feel: "You should be happy and grateful"; in other words, you have no right to be feeling disrespected. Sadness is often associated with badness and ingratitude for all of the help and empowerment efforts. A third response that can be excruciating for the less powerful is to tell them, "Your feedback is off...your perception is distorted due to your emotional problems." A fourth response is for the more powerful to say nothing in the encounter, but to then treat the less powerful poorly thereafter in indirect

[94] Bateson et al.'s classic example is of a parent visiting her child in the hospital. The parent opens her arms to the child, but as the child approaches, the parent stiffens and conveys displeasure. Then the parent adds, "Don't be afraid of your feelings." The second message denies the first, so the child is unable to accurately interpret the communication. She must deceive herself to align with the parent's deception. The child is punished for discriminating accurately and punished for discrimination inaccurately: She is caught in a double-bind (Bateson et al., 1976, p. 13).

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ways. And finally, retribution can also mean being fired or having friendship and trust withdrawn. Communication theory makes clear what retribution can look like and why the fear of retribution drives many interactions.

Dealing with the double-bind type of situations includes two responses: One is to stay within the frame, take the abuse, and try to deal with the situation. A second response is to get distance, examine critically the rules of the situation, then reconstruct a new set of rules to deal with the experience—this includes leaving the situation (Sluzki & Verón, 1976a, p. 332) In many double-bind situations, communication theorists argue that an outside intervention is needed to change the rules out of the frame.

There is a substantial double-bind literature that strives to distance itself from casual uses of the term (Sluzki & Ransom, 1976; Sluzki & Verón, 1976a. 1976b). It can get confusing, especially in trying to sort out the differences, for example, between paradoxical injunctions and double-binds. But the double-bind concept has emerged as a thread throughout the key literature of this study. I believe that in empowerment encounters, there are what I would call "near double-binds." In these near double-binds, the less powerful can often more easily "leave the field." A second difference is that in some cases, the less powerful do not have to respond to requests (e.g., "I want your feedback"). Yet withholding the feedback, feeling resentful, hurt, and misunderstood can also be excruciating.

One final point about double-binds: Mixed messages that result in double-binds are often related to definitions of the "self." This is because "interactional systems are two or more communicants in the process of or at the level of defining the nature of their relationship" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 121). Each seeks to define the nature of the relationship. Each puts forth their definition of self that is either confirmed or rejected

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("you are wrong," limited recognition or misrecognition) or disconfirmed ("you do not exist," nonrecognition) (p. 85). When symmetrical relationships break down, the result is often rejection, but when the complementary type of relationship breaks down (between the more and less powerful), if real rigidity sets in, then the less powerful is disconfirmed. For some in the more powerful positions, they can only be themselves when the more powerful play their specific complementary role (p. 108).

Conclusion

In conclusion, what are the implications for a two-way empowerment way of being? Gutierrez noted some social workers are struggling with role confusion as they try to move into an empowerment way of being that draws on client's strengths. I wonder if some of us driven by the need to stay in the one-up position are sending a mixed message in empowerment encounters—for example, "My goal is that this encounter will help you to empower yourself," framed by signals sending a different message: "Be empowered based on my standards" and "be empowered but don't become more powerful than me."[95] The more likely scenario, I believe, is the one I have outlined throughout this thesis: An unintentional disrespectful remark setting off a vicious cycle of resentment can intensify into a near double-bind despite practitioners who are working hard to be respectful and effective.

For practitioners who do not want to increase the mystification and confusion in their communication with colleagues that can unintentionally put the less powerful in what

[95]For example, while coordinating the GIST Project (Grassroots Ideas for Self-Strengthening), I met an NGO leader who was concerned about grassroots managers communicating and training each other directly. His response: "They can't do that, they need us." He paused and then added, "but then what will we do?"

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R.D. Laing called an "untenable position," where they "cannot move without a catastrophe" (Laing, 1961), what are the alternatives? Communication theorists urge us to increase our awareness of these systems and distorted patterns, and then to choose as existential beings more respectful communication systems—for example, to design continuous feedback systems. They also encourage us to recognize how interaction communication systems are open systems, that each participant in the empowerment encounter comes with different constraints because each is also a participant in other communication systems that are both horizontal and vertical (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 123). (See Appendix 6, Flip 12, "Differences in Relational Power.")

Interaction communication systems theory, however, is not enough. In my work at the school, understanding the vicious cycles would not have been possible with communications theory alone. I also needed to understand the ritual dimensions of empowerment encounters that these theorists only refer to briefly. Therefore, I believe empowerment practitioners interested in lessening the practices/intentions contradiction and moving toward a two-way empowerment way of being need to be *very* aware of the traces of our evolutionary history (our desires for status and recognition intertwined with deception), our different interpretations of power and empowerment, our differences in status, power and privilege, and our different styles and histories. In the next chapter, interested practitioners can learn about working with the hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters to increase respect and effectiveness. Recognizing and working with the hidden background, we can be open to learning, and to being changed, while working with people who have less power and status. Further, as Maria demonstrated, we can transform draining vicious cycles (the focus of this chapter) into energizing learning cycles and encourage two-way empowerment.

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CHAPTER 10

WORKING WITH THE HIDDEN BACKGROUND OF EMPOWERMENT ENCOUNTERS

(Theoretical Summary)

In this chapter, I present the partially illuminated hidden background of empowerment encounters; a theoretical summary. Despite our conscious intentions, if we leave out the hidden background of empowerment encounters we can reproduce disrespectful and ineffective practices. Rather than encouraging two-way empowerment, we can be less than effective and disrespectful, trigger vicious cycles and put the less powerful into near double-binds that drain away crucial energy from social change work.

This chapter has three sections. First, I present the different hidden background dimensions (see Figure 10 on the next page). I explain how each dimension, if not recognized and worked with, can affect empowerment encounters. Then, in the second section, I summarize how disrespectful and ineffective practices can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. Finally, I offer ideas from the literature for practitioners to work with the hidden background toward a two-way empowerment way of being to increase respect and effectiveness.

The Hidden Background Dimensions of Empowerment Encounters

If we are unaware of the hidden background, we can misrecognize the empowerment encounter, ourselves, and our less powerful colleagues. Yet practitioners

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The Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters

Significant Dimensions Include:

- How Encounters are Historically Situated and Culturally Contexted;
- The Desire For Status, Intertwined with Deception, and The Umbilical Cord of Privilege and Habitus;
- The Desire for Recognition;
- Power
  - Power Interpretations and Discourses
  - Disciplinary Power and the Normalizing Gaze
  - Reproduction of and Resistance to Power Relations;
- Empowerment Interpretations;
- Interaction Communication Systems;
- Interpersonal Style, Unique Biography, and Values/Affiliation.

Figure 10. The hidden background of empowerment encounters.

who increase their awareness can lessen the contradiction of practices/intentions and encourage two-way empowerment.

Again, I believe we are free yet limited (as discussed in chapter 6). In transforming practices, I do not believe we can transcend the background to a utopian empowerment encounter. My hope is that practitioners and scholars can critically assess the hidden background analysis (using mental baskets of: useful "as is", useful with changes, and not useful) and find ways of applying it to their practice and theory. This critical assessment is especially significant for the many tendencies introduced in this chapter that have exceptions. Each encounter is unique, depending upon the participants, context, purpose, and so on, and the results of analysis will produce a specific hidden background (as seen in

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the case study). The point is to invite interested practitioners to take a first step in partially illuminating and potentially lessening the practices/intentions contradiction through increased awareness.

Historically Situated, Culturally Contexted, Geographically Located

Within empowerment encounters, the more and less powerful work together against a historical backdrop created through the marginalization of different groups in the U.S. through colonialism, and through current U.S. hegemony in economic (the multilaterals, the private banks, and multinational corporations), political, and cultural globalization. Intercultural empowerment encounters are initiated by the more powerful institutions primarily to empower the less powerful, not to increase mutual understanding. These encounters, therefore, are "crucially constituted by power" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 52). The ideal communication models of Habermas and Gadamer that see power as a distortion are difficult to apply directly to empowerment encounters where the conversation is initiated and tends to be maintained by the more powerful practitioner (p. 51). As I quoted Calhoun earlier: ***"Power is not simply a distortion of the conversation, it is its occasion."***

Therefore, the historical dimension affects empowerment encounter practices in two ways. First, without awareness of the historical dimension, those of us in the more powerful positions may *distort assessments of our own and the less powerful's strengths and weaknesses.* We can inflate our personal strengths and ability as members of currently strong nation-states and have difficulty recognizing the less powerful's strengths (reinforcing a similar problem due to our desire for recognition and our umbilical cord of privilege). A second way the historical dimension affects everyday practices is in our

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interaction through *expressions of deference and demeanor, the less powerful may resent the more powerful for being unaware or unwilling to get familiar with the historical context, and withholding on both sides due to lack of trust based on previous experiences.* Unawareness of the historical dimension may intensify the practices/intentions contradiction and may result in misrecognizing both how we are currently being empowered and opportunities to be empowered.

Desire for Status, Umbilical Cord of Privilege, and Habitus

I initially described the desire for status within the chapter on the umbilical cord of privilege. I then elaborated on the desire for status in describing the seminars at the school—notably the second seminar that draws on social psychology and evolutionary psychology, to understand why it is so difficult to respond versus react to critical feedback-up from the less powerful. Below I review the analysis at length (with some additional research) because of this dimension's central and crucial effects on empowerment encounters. First, I will review the core deception and hypocrisy. Then, I will describe the distortions in assessing behavior and problems due to our bias toward the self. Next, I will analyze the distortions in the monitoring of exchanges. This is followed by a review and summary of the umbilical cord of privilege's three effects: the invisible/NEON effect, distortions in assessing strengths and weaknesses, and ethnocentrism and paternalism. And finally, I will review the problems in language, especially the special language of the professional in the helping professions, that conceals inconsistencies from all of the above.

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Core Deception and Hypocrisy

One of the central, hidden dimensions in the background of empowerment encounters is the desire for status. Across cultures, people are treated differently based on their status (however culturally defined) (Wright, 1994, pp. 259,261,414n.4-5). *Because treatment tends to be geared to status, people will perform in encounters to ensure their status is maintained or increased* (Goffman, 1959b). The moral rules and rituals that bind us to society are our desire for dignity, pride, and *respect* and our avoidance of shame, disdain, and *disrespect*. Again, each of these vary by culture and personality (Goffman, 1967, pp. 43-44). The interactional work, or what Goffman referred to as face-work, to maintain or improve our place in the ritual order includes our demeanor (posture, discretion, self-control) and in the giving and withholding of deference to others (Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. xviii). Even brief interactions in encounters—for example, passing in the hallway—are ritual, not just interpersonal (Goffman, 1956), as many of us have experienced.

In our striving for status, I believe there is a core deception and a core hypocrisy that helps to partially illuminate why our practices can contradict our intentions. The ***core deception*** is that *we tend to deceive ourselves in order to deceive others for purposes of attaining and maintaining status*. We need to be able to impress upon ourselves and others through our performance that we are who we claim to be (Goffman, 1959b; Wright, 1994), and that what we are saying is credible. Deception is part of our repertoire as it is of many other animals. Being able to deceive others through deft performances, especially when we are at risk, is a capacity we need to have available (Lerner, 1993).

Yet this desire for status and the capacity for deception strengthens our capacity to *denounce others while downplaying, hiding, or denying our own faults.* This *core*

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hypocrisy is not a new observation. As I mentioned earlier, the Buddha put it succinctly 2,500 years ago, *"the fault of others is easily perceived, but that of one's self is difficult to perceive* [italics added]" (Burtt, 1982, p. 65). Sage wisdom addresses how desire is intertwined with deception; *how it is much easier to talk about being respectful than to practice respect day-to-day*—especially when we have developed a keen sensitivity to detect flaws in others we consider rivals. Some social theorists have also recognized "the interplay of manipulation and morality" (Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. xiv) as part of our existence as social beings. Goffman argued that *"universal human nature is not a very human thing* [italics added]," (Goffman, 1967, p. 45), and one admirer of evolutionary psychology adds that "to be moral animals, we must realize how thoroughly we aren't" (Wright, 1994, p. 344).

The core deception and hypocrisy plant the seed of ***bias toward the self*** that can affect interaction and assessments and our ability to recognize how we are and can be empowered: in other words, our openness. Social psychologists Aronson and Lerner both argued that as social beings, we strive to maintain and enhance our self-esteem and public image (Aronson, 1972, p. 162; Lerner, 1980, p. 112). This leads to perceiving ourselves more central to events than we really are, the "illusion of control" (Aronson, 1972, p. 163), and to taking credit for the good and denying the bad (p. 166). *"We need to see ourselves as good and sensible people," but we also need to see how our desire for status "frequently leads us into performing actions that are neither good nor sensible" in certain situations* [italics added] (p. 169). Again, as I said about deception above, these biases toward the self are also needed in our repertoire to help us overcome adversity, achieve, and improve our mental health. But these biases toward the self have major costs: a distorted picture of ourselves, empowerment encounters, and the world (p. 169).

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Bias Toward the Self in Assessing Behavior and Problems

Actor-observer bias.

The first tendency is to *assess the other's behavior as we observe it without giving them the benefit of the doubt by taking into consideration history or circumstances. Yet we tend to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt in assessing our own behavior.* This is known as the actor-observer bias (Aronson, 1972, p. 160). When we are the actor, we take for granted our contextualizing, but when we observe someone else, we focus on their immediate behavior. In social psychological experiments, Edward Jones and Richard Nisbett found that when we experience bad luck, we attribute it to the environment, but when the same problem happens to someone else, we attribute it to the weakness of that person's character (Lerner, 1980, p. 219).

Fundamental attribution error "not like us" person vs. situation.

This leads into the second and related problem: *We tend to assess the other's behavior—especially the less powerful's behavior—without addressing the background dimensions of the encounter.* We attribute the other's behavior to personality, disposition, capacity level, and attitudes (Aronson, 1972, p. 156), and sometimes to their lack of interpersonal style or communication skills, while we ignore the power of the situation, social roles, and other dimensions of the hidden background (pp. 157-158). (The less powerful, however, can do the reverse—in studies, girls have taken more blame then boys rather than bringing in the situation; depressives can also be exceptions as well as others who have fallen into a more victim mentality.) (p. 297).

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The agency representative I described earlier who told me that the grassroots leaders were "not like us," the in-group (Aronson, 1972, p. 141). of more powerful practitioners, attributed the grassroots leaders' timid behavior and poor work performance to their inabilities, personalities, and "their" nature. But "people who do inferior things are not necessarily inferior" (Aronson, 1972). This primitive, self-serving, attribution process tends to color who we blame for what in the service of making us look (public image) and feel (self-esteem) good (Lerner, 1980, p. 111). After blaming the less powerful, to reduce our guilt, we may need to paint them as "less than," because being "less than" explains their situation for those of us who have a "desire for a just world"—that is, a belief that people get what they deserve (p. 55).

The actor-observer bias and the fundamental attribution error are the knee-jerk reactions for explaining behavior and problems. *What is missing are empathy and attempts to get in each others' shoes.* The fundamental attribution error is a tendency exacerbated by power but not only committed by the more powerful. The less powerful can also make assessments unaware of the more powerful's constraints.

Bias Toward the Self: Distorted Monitoring of Exchanges.

We remember who owes us, but we tend to forget who we owe.

A second way the desire for status affects our assessment of empowerment encounters is in the monitoring of exchanges (how much we give and how much others take). We tend to remember who owes us (time, money, ideas, support, etc.), but we forget who we owe. This tracking system tends to be biased toward the self. *This may be related to problems around recognizing the other* (Fanon, 1967; 1986 Benjamin, 1988),

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and recognizing interaction work (Fishman, 1990). We can greatly anger and frustrate our less powerful colleagues by making a point, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, that they owe us (thanks to all of our hard work in the empowerment encounters), and at the same time not recognize how we owe them, how their efforts led to our personal and to our collective empowerment.

We assess taking>giving inaccurately leading to feelings of betrayal, indignation, retribution.

Distortions in the monitoring of exchanges can also lead to a further distortion: believing that the less powerful are taking more they are giving when that is not the case. Because tracking systems tend to be biased toward the self, how much others have given tends to be downplayed or misrecognized. Nevertheless, the "taking more than giving" distorted assessment can trigger feelings of betrayal, moral indignation, and impulses to carry out retribution that affect the interactions within empowerment encounters. Because status positioning has been (in our evolutionary history) and continues to be so crucial, the monitoring of exchanges is scrutinized with an acute sensitivity for perceived betrayal and a tendency to discourage all exploitation emphatically through moral indignation (Wright, 1994). Our indignation also rises with groups whose interests conflict with the groups we belong to—when our norms are violated, we want to see justice because, often unconsciously, the way our culture lives is the "right" way, and we become indignant if violated (Lerner, 1980, p. 10). In social psychological experiments, these feelings were strong even when the groups were assigned arbitrarily (Aronson, 1972).

While slights to dignity, and exploitation also summon up these legitimate feelings, we need to be aware of *how easily we can get hooked based on a biased, lopsided*

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assessment. Once we are triggered, our distorted claims of betrayal, indignation, and retribution can be devastating to our less powerful colleagues. A vicious cycle can begin to gyrate with both sides increasingly frustrated, resentful, and disempowered *despite* their intentions to work respectfully and effectively together, as we saw in the case.

Umbilical Cord of Privilege: Invisible/NEON, Reproducing Disrespectful and Ineffective Ways of Being

The umbilical cord of privilege can affect the encounter in three ways.

Invisible/NEON and habitus.

The first way is a powerful distortion: Being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging or privilege widens the contradiction between our practices and our intentions to be respectful and effective. The first effect, as I outlined earlier in the thesis, is that we tend to focus on the areas where we are disprivileged (e.g., gender), pointing to the privilege of those one rung above us (e.g., male privilege), while being unaware of or uncomfortable acknowledging the other dimensions where we are privileged (e.g., class, race, education, etc.). In any dimension, "disempowered" and "empowered" are relational (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 48). Without experiencing poor treatment directly, understanding disprivilege is more difficult (Aronson, 1972, p. 298). Yet when we complain about the privilege of others, but fail to recognize or acknowledge our own, this stirs up deep resentment. Our privilege may be invisible to us, but it is in NEON to those with less privilege in different dimensions.

Because our ways of embodying privilege are absorbed unconsciously, and become "second nature," we can misrecognize our habitus: our ways of thinking, feeling,

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and interacting that embody our privilege. Our embodied privilege (habitus) can dispose us to unintentionally make insensitive remarks, and to feel natural doing some things, and not others. Further, we can misrecognize our norms as universals, our standards as THE standards (when they were acquired), and then use them to classify and judge. This is the power of the habitus. Rather than our consciously learned rules and principles, aspects of our way of being are so ingrained we often think, feel, and interact without awareness. When we work with the less powerful, we are drawing on some conscious principles, but by necessity, we also have to shoot from the hip; we have to improvise in our thinking, feeling, and interacting. In improvising, it is easy to reproduce ingrained ways of being without recognizing our behavior because they are second nature.

Understanding where we are privileged is a challenge. But making visible our ways of being (how we think, feel, and interact) that are disrespectful and ineffective, is *much* more difficult. In fact, I believe it is so difficult that we often need a tape recorder, videocamera, or consistent critical feedback-up to make these visible. ***If we do not see our privilege in different dimensions, how can we see privilege embodied in our ways of being?*** The tendency is to misrecognize both privilege and habitus contributing to the related two effects below.

Distort assessment of both the more and less powerful's strengths/weaknesses.

The second effect on encounters of not recognizing our privilege is central to this thesis: We can distort the assessment of both the more and less powerful's strengths and weaknesses. Cushioned by our privilege, we can underestimate or be blind to how tough it is for the less powerful (logistics, day-to-day poor treatment—often due to racism, classism, etc.). By not recognizing our privilege, we inflate our personal competency and

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then ask why the less powerful are "not like us." Similar to the actor-observer bias, this distorted assessment is profoundly disrespectful and generates tremendous resentment in empowerment encounters—especially playing down or ignoring day-to-day poor treatment. Finally, when we do not recognize our privilege, we may not recognize how resourceful they are: their capacity to get things done despite what they are up against (logistics, poor treatment), what they know that we do not know, what they are better at than we are).

Ethnocentrism/paternalism.

The third way being unaware of our different dimensions of privilege affects empowerment encounters is that we can fall into ethnocentrism and paternalism (both the opposite of empowerment): In areas where we are privileged, we may assess differences of the less privileged as deviations that need to be brought "up" to our more privileged group's standards and norms. As Young (1994) and Fraser (1989) made clear, it is easy for the privileged group's standards to infiltrate "universal" norms. As a result, we can unintentionally reproduce relations of domination generating disrespect and resentment.

Goffman demonstrated how often well-intentioned helping professionals (in his case, professionals working in asylums) treated people, disrespectfully and sometimes cruelly (Goffman, 1959a). One explanation for this contradiction is Lerner's' "desire for a just world" theory. He argued that we often unintentionally use our own standards as the default standards—the "right" way to work and live. Assessments of what is deserved in our "just world" reflects our norms and those of our culture (Lerner, 1980, p. 15). Within our norms, the in-group/out-group phenomenon applies: Those similar to us have greater worth, and those who are "like us" deserve more than those who are *"not like us"*

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(Aronson, 1972, p. 141; Lerner, 1980, pp. 16-17). As a result, we become angry, indignant, and outraged when we perceive that universal norms are being violated (p. 10). More visceral than a cognitive dissonance approach, Lerner argued that we tend to look for justice based on our own 'just world' criteria (pp. 37-38).

Language (winning vs. truth, frame-traps)

A fourth way that desire for status affects interaction and assessments is through language. To hide all of the inconsistencies and hypocrisy behind the lopsided assessments, the disrespectful interaction, and the feelings of resentment, betrayal, indignation, and urges for retribution, our language and bodies often work as press agents both verbally and nonverbally. The goal, especially when we are triggered, is to win, not "the truth." In order to present the more idealized self within encounters, Goffman noted that we need to conceal a certain amount of inconsistencies (Goffman, 1959b, p. 41).

We have an intense motivation to justify ourselves; we strive to be right. At the same time, we need to see ourselves as good and sensible—for example, working toward intentions of being respectful and effective (Aronson, 1972, pp. 23,177-182). Jones and Kohler, researchers in social psychology, found subjects *tended to remember the plausible arguments agreeing with their own position and the implausible arguments agreeing with the opposing position* (Aronson, 1972, p. 183). To maintain the positive self-concept, we will reduce dissonance—especially when the self-concept is threatened (e.g., that I am respectful, that I empower people and I don't dominate others, etc.) (p. 202).

Further, if we did not intend to hurt someone, there is a *tendency to deny others' legitimate feelings of disrespect, anger, resentment, and disempowerment:* We may think,

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"I did not *intend* to hurt you so you should not be upset [italics added]" (p. 397). This blocks learning opportunities through critical feedback-up.

Another way of ignoring legitimate claims and feelings of the less powerful is through the use of what Edelman referred to as the "special language of the helping professions." In professional journals, Edelman checked for justification of power, status differentials, and authority. He found that portraying a power relationship as a helping one enabled "linguistic flexibility and potency" well beyond simple deception (Edelman, 1974, pp. 297-298). This special language works to smooth out the bumps of inconsistency; and *when helping professionals are dealing with issues that bring in status and power, "distortion and misperception are virtually certain to occur"* (p. 296). It is language that, while not being viewed as political, can structure "perceptions of status, authority, merit, deviance and the causes of social problems" (p. 296).

Using the special language, the less powerful may be assessed and categorized (under the microscope) based on the professionals' assumptions rather than their behavior (Edelman, 1974, p. 295). In other words, the behavior of the less powerful is often assessed based on who they are, their status, versus what they do (a point emphasized by many of my colleagues in the less powerful, lower status positions and by Maria in the case) (p. 308). Professionals may seek to confirm categories and ignore counterevidence with the quest for status fueling the interpretation (p. 300). As Maria pointed out, the tendency to ask status questions and then label can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being.

This phenomenon was referred to by Goffman as a "frame-trap"—the frame is reinforced by whatever is communicated thru the frame (Goffman, 1974, p. 480). Social power is a condition of persistent misframing. People with little social power have little

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power to frame events or to combat interpretive frameworks applied to them (p. 445). Certain kinds of power generate persistent misframing—for example, assessing competence, protests are discounted and add to the misframing; and assessing character, the least anchored to hard reality, can easily lead to frame-traps where nothing can get through (Goffman, 1959a), and "the character we impute to another allows us to discount his criticisms and other professions of belief, transforming these expressions into 'what can only be expected' of someone of that character" (Goffman, 1974, p. 482). For example, Janeway's book, *The Powers of the Weak*, uses "the weak" to demonstrate how the less powerful are framed by the more powerful and can find themselves in frame-traps. She hammered in the point that as long as the more powerful are the ones doing the defining, the less powerful are tagged with a name that signifies stigma (Janeway, 1980, p. 304).

In summary, the desire for status affects interaction through the core deception (self-deception to deceive others better) and hypocrisy (faulting others, hiding our own faults). The bias toward the self strongly distorts assessments of behavior, blame, and the monitoring of exchanges that can lead to feelings of betrayal, indignation, and urges for retribution (the vicious cycle leading to a near double-bind). The umbilical cord of privilege affects interaction and assessment by not seeing our own privilege, but seeing the privilege of others in NEON, by strongly affecting our assessment capacity of both the more and less powerful's strengths and weaknesses (adding to the historical dimension effect), and by distorting assessments leading to ethnocentrism and interacting in a paternalistic way.

Finally, the desire for status affects interaction through language enabling us to hide all of these inconsistencies as we push to win, to prove we are right, and that we are good people and respectful practitioners. If others feel disrespected, but we did not intend to be

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disrespectful, their feelings may not be seen as legitimate. Through language, we may assess the less powerful based on their status rather than their behavior and potentially put them in "frame-traps" (an important addition to the fundamental attribution error where we base assessments on behavior rather than the power of the situation and the background). All of these distortions can intensify the practices/intentions contradiction, and we can misrecognize how we are and can be empowered while working with less powerful colleagues.

Desire for Recognition (Problem in Recognizing the Other, Biased Exchange)

The desire for recognition affects empowerment encounters in four ways. First, as Benjamin noted, by distorting our assessment and *denying our dependency on other less powerful for recognition*—for example, that our work is legitimate, that we are respectful. This affects interaction because we may not recognize the interaction work of the less powerful or misrecognize it as their nature as Fishman described.

A second way the desire for recognition affects encounters is in *distorting the assessment of the less powerful's independence.* In interaction, we may misrecognize or not recognize the less powerful's ideas, critical feedback-up, the existence of a hidden transcript, and their capacity to exercise power.

The third way the desire for recognition affects encounters is by *distorting the assessment of the less powerful's differences as "less than" (ethnocentrism).* Strengths are misrecognized or not recognized. Instead of recognizing differences, we may desire the less powerful to give us a positive reflection of our hard work, rather than full recognition including critical feedback-up—especially if we are volunteers or are low-paid. As

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researchers in social psychology have found, we desire to confirm our beliefs and control the outcome (Aronson, 1972).

And finally, a fourth affect on empowerment encounters is *misrecognizing our commonalities with the less powerful.* This includes the capacity to be respectful, effective, and to receive critical feedback as well as the capacity to be disrespectful and less than effective. It is unfair to withhold critical feedback (as I discovered) and to hold the less powerful to a higher standard in terms of being respectful. Subtle forms of paternalism can emerge here.

If we are focused on self-assertion and neglect the recognition of the other, we will neglect how the less powerful are empowering us, how they are capable (more capable in some areas), and how they achieve in different areas outside the encounter. Instead, we may falsely attribute their achievements to our efforts. And as Laing noted, when a self cannot perceive otherness, she will expect gratitude because she will believe the other's capacity is due to her. The more the other achieves, is empowered, the more she has been given and should be grateful (Laing, 1961), a cycle I have seen in empowerment encounter that works both in the U.S. and internationally.

Power

Interpretations of Power

Power affects everyday interaction and assessments within empowerment encounters in three ways. The first way power shapes interaction and can distort assessments is through the interpretation of power the practitioner draws on that affects her day-to-day practice. Some practitioners fear power (fear that power corrupts those who exercise it or their knowledge, fear of retribution, cultural prohibitions), others deny power

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because of their commitment to egalitarian relations and empowerment, and still others, including many feminists, redefine the paradoxical nature of power to "power-to" by excising the "power-over"; power becomes a capacity, an ability rather than a relationship where there are conflicting interests (where everyone is not equal).

Hiding, denying, or redefining power builds in deception from the start and affects assessment by misrecognizing or not recognizing both the use and abuse of power, and neglects developing the capacity to distinguish the difference. Unawareness of, or uncomfortableness acknowledging power can also lead to misrecognizing the less powerful's resistance to power—for example, Willis' lads' rude behavior was misrecognized as individual rude behavior rather than the result of a disrespectful comment, look, or practice. Critical feedback-up (resistance) that could help us lessen our practices/intentions contradiction is not only ignored, but may be misunderstood and even punished.

Power, like empowerment, is interpreted individually and psychologically, or more collectively and politically (including social influence and making definitions of reality stick). This affects the choice of empowerment processes, methods, and practices.

How the nature of power is interpreted also radically affects practices. Practitioners who view power as one-way (responded to with cheerful obedience as Janeway, 1980 would say), rather than others who view power as an active two-way relationship will interact differently and will assess the interaction differently. The one-way interpretation can misrecognize the less powerful's active participation and again, may potentially punish them for it. The key for two-way power is in monitoring the exchanges in the relationship itself. This is to keep each other accountable, but as we saw above, this demands extra work given our bias in tracking exchanges.

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If practitioners view the nature of power as only that which is produced in the interaction, they can distort the existing power of practitioners, institutions, and systems. Claims that "everyone has power, why don't they use it?" from the more powerful ignore the different weighting and how it is easier to exercise power with a "thick" umbilical cord of privilege than one that is thin and weak. Not recognizing the less powerful's capacity to exercise both creative and coercive power, however, can be paternalistic rather than treating the less powerful as maximally human. Finally, if power is viewed only as something that can be exercised intentionally, it takes the practitioner off the hook for disrespectful practices.

Disciplinary Power and the Normalizing Gaze

A second way power affects practices in empowerment encounters is through the discourses we draw on that are permeated by the disciplinary power-knowledge regime. As a result, the asymmetrical, one-way, normalizing gaze greatly distorts assessment of the less powerful: Only they are put under the microscope, made visible, and subjected to standards we are not; only they are viewed as needing help, lacking competencies, and needing to be empowered; and only they are emphasized to be transparent. The gaze affects practices and creates more power for the more powerful through individualizing visibility (detailed cases). The gaze distorts assessment by believing that our standards are "the" standards, and then through normalizing judgment to get the less powerful to conform to our rules and norms. The normalizing gaze affects interaction and assessment by *individualizing and psychologizing the less powerful's problems and their solutions.* In sum, the normalizing gaze denies almost all of the dimensions of the hidden background.

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In empowerment encounters where practitioners claim they are helping and not exercising power due to the fear of power corrupting knowledge (and the other fears mentioned above), *power and its mechanisms need to be hidden.* As Young (1994) pointed out, power is often *hidden by knowledge, skills, and intentions to be caring and helpful* (but power is seen by the less powerful in NEON). This expertise and care, however, can result in the exercise of paternalistic power and discipline There is no power-free context. Foucault's analysis helps, as Fraser (1989) put it, to sniff out the hypocrisy and self-deception of practitioners despite their intentions.

Reproduction of and Resistance to Power Relations

And the third way power affects interaction and distorts assessments is through the reproduction of and the resistance to power relations. In those areas where we are more powerful and/or privileged, Fishman (1990) helps us recognize that *we can unintentionally dominate others by directing conversation, misrecognizing the less powerful's interaction work (as their nature or identity), misrecognizing the less powerful's attempt to direct conversation (as insubordination), and by making sure that our version of reality sticks in the conversation.* ***This unreciprocated interaction work, as Deveaux (1994) noted, can generate profound feelings of disempowerment for the less powerful.*** Molotch and Boden (1985) added to Fishman's reminders of how those of us in the more powerful positions can unintentionally exercise power in conversation by *manipulating talk through topic control, turn-taking, and control of context (crucial), to then assess what is legitimate and what version of reality will stick.*

Status domination can also kick off vicious cycles of resentment, and misrecognizing the resentment and resistance. As members of dominant cultural groups,

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we may unintentionally disrespect the less powerful by talking about their clothes, music, ways of working, and so on, as strange or "less than." These day-to-day slights to dignity are exercises of status domination; and because of our desire for status and respect and our aversion to disrespect, this form of domination can be brutal. Disrespect is the focus not only of these writers, but also of postcolonialists. Unaware that these comments were disrespectful, when the less powerful interact in ways that expresses their resentment, we can misrecognize their responses. We can make the fundamental attribution error that the less powerful have individual, psychological problems because we cannot understand why they are so upset. A further problem is in sending signals that the less powerful should act in ways that you also say they cannot: double-bind and more resistance. And finally, if we promise upward mobility without talking about the "isms," the less powerful may encounter different realities and feel betrayed.

Another way power relations affect interaction and assessment is through what Scott (1986) referred to as the *"dialectic of disguise and surveillance" driven by power (fear of retribution) and interests (desires for resources, recognition, and information about the other)*. In these performances of deception, the less powerful fearing retribution and desiring resources often shows deference and consent. As I discovered in the case, the more powerful researcher, desiring recognition (positive reflection) and concerned with performing the role of the "expert," may *withhold critical feedback* for fear of being told to go home (retribution). Being blind to the impact of power relations, *we can misrecognize the less powerful's deferential behavior as their personality, nature, or inferiority that justifies our continued dominant position* (what Scott referred to as "worse than blaming the victim"); *and we can misrecognize ingratiating, deferential behavior of the less powerful as a reflection of our character and competency* (that we are well respected and

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doing stellar work reflecting our desire for a positive reflection), rather than their appropriating the performance through flattery for their own ends. In the case, I learned that by not recognizing their independence, we lose our ability to treat them as maximally human (where power and recognition come together). Resistance can also be misrecognized because of the contradictions and tensions in agency due to our different umbilical cords of privilege creating ambivalent relationships and tensions in resistance.

The costs of being unaware of how power relations affect interactions and assessment are continued disrespectful practices (misrecognition of the less powerful and the signals sent for them to withhold their critical feedback-up) and ineffective practices (poor decision-making, ideas and concerns withheld).

Empowerment Interpretations

The interpretation of empowerment we draw on affects our day-to-day practice in our assessment and choice of empowerment processes and method. Practitioners with an *individual empowerment interpretation* will emphasize capacity building (esteem building, skills), but they may not see the point of consciousness raising. And some *collective empowerment* practitioners focused on participatory dialogue, skills, and action may not see the value of addressing the issues of power and privilege within the encounter itself. When practitioners within the same empowerment encounter keep their different interpretations in the background, it is easy to *talk past one another* and make an already more difficult conversation even more open to *miscommunication.*

Different empowerment discourses further affect how we think, feel, and interact and get in the way of two-way empowerment by what they include and exclude. Feminist Maria el de Montis Solis (1994) pointed out that when *nonrational methods* are devalued

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and excluded, often so are women, our bodies, emotions, relationships to nature, and so on. Not only does this affect interaction by restricting the ways of learning and knowledge generation, it can continue to subordinate women if they are associated with those devalued aspects. Further, Ellsworth (1989) pointed out that rational tools fall far short of being able to deal with interactional issues of trust, risk, fear , desire, and deception in groups where there are differences in power, status, and privilege (a finding Goffman, Wright, Aronson, Lerner and others would acknowledge). Not including the nonrational also affects two-way empowerment. Without being aware of emotions, interaction work, inspiration, and so on, we may misrecognize how the less powerful are empowering us right now or can in the future. To encourage two-way empowerment, to be open to learning and to being changed, we need skills beyond the rational to help us be present in the encounter, to respond versus reacting when getting critical feedback-up, and so on—in other words, to deal with the ritual dimensions of empowerment encounters.

Discourses that do not address the *multiple forms of domination*, instead focus on the oppressor versus oppressed dichotomy, with the oppressor being outside of the encounter and usually blind to other forms of domination. This ensures the reproduction of unjust power relations inside and outside of the encounters. With only one dimension on the umbilical cord of privilege receiving attention, we may be blind to two-way empowerment taking place and future opportunities.

When the *facilitator's presence and other background dimensions are left out* of discourses, this affects interaction in the following ways: voyeurism, instrumentalism, paternalism, mystification of the expert role, collusion (desire to be superior), and the reproduction of power and privilege. Leaving out the facilitator's presence also distorts assessment by strengthening the belief that in dialogue, we are all equal. It can also distort

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our assessment of why the less powerful choose to work on immediate needs rather than political organizing (by being unaware of our relative privilege). Two-way empowerment is not possible because the more powerful is a voyeur. Further, by not addressing differences and the coexisting multiple realities, different strengths can be missed as well as the insight of interdependent partial narratives that is the rallying call for two-way empowerment.

For those discourses that do not include the more powerful as one who needs to be empowered, this decision affects interaction by relying on the one-way, normalizing gaze (discussed above). This distancing, individualizing, normalizing form of interaction and assessment are the opposite of two-way empowerment.

Finally, an individual empowerment approach (that does not address the hidden background dimensions) can distort the strengths and weaknesses of both the more and less powerful blocking the recognition of how we are being empowered and opportunities to be empowered.

Interaction Communication System (Interpersonal Context)

The interaction communication system often hidden in the background also affects day-to-day practices (interaction and assessment) and two-way empowerment. Empowerment encounter interaction, rather than being causal, is *circular and two-way* (disrespectful practices may generate resentment, this resentment then may generate resentment in the more powerful because they do not understand why the less powerful are upset). Interaction in this sense is really a set of *feedback loops* where each person affects and is affected by the other. Interactions in empowerment encounters, even bumping into

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each other at the copy machine, create specific interpersonal contexts that set up the constraints for the next encounter.

Screening to prevent information overload in interaction communication systems also affects interaction and assessment. Screening means that multiple realities co-exists in the encounter. Yet the hidden dimensions discussed above can distort assessment, and we may believe that the only reality that exists is our own.

The most potentially damaging affect on interaction is the ease with which the *more powerful can send mixed messages to the less powerful intensifying contradictions, triggering vicious cycles, and putting the less powerful into near double-bind situations.* The more powerful have more leverage in framing the message and in interpreting the response. Another danger for empowerment practitioners, who are by definition in complementary relationships, is to become rigid in the different roles—that is, in making the less powerful play the less powerful role.

Finally, constraints, hidden transcripts, information, and ideas that take place in other conversations and are hidden to the current encounter also play a part in the interaction communication system. Yet the actor-observer bias and the fundamental attribution error often exacerbate poor communication systems and distort assessments.

Interpersonal Style, Unique Biography and Values/Affiliation

Interpersonal Style

Interpersonal style differences, like differences in culture, can be assessed as "less than," deviant, and needing to be brought up to standard. This can affect interaction through miscommunication and poor assessments leading to disrespectful comments, looks, and acts. Similar to culture, every style is needed for a team to achieve its goals, yet

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the interdependency and different strengths are often misrecognized or not recognized. Several businesses have created interpersonal styles courses including Meyers-Briggs and the Wilson Social Style model that I used in the seminars. Their limitations, like the individual empowerment interpretations, are that they are not situated within the context of power, culture, and status.

Unique Biography

"The body is the inscribed surface of events."

—Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy and History* (Foucault, 1977b, p. 11)

Everyone brings a different body to the empowerment encounter. Personal triggers, emotional unresolved issues, or trauma, are like minefields just waiting to go off when a colleague steps in the wrong place. Unawareness of personal triggers can exacerbate some of the desires and biases outlined above.

Values and Affiliation

Social location and privilege does not guarantee politics and positions. A participant in the encounter may be very privileged and affiliate with most disempowered on social action, being very aware of the issues. Or she may come from a very disadvantaged background and not be aware of different issues and be politically conservative and not interested in social action to change unjust relations.

The umbilical cord of privilege, therefore, does not dictate one's politics, just privileges and potential blindspots. Each person may identify upward or downward, the more powerful and more privileged may affiliate with the less powerful and less privileged and vice versa.

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Potential Pattern: Status Domination, Vicious Cycle of Resentment, and Near Double-Bind

In the second seminar I outlined a pattern that described in interviews and the hidden transcripts of the case that led to the intensification of the practices/intentions contradiction, triggering a vicious cycle of resentment and then resulting in the less powerful being put into a near double-bind. In the analysis of the case, I created an illustration of this patterns (Figure 2). This pattern is the product of many of the hidden dimensions described above along with one I have not mentioned: *the power to induce conformity.* I will review the pattern here briefly.

First, the more powerful is unintentionally disrespectful (comment, look, practice). This leads to complainin' in the kitchen (hidden transcript) that turns feelings of being disrespected into feelings of resentment. When the less powerful show their resentment in their interaction, the more powerful misrecognize their feelings and get resentful themselves for what they perceive as poor treatment without reason. -The vicious cycle of resentment gyrates getting progressively more intense. When the less powerful get the courage to respond to the request of the more powerful for feedback, the more powerful respond with anger and possibly retribution because they feel betrayed due to their biased assessment that the less powerful were taking more than they were giving. The less powerful are now caught in a near double-bind: They are requested to give feedback, but punished if they do so. Both the more and less powerful caught in this pattern end up feeling disrespected, resentful, and disempowered undermining their effectiveness and possibly leading to burnout.

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By not recognizing the less powerful's independence, their hidden transcript can come as a shock. The more powerful's defensiveness heightens, and the situation polarizes. In the more powerful's hidden transcript, they express feelings of not being appreciated, unfair attacks, being taken advantage of, feeling hurt, and confused that the less powerful do not want to participate.

What is important to highlight in this pattern is *the more powerful's power to induce the less powerful to conform with the standards of the more powerful's thoughts and behaviors, and to respond to requests—especially when there is money involved in empowerment projects.* A group is more effective at inducing conformity if it is made up of experts, and/or if it is important to the individual. We tend to conform to the behavior of the high status person. The less powerful feel more at ease in deviating from the group's norms when they feel secure (Aronson, 1972, pp. 27-28). But many empowerment encounters are not secure but quickly arranged in far-flung places with shifting contracts.

The key issue in compliance is power—teachers and others have the power to dole out the rewards and punishments (Aronson, 1972, p. 34). As Milgram's famous experiments in obedience showed, *prestige increases obedience, and physical face-to-face contact makes it more difficult not to obey authority.* Milgram believed it is harder to induce pain directly in face-to-face contact; in his experiments, yes. But I would argue that putting someone in a near double-bind, into excruciating pain, can take place face-to-face but without being aware of what is taking place. This pervasive tendency to obey authority does help to explain why giving critical feedback-up is so difficult and so complex (Aronson, 1972, p. 45).

There are exceptions to the tendency to obey authority and to conform to the higher status person. Some empowerment practitioners are very respectful when working with

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the less powerful, but they are disrespectful to their colleagues and worse yet, their superiors (depending upon their leverage, some situations are fraught with ambiguity). Some less powerful colleagues also exercise their power by not conforming or participating. The point here is to recognize that for a large number of participants in empowerment encounters, these tendencies can affect interaction, assessment, and two-way empowerment. Without the systems to give and receive critical feedback-up, two-way empowerment, despite all the awareness work with the hidden background dimensions, cannot be put into practice.

How Our Disrespectful and Ineffective Practices Get in the Way of a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being

Interaction Distortions

The hidden background can distort interaction in five ways. The first way is to put the less powerful under the microscope while leaving out our presence for examination. A second way is paternalistic practice in our interactions with the less powerful. Personal and cultural slights to the less powerful (status domination) that maintain and reproduce power and status relations is a third distorted interactional practice. A fourth way the hidden background can affect interactions is in our day-to-day talk: With our differences in style and different interpretations of power and empowerment, we can talk past each other. And a fifth way is to hide our inconsistencies through our language.

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Putting the Less Powerful Under the Microscope, the One-Way, Gaze

If we exercise disciplinary power and the asymmetrical, one-way gaze, we put the less powerful under the microscope and ignore our own presence. Only the less powerful are visible. Only they are subject to examination, to be assessed against norms. Only they are needing help, lacking competencies, struggling, and needing to be empowered.

Those of us in the more powerful positions become, as Ellsworth (1989) puts it, voyeurs: generic, interchangeable practitioners. Differences in the encounter may be invisible to or hidden by us, but they are seen in NEON by the less powerful.

If those of us in more powerful positions exclude our presence, we ignore where we are struggling. Instead, we are assumed to be more competent in all fields. The purpose of the encounters is to interact with the less powerful to bring them up to our level (skills, consciousness) which is perceived as THE level. Even discourses that encourage participation often seek to learn from the less powerful how to empower the less powerful better. As Ellsworth (1989) noted, this instrumentalism puts the more powerful as the origin of knowledge in all fields.

Paternalistic Practice

One of the problems of an empowerment gaze is paternalistic practice. This is interacting with the less powerful to bring them up to our level (the default level) by taking action for the less powerful rather than with them, and can include disrespectful behavior including, as both Simon (1994) and Young (1994) pointed out: distancing (not responding reciprocally to questions); claiming equality in power; acting superior with the less powerful as victims; jumping in to fix, save, and so on (overfunctioning); discounting;

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pushing for quick agreements; underestimating their strengths, overestimating ours; a punitive atmosphere, and expert language.

Young (1994) reminds us that paternalistic power and everyday discipline can be masked by the practitioners' skills, competencies, and their intentions (a caring approach). I discovered Young's remarks were also true in my own practice as a researcher in the case. I withheld feedback from the less powerful rationalizing that they already had enough on their minds demonstrating my "paternalista" practice.

Reproducing Power Relations Through Status Domination

We can unintentionally slight the personal or cultural dignity of less powerful in areas where we have power and privilege. This includes direct put-downs through comments, facial expressions, and actions generating hidden transcripts (as Scott (1986) discussed) and vicious cycles of resentment (as in Willis's (1977) case of the lads and their teachers).

Unintentional domination can also be more subtle in our talk. Fishman (1990) noted the ease with which men, despite their intentions to be respectful, directed conversations, misrecognized the interaction work of the less powerful as their nature or inferiority, misrecognized participation as insubordination, and made their version of reality stick. Molotch and Boden (1985) also pointed out that we can manipulate talk through topic control, turn taking, control of context, and defining rules for assessing legitimacy.

Talking Past Each Other

Multiple realities co-exist in empowerment encounters due to differences in the hidden dimensions—especially different interpretations of empowerment encounters, and

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different interpersonal styles. Drawing on different interpretations (individual versus collective empowerment), we can talk past each other.

Hiding Inconsistencies Through Language When Receiving Critical Feedback-Up

In language, we desire to be right and tend to justify our behavior, especially if our self-image (e.g., being respectful) is questioned. Inconsistencies (disrespectful practices/stated intentions to be respectful) are masked especially through our special language as "experts." We remember the strengths of our argument and the weaknesses of others'. And critical for this inquiry because of the practices/intentions contradiction, we may deny the less powerful's legitimate feelings (anger, sadness, etc.) if we did not intend to hurt them: "I didn't mean to hurt you so you have no right to be upset."

Making Biased and Distorted Assessments

The hidden background can distort our assessments in six ways. The first way is by hiding, denying, redefining, or being blind to power. A second way is by claiming "we are all equal" because we use a rational, participatory dialogue process. Using our own biased standards as the universal standard is a third way the hidden background affects our capacity to make assessments. A fourth way is to distort both our own and the less powerful's strengths and weaknesses, and our situations of empowerment and disempowerment. Distorting assessments of the interactions themselves is a fifth way. And distorting assessments of the less powerful's behavior in the interaction is a sixth way.

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Hiding, Denying, Redefining, or Being Blind to Power

Hiding, denying, redefining, or being blind to power is dangerous. Some practitioners fear power, others hide or deny it because of their egalitarian approach and empowerment goals, and others redefine it to power-to. As Young (1994) described, practitioners can hide disciplinary power through knowledge, skills, and intentions. Yet *power is still being exercised, but it is not being acknowledged, and practitioners do not pay attention to the use of power or the abuse of power because they do not believe power exists in the encounters.*

We can also deny power by believing that only intentional acts are acts of power, and unintentional exercises of power are to be ignored (giving the force of legitimacy to "I didn't mean to hurt you so you have no right to be upset"). And finally, when the historical dimension is in the background, we can be blind to the way the encounter is constituted by power—for example, why the U.S. (with its military and economic might) is so involved in international development work. Not seeing this generates resentment. As a result of all of the above, neglecting the existence of power builds denial and deception into encounters from the start.

"We are All Equal" through Rational, Participatory Dialogue

For practitioners who deny, hide, redefine, or are blind to power, power does not exist, so "we are all equal" by default. The participatory dialogue discourses argue that dialogue as a process brings equality (for some a rational process, for others it also includes the nonrational). Yet we are not all equal; we cannot transcend power relations and ignore differences, desires, and deception. If the nature of power is assessed as only being generated in interaction ("everyone has power, why don't they [the less powerful] use

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it?"), we can miss the different weights and positions: It is easier to exercise power with a thick umbilical cord of privilege. When practitioners become frustrated that the less powerful are more interested in meeting basic needs than political organizing, they are often not seeing their umbilical cord of privilege.

Because there are differences, relying on a simple oppressor/oppressed dichotomy (we are all equal against the outside oppressor) often based on class, ignores the other multiple forms of domination—notably, gender-based domination as the feminists have pointed out (de Montis Solis, Young, Fraser, Simon, Gutierrez, Ellsworth). In the rational forms, the nonrational is devalued and often, so are women, feelings, emotions, empathy, and so on. And this distorted assessment ignores the internal differences of the encounter itself, the domination taking place, and other group dynamics.

Biased Standards: Our Standards are THE Standards

Our bias toward the self is reflected in our standards. We tend to view our standards as THE standards. This ethnocentric and paternalistic approach infuses many empowerment practices. In every dimension of our umbilical cord of privilege where we are advantaged, differences can be seen as a deviation, as "less than" as "not appropriate". In the case, teaching the "isms" for some was not appropriate due to their privileged position and interpretation of empowerment.

We can also use our norms when in the more powerful positions to push for conformity to what are described as universal norms (normalizing judgment). As the higher status person, the tendency to obey authority works in our favor.

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Distorted Assessments of Strengths and Weaknesses, Empowerment and Disempowerment

Without an awareness of the historically situated, culturally contexted dimension, the umbilical cord of privilege and power, we can radically distort assessments of the more and less powerful's strengths and weaknesses. Unawareness tends to inflate the more powerful's strengths and underestimate their weaknesses and needs. Unawareness also underestimates the competencies of the less powerful (how resourceful they are, different strengths), and how tough their disempowerment situation is (what they are up against: day-to-day poor treatment and tough conditions, logistics). This is compounded by our desire for a positive reflection that seeks behavior that is the same, and distorts differences as "less than"; different strengths are misrecognized or not seen at all. Further, without the hidden background, the less powerful are often assessed as individuals in an interpersonal interaction, often based on psychological criteria, rather than seeing the encounter and the background (normalizing judgment).

Distorted Assessments of Interaction

The assessment of interactions between the more and less powerful, the verbal and nonverbal foreground of empowerment encounters, can also be severely distorted by leaving out the hidden background. First, *without the hidden background, ritual performances of deference and demeanor are interpreted interpersonally inflating the more powerful and often painting the less powerful as inferior.* We can be blind to the dialectic of disguise and surveillance driven by power (fear of retribution) and interests (desire for resources, recognition, for a positive reflection, information regarding the other) expressed in deference and consent of the less powerful and the performance of expert of

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the more powerful. Assessing different interpersonal styles as "less than" rather than different styles needed by the team adds to the poor assessment. By denying our interdependence—especially their independence—we can also falsely attribute their achievements to our efforts and expect gratitude.

Blind to the background, we buy into the performance—and the more privilege and power we have, the more deference and often the less feedback that gets through. *We may also be oblivious to the signals we send about not wanting feedback, but instead, a positive reflection.* We then lack the information to make accurate assessments about ourselves and others.

If we are unaware of the interaction communication system and circularity, we can distort assessing resistance. Resistance of the behavior of less powerful may be judged interpersonally as rude (Willis' lads) and not justified. Without the interaction communication systems perspective, it is difficult to see this resistance as a response to previous status domination (slights to personal, cultural dignity). If the more powerful respond with further resentment, the vicious cycle begins to gyrate and constraints are established for the next encounter. Focusing only on the current interaction, we can also miss the constraints, hidden transcripts, information, and ideas that take place in other conversations that are hidden but influence the current encounter.

Distorted Assessments of Less Powerful's Behavior

Scott pointed out two crucial problems in assessing the less powerful's deferential behavior. The first problem, as described above, is attributing the deference and consent to personality, nature, inferiority, and sometimes to justify continued domination (that Scott saw as worse than blaming the victim) rather than seeing the hidden background—

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especially power. The second problem is being lulled into a false sense that we are doing a great job; that we are respectful and effective.

Part of these problems result from the actor-observer bias and the fundamental attribution error. These tendencies help to distort assessments of the less powerful's behavior. The less powerful's behavior is judged based on appearance (without the hidden background, context, and explanations we allow ourselves), assessing the less powerful as being inferior in competence, by nature or having a character flaw.

We can also assess the less powerful based on their status, who they are, rather than what they do as Edelman (1974) described. And the more powerful can frame the less powerful as Goffman (1974) described. Once framed, the more powerful are invested in confirming the assessment. Counterevidence is ignored, and the less powerful have a very tough time trying to convince the more powerful that the frame analysis is off—all complaints just strengthen the assessment. Assessing competency and character (the least anchored to reality) is the most distorted; nothing can get through.

And we can also distort assessments of the less powerful's independence (their ideas, feedback, hidden transcripts, capacity to exercise power, to empower themselves, others, and us) and of their silence. Critical pedagogy sees silence as lost voice, and others may see it as ineptitude.

How Interested Practitioners Can Work With the Hidden Background Dimensions Toward a Two-Way Empowerment Way of Being

Working with the hidden background dimensions, interested practitioners can encourage two-way empowerment. With a hidden background analysis, we can both

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interact more respectfully and effectively, and we can make more respectful and effective assessments. The key is to increase our awareness and sharpen our recognition skills in embodying a two-way empowerment way of being.

Interacting More Respectfully and Effectively

As More Powerful Practitioners, We Can Include Ourselves in the Encounter

A two way empowerment way of being goes against the grain of the one-way, normalizing gaze prevalent in empowerment discourses. Practitioners can make visible and work with their own presence in the encounter and the rest of the hidden background dimensions of differences, desires, and deception. It is crucial to include both the psychological aspects of the presence of self (as Surrey (1991) described in "mutual empowerment") and the more sociocultural aspects (as stressed by Ellsworth (1974), hinted at by de Montis Solis (1994); and a few dimensions worked with in Simon's work, 1994).

Recognizing and Changing Paternalistic Practices rather than Extracting Paternalism: Treat the Less Powerful as Maximally Human versus Less Than

As Simon lamented, "practitioners in the [social work] empowerment tradition—despite the wealth of their century-old inheritance—still lack systematic strategies for extracting paternalism from practice and for empowering themselves as workers" (Simon, 1994, p. 185). A two-way empowerment way of being does not seek to extract all paternalism, but to build capacity to recognize and deal with it, to transform the inevitable disrespectful and ineffective practices that emerge when unequals come together, and to

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encourage two-way empowerment so the more powerful recognize the ways they are being empowered, when they are reacting to critical feedback-up and when they can take advantage of more opportunities to learn and to be changed. Practitioners can work with desires and deceptions to help understand why we are paternalistic despite our intentions, our studying, and our many years of practice, and how to reduce paternalistic practice.

The spirit of a two-way empowerment way of being is to strive to treat the less powerful as maximally human, rather than as less than. Working with the hidden background analysis can help to put "less powerful" and "more powerful" in context, to recognize multiple realities, and to again recognize different competencies and areas of struggle and our interdependency.

Listening, giving and receiving feedback, and recognizing different interpersonal styles within the context of the hidden background analysis may help to lessen paternalism. *Especially important is listening to the less powerful from their own frame of reference* as feminists of all stripes suggest. Mutual empathy is also crucial: however, practitioners need to be aware of the continuum and the Achilles' heel of mutual empathy than can leave the less powerful doing most of the empathy work, unfairly taking away their valuable time, and in some cases, the less powerful may confuse the feelings of the more powerful for their own (Figure 9, "Empathy Continuum").

Breaking the Reproduction Cycle: Changing Disrespectful and Ineffective Practices: Tapping Resistance to Make Status Domination Visible, Do More Interaction Work

I am arguing that disrespectful and ineffective practices are inevitable in encounters among unequals—especially when there are more dimensions of difference. Resistance can help to make this unintended status domination visible and to better illuminate the

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hidden background dimensions. More powerful practitioners who want to resist reproducing unjust and ineffective relations, can work with the less powerful to understand their resistance and to transform specific practices.

In the more subtle form of talk, those of us in the more powerful positions can *better share the interaction* work through listening from the other's frame of reference; recognize less powerful's capacity to exercise power and direct the conversation. develop strategies and ground rules for talk based on encounter specific patterns, and create ways to share in reality making. Some of the teachers in the case study lessened the contradiction of practices/intentions through their willingness to share in interaction work (paying attention to gender studies), to value interaction.

Make Empowerment Interpretations Visible

Practitioners can help to make these multiple realities visible. The more powerful can then clarify the institutional discourse and whether it is open to change or suggestions. Then, if the less powerful participants differ, they can choose whether they want to stay and accept the institutional discourse despite differences in individual versus collective empowerment, or whether they want to try to change it from within, or whether they want to find a different organization where they are more aligned. The decision to stay when there is a split is complex, and the less powerful may be ambivalent—for example, admiring the organization in one area, frustrated in another, yet needing the job for financial or other reasons.

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Making More Respectful and Effective Assessments

Make Power Visible: Explore Why the More and Less Powerful are More and Less Powerful, Make Everyday Exercises of Power Visible through Resistance, Body Sensations

Practitioners can make the historical dimension visible to explore how the different cultural groups came together in the encounter, and to explore why the more powerful are more powerful, and why the less empowered are disempowered, and how that power permeates the encounter. The challenge for empowerment practitioners is to "overcome historical naiveté" and situate understanding within the "long historical process that created the occasion for cross-cultural contact" (Calhoun, 1995, pp. 84-85), and within the particular geographical location. In the case, I tried to look at some of the historical processes that brought together the Catholic school, the mostly White, middle-class, volunteer teachers, and the Latina, working-class students. The legacies of this history (from colonialism, U.S. supported violence, and U.S. cultural products flooding the markets) can serve as obstacles to understanding and working together in a respectful and effective way.

To get at this hidden dimension, the following questions may be useful. Why are the participants of the encounter as members of their different cultural groups coming together at this point in time in empowerment encounters? What is the history of these cultural groups individually and in contact with each other? Why is the more powerful, more powerful? Why are the less powerful disempowered? What is the current political and social situation of these different cultures? How is the current historical situation of

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increasing centralization of power and capital, and the globalization of American culture affecting this encounter?

A second emphasis is paying attention to unintentional disrespectful acts as exercises of power. These unintentional acts will take place; the challenge is to be able to talk about them and transform them. The first challenge, however, is to make everyday practices and exercises of power more visible despite many efforts and often layers of deception to deny power. One of the best resources, again, is resistance: both our own resistance to practices and the less powerful's resistances. Power being exercised over our bodies can be felt. Paying attention to the body sensations is important. During the case work, my most heightened experiences were those times I could feel someone exercising their power over me.

Making Visible the Multiple Dimensions of Domination (Umbilical Cord Of Privilege Exercise) Drawing on Non-Rational Methods and Alternatives to Dialogue to Increase Awareness and Act

Critical feminists and postcolonial feminists agree that we need to increase awareness of the multiple forms of domination. One of the processes to encourage two-way empowerment that I am proposing begins with exercises to make visible the different dimensions of the umbilical cord of privilege: where we are advantaged and disadvantaged, recognizing how easy it is to dominate in areas we are privileged.

In this process, including the nonrational methods is central to deal with anger, resentment, and sadness and to help the more powerful move from guilt about their areas of privilege and power, to action. One of the dangers is that "guilt has a tendency to 'curdle' into a sour resentment toward those 'provoking' the guilt" (Shohat & Stam, 1994, pp. 344-

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345). Rather than getting stuck umbilical cord gazing, we can increase sociocultural awareness (collective empowerment), and develop a sense of urgency to act. We can become aware of and acknowledge our privilege then use and share the privileges we do have (time, skills, connections) (Bonacich, 1992, p. 119) .

Even with acknowledging privilege, however, as Ellsworth made clear, encounters are often not safe spaces for many reasons. Therefore, we can experiment with alternatives to add to dialogue to deal with intercultural talk: talking back, social action, and so on.

Revisit Our Standards, Check for Biases in "THE" Standards, Acknowledge Biases

The hidden background analysis work pushes those of us in the more powerful positions to revisit standards and check for biases. These biases are notably influenced by our different umbilical cords of privilege and our different interpretations of empowerment. To make better assessments, we can increase our cultural awareness of the groups working within the encounter.

Practitioners have to make judgments of what is and is not appropriate. What generates resentment in colleagues is not making the judgments, but claiming that the standards are universals and not biased. Therefore, lessening the distortions as much as possible, mining the resistance for suggestions, then creating the standards being open about where the standards came from may increase respect and effectiveness.

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Make Better Assessments of Interaction: View Empowerment Encounters as a Two-Way Dance, a Dialectic of Disguise and Surveillance versus Interpersonally

The dialectic of deception and surveillance is inevitable given the differences, desires and deception embedded in encounters. Being aware of this dance is much easier said than done in practice. Yet, in making assessments, we can reflect on Scott's insights—especially deferential behavior (discussed below). The important part here is to see the interaction as a communication system, a dance, a two-way encounter. We can push ourselves to better assess resistance by taking an intercultural and systems approach, by stepping back from the urge to judge interpersonally.

Use the Hidden Background Analysis to Make Better Assessments of Strengths and Weaknesses, Recognize Different Strengths, Learn From and with the Less Powerful

Distorted assessments of the more and less powerful's strengths and weaknesses can neglect the areas of struggle of the more powerful and the strengths and competencies of the less powerful. For many of the reasons above—notably our desire for a positive reflection, ethnocentrism, instrumentalism, and paternalism—these different strengths are misrecognized or not recognized. There may be areas where the less powerful have strengths in the areas where the more powerful are struggling. But failing to recognize this opportunity, the organization pays an opportunity cost in terms of effectiveness and disrespects their colleagues.

We can lessen distortions of strengths and weaknesses so that these previously overlooked opportunities are realized and acted upon. Using the historical questions outlined above (why the more and less powerful are more and less powerful) can help to

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deflate inflated strengths of the more powerful, and to better recognize what the less powerful face and their capacities

Recognizing different strengths (acknowledged by Gutierrez, Simon, de Montis Solis) is the first step, and then putting the exchange into action is the second. This exchange, however, will take place in the same power-permeated encounter rather than a clean, power-free exchange. The same dynamics and defensiveness triggers need to be worked with as when we are receiving critical feedback-up. But it is possible. Ellsworth acknowledged her students knew more about racism than she did, but she also acknowledged that her weight carried more in terms of institutional power. Finding a process with more safety is the challenge for taking advantage of these overlooked opportunities.

We can be more aware of our desire for a positive reflection and better notice when we are reacting to differences as deficiencies. We can also actively acknowledge our limits and recognize different strengths as the teachers did in the case study. One of my future goals is to develop a training for those of us who are more skilled in self-assertion so that we can practice and improve our recognition skills.

Better Recognize the Less Powerful: Their Behavior, Their Power in Shaping Encounters and Empowering Us, and Their Silence as Resistance

We can better assess the less powerful's behavior in context by making visible the hidden background rather than jumping to interpersonal conclusions (this is not easy given our desire for status and a tendency to detect flaws in others). Trying to get in each other's shoes through reversed role plays, and increase interdependence in tasks are some ideas from Aronson (1972) to increase empathy. He also recommended that we pay attention to

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the process as much as the content in interactions (a difficult order for time-pressed social change organizations, but not paying attention can undermine the content). To face up to the actor-observer bias and the fundamental attribution error, when making assessments, especially about the cause of problems and failures, we need to first **give the less powerful the benefit of the doubt,** to listen to the circumstances, and to make the hidden background visible rather than jumping in to make attributions.

Awareness of Scott's dialect can also help to lessen distortions of the less powerful and our own competencies and character by being aware of the performances (again, acknowledging that this is hard to do, especially when the less powerful are very deferential). Being aware of the less powerful's capacity to appropriate the performance for their own ends (Scott, 1986; Kondo 1986, 1990) and our desire for a positive reflection may take the shock out of this discovery and save emotional energy spent on inflated indignation (feelings of being used, betrayed, etc.). As Visweswaran (1994) pointed out, betrayals are part of encounters where there are unequal power and privilege relations.

We can also better recognize the less powerful's power in empowering us: how we are empowered by mutual empathy, increased personal awareness, increased esteem, and increased skills and know-how. At the school in the case study, some of the teachers experienced individual empowerment. The girls often comforted them when they were having bad days (again, the caution here is being too open—the Achilles' heel of a two-way empowerment way of being). The teachers also developed an increased knowledge of Spanish language skills, an awareness of several different Latin American and Caribbean countries, and teaching skills. International volunteers around the world are empowered by understanding local logistics, politics, different skills, support, and empathy enabling them to be more effective and respectful in the local environment.

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At the school, some of the teachers were also empowered collectively. The students brought their reality into the classroom forcing teachers to question their assumptions about Latinas, and working-class families, increasing their sociocultural awareness. As an international volunteer, I was empowered collectively by colleagues who helped me to see the structural causes of social injustice. This awareness transformed my consciousness, moving me from a more liberal position to a more radical position. I was also introduced to skills for collection action, and was motivated to bring more of the hidden background out into the open, and show how it affects the encounters themselves—in other words, this thesis.

We can also better assess the power of the less powerful to resist through silence. The less powerful can use silence strategically (Visweswaran, 1994; Scott, 1986; Kondo, 1986, 1990; Fraser, 1989 and Ellsworth, 1989). Sometimes it is not safe. Sometimes there is mistrust based on cultural histories in different encounters. Silence and not participating may be resistance. Yet because the less powerful are often both advantaged and disadvantaged, and they deal with desires and deception, we need to be careful not to judge behavior in a one-sided way (e.g., as either resistance or not resistance) without recognizing the complexity that the less powerful's behavior can include both and ambivalence (Kondo).

By being aware of the power of the less powerful, we are not shocked when we encounter it. Further, we move from treating the less powerful as "less than" to maximally human.

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Responding to Critical Feedback-Up from the Less Powerful: Avoid Mystification Using Special Language, Look at the Strengths of Their Argument and Our Weaknesses, Apologize and Change When Needed

In responding to critical feedback-up, we can include nonrational tools to understand why we react in a knee-jerk way, and explore ways of responding more consciously. Simon (1994) encourages being responsive to feedback but she did not mention how. In our language we can hear if we are reacting or responding more consciously. We can avoid mystification using special language. We can put a concerted effort into looking at the strengths of the less powerful's arguments and the weaknesses of our own. If we hurt someone, or our actions are ineffective despite our intentions, it still matters. We can take responsibility, acknowledge our behavior, and apologize if needed.

The key is in discerning legitimate feedback. An area that merits further study. Lessening the distortions in all the areas above by working with the hidden background of the specific encounter can help to make a better assessment. The less powerful, however, are our greatest resource: They can help us understand the signals we send, and work with us to devise systems that encourage continuous feedback.

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Next Steps:

Making These Theoretical Findings Practical and Accessible to Practitioners

In this chapter, I began the process of synthesizing the theoretical learnings of the thesis. The crucial next step is to take these theoretical findings and make them practical and accessible to practitioners.

In the chapters that follow, I describe what I concluded from this inquiry process, implications for scholars and practitioners, and next steps.

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PART IV

CONCLUSION: ENCOURAGING TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT

Practitioners can encourage two-way empowerment. How? By being open to learning, and to being changed, while working with the less powerful. In the case study and the case-driven theoretical analysis, I learned about different ways that practitioners can embody a two-way empowerment way of being. I also discovered more questions and the need for further research from theory and practice.

In this section, I first review why I initiated this study to explore two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters. Next, I discuss why those of us who are practitioners can only *encourage* two-way empowerment; we cannot make two-way empowerment happen simply by being open to learning and to being changed. Here I draw on my own initial failure to recognize this distinction. Then, I review how interested practitioners can encourage two-way empowerment. I outline the learning highlights and build on Maria's exemplary two-way empowerment way of being. Through practitioner openness, we can learn how to free up and rechannel precious energy out of draining, unintentional vicious cycles, and into our day-to-day empowerment practice and efforts toward longer term social change goals.

In chapter 11, "Expecting and Being Open to Critical Feedback-Up is Crucial to Encourage Two-Way Empowerment," I describe why this learning (reflected in the title) was for me the most significant in this inquiry. I then review the two ideas that I gleaned from Maria's practice that interested practitioners can learn from to be more open to critical feedback-up: First, we can interpret critical feedback-up differently. We can interpret it as expected and crucial to be heard out and discerned. And second, by being aware of what

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we are up against (the hidden background of empowerment encounters), we can resist reproducing unintentional, disrespectful, and ineffective practices. I also discuss the questions that emerged—notably about how to discern critical feedback-up—and the need to continue exploring this crucial aspect of a two-way empowerment way of being in theory and practice. I end this chapter by reflecting on how practitioner openness to critical feedback-up can transform potential draining vicious cycles into energizing learning cycles and encourage two-way empowerment.

In chapter 12, "Implications for Scholars, Current Practitioner Applications and Next Steps," I offer this study to interested practitioners and scholars to explore, critique, and expand. I also briefly describe two current practitioner applications, and then outline the next steps: to continue creating experiential (mind-body), practical, and accessible training methods with interested practitioners. And finally, I reflect on and appreciate the ripple effect of an openness to learning and to being changed that took place throughout the inquiry, and, I hope, will continue with readers of this study.

Why I Explored Two-Way Empowerment and the Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters

In introducing this thesis, I described a troubling contradiction that concerned me as a practitioner: Despite the intentions of many of us to be effective and respectful in empowering others, too often after face-to-face empowerment encounters, both the more and less powerful felt ineffective, disrespected, resentful, and disempowered. As a result of these disempowering empowerment encounters, some colleagues dropped out, others burned out. This left already strapped organizations, often facing overwhelming obstacles,

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without the human resources needed for crucial struggles—especially organizations depending upon volunteers. Yet even when the situation did not reach burn-out levels, there were costs. *The precious energy we needed to be effective in our day-to-day empowerment practice and in achieving longer term social change goals was being drained away by unintentional vicious cycles.*

I initiated this research for practitioners across disciplines and fields of practice who are concerned that their day-to-day practices too often contradict intentions to be respectful and effective in face-to-face empowerment encounters. I wanted to learn why it was so much easier to talk about empowering others effectively and respectfully, rather than being in the face-to-face empowerment encounters themselves. I wanted to move beyond the "shoulds" in the literature, to learn what is actually taking place when the more and less powerful come together, and what we can do to bring practices more in line with intentions.

I argued that part of the reason we can be unintentionally disrespectful and less than effective is that we often focus exclusively on the less powerful. Leaving our presence out of the empowerment encounter creates two problems:

- First, we are often not aware of or are unwilling to acknowledge what we bring to the encounter with our bodies (status, power, privilege, interpretations, desires intertwined with deception, style, and biography), and how that affects the way we think, feel, and interact.
- Second, we are not open to being empowered. This creates an immediate one-up/one-down: The less powerful are viewed as the only ones with problems and in need of empowerment. In this one-way posture, those of us in the more powerful positions send signals (both verbally and nonverbally) that:

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- We have nothing to learn (we have the whole picture); and
- We do not need to change (our ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting are respectful and effective).

Yet due to our umbilical cords of privilege, our positioning as the more powerful practitioners, our style, and our unique history, it is not possible to have the whole picture (an understanding of all the multiple realities in the empowerment encounter and expertise in all areas). It is also not possible for us to see what we cannot see (our unconscious, ingrained ways of being that are disrespectful and less than effective). This one-way empowerment posture is profoundly disrespectful and undermines effectiveness. Therefore, we need to be open to learning, to being changed, to being empowered. If we focus only on empowering the less powerful, we will continue to unintentionally reproduce disrespectful and less than effective practices despite our intentions.

The goal of this inquiry was to increase respect and effectiveness in face-to-face empowerment encounters by exploring two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters.

Why We Can Only *Encourage* Two-Way Empowerment

In exploring two-way empowerment, I first distinguished between goal and process. I defined two-way empowerment as a goal for empowerment encounters by responding to two questions: Empowerment for whom? And empowerment for what? Two-way empowerment takes place when:

- Both the more and less powerful *are empowered individually and collectively* (increased sociocultural and self awareness, skills, esteem, and organizational systems)

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to be more respectful and effective in working together and in reaching social change goals;

- Both also *feel empowered* in the process: energized, effective, recognized, respected, valued (less drop-out and burn-out).

Individual and collective two-way empowerment may take place in three different ways. First, the more and less powerful participants can be empowered by each other's knowledge, skills, awareness, and feedback. A second way participants can be empowered is just by being in the interactions themselves. And a third way participants can be empowered is by what emerges in the interaction while working together, a creative synthesis of ideas, or awareness, that did not exist before.[96]

Yet as more powerful practitioners, we can only encourage two-way empowerment. We can create conditions that encourage two-way empowerment, but whether it takes place or not is up to both those of us who are practitioners, and to the people we work with who have less power and status. We cannot make two-way empowerment happen on our own.

As I wrote this thesis, I discovered that I made a paternalistic assumption during this inquiry: I assumed that the more powerful practitioner could make two-way empowerment happen. For example, in my introductory letter to the principal (Appendix 1), I wrote, "I would like to learn more about *how* Maria actually goes about 'two-way empowerment.'" Throughout the thesis, there are other places, now in NEON to me, that reflect my paternalism and my naiveté about power.

My paternalistic assumption became clear as I began to analyze my paternalistic tendencies as a White, middle-class woman: I reacted to participants when they exercised

[96]Many thanks to Craig Calhoun for helping me to understand these distinctions.

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their power to give their critical feedback-up, and I withheld my critical feedback-up. Underneath these paternalistic practices, I discovered an additional desire: My own desire to make mutual respect happen. This desire and intertwined self-deception emerged from my unique history and affected my research encounters. As a recovering father's daughter, I still struggle to interact in a relational rather than a falsely autonomous way of being. I went into this inquiry with an unconscious assumption: If I, the more powerful, am respectful and do everything I can, then mutual respect will happen.[97] If the reader peruses my initial documents in the appendix, my goal to create mutual respect is firmly etched into the research process landscape.

To take all of the responsibility for mutual respect, and for two-way empowerment, simply repeats the colonial sovereign subject (discussed in chapter 6) in that it assumes that I alone am the one who sets the tone in the interaction.[98] If I, the more powerful researcher, am respectful, then mutual respect will happen. Believing that my intentions alone could make mutual respect happen (the "master" mentality) echoes back to Hegel's master-slave and to "power-to" interpretations (discussed in chapter 7) that ignore relationships and conflict of interest. As I learned, my paternalistic tendencies revealed my desire to saturate the context of the encounter with my intentions.

How presumptuous and disrespectful on my part to think that I alone (even at a subconscious level) could make mutual respect and two-way empowerment happen! Mutual respect and two-way empowerment, like recognition, power, empowerment, and communication, are two-way.

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[97] Thanks to Anna DiStefano who helped me to get clear on this point.
[98] Thanks to Matthews Hamabata who worked with me here.

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When I did not recognize the independence of the less powerful (their ability to exercise power) and the commonalities we share (to be both respectful and disrespectful and the capacity to take critical feedback), I became a *"paternalista"* despite my intentions and the focus of this inquiry. I learned that for future empowerment encounters, I not only needed to transform my practices (e.g., to recognize the less powerful as maximally human: both how they are different *and* what we have in common), but also my intentions: from a personal goal of increasing mutual respect to one of encouraging mutual respect and two-way empowerment.

I am grateful to the principal case participant, Maria, for being patient with me during this learning process. Borrowing a phrase from Vincent Van Gogh, "I am always doing what I can't do yet in order to learn how to do it" (Edwards, 1989, p. 72).

How Can Interested Practitioners Encourage Two-Way Empowerment?

To learn how interested practitioners can encourage two-way empowerment, I explored a two-way empowerment way of being. A two-way empowerment way of being tries to capture the more powerful practitioner's manner, the way she thinks, feels, and interacts as she is working with the less powerful to encourage two-way empowerment.

While exploring two-way empowerment and the hidden background of empowerment encounters, I asked three questions: First, what is a two-way empowerment way of being? Second, why is a two-way empowerment way of being difficult in empowerment encounters (i.e., what are we up against given the hidden background dimensions). In other words, what can get in the way of a two-way

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empowerment way of being? And third, how can interested practitioners embody a two-way empowerment way of being?

In the case study and case-driven theorizing, I learned that a two-way empowerment way of being can be defined as follows: *a practitioner's openness to learning, and to being changed, while working with the less powerful.* The "while working" phrase is important because the practitioners I am speaking to are not entering empowerment encounters just to change themselves. Social change activists, international development workers, social workers, teachers, and volunteers across the board are engaged in practical projects that deal with often overwhelming problems. Being open to learning and to being changed (to being empowered) means that we are open to being transformed in the day-to-day interactions that take place *while we work with people who have less power and status.* These transformations make us who we are, and they can help us to increase respect and effectiveness in the encounters.

For example, in the case, the goal of the administrators and teachers at the school was to empower the students. Some of the teachers who were open to learning and to being changed during their face-to-face encounters with students were changed: as teachers (both what they taught and how they taught, their manner), as individuals, and as members of different groups (White, middle-class, American, and so on). The encounter was not set up to empower the teachers and administrators, yet by being open, Maria and others were able to be empowered and to recognize how the students empowered them, which increased respect and effectiveness.

Understanding a two-way empowerment way of being is a start. But what is crucial, yet often neglected, is to also understand what can get in the way of being open to learning, and to being changed, while working with people who have less power and

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status. To better recognize what we are up against, throughout the thesis I analyzed the hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters (Figure 10). If we are unaware of the hidden background dimensions of empowerment encounters, we can react rather than be open and respond, and our disrespectful and ineffective practices can get in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being.

In chapter 1, I described how the hidden background includes the ritual dimension of empowerment encounters that are status-driven (Goffman's critical contribution). In chapter 3, I drew on the literature and experience to analyze our desire for status intertwined with deception, our umbilical cord of privilege, habitus, interpersonal style, and unique history. In the case (chapter 5), the participants and I continued to bump up against additional hidden background dimensions that got in the way of a two-way empowerment way of being. Then, in part three, the case-driven hidden background analysis (chapters 6-10), I analyzed our desire for recognition, historical and cultural context, different interpretations of power, Foucault's disciplinary power and the normalizing gaze, reproduction and resistance to power, different interpretations of empowerment, communication systems (notably vicious cycles and double-binds), styles, unique history, values, and affiliations.

Given all we are up against, how then can interested practitioners encourage two-way empowerment by embodying a two-way empowerment way of being? First, practitioners can increase their awareness of two-way empowerment, a two-way empowerment way of being, and the hidden background dimensions outlined in this thesis. Just by increasing our awareness, we can better recognize the empowerment encounter, ourselves, and the less powerful.

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For example, one way we can embody a two-way empowerment way of being is by recognizing our privilege and by making better assessments of our own and the less powerful's strengths and weaknesses. We can sharpen this assessment by asking four questions:

- What do the less powerful face that I do not (logistics, day-to-day poor treatment)?
- What have they achieved despite these obstacles?
- What do they know that I do not know?
- What are they better at than I am?

By working with the hidden background of empowerment encounters, we can better recognize our own and the less powerful's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for learning. As a result, we may trigger fewer unintentional vicious cycles (refer again to Figure 2). This is significant. By recognizing our less powerful colleagues' different realities and expertise, less energy is drained away into vicious cycles. Instead, this energy is freed up and can be channeled into day-to-day empowerment practice and in working toward longer term social change goals.

Another way we can embody a two-way empowerment way of being is by paying attention to our body sensations, feelings, and our resistance in the encounters themselves. We can resist reacting to the strong tendencies of the hidden background to reproduce disrespectful and ineffective practices detailed throughout this thesis. Instead, we can recognize the knee-jerk reactions as they come up, and then respond versus react. For example, we can recognize our tendency to direct conversation, and shift into doing more of our share of the interaction work (being curious, empathic, and open to having the less powerful's version of reality stick). In another example, we can recognize our more

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powerful position (rather than hiding, denying, or redefining power), and track our abuses of power by tapping into the resistance of the less powerful.

A third way practitioners can embody a two-way empowerment way of being is by learning from and building on Maria's six day-to-day practices:

- Students could express when they were upset with Maria without being punished; she "heard them out" and was open to being changed (she was open to critical feedback-up);
- Maria taught about the ISMs, how students could change their world, and gave students space to vent (about the obstacles they faced, how they were treated by others);
- Maria and her students gave each other "second chances";
- Maria strove to be real by sharing with her students;
- Maria was open to learning from and with her students;
- Maria was open to having her assumptions challenged and to being changed about "something I didn't realize."

Building on the above, a fourth way to embody a two-way empowerment way of being is to model an ***openness*** to being empowered by the full range of possibilities (see Figure 11 on the next page):

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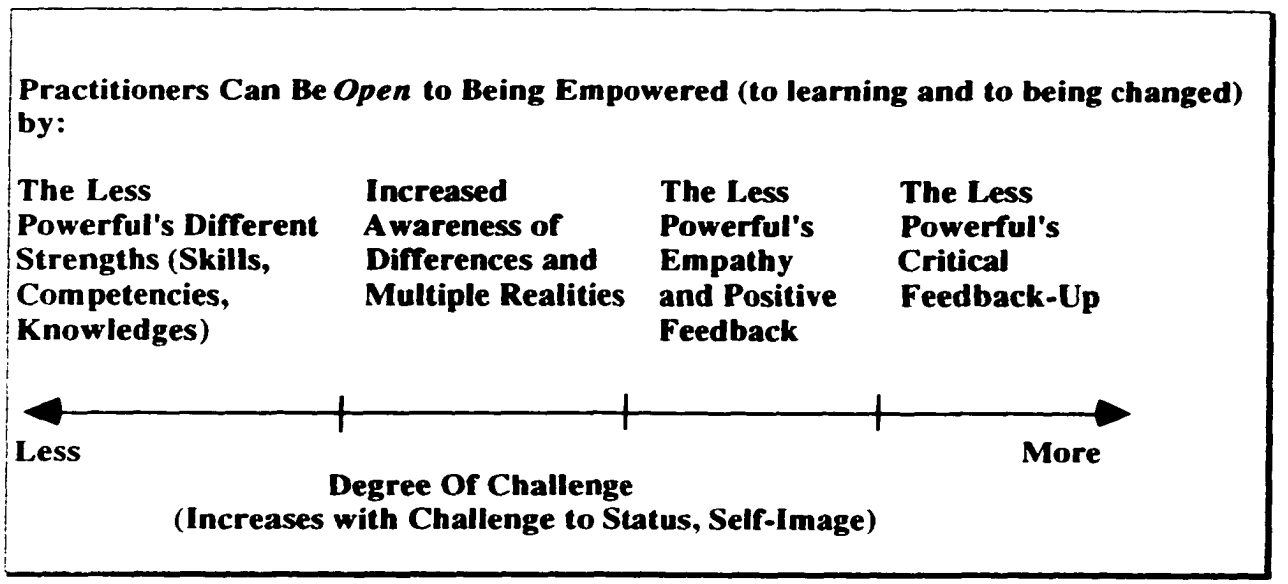

Figure 11. Range of what practitioners can be *open* to being empowered by and degree of challenge.

A two-way empowerment way of being (a continually evolving process that interested practitioners can explore, critique and adapt as described in chapter 12) encourages the goal of two-way empowerment. To embody a two-way empowerment way of being does not require that we as practitioners be empowered by all the dimensions within the range listed above in each interaction. Instead, what is crucial is our *openness* to being empowered by any of the dimensions. Our openness is what creates our manner, our way of being. This openness is what I believe Maria tried to describe as the "something there" that she, her boyfriend, and many of her students picked up when they felt comfortable with someone.

Being open helps us to move closer to treating others as maximally human. Rather than a closed and imposing way of being that creates a one-up/one-down encounter from

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the start, we acknowledge that we also have areas of weakness, limits, problems, that we can be changed, and that we also need to be empowered.

Our openness to being changed is just that, an openness. It does not mean believing and acting on everything from our less powerful colleagues. By drawing on the hidden background analysis we can better discern what we can learn from our colleagues, what we need to recognize, and what we need to pay attention to and change. We can also better discern when to set aside or to not take our colleagues' ideas, flattery, and critical feedback-up

Being *too* open, however, is the potential Achilles' heel of a two-way empowerment way of being. I initially saw this potential problem in the case when participants described their struggle of being real and also being discreet. In chapter 5, I argued that this Achilles' heel applies to each of the ways we are open to being empowered (Figure 6, "Openness to Critical Feedback-Up Continuum," and Figure 7, "Openness to Learning, Sharing and Venting Continuum"). The challenge is find the place where being open to learning, sharing, venting and critical feedback-up encourages two-way empowerment. This thesis only identified the challenge. Further research is needed to flesh out further awareness, skills, and systems to help practitioners in the discernment process—especially in being open to critical feedback-up. Why we need to expect and be open to critical feedback-up is addressed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 11

EXPECTING AND BEING OPEN TO CRITICAL FEEDBACK-UP IS CRUCIAL TO ENCOURAGE TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT

While writing this thesis, I was asked the following question by colleagues: "How can I make sure that I do not impose my power, privilege, and culture on the less powerful people I am working with?" My response, based on my experience and learnings from this inquiry was, "I do not believe you can. Instead, I believe the best we can do as practitioners is to expect and be open to critical feedback-up to encourage two-way empowerment."

While I do believe that there are many valuable ways to increase our awareness, skills, and systems, I also believe that, given our more powerful positioning and the hidden background of empowerment encounters (notably our desires and intertwined deception), it is inevitable that we will be unintentionally disrespectful and less than effective.

Expecting and being open to critical feedback-up is, for me, the most significant learning of the thesis, and the most empowering. I acquired this learning by working directly with Maria: through her interviews, her modeling, her persistence, and her patience.

Maria's openness to critical feedback-up stood out in the case study. As I described in chapter 5, despite our intentions, some of the teachers, administrators, and I reacted to critical feedback-up. We not only reacted, we also did not recognize that we reacted. As I emphasized in chapters 3 and 5, if we misrecognize (are not aware of, are uncomfortable acknowledging, or deny) our status, power, and privilege, then we will misrecognize our

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ways of being that embody our status, power, and privilege (what Bourdieu refers to as habitus).

Maria's example in the case is significant because she responded versus reacted. She resisted the powerful tendencies of the hidden background and was open to learning and to being changed. As I noted, Maria was not perfect, nor was she a saint. Yet as a Latina, working-class woman, she knew what it was like to be on the receiving end of disrespectful behavior. She knew the gut-wrenching pain of being punished for giving critical feedback-up. Maria also had a theoretical understanding of structural inequalities as a graduate student in gender studies. Maria's positioning and her experience can help those of us with thicker umbilical cords of privilege learn how to be more open to critical feedback-up.

Learning *how* Maria was open to critical feedback-up was a challenge. In chapter 5, I compared Maria to an athlete or a skilled facilitator who makes something difficult (being open to critical feedback-up) look easy, natural, and, at times, unnoticeable. The challenge then was twofold: First, to learn what Maria was doing (her way of interpreting and responding). And second, to learn what Maria was not doing (how she resisted reacting to the powerful tendencies of the hidden background).

Maria's openness to critical feedback in the case produced two striking results in contrast to my own and those of the other teachers and administrators. First, Maria's openness to Lourdes' critical feedback-up transformed a potential draining vicious cycle into an energizing learning cycle (Figure 1). She did not make a difficult situation worse by reacting to Lourdes' critical feedback-up and putting Lourdes in a near double-bind (Figure 2, "Potential Vicious Cycles and Near Double-Binds"). Instead, Maria learned from and was energized by the encounter.

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In a second example, Maria's response to Nira's critical feedback-up (Figure 3) stands in contrast to my unconscious reaction that triggered a draining vicious cycle (Figure 4). Maria and I had both been unintentionally disrespectful to Nira. Maria, however, quickly caught her reaction, acknowledged her disrespectful practice, "heard out" Nira's critical feedback-up, and prevented a vicious cycle. I, on the other hand, was unaware of my reaction for a year until I saw myself reacting to Nira in the videotape.

How did Maria respond rather than react? What did she do, and what did she resist doing? And how can interested practitioners learn from and build on her example? After analyzing the case and case-driven theory, I believe there are two ideas practitioners can learn from. First, we can interpret critical feedback differently: as expected, crucial (to be heard out and discerned). And second, by being aware of what we are up against (the hidden background of empowerment encounters), we can be open to critical feedback-up.

We Can Interpret Critical Feedback-Up Differently: As Expected, Crucial (to be Heard Out, Discerned)

If we put all our energy into the design and planing of empowerment encounters to ensure harmony in the interactions, we will be surprised, shocked, and potentially react with retribution when the less powerful give us critical feedback-up. Rather than a pure harmony approach, we can interpret critical feedback-up and conflict differently, as inevitable and crucial to encourage two-way empowerment.[99] Through practitioner openness, we can help to create a feedback rich culture and a learning organization.

[99] This is a point many of my colleagues in Latin America and the Caribbean have made for years. They questioned conflict resolution workshops because they stressed the need to be with the conflicts and the feelings involved as part of the empowerment process.

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We can recognize that we do not have the whole picture. We only have, as Ellsworth (1989) emphasizes, a partial narrative. And as we learned in chapter 9, due to screening, it is easy to think that our reality is THE reality.

We can also recognize that we cannot see our ingrained, unconscious patterns, our manner. We can further recognize that the people we work with who have less power and status often see our disrespectful and ineffective ways of being in NEON, and that we can tap their resistance to become more respectful and effective.

We can include critical feedback-up in the range of what we are open to being empowered by (refer to Figure 5). We can not only expect critical feedback-up, we can also expect it to be the most challenging. We can recognize that critical feedback-up is more threatening to our status and self-image, yet crucial to encourage two-way empowerment (again refer to Figure 5 above). We can expect our knee-jerk defenses to kick in, as Maria put it succinctly, "Because it involves me!"

The key here is in discerning the critical feedback-up. As mentioned above, the potential Achilles' heel is to be too open, to take in and act upon all the critical feedback-up. If we are too open, then we may change what we should not change based on one person's interpretation. Without limits and the ability to discern, we can hurt both ourselves and the people we work with. The challenge again is to discern critical feedback-up to encourage two-way empowerment. What will give us more choices to be respectful and effective? Maria and other participants noted the challenge here. Practical ideas and skills for discerning critical feedback-up need to be explored further.

Finally, for some practitioners, critical feedback-up can be interpreted as a way of helping the less powerful: It will give them the opportunity to give critical feedback-up so that they feel good about being involved in the process, so that they can have experience

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with the skills involved, or so that they will be more receptive to the more powerful's critical feedback. The value of what the less powerful have to offer is often not emphasized. In this thesis I am arguing that being open to critical feedback-up is not just a nice thing we can do for the less powerful. Instead, we need to interpret critical feedback-up as crucial for both the less powerful and for those of us who are more powerful practitioners.

By Being Aware of What We Are Up Against (the Hidden Background of Empowerment Encounters), We Can Be Open to Critical Feedback-Up

In chapter 5, I described how Maria was open to critical feedback-up. I used the theoretical lenses from chapter 3 to understand what she was up against, what she was doing and what she was not doing (the ways she was resisting). Even though Maria had more in common with the students than the rest of us, she still had power, status, privilege, habitus, her own interpersonal style, and unique history. In the case-driven theoretical analysis, I learned about several other tendencies that Maria resisted that interested practitioners can learn from.

To be open to critical feedback-up, we need to be aware that we are going directly against our desire for status. Because treatment is geared to status, we tend to deceive ourselves to deceive others better (the core deception) especially by hiding our own faults, while pointing out the faults of others (the core hypocrisy pointed out by the sages). We need to be aware that we are going against our desire for a positive reflection versus full recognition (warts and all). We are also going against our tendency to confirm our beliefs and control the outcome.

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Because critical feedback-up threatens status and self-image and goes against the powerful core deception and core hypocrisy, we can expect it to set off the strong feelings and body sensations. We can also realize that, due to the bias toward the self, these feelings and sensations are often inflated—for example, the perception of being betrayed, shortchanged, and the moral indignation that follows.

Yet when the less powerful give us critical feedback-up, our interpretation of critical feedback-up as expected and crucial can better enable us to hear them out and discern the learnings. We can better hear and respond to critical feedback-up because we have analyzed the hidden background dimensions of the encounter. Thanks to the hidden background analysis, we can better recognize the less powerful's different strengths, our own areas of weakness, and how we are empowered by them.

We can also recognize the historical, cultural and organizational power within the empowerment encounter (the "up" in critical feedback-up). We can resist the tendency to hide, deny, or redefine power. Instead, we can acknowledge it. We can then track our uses and abuses of power through critical feedback-up.

We can recognize how power permeates the encounter. Rather than buying into the performance because we want the positive reflection, we can better recognize that the absence of critical feedback-up in the public transcript often reflects the degree of power that exists. We can also recognize that there are hidden transcripts that we are not aware of and recognize the less powerful's independence. In this way, we are not lulled into a false belief that there are no issues or complaints, and then shocked if they emerged.

If we neglect recognizing the less powerful (how they are different and what we have in common), we neglect recognizing their strengths, their power, how they empower us, their capacity to given and receive feedback, and how they are achieving in different

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areas outside of the encounters. Instead, we may falsely attribute their achievements to our efforts. And as Laing (1961) noted, when a self cannot perceive otherness, she will expect gratitude because she will believe the other's capacity is due to her: The more the less powerful achieves, the more she should be grateful. This adds to the bias toward the self in the monitoring of exchanges.

As a result of better recognizing the less powerful and the empowerment encounter, we stand a better chance of *not* assessing their critical feedback-up as taking more than they were giving, resulting in indignation (e.g., "After all I have done for you") and as a betrayal. We can remind ourselves of how much the less powerful have empowered us: How we learned from and with them. How they support us emotionally and professionally. And how they increase our awareness as individuals and as more powerful and privileged members of groups—notably the biases in our standards. We can also recognize their independent efforts outside of the empowerment encounter. By recognizing how the less powerful can and do empower us, and by recognizing their independence, we can reduce the bias toward the self in the monitoring of exchanges. A less biased perception that can reduce falsely perceiving unfairness, feelings of indignation and betrayal.

In discerning the critical feedback-up, we can *resist* reacting based on our umbilical cord of privilege. We can chose to not focus on our own pain and disprivilege while ignoring the pain of the less powerful in areas where we are privileged. Instead, we can acknowledge our relative privilege and hear out their complaints.

We can also *resist* falling into the pitfalls of language that service the desire for status interlaced with deception. We can listen for the strengths in the less powerful's comments, and recognize the weaknesses of our own defenses, even when our self-image

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as a respectful and effective practitioner, individual, or more privileged person is being questioned. We can acknowledge biases in our standards, and we can be empowered by a new frame of reference.

We can *resist* the tendency to deny the less powerful's feelings of anger or sadness. We can resist saying, "You have no right to be upset because my behavior was not intentional." Instead, we can acknowledge when we are disrespectful. We can bring in empathy and curiosity and listen from their frame of reference.

We can *resist* the tendency to ignore or rationalize the critical feedback-up of the less powerful who are struggling. We can resist labeling (putting them in frame-traps as Goffman noted). Instead we can give each of the less powerful second chances and recognize that they can do the same for us.

Finally, our own self-awareness and awareness of structural inequalities can trigger fewer disrespectful comments and actions. We can give students the benefit of the doubt (versus the actor-observer bias). We can recognize the power of the situation the less powerful are in that shapes their behavior (versus the fundamental attribution error). And we can recognize the differences, the "ISMs" and multiple realities within the empowerment encounter itself and society.

In summary, as Maria so passionately and tirelessly pushed me to understand, being open to critical feedback-up is crucial to encouraging two-way empowerment and to preventing the draining vicious cycles and near double-binds that can sap the energy of individuals, organizations, and movements.

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Practitioner Openness to Critical Feedback-Up Can Transform *Draining* Vicious Cycles into *Energizing* Learning Cycles and Encourage Two-Way Empowerment

At the outset of this thesis, I described a problem with empowerment encounters: By focusing only on the less powerful and not being open to being empowered ourselves, practitioners can unintentionally be less than effective and disrespectful (triggering vicious cycles, near double-binds, leading to drop-out and burn-out). This thesis addresses the problem and builds the case, based on Maria's example, that practitioner openness to critical feedback-up can transform *draining* vicious cycles into *energizing* learning cycles and encourage two-way empowerment (Figure 1 and Figure 3).

In my future work as a practitioner, I hope to build on what I learned from Maria's two-way empowerment way of being. Where I am in developing this work, and the next steps I am planning to take, are outlined in the final chapter.

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CHAPTER 12

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARS, CURRENT PRACTITIONER APPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

My Offer to Interested Practitioners and Scholars: Explore, Critique and Expand

This dissertation is for practitioners who, for ethical or practical reasons, want to learn about how they can encourage two-way empowerment by being open to learning, and to being changed, while working with people who have less power and status. If you are a practitioner who recognizes that you can be unintentionally less than effective and disrespectful, who is frustrated by vicious cycles draining precious energy needed for social change struggles, and who recognizes that you also need to learn, change and be empowered, then I encourage you to explore, critique and expand the ideas.

If, on the other hand, you do not agree with the idea of encouraging two-way empowerment through practitioner openness,[100] or you do not believe that as a more powerful practitioner it is inevitable that you will be unintentionally disrespectful or less than effective, this thesis may not interest you except for critique.

For practitioners who are interested in encouraging two-way empowerment, but are unsure if they can carry out a two-way empowerment way of being in their current work

[100]Two examples here come to mind. First, practitioners who are more interested in learning how they can change others, rather than themselves. And second, practitioners who fundamentally disagree with the idea of two-way empowerment. As one development professional remarked, "I cannot use this two-way empowerment idea. Even if I learn that the less powerful are better than we are in some areas, I cannot tell my boss that they should do it. We have a budget that we need to spend by doing the work ourselves." As I mentioned earlier, two-way empowerment often goes against the grain of the international development industry.

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environment, this dissertation may help you learn if it is possible and to generate ideas for being open.

Implications for Scholars

Although the case is specific, the ideas in this study, both the theory and the findings, may trigger ideas for rethinking theory, intentions, and practice for empowerment practitioners of all kinds: teachers, social workers, anthropologists, international development volunteers, social change activists, psychologists, and volunteers.

For scholars studying resistance, this study adds a case from the more powerful's perspective. Rather than just focusing on how the less powerful resist domination, this study looks at how the well-intentioned, more powerful resist reproducing unjust relations, and then transform disrespectful practices.

For empowerment scholars, I am offering an additional empowerment interpretation for critique and adaptation. I expect significant resistance from the different scholars and practitioners who adhere to the participatory dialogue, skills and action interpretations. Ellsworth's (1989) article outlining her "sustained encounters" discourse was rejected by the critical pedagogy scholars and practitioners. Her critiques have not been addressed by this group in the ten years since her work was published. The critical pedagogy scholars critiqued Ellsworth's approach by saying it leaves practitioners with a feeling that there is nothing you can do but "throw up your hands." They asserted that she put too much emphasis on differences (E. Ellsworth, personal communication, April 4, 1998).[101] While I don't go as far as Ellsworth in claims about "unknowable knowledge," I still agree with her on the critical issues and expect similar responses.

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Given the limitations of this thesis, and the learnings that emerged, I also have four more specific recommendations for interested scholars. First, interested scholars can initiate a similar study that either brings in more international work, or compares these findings to examples in the literature from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

A second recommendation for interested scholars is to take the "What is empowerment?" question further. A dissertation that thoroughly analyzed the different interpretations across empowerment literatures would be useful and was suggested by several colleagues when I was in the design phase.

For scholars interested in face-to-face interaction studies, a third recommendation is to study other examples of empowerment encounters, create more case studies, and rely more on videotapes than on descriptions. A study that focuses more on what people actually do than what they described they do (as in this thesis) is needed.

Finally, a fourth recommendation is for scholars interested in integrating the more interpersonal and intrapersonal with the sociocultural. One possibility is to bring in the social justice personality concept to the findings of this thesis to add the personal depth—especially around the issue of being open to critical feedback-up. What are the interpersonal skills needed in the interactions themselves? A dissertation on the social justice personality is another request I received while designing this study and could be useful.

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Current Practitioner Applications

Ideas in this thesis are currently being applied in international volunteer training and in one human rights organization. One colleague, who gives seminars to help potential volunteers get prepared for international social change work, uses the ideas in a role play. She has the potential volunteers think of three women in different countries whom they may be working with, and describes their specific situations. Then, rather than asking the volunteers how they can help their local colleague, the facilitator asks the volunteers-in-training the following questions: What does your local colleague know that you do not know? What is she better at than you are? What does she face (poor treatment, logistics) that you do not? And what has she achieved despite these obstacles? She reports that this gets the future volunteers out of the "helper" frame.[102]

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)[103] took some of the ideas from this thesis as I was developing them, adapted them for their needs as a national human rights organization, and expanded the ideas. For example, one of the objectives at their leadership training institute for grassroots chapter activists is "three-way learning." From the outset of the training, GLSEN national staff and the institute trainers make clear that learning goes three ways: "You'll learn from each other, you'll learn from the presenters, and the presenters (and GLSEN) will learn from you." Being open to learning, and to being changed, while working with people who have less power and status, is now also a part of the institute's module on building inclusive chapters and a new module on giving and receiving feedback.

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[102]Thanks to Joan Heckscher for sharing her adaptation of the ideas.

[103]Many thanks to GLSEN for working with me on these ideas *as they were being developed* during the writing phase of this thesis. I greatly appreciated the patience of the GLSEN staff and leadership training institute participants as I struggled to translate the learnings from the case and theory into practical, accessible training.

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Next Steps: To Continue Creating Experiential (Mind-Body), Practical and Accessible Training Methods with Interested Practitioners

The real challenge of this work is to translate this study into practical methods for social change organizations. I need to continue to develop methods that are clear, concrete, practical, and accessible (*not* simple) by working with interested practitioners.

The seminars were a beginning. But as I mentioned, they are limited. Maria's frustration and anger about the first seminar, and to a lesser degree about the second seminar, was repeated when I tried to do this for a human rights organization.

It is not enough to just see our privilege in an individual exercise, we also need to see how we embody that privilege. As I said before, seeing privilege is tough, but seeing how we embody privilege in our ways of being is very difficult—for me it took seeing myself on video. To increase our awareness, skills, and systems we need to be open to learning about, and to changing, our day-to-day practices that are less than effective and disrespectful.

We need to be open to critical feedback-up, but not too open. ***The key here is in discerning the critical feedback-up.*** In the thesis, I only identified this need. My next step is to learn how practitioners can discern critical feedback-up: the different skills and systems. Seashore, Seashore and Weinberg (1992), in their book, *What Did You Say? The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*, offer some excellent interpersonal skills for receiving feedback. My challenge is to adapt and expand the authors' practical suggestions using the sociocultural lenses of this study. Fortunately I have an opportunity to work with interested practitioners from GLSEN on this issue. For GLSEN's next leadership training institute, we will be facilitating a session on giving and receiving feedback, especially feedback-up, when there are differences in power and status.

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You can not "get" these issues, however, just by "talking about" them. As Calhoun noted, "The challenge of coming to mutual understanding with those very different from ourselves is always thus a challenge to our visceral sensibilities, not just our minds and vocabularies" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 294). Therefore, I need to develop processes and methods that are *experiential*.

My goal is to create mind-body training that supports a two-way empowerment way of being. To do so, I am now in training to become a Kripalu yoga teacher (to learn more about the postures that encourage an openness to learning and to being changed), and as a mind-body practitioner with the Hendricks Institute (to learn more about practical tools for conscious living that encourage learning from every interaction). Again, the challenge here is to adapt the more interpersonal and intrapersonal training to also include the crucial sociocultural dimensions.

The Ripple Effect of Being Open to Learning and to Being Changed

Maria was open to learning new ideas and to being changed because of her positioning, life experience, and education. As a result, she was empowered in interactions with other teachers, the students, and her boyfriend, and this transformed her way of being as a teacher and as a human being.

Because of my contradictory positioning and my struggle as a recovering father's daughter, I was open to learning and to being changed. In exploring two-way empowerment, I was open to Maria's passion about critical feedback-up. This expanded the thesis from exploring two-way empowerment as an exchange of ideas based on different strengths to encouraging two-way empowerment through practitioner openness to

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learning, and to being changed, while working with people who have less power and status.

For practitioners who are open to learning and to being changed, I hope that this dissertation provides ideas and awareness that contribute to your own learning and change process.

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AFTERWORD

Maria left the school shortly after the case study. She now works at a high school dedicated to social change, where she feels very aligned with the mission. In the Fall of 2000, Maria will begin a doctoral program in international and transcultural education.

Maria and I met to review the ethnography. She felt validated. She saw herself at St. Teresa's and enjoyed reading the students' comments. She also found the contradictions glaring with student and faculty comments side by side.

We discussed how easy it is to be subtly paternalistic: either by withholding critical feedback-up (as I did in the case), or by being too open to critical feedback-up (as Maria was discovering in her new environment).

I spoke with the principal of St. Teresa's by phone. Due to the long time lag, the principal did not see the value of reading the case study at this time. She explained that she preferred a personal interchange with Maria.

Maria and the principal recently had this exchange. During the meeting, Maria was encouraged by the principal's openness. Maria has agreed to work with St. Teresa's in their recruiting efforts.

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APPENDIX 1

Introduction Letter to School Principal

Kelly Rae Reineke
Doctoral Student,
Human and Organization Development Program, The Fielding Institute
316 W. 85th St., #3
New York, NY 10024
phone: (212) 787-6786
fax: (212) 579-5021
e-mail: krreineke@igc.org

12 February 1997

Sr. Kate Smith
Director
St. Teresa's
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Sr. Kate:

Maria suggested I contact you to see if you are interested in discussing potential opportunities to work and learn together collaboratively.

I am currently in the process of looking for case studies here in New York for my dissertation inquiry of "Two-Way Empowerment: Practices and Implications." For one of the case studies, I am looking for teacher-student relationships where the teacher not only works to "empower" the students, but also sees it is in her own interest (and that of her institution, race, class, culture, etc.) to "be empowered by" her students. After my conversations with Maria, I believe she could provide an example for other practitioners who seek to increase mutual respect in their empowerment practice but do not know *how*. I would like the opportunity to learn more about *how* Maria actually goes about "two-way empowerment" in her day-to-day interactions with her students—notably, how she talks with her students and her body language.

If your organization believes that the above research possibility is of value for your faculty, staff, students and community given your mission and needs, then I would like to discuss this collaborative research opportunity with you further.

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As a researcher, I also try hard to create and maintain relationships based on mutual respect. I realize that your time is valuable, and that participating in research takes time. My research policy is to offer my services, based on your needs, if you are interested in collaboration. In previous volunteer opportunities (see attached résumé), I have worked with "teams" (current members of the organization) in a course called "Team Skills." This very practical, experiential course includes the following: working as a team given different social-cultural styles; listening and giving feedback. (Please note I gave Nova a copy of the "Team Skills" course brochure prepared in collaboration with colleagues from Ecuador. The course would need to be modified for your culture.) Another area where I have worked with teams is around privilege: becoming aware of our "invisible umbilical cords of privilege," and, more importantly, given our privilege, how we can work in a mutually respectful way with others.

Thank you for taking the time to review this letter. I will call on Monday, February 17, 1997 to see if you are interested in discussing these research and training possibilities further.

Sincerely,

Kelly Rae Reineke

enclosure: Résumé

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APPENDIX 2

Presentation Handouts to School Faculty

18 March 1997

St. Teresa's
XXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX

Dear Faculty and Staff of St. Teresa's,

Tonight I will be talking with you to see if you are interested in working and learning together collaboratively.

I am currently in the process of looking for case studies here in New York for my dissertation inquiry of "Two-Way Empowerment: Practices and Implications." For one of the case studies, I am looking for teacher-student relationships where the teacher not only works to "empower" the students, but also sees it is in her own interest (and that of her institution, race, class, culture, etc.) to "be empowered by" her students.

Tonight I will be outlining my needs as a researcher. In addition, I will also be putting on the table what I can offer your organization in return if you are interested in participating. I realize that your time is valuable, and that participating in research takes time. I try hard to create and maintain relationships based on mutual respect. Therefore, my research policy is to offer my services, based on your needs, if you are interested in collaborating.

Over the next few weeks, I hope you will think about my proposal and discuss whether your organization believes that the research possibility is of value for your faculty, staff, students and community given your mission and needs. If you believe that it might be, then I would like to discuss this collaborative research opportunity with you further.

Sincerely,

Kelly Rae Reineke

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My Needs As A Researcher

Research Goal and "Two-Way Empowerment"

My research goal is to learn how practitioners in the "helping professions" (teachers, organizers, social change agents, social workers, international development coordinators, etc.) are struggling toward what I am calling at least for now, "two-way empowerment". "Two-way empowerment" tries to capture moments in relationships when the "learning" goes both ways. "Empowerment" is loosely defined as teachers *interacting* with students using their intellectual and emotional abilities to increase the strengths, resources, effectiveness, decision-making capacity and well-being of the students[1].

I am interested in learning from teachers who believe that the students they seek to "empower" may also have something to offer them—that is, ideas for the teacher's *own* problems (and those of her/his organization, culture, gender, class, race, etc.). In other words, moments of "two-way empowerment" take place when teachers *recognize* students' strengths in an area where teachers are unfamiliar or struggling; and when teachers are *open* to "being empowered by" students despite differences in power and status (age, profession, gender, class, race, etc.). For example, a math teacher who "empowers" her students in decision-making also *recognizes* and is *open* to "being empowered by" her students from a different cultural background who know how to do more with fewer resources (something nonprofit and financially strapped organizations have struggled with and the industrialized countries are starting to struggle with).

Mutual Respect and Research Questions

At the core of "two-way empowerment" is mutual respect. I am working on this dissertation for myself and other practitioners who would like to increase mutual respect in our day-to-day practice. To do so, I am trying to answer the following questions: What does it look like to recognize students' strengths that are different from your own?; what does openness to "being empowered by" the students look like? How do teachers and students experience moments of "two-way empowerment"? Is working toward "two-way empowerment" significant (does this make a difference in the classroom, for grades, for students long-term)?; does it transform historical relations of power (old hierarchies)?

[1]adapted from Miller, J. B. (1986/1976). *Toward a new psychology of women*. Boston: Beacon Press.

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Faculty as Co-Researchers

I am interested in working and learning with up to three faculty as co-researchers to address the research questions outlined above. Together we would be describing, tracking, and gleaning insights from the day-to-day interactions between the teacher and her/his students in the classroom.

Over the next three to four months, I would spend two days a week at the school:

- attending co-researchers' classes to learn more about *how* they teach and to "hang out" with students (and when possible to help with anything they need)
- attending recess, breaks, lunch, assembly, etc.,
- attending relevant faculty meetings

In the final two weeks, I would spend two to three days at the school:

- conducting two conversational interviews with each co-researcher, to be arranged at their convenience, that are expected to last approximately one and one-half to two hours
- conducting one conversational interview with some of the co-researchers' students arranged at their convenience to last approximately one half-hour
- exploring the significance of the results of the observation, analysis, and interviews with each of the co-researchers (approximately two hours)
- exploring the significance of the results with faculty and then later students (approximately one hour).

What I Have To Offer

My nonpaid services based on and tailored to your needs.

In previous volunteer opportunities (see attached résumé), I have worked with "teams" (current members of the organization) in a course focusing on issues of "difference" at both the interpersonal and intercultural (group identity) levels. Here are a few courses that I can offer:

- facilitate a *"Team Skills" course*: working as a team given different social-cultural styles; listening; and giving feedback. (2 day course that can be adapted to a 4 half-day course)
- facilitate *discussions around "differences"*: given our differences, how can we work in a mutually respectful way with others? (discussion time will vary given your needs)

Note—here I need to stress that I am not an "expert". Instead, I am a middle-class White woman who is struggling with these very same issues. What I can offer, however, are my learnings gained from intercultural experience in Latin America, the Caribbean and the U.S.; insights from studying; and guidelines for group exercises from grassroots practitioner workbooks (*Women, Organizing and Diversity* from Hunter's Education Center for Community Organizing and *OD Tools* from Resource Women).

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APPENDIX 3

Collaborative Working and Learning Agreement

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COLLABORATIVE WORKING AND LEARNING AGREEMENT--D R A F T

Two-Way Empowerment Research

Kelly Reineke(Fielding), Maria Garcia and Sr. Kate Smith (St. Teresa's)

23 May 1997

WHAT *Results and Behavior*	**WHY** *Importance, Rationale*	**WHAT IF** *Possible Obstacles*	**WHAT NEXT** *Summary and Follow-Up*
RESEARCH TIME PERIOD			
1. Time Period Collaborating with St. Teresa's: **5/5/97 through 10/4/97** Note-Collaborative relationship means a working and learning relationship based on an exchange of resources given each of our needs and what we have to offer each other. • **5/7/97 through 6/11/97** Kelly will attend Maria's seventh grade reading class 2-3 times/week, taping, videotaping if permission is granted by parents of students. Other relevant activities may also take place if permitted (assembly, recess, faculty meeting) • **7/13/97 through 8/17/97** Kelly will be out of the country • **8/18/97 through 10/18/97** Kelly will be writing up the dissertation but still will facilitate a "Team Skills" course and attend a few of Maria's classes, and will be requesting help from St. Teresa's and students to understand the research findings.	***Kelly's Needs as a Researcher*** Working together collaboratively, we will be able to try and understand more about two-way empowerment in everyday classroom interaction. <u>Research Questions:</u> • what do two-way empowerment interactions look like? (the way people talk, and their body language) • how do they feel (how do both teachers and students experience two-way empowerment?) • are two-way empowerment interactions significant? (does it make a difference to students, teachers, the school, the community?) Note--other questions will emerge in the study from St. Teresa's faculty/staff and students. ***St. Teresa's's Needs*** One-day seminar "Ways of addressing differences respectfully thru Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills": 5/5/97 One-day seminar: "Team Skills" with new staff at the beginning of the new semester	There may not be enough time to address all these questions. Documenting the events (by taping, videotaping) and day-to-day interaction will only take place with the participants permission. An attached permission slip is attached for your review, Maria can help me translate it. Once approved, the permission slip will be sent home with Maria's 7th grade reading class and homeroom class. The permission slip will briefly describe that I am interested in learning how the students learn from Maria, and, more crucial for the study, *how Maria learns from her students*. Together with the students, we will be talking together and watching the videotapes together for clues in both the dialogue and the body language.	Have St. Teresa's check this agreement, make additions, modifications, deletions--especially in the "What If" box. Make sure this time period is clear and workable with St. Teresa's staff. Check with St. Teresa's for questions about the research questions. Talk with St. Teresa's, get their suggestions, about getting permission from parents and colleagues for the research. St. Teresa's director, Kate Smith, and Maria will review the permission slip, and if approved, distribute to students in Maria's seventh grade reading class and homeroom. Check with St. Teresa's to see if there are other opportunities where teachers and students come together during the research time period.

WHAT *Results and Behavior*	***WHY*** *Importance, Rationale*	***WHAT IF*** *Possible Obstacles*	***WHAT NEXT*** *Summary and Follow-Up*
PARTICIPATE IN St. Teresa's ACTIVITIES			
2. Attend Maria's 7th grade Reading Class until 6/10/97 • **5/27/97** • **5/29/97** • **5/30/97** • **6/3/97** • **6/4/97** • **6/5/97** • **6/6/97** • **6/9/97** • **6/10/97**	Here is the one of the best chances to see moments of two-way empowerment in St. Teresa's teacher-student interactions. In these reading discussions it may be possible to ***capture and document what Maria, a St. Teresa's teacher is doing*** (and not doing) so that other teachers (and others in all the "helping professions") can learn from St. Teresa's and the students.	For the last few weeks, I have just let the students get to know me by my participation in the reading group But at this point in the research, I need the permission of the parents of the students in the reading group and Maria's homeroom to participate in the research (talking with me while being taped, videotaped). If some students do not want to be taped or videotaped, Kelly will rely on note-taking.	Work with St. Teresa's on appropriate way of requesting permission from parents to let students who want to, to participate in the research. Make sure there is no coercion of students.
3. Dialogue with Maria's homeroom: ***"how do students learn from teachers AND teachers learn from students?"*** • **6/6/97**	To learn from students when and how they are able to "teach" teachers, empower them, and/or give teachers feedback (suggestions, constructive criticism, ideas, knowledge)	Because I have only attended one homeroom, the girls who are not in the reading class aren't as used to me. They may not feel as comfortable talking about this. Maria and I discussed potential questions and ways of being respectful in this conversation. Any more ideas?	Check with St. Teresa's if OK. Review again with Maria the proposed process. Verify the date will work for Maria.
4. Attend Recess Periods • **5/30/97** • **6/3/97** • **6/4/97** • **6/6/97** • **6/9/97** • **6/10/97**	To get a chance to "hang out" with the students and faculty and learn more about teacher-student interactions in a less formal way.	Because I have not spent enough time here to bond with the students, it is unlikely I'll be able to do serious "hanging out". There are, however, a few students who have shown that they are comfortable chatting with me.	Check with St. Teresa's if OK
5. Attend an Assembly	To participate in a school-wide meeting and morning ritual. To better understand the context within which Maria's seventh grade class is a part of.	Will I be a distraction to your morning ritual?	Check with St. Teresa's if OK If OK, get a date that is appropriate
6. Attend a Faculty Meeting	Again, to better understand the context within which Maria's seventh grade class is a part of. To update the faculty on the status of the research and the next steps (including planning for the "Team Skills" course in the fall).	St. Teresa's faculty meetings may be too sensitive for me to participate in.	Check with St. Teresa's if OK

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WHAT *Results and Behavior*	***WHY*** *Importance, Rationale*	***WHAT IF*** *Possible Obstacles*	***WHAT NEXT*** *Summary and Follow-Up*
INTERVIEWS			
7. **Informal Interviews** with Maria, the students, faculty and staff throughout the research time period. (appropriate meetings to be taped) **Pre-Summer Interviews** 8. **Interview Maria Four Times** (1.5 hrs each time taped) 9. **Interview interested faculty/staff Twice (1 hour each time taped)** 10. **Interview Interested Students** (1 hour each time taped) **Post-Summer Interviews** 11. **Interview/discuss w/ Maria about all the research once completed:** context, interaction documentation, interviews (2 hrs taped) 12. **Interview/discuss w/Maria's students once research completed** (1 hr taped) 13. **Interview/discuss w/St. Teresa's faculty/staff once research completed.**(1 hour taped)	To get St. Teresa's's advice on carrying out the research: how to be most ethical, best ways of learning about two-way empowerment, understanding the teacher-student interactions and educational context of St. Teresa's, etc. To learn how each individual experiences two-way empowerment, either directly or indirectly. Is two-way empowerment significant? for the students, for teachers, for the school, for the community, for the larger educational system, for social change? To demonstrate some of the significant strengths of St. Teresa's and the potential contribution of St. Teresa's to other educational institutions and helping professionals in different disciplines.	Time is tight. Will there be time for these conversations and interviews before the summer break?	Set up a draft discussion/interview schedule for the pre-summer interviews. Ask other faculty/staff members if they would be interested in participating in the research via interviews.

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WHAT *Results and Behavior*	***WHY*** *Importance, Rationale*	***WHAT IF*** *Possible Obstacles*	***WHAT NEXT*** *Summary and Follow-Up*
SEMINARS			
14. Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills Seminar (9 am - 3 PM) 5 May 1997	Ideas for dealing with differences respectfully and increasing effectiveness		Done!
15. Team Skills Seminar (Social Styles, Listening, Feedback) (9 am - 5 PM)	Ideas for increasing team effectiveness and relationships by learning more about the different social styles Listening and Feedback **Present some of the research findings to date	"Team Skills" is the course we participated in on 5 May 1997 plus Social Styles. How much repeat from the previous course do you want in the next one?	Adapt this course to St. Teresa's culture and needs. Set a date for the fall.
FEEDBACK			
16. Coaching/Feedback for Kelly in interactions with St. Teresa's faculty-staff and students, plus as a facilitator in the seminars.	Kelly needs to know if she is disrespecting or disempowering anyone through either: • things she says or • through her body language or • through her actions as a researcher. Kelly needs to learn this so she can increase her consciousness, but more importantly, so she can change her behavior so it is aligned with her intentions of ***mutual respect and two-way empowerment.***	Is St. Teresa's OK with giving Kelly feedback even when it is uncomfortable?	Learn from St. Teresa's how to signal openness to feedback.

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APPENDIX 4

Seminar 1 Handouts, Flip Charts: "Ways of Addressing Differences Respectfully through Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills"

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flip 1: PROPOSED AGENDA

St. Teresa's
One-Day Faculty Seminar: Ways of Addressing Differences Respectfully through Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness and Skills
5 May 1997

Offered and Facilitated by Kelly Rae Reineke
for St. Teresa's Participation in "Two-Way Empowerment" Research

Morning Introduction (9:00 - 10:30 a.m.)

- Kelly's Introduction: Propose Plan for the Day, What This Seminar "Is" and What This Seminar "Is Not", Groundrules (all subject to approval by the group): .
- Check-In: what are the different strengths at St. Teresa's?
- Addressing Differences Respectfully (not "the" answer, just some ideas)
  1. Intercultural Awareness and Skills
     AND
  2. Interpersonal Awareness and Skills

Break (10:30 - 10:45 a.m.)

Intercultural and Interpersonal Awareness, *Listening Skills* Practice (10:45-12:30 p.m.)

- Intercultural Skills: (overview)
- *Intercultural Awareness Exercise*
- Interpersonal Awareness (brief description of "overfunctioning/underfunctioning"):
- Interpersonal Skills* (practice)
  Listening Skills
  - focusing on others

Lunch (12:30 - 1:30 p.m.)

Feedback Skills (Practice) (1:30 - 2:30 p.m.)

- Constructive Feedback (practice writing constructive feedback only)
- Positive Feedback (volunteers can practice giving feedback)
  - focusing on others' strengths

Closing (2:30 - 3:00 p.m.)

- Check-Out: what is the most valuable thing you learned today that you can use?

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Flip 2: Groundrules, Reminder

GROUNDRULES

- work on awareness/skills
  vs.
- working through issues

- speak for yourself, not others
- level of sharing is up to you
- *Have Fun!*

REMINDER

- exceptions to tendencies

we are both
- members of cultural groups
- unique individuals

example: father's daughter

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Flip 3 Facilitator-Researcher Role, Spirit

FACILITATOR-RESEARCHER ROLE

Share → SE Adapts [Useful As Is] [Useful w/changes] [Not useful]

- Learn
- Intentions ———————— Behavior, Actions
  Caring
  (being effective, respectful)

SPIRIT

- because people are in constant flux, capable of amazing transformations, why should I pin them motionless with a judgment of good or bad
  (Tao Te Ching)
- compassion for self and others(St. Teresa of Lisieux)

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Flip 4: Different Strengths

ST. TERESA'S DIFFERENT STRENGTHS-CONTRIBUTIONS
• INDIVIDUAL • CULTURAL • KNOWLEDGE AREAS

(each member of the group offered 1 or 2 listed below)

- families warm, affectionate
- perseverance
- spirituality-contributes to growth beyond...
- spirituality, faith, learned from folks here
- choice to be here, belief in St. Teresa's
- commitment by volunteer staff
- atmosphere: love, warmth,
- support from families
- kids love of music and dance
- levelheadedness, creativity
- new school freedom: creativity to change
- courage to believe and act the vision
- sense of humor, critically thinking/reflecting on St. Teresa's
- excitement in working with parents given knowledge areas
- people bring experience with them, fresh eyes
- faculty/staff give kids the benefit of the doubt vs. labeling
- teachers as "researchers in action", trying something new
- bringing diverse life experiences to teaching

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Flip 5: Power and Umbilical Cord of Privilege

DESPITE INTENTIONS, ↓ **EFFECTIVENESS,** ↓ **RESPECT, RELATIONSHIPS**

WHY?

- Intercultural Position Advantage (gender, class, race, ethnicity, etc.)
- Tendency to Focus on our Disadvantages: Unaware/Uncomfortable with Advantages
- INVISIBLE/NEON --> Resentment
- Permeates Consciousness and Behavior
- More Powerful: Self-Group as "Std", Normal, Others Deficient

POTENTIAL COSTS:

- Missed Opportunities to Learn

"Help" is Less Effective
- Underestimate how tough situation is
  - logistics
  - day-to-day poor treatment
- Underestimate how resourceful others are

- Both Helping Professionals and Colleagues Feeling:
  - resentful
  - disrespected
  - disempowered
  - frustrated/confused

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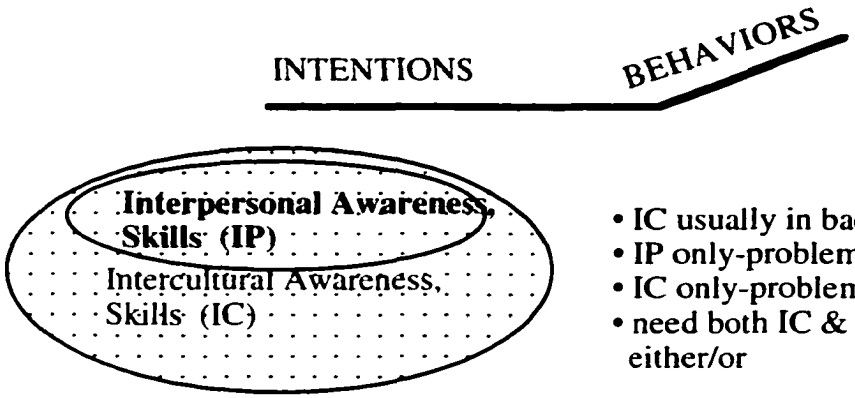
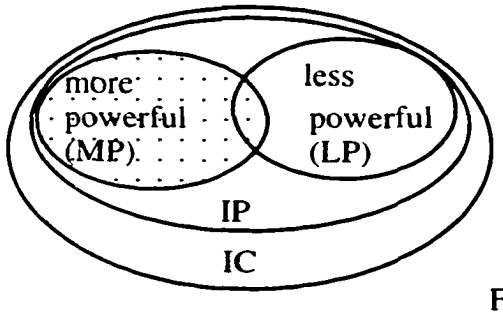
Flip 6: Intercultural-Interpersonal Awareness, Skills Overview



- IC usually in background
- IP only-problems
- IC only-problems
- need both IC & IP not either/or



- MP usually in background: one-up /one-down
- Need both MP and LP

FOCUS TODAY: IC, MP yet all responsible

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Flip 7: Intercultural Awareness and Skills

INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS & SKILLS

Kelly's Idea, Model:

- Increase Awareness of IC Position (Dimensions) Exercise
- Acknowledging IC Position
- Day-to-Day LISTENING: Focusing on the different strengths of others
- Requesting FEEDBACK and dialogue from less powerful IC positions
- LISTENING to FEEDBACK (bringing behavior in line with intentions)

ACTIVITIES

- *Individual Exercise* (see attached 2 page "Increasing Intercultural Awareness: Exploring the Different Dimensions of your Intercultural Position")
- *Small Group Exercise*--with 1 or 2 others you feel comfortable with, share experience of doing the individual exercise
  - surprises?
  - how did you feel?
  - anything hit home/trigger memories?
  - significance of increasing awareness of advantaged dimensions and IC - position?

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Flip 8: Increasing Interpersonal Awareness and Skills

INCREASING INTERPERSONAL AWARENESS AND SKILLS

PROBLEM: one-up/one-down

IDEAS for Increasing IP Awareness:
- Increase Awareness of life history, experiences you bring
- Increase Awareness of Multiple Realities
- Increase Awareness of Overfunctioning/Underfunctioning--esp. helping professions

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY
- if possible, new people
- discuss any insights, responses to increasing IP awareness

SKILLS (next)
- Styles (later)
- LISTENING
- FEEDBACK

Flip 9: Listening Skills and Model

LISTENING SKILLS

Spirit:
- Curiosity
- Focus on the Speaker
- Capture Their Point of View NOT Yours

Try Not To:
- interrupt
- talk a lot
- distract the speaker

LISTENING MODEL

Information Gathering ——>	*Problem Solving*
paying attention	summarize the problem
reinforcing	what have you tried so far?
restating	would you like some ideas?
questioning	offer idea, check for reaction

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Flip 10: Listening Skills Explained

FOCUS ON THE SPEAKER

- Paying Attention
  - Body language
  - Single Focus
- Reinforcing
  - Body Language, gestures
  - Encouraging sounds
- Restating — Briefly, in speaker's words, not too often
- Questioning
  - Invite Speaker to Amplify a Theme
  - Clarify

NOT
- Diverting
- Expressing your point of view
- Problem Solving

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Flip 11: Benefits of Listening

BENEFITS OF LISTENING

Increase Effectiveness	**Increase Relationships (Mutual Respect)**
• increase information flow	• increase knowledge of each other
• increase accuracy	• decrease defensiveness
• increase ownership	• increase mutuality
	• increase respect for the speaker
	• increase bonding
	• decrease miscommunication, conflict

Flip 12: Listening Practice

LISTENING PRACTICE

- IC Position Exercise Notes
- Pick 1 Partner you are comfortable with (not the high dive)
- Pick who will be Speaker, Listener in 1st round
- Listener: use, practice: paying attention, reinforcing, restating, questions and **FOCUS ON THE SPEAKER**
- Speaker: talk about experience of IC Position exercise
- 5 minutes, debrief, switch, debrief
- Roving Facilitator (raise hands for help), 1 minute warning
- Debriefing Questions
  - 1 thing Listener did well
  - 1 thing Listener could improve

Improvement Not Perfection

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Flip 13: Feedback Overview

FEEDBACK

- increase effectiveness, increase relationships (mutual respect) thru clear expectations
- *Spirit:* to help someone improve (vs. hurting others, zingers)

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

When is it time
- gossiping about others
- way you are thinking about others
- change in relationship with others

Avoid
- absolutes (never, always)
- Name calling
- Loud voice
- repeating bad situation, story over and over
- overloading

Ideas
- Get their perspective
- *Be specific: Camera Check vs. General*
- Timely
- Clear Consequences
  - how it impacted you
    - You
    - Team
    - Project Results
-
- How to improve

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Flip 14: Positive Feedback

POSITIVE FEEDBACK: bringing it all together

- Focus on different strengths
- Same skills
  - specific (camera check)
  - timely
  - clear consequences

PRACTICE

- ***Focusing on a Student's Different Strengths***
  - obstacles they've dealt with (past, present)
  - how tough their situation is (logistics, day-to-day poor treatment)
  - what have they achieved?
  - what do they know that you don't?
  - what are they better at than you?

- Volunteers to share Positive Feedback Messages?

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Flip 15: CHECK-OUT

1 or 2 Key Learnings you can apply to St. Teresa's day-to-day practice

- acknowledging other realities
- recognize different students' strengths (positive feedback)
- acknowledge advantages (IC position)
- Listening
- constructive feedback to students (specific, consequences)
- pay attention to when it is time for feedback (keep thinking about it in shower), time to Act
- overfunctioning/underfunctioning
- focus on the speaker
- specific positive feedback
- writing out anger
- concrete ways, feedback can open a dialogue
- recognize my own triggers
- articulation of ambiguities
- now we have a common language-defuse conflicts
- what do they know that I don't know, that I can learn from them
- feedback
- listening key questions, recognizing some people don't want advice or problem solving now but later, just want listening.

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APPENDIX 5

"Increasing Intercultural Awareness"

Seminar 1 Exercise

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INCREASING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS: Exploring the Different Dimensions of Your Intercultural Position

Note: This form will not be collected, nor will you be asked to share the content. Later you will be asked to talk about the experience of filling out the form, but not the content unless you choose to. Also, you do not have to fill out anything on this form you are uncomfortable with.

- People tend to focus on dimensions where they are disadvantaged. While several of these dimensions depend on the particular context, try to view each dimension to see if you have advantages relative to some (not all) in that dimension.
- Try just to get an idea rather than worrying about this being "right" or "wrong".

Different Dimensions of your Intercultural Position	**Your Description**	**Advantaged (highlight) or Disadvantaged (circle).**
Race		
Ethnicity		
Nationality		
Class		
Gender		
Sexual Orientation		
Able-Bodied or Disabled		
Religion		
Age		
Education (School Status)		
Professional Experience (Organization Status)		
Profession		
Current Residence		
Contacts/Networks both family and professional (resources, emotional and financial if you are in trouble; getting jobs, etc.)		

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Your experience of this exercise

Feelings/Thoughts/Memories Triggered in filling out this sheet?

The *Different Dimensions of Your Intercultural Position* is not a complete list, what do you see missing?

Any other feelings/thoughts about the exercise or anything else? [use other side]

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APPENDIX 6

Seminar 2 Handouts, Flip Charts:

"Working Effectively and Respectfully with Different Styles and Differences in Relational Power"

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WORKING EFFECTIVELY AND RESPECTFULLY WITH
• DIFFERENT STYLES and*
• DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONAL POWER

for the staff of St. Teresa's Facilitated by Kelly Rae Reineke in exchange for St. Teresa's participation in the "Two-Way Empowerment" research

27 August 1997

Process

Time Beg	Time End	Discussion/Activity
1:00	1:10	*Introductions*
1:10	1:15	*Exercise:* Body Language Exercise Increasing Awareness of Our Actions
1:15	1:45	*What Are The Different Styles??* Introducing the Different Styles (Intro) 5 minutes
1:45	1:50	*Individual Exercise:* What styles are you more and less comfortable with?
1:45	2:30	*Small Group Exercise* What Is Your Style? • Groups of 3 people • Spend five minutes on each person,
2:30	2:45	***BREAK***
2:45	3:05	Giving and Receiving Feedback to and from those • Less Powerful Than You • More Powerful Than You
3:05	3:10	Individual Exercise: Receiving Feedback from Less Powerful (Teachers, Students)
3:10	3:25	Small Group Exercise: • Groups of Two People • Practice Receiving Feedback from Less Powerful
3:25	3:30	Individual Exercise: Feedback Systems
3:30	3:45	Discuss in Small Groups of 3-4 People
3:45	4:00	Check Out: Most Useful Thing You Learned and How You Will Put It Into Practice

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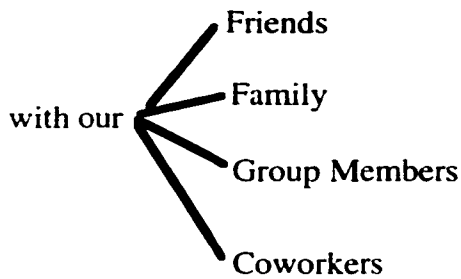
FLIP 1: INTRODUCTIONS

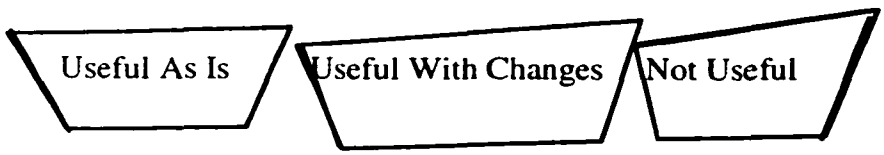
WORKING EFFECTIVELY AND RESPECTFULLY WITH
- DIFFERENT STYLES AND
- DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONAL POWER



Name?
Where Are You From?

FLIP 2: ADAPT THESE SKILLS TO YOUR NEEDS

This Seminar Needs To Be Adapted To Your Culture and Needs



Exceptions to the Tendencies

Have Fun!!

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FLIP 3: INTRODUCTION TO STYLES*

INTRODUCTION TO STYLES

Goal: Awareness of Actions, of Self and Others (Body Movement and Voice)

Different Styles≠Less Than

Each Style is Important for the Family, Group or Work Team
(Styles are Complementary)

One Style is NOT Better Than The Other, Each Style has
- Strengths
- Weaknesses

Remember:
- *not all descriptions apply*
- *base style, secondary style*
- *back-up styles (stress)*

Increase Understanding, Reduce Tension

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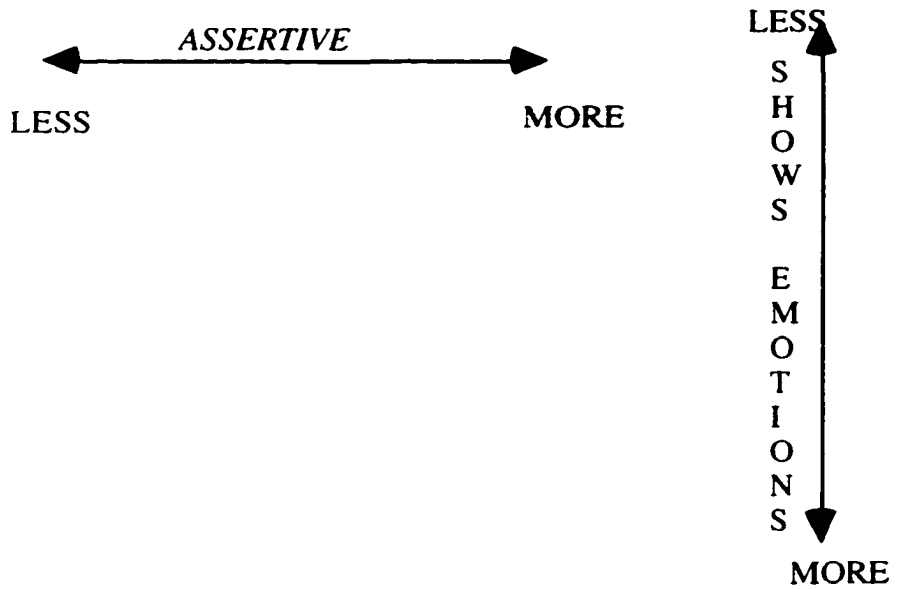
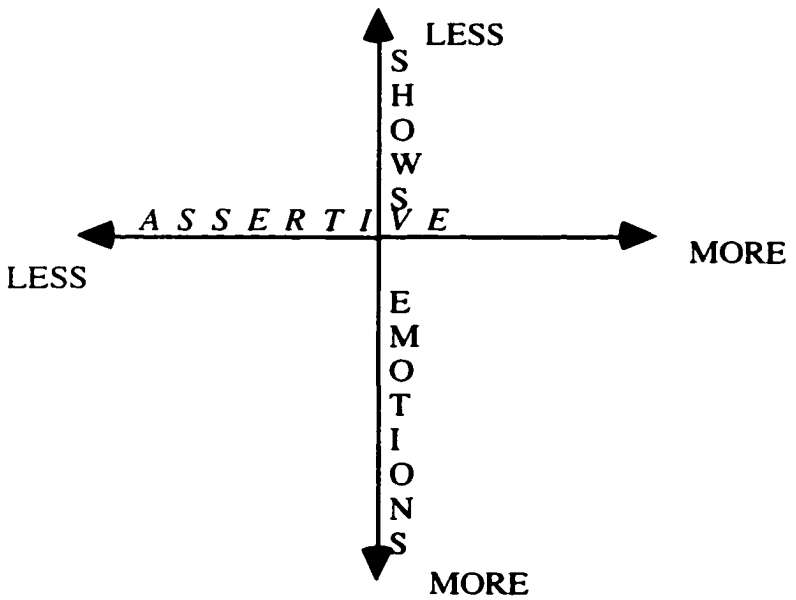
FLIP 4: TWO KEY DIMENSIONS:
HOW ASSERTIVE?, SHOWS EMOTIONS ?





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FLIP 6: SOME AN TENDENCIES

AN

Examples of Professions: Administrators, Accountants, Lawyers, Judges, Computers, etc.

Some Tendencies:

- Want you to be exact, sequential, logical
- Hate to make mistakes
- Like to follow rules
- LOVE DETAILS
  Not as comfortable with emotions, withdraw
- Need Space (not in their face)
- More quiet in big groups

Examples??

FLIP 7: SOME AM TENDENCIES

AM

Examples of Professions: Nurses, Teachers, Parents (Mothers Historically), Social Workers

Some Tendencies:

- Love helping people
- unselfish
- some taken advantage of—too nice
- family oriented group
- wants everyone to get along

Examples??

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FLIP 8: SOME EX TENDENCIES

EX

Examples of Professions: Sales, Team Leaders, Politics, Creatives (Arts, Drama), Trainers

Some Tendencies:

- Fun
- Spontaneous (do things without planning)
- Impulsive
- Likes to be in the spotlight
- Passionate
- Committed
- Emotional
- Ideas, Creativity
- More Ups and Downs

Examples??

FLIP 9: SOME DR

DR

Examples of Professions: Directors, Production Managers, Principals,

Some Tendencies:

- Like to be in control
- Leaders
- Impatient Sometimes
- Hate Wasting Time
- Confident (others see them often as arrogant)
- Like to Get Things Done
- SERIOUS

Examples??

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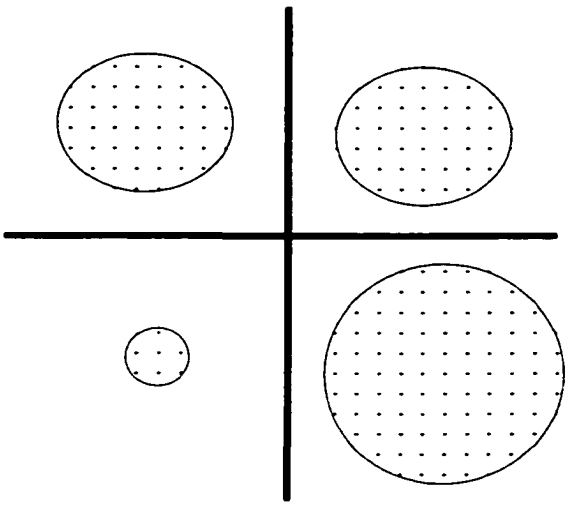
FLIP 10: INDIVIDUAL STYLE EXERCISE

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: WHAT STYLES ARE YOU MORE AND LESS COMFORTABLE WITH?



FLIP 11: STYLE EXERCISE

EXERCISE: WHAT IS YOUR STYLE?

Groups of 3 People

Spend 5 Minutes on Each Person. What is their Style?

- - - - - - -

What did you learn about yourself?

What did you learn about others?

How Can Each Style Be More Effective and Respectful?

What 1 Strength Do You Want To Learn From Another Style?

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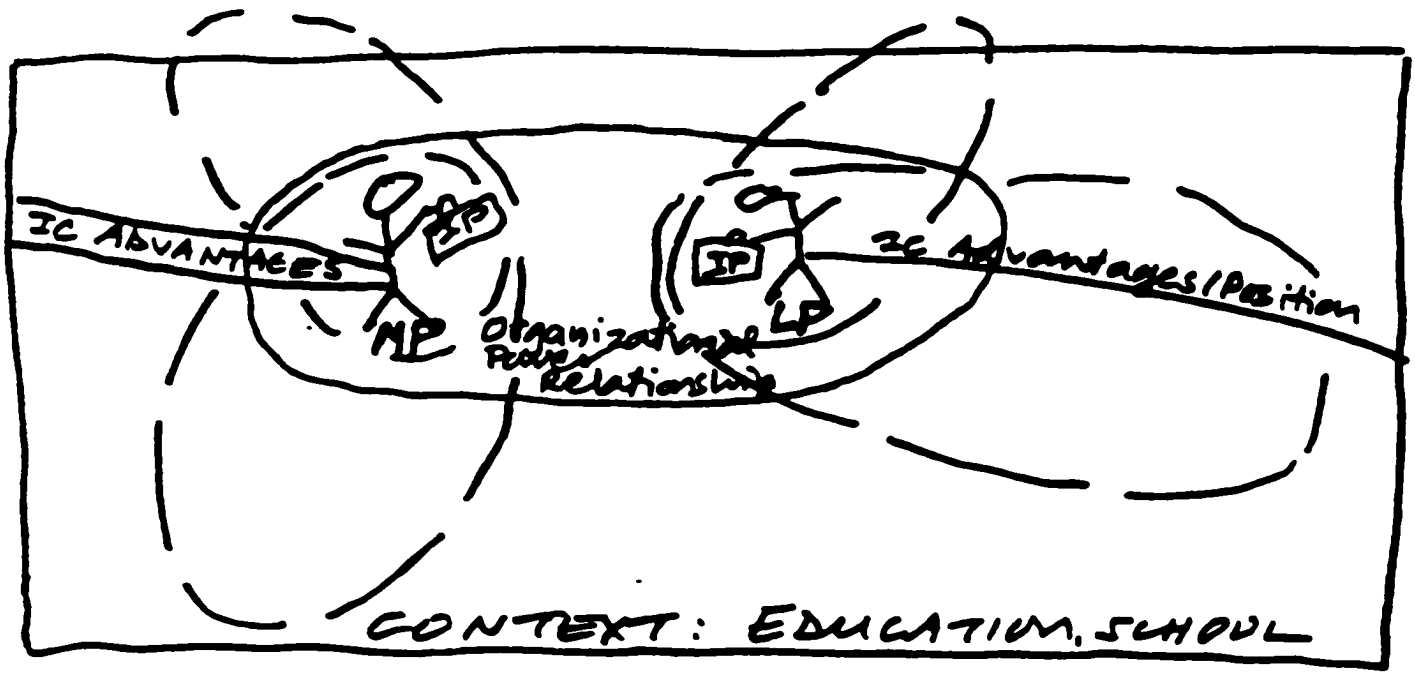
FLIP 12:

DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONAL POWER



Who Has The Whole Picture?

What Does Each One Have That The Other Is Unaware Of?

What Is A Potential Problem In Giving/Receiving Feedback?

What Are The Advantages Of Seeing Other Perspectives?

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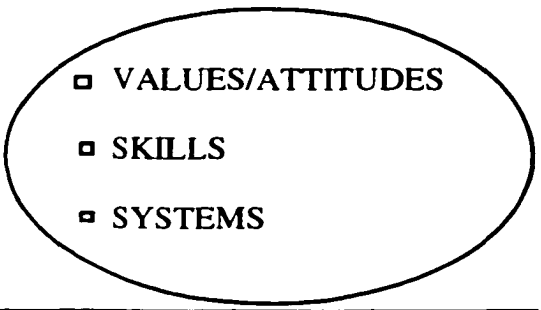
FLIP 13: CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

GOAL: Mutual Respect in Day-to-Day Practice
Bringing Behavior in Line with Intentions
HOW?



Thanks to Dr. Marty Seldman for above illustration

FLIP 14: TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT EVOLVING MODEL

TWO-WAY EMPOWERMENT MODEL (Continuously Evolving)

- Increase Awareness of Intercultural Position (Dimensions Exercise)
- Acknowledge Intercultural Position
- Day-to-Day LISTENING: Focusing on Different Strengths of Others
- **Model GIVING FEEDBACK**
- **Model RECEIVING FEEDBACK**
- Request FEEDBACK from Less Powerful
- **Continuous SYSTEMS for GIVING and RECEIVING FEEDBACK with the Less Powerful**

Note: Additions in **bold** from previous version of model presented at first seminar Thanks to Maria for helping me to see what was needed by modeling it in the classroom.

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***FLIP 15: KNEE-JERK REACTIONS* When Receiving FEEDBACK from Less Powerful**

In Our Quest for **STATUS**
- we deceive ourselves, to deceive others better

How? Core **HYPOCRISY** seen by Sages [Jesus, Buddha]
- we put down others
- we obscure our own faults

BIASED MORAL ACCOUNTING SYSTEM in MONITORING EXCHANGES
- we remember who owes us
- we forget, hide who we owe [time, money, ideas, support]

RETRIBUTION
- helps deal w/cheater problem [taking more than giving]
  BUT we don't punish only cheaters, moral acctg system biased toward self
- acute sensitivity to **BETRAYAL**

MORAL INDIGNATION (decrease by 50%)
to discourage all exploitation emphatically

Gear treatment of others to their **STATUS**

LANGUAGE as press agent
- inconsistencies drop out
- to win, not the truth

Sources: Evolutionary Psychology, Social Psychology

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FLIP 16: POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

VICIOUS CYCLES, CONTRADICTIONS, DOUBLE-BINDS

DISRESPECTFUL Comment Act <----------> **RESENTMENT**
[put down less powerful
hide our own warts]

I WANT YOUR FEEDBACK
[RETRIBUTION]

punished either way?
can you leave the field?

1. *RESPONDS TO FEEDBACK AS **BETRAYAL***
   due to **BIASED MORAL ACCTG**
   perceived as taking more than giving
   "After all we've done for you"

2. *TELLS LESS POWERFUL HOW THEY SHOULD FEEL*
   "You should be happy and grateful"

3. *NO SPACE FOR SADNESS*
   Sadness associates w/badness and ingratitude

4. *TELLS LESS POWERFUL THEIR PERCEPTION IS DISTORTED*
   "This is your crap, your emotional problems"

5. *SAYING NOTHING, TREATING POORLY THEREAFTER*

6. *FIRING LESS POWERFUL*
   WITHDRAWING LOVE

only escape from Double-Bind is to comment on the situation--but often seen as SLAP!

WALKING ON EGGSHELLS

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FLIP 17: GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK WITH THE LESS POWERFUL

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK WITH THE LESS POWERFUL

1. **SETTING THE TONE**
   - modeling as much as possible
   - give first when possible
   - systems

2. **GETTING CENTERED**
   - not in CRISIS mode
   - Self-Talk -"I've got something to learn, she has a different perspective that I don't see" [given umbilical cord of privilege and multiple realities]
     -"I may be missing out on some crucial information for me, the school, etc."

3. **RECEIVING FEEDBACK**
   - Don't REACT immediately [explaining, rationalizing]
   - LISTEN [pay attn, reinforce, restate, approp. questions, INQUIRE]
   - State your point of view w/examples, your constraints

Criticism-->Defensiveness-->Criticism-->Defensiveness->Criticism-->Defensiveness

To break the cycle, LISTEN
get as much INFORMATION as you can
then **RESPOND** [vs. reacting]

One idea: always accept some criticism....setting the tone

COURAGE
FORGIVENESS

Thanks to Rich Carson of Monitor Company for sharing ideas on continuous feedback systems

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APPENDIX 7

Letter to Parents: Photography, Videotaping Permission Slip

27 May 1997

Dear Parent(s):

I am a doctoral student at the Fielding Institute, a graduate school in the social sciences, and I am working and learning with St. Teresa's. I am currently trying to understand how students learn from their teachers, *and*, more importantly, how teachers learn from their students.

Your child's teacher, Ms. Garcia, believes that your child has a lot to offer the faculty and staff at St. Teresa's, and a lot to share with teachers in general. I would like to capture the two-way learning process (teachers and students learning from each other) so that other teachers (both here in New York City and internationally) who are interested can learn how to be more effective and mutually respectful by learning from their students.

To capture the two-way learning process, I would like to videotape Ms. Garcia and her students in day-to-day interaction. Then I would like to study and discuss the videotapes with Ms. Garcia and the students to see what we can learn that will help other interested teachers.

These videotapes will be used for research purposes only and, in addition to Ms. Garcia and the students, will be viewed only by myself and, possibly, by two or three faculty members and doctoral students at the Fielding Institute. They will not be broadcast or used in any other context. Should any other occasion arise in which it could be useful to others to see them, I will contact you to ask for your explicit permission to show them on that occasion only, and you have the right to refuse. These videotapes will be kept securely in my possession under lock and key and no-one else will have access to them.

I will not do any videotaping without the permission of both your child and you as a parent (or parents or guardian). Please indicate on the slip below whether you are comfortable with your child's participation in the videotaping and the discussions, please sign the slip below and have your child return it to Ms. Garcia. If you have any questions or concern, please feel free to call me at 212-787-6786, or Ms. Garcia.

Thank you for taking the time to review this request.

Sincerely,

Kelly Rae Reineke

_____ does _____

(your child's name here) does not ____

have permission to participate in the two-way learning process project. (videotaping, discussions)

_____ _____

(date) (parent's signature)

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