

# *Against Repetition: Addressing Resistance to Anti-Oppressive Change in the Practices of Learning, Teaching, Supervising, and Researching*

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*In this article, Kevin K. Kumashiro draws on his experience as a teacher, teacher educator, and education researcher to analyze how anti-oppressive educators may operate in ways that challenge some forms of oppression yet unintentionally comply with others. Drawing on Butler's work, which views oppression in society as being characterized by harmful repetitions of certain privileged knowledge and practices, the author examines how theories of anti-oppressive education can help educators learn, teach, and supervise student teachers, and conduct educational research in ways that work against such harmful repetitions. Kumashiro describes incidents in which his students sought knowledge that confirmed what they already knew, and when he as the teacher unintentionally missed opportunities to resist this repetition and guide his students through an emotional crisis. Using the framework of repetition, Kumashiro challenges anti-oppressive activists and educators to disrupt some of their own unconscious commonsense discourses that serve as barriers to social change.*

Recently, education researchers have articulated many theories about and provided many illustrations of ways that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression play out in schools (Apple, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Lipkin, 2000). Their varying conceptu-

alizations of the nature and dynamics of oppression have suggested to educators a range of approaches to challenging and changing oppression in schools (for a summary of these approaches, see Kumashiro, 2000b). By critiquing what has become accepted by many in society as conventional wisdom, or common sense, in classrooms, teacher-education programs, and research communities, and by offering alternatives that explicitly aim to work against the ways that oppression is already playing out in schools and society, such anti-oppressive efforts in research and practice do much to change the status quo of education.

However, in my experience, these efforts to challenge oppression are not free of contradictions. Anti-oppressive approaches to teaching and researching operate in ways that challenge some forms of oppression while complying with others (Kumashiro, 2001). This complicity is not always intentional or visible. Students, educators, and researchers, including those committed to social justice, often want certain forms of social change but resist others, sometimes knowingly, sometimes not (Kumashiro, 1999, 2000a). One reason that a desire for social change can coincide with a resistance to social change is that some educational practices, perspectives, social relations, and identities remain unquestioned. In fact, people often consider some practices and relations to be part of what schools and society are supposed to be, and fail to recognize how the repetition of such practices and relations — how having to experience them again and again — can help to maintain the oppressive status quo of schools and society.

Butler (1997) tells us that oppression can often be characterized by the repetition in society of regulatory identities, knowledge, and practices. In particular, what is oppressive is having to experience, again and again, the privileging of only certain ways of identifying, thinking, or relating to others. The privileging of certain identities and the marginalizing of others happens when members of and institutions in society learn to associate these identities and groups with differentiating markers. Examples include associating Whiteness with Americanness, Asianness with foreignness; maleness with strength, femaleness with weakness; or heterosexuality with normalcy, homo- or bisexuality with queerness. When social interactions, legal protections, and religious teaching continuously perpetuate these associations (as when stereotyping Asian Americans, failing to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, or teaching that men are leaders of the household), what can result are the systematic inclusion and exclusion of different groups, valuing and denigrating of different identities, and normalizing and dismissing of different practices. Often, these forms of repetition are masked by popular notions of the “authentic” American, the “traditional” gender roles, and the “natural” sexual orientation, and, therefore, are hard to recognize. In fact, because these popular notions of authenticity, tradition, and nature offer a sense of identity, belonging, and normalcy, people often un-

knowingly desire what is oppressive. People often desire repetition and resist anti-oppressive change.

Such desire for repetition does not disappear when people, including educators engaging in anti-oppressive research and teaching, commit to working for social justice. Even while interrupting some forms of repetition, they often continue to desire and partake in other forms, primarily because the oppressiveness of such repetition remains invisible. In this article, I examine some ways that educational practices, particularly anti-oppressive ones, both confront and participate in potentially harmful repetition. Specifically, I focus on ways that desire among students, educators, and researchers to repeat certain practices often translates into resistance to anti-oppressive change. I organize my arguments around four practices in the field of education — learning, teaching, supervising student teachers, and conducting educational research — as I explore what it could mean to work against the repetition that hinders anti-oppressive change. I argue that addressing resistance to anti-oppressive change requires addressing our desire for certain harmful practices to be repeated.

I recognize that not all forms of repetition are harmful; some forms can be helpful in movements for social justice. Nor is the goal to find learning, teaching, supervising, or research practices that are fully anti-oppressive. All practices are helpful in some ways, but not in others. They are partial in both senses of the word: they are incomplete, addressing only certain problems; and they are biased, informed by what is known and limited by what is not. Nonetheless, I argue that many efforts made toward social justice are encumbered by harmful repetitions, and that engaging in anti-oppressive education requires constantly working against these oppressive tendencies. Much takes place in classrooms, teacher-education programs, and research communities and processes that, despite our good intentions, actually contribute to oppression.

My own experiences are illustrative. Over the past few years, I have researched anti-oppressive education and attempted to put theory into practice as both a classroom teacher and teacher educator. During this time, I have repeatedly confronted resistance to anti-oppressive change, even among people, including myself, who have made explicit their commitment to social justice. Throughout this article, I draw on my experiences working in the field of education to describe some of the barriers I have encountered to anti-oppressive change. I argue that certain ideas about what it means to learn, to teach, to supervise student teachers, and to conduct educational research have become so entrenched in schools and universities that my students and colleagues and I often accept anti-oppressive change only insofar as it conforms to those ideas. In particular, I argue that our desire to work for social justice often contradicts and is superceded by our desire to repeat only certain ideas of what educational work is “supposed” to be.

## Learning against Repetition

Anti-oppressive educators have long recognized the problematic nature of biased, non-inclusive curricula that are Eurocentric (Asante, 1991), male centered (Kenway & Willis, 1998), heterosexist (Lipkin, 2000), or class biased (Apple, 1995). By focusing on only certain stories and perspectives, such curricula normalize and privilege certain groups in society while marginalizing others. For students who gain such partial knowledge, the impact can be far reaching, influencing not only how they think about and relate to others, but also how they think and feel about themselves. Students enter school with a range of identities and life experiences, only some of which may be represented favorably in the curriculum. Inclusive curricula, therefore, are important not only for learning to embrace various social differences, but also for affirming oneself.

Britzman (1998a) tells us that students, at least subconsciously, want learning that affirms their identities, experiences, perspectives, and values. However, she also tells us that, to learn in anti-oppressive ways, students need to do much more than learn that which affirms how they already understand themselves and what they already believe. Simultaneously and contradictorily, students also need to interrupt their desire to see their identifications, perspectives, and values repeated. They need to interrupt their resistance to disruptive, disaffirming knowledge. Reflecting on my own classroom experiences, I can think of at least three situations in which my students' desire to see their identifications and knowledge repeated seemed to hinder their learning and change. All three situations occurred when I taught in teacher-education and educational studies programs at small, undergraduate liberal arts colleges in the eastern United States.

The first situation involved students' resistance to thinking differently about themselves. In an advanced course on the relationship between schools and society, I had assigned an essay early in the semester in which my students were to draw on course readings as they analyzed how their identities and life experiences influenced their K-12 schooling experiences. I also required them to examine some of the ways they were both privileged and marginalized in school.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the assignment was for them to explore how the readings might help them to think differently about their experiences in school. I wanted the students to explore what new insights are possible when they use different theoretical lenses to make sense of who they are and what they have experienced. As I collected their essays, I asked for feedback on the assignment. Some students complained that they had diffi-

<sup>1</sup> My description in the course syllabus stated that the class examined, among other things, ways that schools perpetuate social inequities. Therefore, I assumed that, by taking this course, students demonstrated their interest in learning such perspectives, and perhaps in challenging these inequities as well.

culty connecting their lives to the course readings because they did not see themselves in the readings.

For example, some students wanted to talk about their religious identities, but the course readings focused primarily on identifications of race, social class, gender, and sexual orientation. Other students wanted to talk about race, about their experiences as Latina or Black or White American students, but such identities were not central in the primary course reading on race relations and racial identities. I had assigned Lee's (1996) ethnography of Asian American students in an urban high school for its theories on the relationship between identity and academic achievement, for its concrete data on intra- and interracial relations, and for its critique of the Black-White framework that dominates discussions of race in the United States. I had explained to students that their task was not to find places in the readings that simply mirrored their own lives but to examine how the readings suggested new frameworks for understanding how their racial identities mattered in school. I pointed out that finding instances where the text confirmed their sense of self would not necessarily result in their learning anything they did not already know.

The second situation involved students' resistance to thinking differently about "good" teaching. Toward the end of the semester, student groups were responsible for leading portions of class sessions. One session focused on how educators can make more connections between schools and the communities and lives of their students; the primary course reading was Ladson-Billings's (1994) study of culturally relevant pedagogy. The students leading the session wanted to bring our discussion from the abstract to the concrete, so they ended class by asking students to spend a few minutes writing about whether they thought our course was "culturally relevant," and why or why not. Students then passed around their responses and read aloud one another's writings, anonymously. Some students felt the course was culturally relevant: it addressed a range of issues related to cultural differences and the marginalization of certain groups of students; it invited students to connect the theories in the readings to their own life experiences; and it required students to address issues of social inequity through research projects with local schools and educators.

Other students felt the course was not culturally relevant to them because they did not see themselves in the curriculum: it focused much more on marginalized groups in society than on the White American, middle-class, heterosexual mainstream that presumably comprised the majority of the students in the course; and it emphasized "liberal" and "politically correct" views that left little room to explore more traditional perspectives on and approaches to teaching, approaches that did not center on working against oppression. I had hoped the students would learn to think about "good" teaching differently, that they would shift their understanding of "cultural

relevancy" from a curriculum that merely includes their own experiences and perspectives to a pedagogy that challenges the privilege of certain cultural groups and ideas. While this may have happened for some students, others seemed to resist interrupting their desire to see their own vision of "good" teaching modeled in the classroom.

The third situation involved students' resistance to thinking differently about what it means to learn. In a survey course that introduced students to a range of perspectives on and issues in U.S. schools, students were required to spend several hours each week observing and participating in a local K-12 classroom or educational setting. After each visit, students were to write a journal entry in which they described their observations and then analyzed them through various lenses suggested by course readings. I explained that the purpose of the journal was not merely to offer personal reactions to what they experienced. Such a process of journaling does have educational benefits, but my goals were different: I wanted students to explore different ways of making sense of their observations and, in particular, to explore how the course readings provided analytic lenses that differed from and even contradicted commonsense interpretations of schooling processes.

Throughout the semester, students expressed discomfort with the journal assignment. At first they were unsure how to analyze observations that were not mirrored in the course readings, so we discussed ways that "analysis" did not mean pointing out the similarities between observational data and anecdotes in course readings. We developed examples of how the readings critiqued the events observed, or how the events observed suggested gaps in educational practices mentioned by the readings. We also analyzed how the events both confirmed and challenged the theories in the readings, or how the different authors might suggest addressing problems observed by the students. We discussed ways to juxtapose observations with readings that seemed to be completely unrelated, and how that juxtaposition could lead to insights neither the author of the reading nor the observer of the classroom could have foreseen. We even practiced looking for hidden curricula as we explored processes of observation and analysis that centered on what is visible only after time. However, even when students agreed that it was possible to constantly measure their observations against the course readings, they did not always feel such a practice was helpful. They seemed to resist an assignment that required them constantly to question their desire to analyze in personalized, familiar ways. In other words, they seemed to resist uncomfortable changes in what it meant for them to learn.

In each of the three situations, I tried to make it clear that I was not saying that my curriculum materials, pedagogies, and assignments were the "best" ones possible for learning in anti-oppressive ways. Any choice could only be helpful in some ways, and I agreed that my choices were limited in the issues they raised, the questions they asked, and the learning they made possible for my students. However, in each of the three situations it seems that the

limitations of my choices were not the main problem. Rather, what seemed to hinder my students' learning was their desire to see repeated in our classrooms only certain ideas about what it means to learn. Wanting to see themselves in the curriculum prevented some students from using readings on different groups in society to learn to think differently about their own lives or even to learn to use their lives to complicate theory. Wanting to experience what they already believed to be good teaching prevented some students from learning how cultural relevance could function as much to challenge their identities and beliefs as to affirm them. Wanting to do assignments in ways they already believed to be educational prevented some students from understanding the processes of schools in ways that differed from what they were used to. My students' desire for repetition prevented them from learning and changing in ways that would have drawn on anti-oppressive research and theory.

Psychoanalytic theorists (e.g., Britzman, 1998a; Felman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998) argue that such barriers to learning should be expected; students' unconscious desire for repetition and psychic resistance to change often hinder anti-oppressive education. Students come to school not as blank slates, but as individuals who are already invested in their thoughts, beliefs, and desires. Thus, the problem that educators need to address is not merely a lack of knowledge, but a resistance to knowledge (Luhmann, 1998), and in particular a resistance to any knowledge that disrupts what the students already know. Britzman (1998a) suggests that, unconsciously, students often want learning that affirms their knowledge and self-identifications. In particular, students often desire learning that affirms their belief that they are good people and resist learning anything that reveals their complicity with oppression. For example, as I have argued elsewhere (Kumashiro, 2000a), some students often express discomfort with the term *queer* as a self-identification of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersexual (GLBTI), or in other ways different because of their sexual identity or orientation. Even after learning that many GLBTIs use the term politically to reject "normal" sexualities and genders, some students ask that the silence generally surrounding that term in academia and in politically correct communities be repeated. Instead, they prefer the less confrontational terms *gay* and *lesbian*, which, unlike *queer*, do not invoke a history of bigotry, hatred, and violence, and do not contest the very meaning of normal (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Learning about the term *queer* requires confronting their relationship with heterosexism, which is not something many students feel comfortable doing.

Learning in anti-oppressive ways involves un-learning or questioning what students already know. By implication, desiring to learn involves resisting repetition, especially the repetition of what students believe they are supposed to be learning. Were I to reenact the three situations described above, I would attempt to address their resistance to anti-oppressive learning by asking students to analyze ways in which the repetitions they desire both facili-

tate and hinder learning something new. For example, in the first situation, I might revise the autobiographical essay assignment to ask students to sketch out two parallel analyses, one that draws on readings in which they see themselves mirrored, and one that draws on readings that they believe differ from their own experiences. I might then assign an appendix to the essay in which students reflect on what different insights were made possible by each of the two routes of analysis, whether some of these insights are more desirable or comforting than others, and why. In the second situation, I might ask students to role-play several different visions of a culturally relevant classroom, and then ask what type of learning is made possible, or not, in each scenario. I might then ask why we desire some kinds of learning more than others. In the third situation, I might assign several different types of journal entries, some of which require analyses of readings and some that do not. I might then ask students to reflect on whether the different types of journal entries led to different kinds of insights, whether they preferred one type over another, and why that might be the case. Such lessons might help students at least to recognize their resistance, though I acknowledge that overcoming resistance is a much larger task.

Repeating what is already learned can be comforting and therefore desirable; students' learning things that question their knowledge and identities can be emotionally upsetting. For example, suppose students think society is meritocratic but learn that it is racist, or think that they themselves are not contributing to homophobia but learn that in fact they are. In such situations, students learn that the ways they think and act are not only limited but also oppressive. Learning about oppression and about the ways they often unknowingly comply with oppression can lead students to feel paralyzed with anger, sadness, anxiety, and guilt; it can lead to a form of emotional crisis. I know that I do not typically choose to do something with the expectation that it would make me upset, or at least do not do so without good reason.

Not surprisingly, some educators choose not to teach such information or to lead students to uncomfortable places. In fact, in response to my presentations on anti-oppressive education in conferences and classrooms, university educators and students have questioned whether it is even ethical to knowingly lead students into possible crisis by teaching things that we expect will make them upset. Felman (1995) suggests that learning through crisis is not only ethical, but also necessary when working against oppression. What is unethical, she suggests, is leaving students in such harmful repetition. Entering crisis, then, is a required and desired part of learning in anti-oppressive ways.

Of course, not all students will respond to a lesson by entering some form of crisis, nor will all students benefit from a crisis. Once in a crisis, a student can go in many directions, some that may lead to anti-oppressive change, others that may lead to more entrenched resistance. Therefore, educators have a responsibility not only to draw students into a possible crisis, but also



to structure experiences that can help them work through their crises productively.

As I describe elsewhere (Kumashiro, 1999), one example of students entering and working through crisis occurred in a workshop on stereotypes that I taught to high school students. Many of my students expressed feelings of sadness or guilt when they learned about the harmfulness of stereotypes and about some of the ways they have unintentionally and unknowingly perpetuated them. They seemed more concerned with talking about and working through their feelings than proceeding with the more academic part of the workshop. In an attempt to address their emotional discomfort, they decided to write and perform a skit for fellow students about the harmfulness and pervasiveness of stereotypes. I believe the process of writing and performing the skit helped the students work through their crisis in two ways: they experienced the difference between being the stereotyper (with the intent to harm) and playing the stereotyper (with the intent to critique), and they came to associate many stereotypes with critical perspectives on stereotypes. In other words, they were working through crisis by changing the ways they understood and related to the process of stereotyping. My students' experiences do suggest some of the issues educators might consider when creating spaces in their curriculum for students to work through the crises inherent in learning and unlearning.

### Teaching against Repetition

Students are not the only ones who desire repetition. Consciously and unconsciously, educators do the same when they plan what they want students to learn. Traditionally, educators have conceived of education as akin to banking (Freire, 1995) and have practiced teaching as if they were depositing knowledge into the minds of students. Although many educators today agree with Freire's critique of the "banking" approach when it concerns teaching a list of facts, many still use the banking approach when teaching thinking skills and ideologies. Educators often want students to learn theories and interpretive frameworks and be able to repeat them back "correctly" or apply them "appropriately"; educators often want students to learn to read and write in particular, identifiable, and repeatable ways, as when interpreting texts "justifiably" or writing essays "properly." Even anti-oppressive educators often value the repetition of certain knowledge and skills; we structure courses around anti-oppressive educational theories that we believe are important for aspiring teachers to learn and put into practice if they are to challenge oppression through their teaching.

I do not wish to imply that such goals are not worthwhile, since the ability to demonstrate accepted knowledge and marketable skills is cultural capital in today's society. However, it is problematic when educators presume to

know exactly what the student is to learn, foretell this learning with a list of “standards,” and structure education accordingly. Presuming to know and control what students are to learn makes possible only certain kinds of changes and closes off the infinite changes yet to be imagined. This presumption is especially problematic when recognizing that all knowledge is partial (Haraway, 1988). Even so-called anti-oppressive educational knowledge and practices are necessarily limited.

The problematic nature of my own incomplete knowledge is apparent when I reflect on my experiences teaching middle school English, when I emphasized learning to write “good” academic essays and analyze “themes” in literature, yet failed to teach how different forms of writing can accomplish different goals and how different readings of literature can reveal different insights on social issues. It is also apparent when I reflect on my experiences teaching high school mathematics, when I emphasized learning concepts and applications of algebra and geometry and failed to teach how different approaches to thinking mathematically can make possible different responses to social problems, and how only certain math is currently privileged in society. The problematic nature of my partial knowledge is apparent even in my attempts to teach about anti-oppressive education. When teaching an advanced seminar on anti-oppressive education at a small liberal arts college, I focused so much on teaching about my favored theories of anti-oppressive education that I neglected to provide students with the skills needed to look beyond these theories and to begin to explore possibilities for challenging oppression that the field of research has yet to articulate. This gap in my curriculum became apparent to me only when reading their final essays and realizing that their commitment to engage in anti-oppressive education often centered on implementing the types of theories we studied in class, not on challenging and expanding the very field of study.

Educators’ desire to repeatedly implement what they believe is the effective approach to challenging oppression hinders many articulations of anti-oppressive pedagogy. Such is the case with some critical, feminist, multicultural, and queer pedagogies that privilege rationality when raising awareness and challenging oppression. As Ellsworth (1992) tells us, the rationalist approach to consciousness-raising assumes that reason — detached from and uninfluenced by other aspects of who we are — can lead to understanding and change. But rational detachment is impossible: students’ identities, experiences, privileges, investments, and so forth always influence how they think and perceive, and what they know and choose not to know. What many people consider to be detached rationalism is really the perspective of groups in society whose identities and experiences are considered the *mythical norm*. For example, many people consider male, White, middle-class, heterosexual perspectives to be rational or normal, and other perspectives to be “influenced” by gender, race, etc., and, therefore, not rational. Thus, even while attempting to challenge oppression, pedagogies using such a rational-

ist approach can engage in harmful repetitions. This is not to say that the use of rationality is unhelpful in challenging oppression; like any other educational process, it makes some changes possible, others impossible. What is problematic is when educators continue to privilege rationality without questioning ways that it can perpetuate oppressive social relations.

In my own attempts to teach in anti-oppressive ways, I have found that repeating this privileging of rationalist approaches to teaching often caused me to miss my students in harmful ways. For example, in the seminar on anti-oppressive education mentioned above, I usually planned a range of activities to help students learn about various approaches to challenging oppression in schools. My lessons had often proceeded rationally from reading various theories to discussing central concepts to experiencing some aspect of the theories to imagining implications for classroom practice. Midway through the course, a group of students was leading a lesson on ways in which anti-oppressive practices often challenge one form of oppression while complying with others, and to conclude their lesson they asked the other students to discuss whether they personally felt oppressed in our class. We commonly ended class sessions by discussing how students felt that day's lesson both invited and hindered different kinds of learning and change. This time, however, they were reflecting on the overall course, and their responses stunned me.

Not all students focused on issues of oppression; some redefined the question from feeling "oppressed" to being "turned off." Nonetheless, they had much to say about how the repetition of certain aspects of the course was hindering their learning about anti-oppressive education. Some felt the structure of the course did not give enough opportunity to examine ways in which their identities as raced, gendered, classed, and sexualized people might mean that they read, respond to, and implement these theories in differing ways. The course instead seemed to suggest that there was an objective way to think about the theories. Some felt the other students in the course were not doing enough to practice what we preached and were behaving in ways that silenced others. For example, some students dismissed others' ideas as ignorant or politically incorrect. Some felt the course content did not invite hopeful feelings because many readings revealed more about oppression and about the difficulties of challenging oppression than any one educator could possibly expect to address. Clearly, their identities, experiences, and emotions influenced how they were learning. Had we not discussed these concerns, my rationalist lesson plans would have continued to miss my students in harmful ways.

The failure of teachers' lessons to reach their students does not necessarily lead to harmful consequences. Ellsworth (1997) suggests that teachers' lessons miss their students all the time. Such is the nature of teaching. She tells us that teachers address their students like a film addresses its audience:

No matter how much the film's mode of address tries to construct a fixed and coherent position within knowledge, gender, race, sexuality, from which the film "should" be read, actual viewers have always read films against their modes of address, and "answered" films from places different from the ones that the films speak to. (p. 31)

What is problematic, however, is not that teachers' messages miss their students. The "problem" is that teachers often address their students in ways that try to fix who they are supposed to be, as when teachers assume that students begin at a place of ignorance, that they want to be enlightened, that they need to have certain knowledge, or that they will benefit from certain experiences. The solution is not somehow to align who the teacher thinks the students are with who they actually are. Such a match is never possible because no student is ever unitary or stable. In fact, when teachers address a fixed position and students come to assume that position, both teachers and students are merely repeating a social relationship that is not moving toward anti-oppressive change; such a "match" is a relationship stuck in repetition.

In contrast, Ellsworth (1997) suggests that an anti-oppressive mode of address misses students in ways that invite multiple and fluid ways of learning. I can imagine several ways to change how I addressed my students in my anti-oppressive education seminar. Rather than expect that they were moving developmentally from a state of ignorance to enlightenment, I might design a lesson that expected students to have various types of knowledge, and expected them to both learn and unlearn various perspectives on oppression and on anti-oppressive change. Rather than expect that they were committed to anti-oppressive education, I might design a lesson that expected students to want to learn some things, resist learning other things, and simply miss opportunities to learn yet other things. Rather than expect that they were becoming anti-oppressive educators, I might design a lesson that expected students to be anti-oppressive in some ways and oppressive in others. In other words, my revised lessons would refuse to expect that students would merely repeat my ideas of who they were and were supposed to become. For example, in addition to what they are learning, I might ask students to discuss, reflect on, and write about what they are unlearning, what they feel resistance to learning, and how the implementation of what they are learning can lead to contradictory results.

This is not to say that teachers should reject a traditional format for lesson planning, which is necessary when educators are required to meet standards. However, teaching does not consist solely of a rational, predictable, controllable process. In many ways, teaching is unknowable and uncontrollable. Ellsworth (1997) points out that there is always a "space between" the teacher/teaching and learner/learning; for instance, between who the teacher thinks the students are and who they actually are, or between what the teacher teaches and what the students learn. Educators often respond

to this uncertain space by focusing on what is known and knowable, and do whatever they can to maintain a sense of control over whom they want their students to be, what they want students to learn, and how they want students to behave (Lather, 1998). Working in a state of uncertainty, after all, often causes discomfort.

However, Ellsworth (1997) goes on to suggest that the space between is actually a very liberating space. When educators refuse to foretell who students are supposed to be and become, students are invited to explore many possible ways of learning and being. Students are not forced to merely repeat the teachers' expectations for them, which is a process that denies students their agency and limits the possibilities of change to what is imaginable within the partial knowledge of the teacher. Rather, students are invited to take responsibility for their own learning and to do the labor necessary to find and create identities and relationships with a teacher who expects only multiple, shifting ways of learning and being. In other words, teaching is not about repeating the status quo or utopian visions that are themselves partial. Rather, teaching can be about constantly working against harmful and partial repetitions; about working constantly to become a part of social relations that challenge oppression but that can never be fully anti-oppressive. To teach in this way, educators cannot presume to know who their students are, what they need, and whether they have changed in desired ways as a result of their lesson.

Such a process will likely require teachers to unlearn their ideas of "good" teaching. Anti-oppressive teaching involves educators constantly complicating their identities, knowledge, and practices. It is not unlike anti-oppressive learning. Just as students are likely to enter and work through crises as they learn and unlearn, so too are educators likely to enter and work through a crisis as they learn to engage in uncomfortable ways of teaching. Both students and educators need to challenge what and how they are learning and teaching.

What might this look like? Educators might ask students not merely to learn the theories and repeat the educator's knowledge, but also to juxtapose the theories with other texts to see what different insights are made possible — insights that the educator perhaps had not foreseen (Kumashiro, 2001). Educators might ask students not only to articulate what it is they desire to learn, but also to reflect constantly on their desire *not* to "learn," which means that educators might center their curriculum not only on what many call the core academic disciplines, nor only on uncomfortable knowledge about differences and oppression, but also on the desires and resistance that hinder anti-oppressive learning (Britzman, 1998b). In other words, educators might plan lessons with the expectation that both educator and student constantly look beyond what is being taught, and think critically about what they are expecting to constitute the processes of teaching and learning (Miller, 1998).

### Supervising against Repetition

The notion that educators need to alter their teaching practices significantly in order to address issues of social justice contradicts many popular views of what it means to teach and to learn to teach. Often defined as "commonsense" are views of teaching and teacher education that do not include anti-oppressive goals and do not even value anti-oppressive perspectives. In my own experiences working with student teachers, I have repeatedly confronted at least three commonsense or "folkloric" (McWilliam, 1992) discourses of teacher education that have hindered my efforts to prepare them to teach in anti-oppressive ways.

One such discourse focuses on "academics." When teaching student teachers and even when interacting with their cooperating teachers in schools, I have encountered several interrelated reasons for resisting learning about and implementing anti-oppressive education. Some student teachers have insisted that their job and, as one put it, the "true intention of schools" is to teach the "core" academic subjects of math, science, social studies, English, and so forth. They did not agree with me that academics and oppression are connected, and argued that teachers can teach the academic subjects in ways that are neither oppressive nor anti-oppressive. In their future role as teachers, they asserted, they can and should be morally neutral and the responsibility of challenging oppression should not fall on schools. This resistance manifests even among student teachers who have read about how U.S. schools have historically focused as much if not more on moral development than on academic instruction, including Kaestle's (1983) study of the common-school movement in the antebellum era of the United States. Like proponents of the "back to basics" movement, my student teachers often seemed to embrace the discourse of schooling that has become common sense in contemporary U.S. society, namely, that the purpose of schools is to teach the "three Rs" of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Learning to teach, according to this discourse, does not need to involve learning about anti-oppressive education, moral education, or any form of education that is not commonly deemed "academic."

A second popular discourse on teacher education focuses on "experience." When discussing the degree to which their coursework helped in their development as teachers, my student teachers have often expressed a disregard for the theories and research learned in class. They complained that the theories were too abstract and idealistic in the face of day-to-day demands in "real" classrooms. Even when students found the theories and research interesting and meaningful, they had often been advised by their cooperating teachers that they would learn the important things about teaching when they got in the classroom and tried teaching firsthand. This popular notion that classroom experience is how teachers "really" learn to teach is what Britzman (1991) calls the "discourse of the real," or the cultural

myth that “experience makes the teacher” (p. 7). According to this discourse, there is little reason to study educational research, including anti-oppressive educational research, since such study is not what will prepare the student to teach. I should note that teacher educators are not much different in their own professional development and efforts at anti-oppressive reform. As Zeichner (1999) tells us, teacher educators often rely on experience and cultural myths more than on educational research when learning what it means to prepare teachers to teach and when reforming teacher-education programs.

A third popular discourse on teacher education focuses on “intention.” Many teacher educators with whom I have interacted often place primary emphasis in their student-teaching seminars on developing in their student teachers the skills needed to plan and implement lessons and to manage classrooms. As supervisors, they often continue to prioritize classroom instruction and management by focusing on those issues during their observations and evaluative conferences. I often am no different. When I was trained to supervise student teachers, much importance was placed on using the lesson plan to guide my observations and the student teacher’s reflections. Sample questions included, “What was the objective of this activity?” and “Did the students learn or experience what was intended?” Such an approach to teacher education seems to assume that learning to teach involves learning to match what we want and do in our lessons with the results of the lessons. In other words, such an approach assumes that our “teaching” is constituted by our actions, and that the “effectiveness” of our teaching can be measured by the degree to which our intentions were realized in our students’ progress.

Of course, much that is taught and learned in schools happens unintentionally and unknowingly, and constitutes what researchers have called the “hidden curriculum” of schools (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hanson, 1993). I will return to the notion of the hidden curriculum later in this article. My point here is that despite this recognition much of teacher education only focuses on the “formal” curriculum and the ways that teaching happens intentionally and visibly. Indeed, research reveals that teacher-education programs often emphasize the formal curriculum, such as when emphasizing “the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge” or “helping teachers gain deep knowledge of students’ patterns of learning and growth” (Zeichner, 1999, p. 10). This is not to say that such knowledge and skills are not anti-oppressive; they can be. However, according to the formal curriculum discourse, educators often seem to believe that they are already engaging in anti-oppressive or at least non-oppressive education if they are not intentionally or visibly harming students; therefore, they express no desire to learn more about anti-oppressive perspectives (Kumashiro, 2000a).

The recognition that these commonsense discourses of what it means to learn to teach can function as barriers to anti-oppressive education is not sur-

prising. As Apple (1995) tells us, what society defines as common sense may appear to be just the way things are, but they actually are social constructs that function to "confirm and reinforce . . . structurally generated relations of domination" (p. 12). What society defines as common sense justifies the oppressive status quo of society by sustaining "the appearance of the world as given and received, and of reality as existing on its own" (Britzman, 1991, p. 55). Commonsense discourses, then, not only socialize us to accept oppressive conditions as "normal" and the way things are, but also to make these conditions normative and the way things ought to be. In the process, such discourses suppress alternative perspectives and the possibilities for changed social relations.

I am not arguing that there is no social value to teaching the core academic disciplines, learning firsthand from classroom teaching experience, and planning objectives-based curricula. I do argue, however, that much more is needed in teacher education. Educators who presume that academic subject matter is and can be divorced from the dynamics of oppression cannot help but teach in ways that repeat the oppression already in play in these necessarily partial disciplines (Kumashiro, 2001). Educators who presume that "experience makes the teacher" cannot help but teach in ways that repeat the oppression already masked as common sense (Britzman, 1991). Educators who presume that their teaching consists solely of the formal curriculum cannot help but teach in ways that repeat the often oppressive hidden curricula that pervade U.S. classrooms. In particular, they cannot help but continue to ignore that what educators do *not* do is as instructive as what they do, which is problematic since what educators communicate indirectly and often unintentionally through silence, inaction, gestures, casual conversation, and so forth is arguably more educationally significant than what they intend to and try to teach (Jackson et al., 1993).

One way to address the commonsense assumptions that hinder student teachers' openness to anti-oppressive teacher education is to have them engage in self-analysis, as is commonly done through journaling. Zeichner (1999) reminds us that it is often very difficult to change student teachers' "tacit beliefs, understandings, and worldviews" (p. 11). Simply exposing student teachers to new perspectives does not always bring about change, since the ways they have already learned to think about teaching often filter this new knowledge. The result is that student teachers often "transform the messages given in teacher education programs to fit their preconceptions, sometimes in ways that conflict with the intentions and hopes of teacher educators" (p. 11). Therefore, it is important for teacher educators to teach student teachers to look within themselves and make explicit their assumptions and preconceptions. Learning to teach involves unlearning what they have already learned about teaching, and exposing and challenging the discourses that already frame how they think about and approach teaching and learning to teach.



Self-reflection, however, is not enough. In addition, it is important for teacher educators to help student teachers recognize that their teaching exceeds their intentions. Since teaching does not consist solely of what we intend to teach, the "problem" is not merely the failure to teach what we want to teach. The "problem" is also educators' reluctance to recognize that we often teach what we do not intend to teach and do not realize we are teaching. Changing our teaching practices involves learning to examine and change ways that we unintentionally teach through what we say and do not say, do and do not do, repeat and do not repeat.

I remember supervising student teachers in math classrooms who were organized and creative lesson planners, skillful and affable classroom managers, and knowledgeable mathematicians. They were convinced that their classrooms were not oppressive since they saw and did nothing that they considered oppressive. The questions I asked during our post-observation conferences did not help to change their minds, since my questions focused primarily on whether their students seemed to be achieving the objectives set out for them, and on whether any difficulties emerged in their attempts at classroom management. In fact, by focusing on the effectiveness of their intended lesson, my questions likely reinforced the notion that they did not need to learn more about anti-oppressive education.

If I were to revise those post-observation conferences, I would likely ask questions that might prompt student teachers to recognize hidden ways that oppression could be playing out in their classroom. For example, I might ask them to reflect on their silences, on their inaction, on the hidden messages that permeate classrooms, and not just on a given day, but cumulatively throughout the year. What might students have been learning when the student teacher was silent on a particular topic? How might different groups of students have felt when the student teacher failed to act in a given crisis? How might the repetition of a particular practice daily throughout the term impact students' perception of fairness in this class? Has the student teacher learned about ways that different forms of oppression play out repeatedly in society? Are variations of these oppressive repetitions playing out in this classroom, albeit unintentionally? And what might these repetitions be teaching the students? Do any hidden messages contradict what the student teacher is intentionally trying to teach?

As another example, I might ask the student teachers to reflect on what their students were desiring, what was being repeated in the classroom, and whether they were interrupting comforting forms of repetition. Did their students want to learn only some of the information and perspectives being taught and resist learning others? Why might this have been the case? Was the student teacher addressing students in ways that required them to repeatedly identify and relate to others only in particular ways? If so, what might the student teacher have wanted? Was the student teacher inviting students into crises by interrupting certain resistance and repetitions, and then help-

ing the students work through those crises in productive ways? And, was the student teacher teaching through crisis as the students learned through crisis? How was the student teacher helping students look beyond what was being taught and learned?

Anti-oppressive teacher education involves learning to teach the disciplines while learning to critique the ways that the disciplines and the teaching of the disciplines have historically been oppressive. It involves experiencing the realities of classroom teaching while learning anti-oppressive perspectives that can complicate the commonsense lenses often used to frame those experiences. It involves learning to teach intentionally while learning to recognize the hidden ways we often teach unintentionally. Anti-oppressive teacher education involves interrupting the repetition of commonsense discourses of what it means to teach and to learn to teach.

### Researching against Repetition

Like learning, teaching, and supervising, researching can often be characterized by harmful repetition. Certain notions of what it means to “do research” or “be a researcher” are being repeated in academia, and this repetition is proving to be a formidable barrier to anti-oppressive change, even among researchers committed to social justice. In my own interactions with other educational researchers, I have confronted at least three harmful forms of repetition.

The first form of repetition consists of researchers responding to “new” knowledge in ways that affirm what they already know. At professional meetings, such as those of the American Educational Research Association, researchers commonly present their research on panels, to which “discussants” offer responses. I have seen discussants respond to presentations in a variety of ways, some of which I have found helpful for interpreting the presentations through lenses that explore insights that neither the presenter nor the discussant could have developed before juxtaposing their knowledge. However, the discussants often seem to focus less on the possible insights and changes opened up by the presented research, and more on reasserting the knowledge they brought to the presentations.

For example, I once heard a discussant begin her response with the assertion that the presenter’s use of a particular theoretical framework did not lead to conclusions that the discussant felt research has already proven. Rather than examine ways that the presentation indirectly critiqued the discussant’s own research, the discussant spent her time explaining what she felt the presenter missed. In another session, a discussant began his response by asserting that his background in the field of study allowed him to ascertain that the presentation was at times insightful and at times problematic. Rather than discuss how the presentation might take the field of research in new directions, the discussant spent his time evaluating the presentation, explain-

ing what parts of the analysis he found accurate and why, and what parts of the analysis he found inadequately supported and why.

It should not be surprising that researchers often want confirmation. Confirmation is central to how students are often taught to research and solve problems, namely, through the scientific method (Dewey, 1938). At its most basic level, the scientific method is a way of knowing that ends in repetition. A hypothesis is presented, data is collected and analyzed against that hypothesis, and if the hypothesis is confirmed by the data, the confirmation is presented. If data exist that disconfirms the hypothesis, the hypothesis is reworked and the process repeated, but the goal is eventually to find a hypothesis that is confirmed by the data. Repetition is the desired end product of such research.

Researchers often desire repetition, especially the repetition of theories that they believe have been developed and proven by the scientific method. Simultaneously, researchers often resist disruptive knowledge that requires them to unlearn what they had come to believe to be proven. Just as students often want to learn what is being taught in ways that repeat their knowledge and identities, so too do researchers often desire to respond to “new” research in ways that do not disrupt what they have already come to know. I am no different — I often feel comforted when I encounter research that confirms my assumptions or ideas, and feel distressed when I encounter research that reveals problems and even oppressive tendencies of my own knowledge and practices. After all, the process of unlearning can be emotionally upsetting. Encountering disruptive new knowledge can lead researchers into crisis. For this reason, researchers such as those described above often respond to disruptive concepts with dismissiveness, insisting instead on the repetition of what they already know to be proven.

Yet anti-oppressive research does not involve developing proven knowledge on education, nor does it involve insisting on that knowledge. Like anti-oppressive learning, anti-oppressive research involves constantly questioning and expanding what is already known. Such a disruptive move is necessary when recognizing that research and knowledge cannot help but be partial. All research is framed by the researcher’s ideologies, epistemologies, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies. As Smith (1997) argues, when researchers research, they are at least subconsciously subscribing to particular “stories” or discourses of what it means to do research and be a researcher. The stories to which we subscribe frame the ways we do research. Similarly, Richardson (1997) tells us that researchers are “restrained and limited by the kinds of cultural stories available to us” (p. 2), not unlike the folkloric stories of teacher education, or the “three Rs” stories of learning and teaching. Some research methodology stories, such as the scientific model, are more commonsense; others, such as narrative inquiry or feminist methodologies, are more marginalized. But all are being repeated in academia in ways that both help and hinder our abilities to research in anti-oppressive ways.

Apple (1999) tells us that subscribing to different stories or discourses can lead to significantly different ways of reviewing literature and analyzing data. He contrasted analyses of the same material by researchers from two different theoretical perspectives, and found that

“what the data said” was a construction, subtly yet deeply connected to the social and epistemological commitments and conventions of the “discourse community” in which one is situated. This provided a compelling example of how “fields” are constructed, how discourses both construct and are constructed by, political/epistemological moves, even when as in this case the authors shared a broad agreement on “progressive” readings of material. (p. 344)

Because different “stories” can lead to different insights about oppression and challenging oppression, and because all stories are limited, anti-oppressive research cannot simply repeat only certain stories. Anti-oppressive research involves exploring what changes are made possible and impossible by the use of different stories. No one story or set of stories can be the panacea. Ellsworth (1997) argues that anti-oppressive educational research has been conducted primarily within the social science and critical theory frameworks. In contrast, her research has drawn on film studies to offer radically different and liberating ways to conceptualize and bring about change. She reminds us that the “problem” in research is not our inability to subscribe to the “best” stories, but our desire to subscribe only to certain stories that close off other possibilities for anti-oppressive change.

By not learning constantly to explore different stories than the ones we are used to using, researchers are not being trained to do research in ways that constantly look for difference and challenge their own knowledge. And by not learning constantly to disrupt their desire to see only certain stories repeated, researchers are not being prepared to research through crisis. Yet, anti-oppressive research happens only through crisis. Anti-oppressive research does not merely repeat already proven knowledge; rather, it explores the insights and changes made possible with disruptive ways of knowing. Unless researchers are prepared to research through crisis, they will not be prepared to engage with “new” knowledge.

The second repetition I encounter consists of researchers responding to new knowledge in ways that affirm their own sense of self. I have often attended professional meetings where I presented my research on either anti-oppressive education or queer Asian American identities. Both strands of my research have emphasized the importance of addressing multiple oppression and identities, and I have often centered my presentations on the argument that challenging oppression or addressing differences among students requires examining the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other social markers. I have found it ironic, therefore, when students, educators, and researchers alike categorized my research as either multicultural/Asian American studies or gender/queer studies, but not both.

This tendency to categorize exclusively is perhaps not surprising. Like students and educators, researchers often want the confirmation not only of their knowledge, but also of their identities. I have argued elsewhere (Kumashiro, 2000a) that people often resist seeing me as *queer* and prefer the terms *gay* or *homosexual*, since such terms do not carry the in-your-face, oppressive history that *queer* often invokes, nor do they imply that the norm/non-queer is problematic. I also argued that people — straight and queer — often resist seeing me as bisexual and prefer to say “gay” because bisexual identities make explicit the possibility that sexual orientation is not either/or, and that sexual differences do not consist solely of polar opposites. The identifications of queer and bisexual can be discomfiting because they disrupt the normalized, essentialized, commonsense ways that people often think about their own sexual identities.

I believe that I confront a similar resistance when I insist that race and sexuality are not always separable. For example, when researchers categorize my work as queer studies they are able to push to the margins the ways that I try to critique multicultural, critical, feminist, and other anti-oppressive pedagogies. This happens both informally, as when conversing with colleagues, and formally, as when respondents comment on my presentations. The insistence that multicultural/critical/feminist studies look at intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality is easier to dismiss if voiced from a queer outsider than from someone at the presumed heteronormal center of these movements. The ongoing debate on what should be included in multicultural education is illustrative. Some say the focus should be only racism, others add classism and sexism, and still others add heterosexism and other “isms” but are told that such a move places too much of a burden on multicultural educators and diverts attention away from their primary focus, race.

I argue elsewhere (Kumashiro, 2001) that the desire to separate issues of race from issues of sexuality ignores ways that racial identifications have always been sexualized, and sexual orientation has always been racialized. It ignores ways in which anti-racist movements already reinforce heterosexism and anti-heterosexist movements already reinforce Eurocentrism. And it ignores ways in which racism and heterosexism often play out in ways that are not merely simultaneous, but intertwined and codependent. Addressing one is often impossible without addressing the other, and trying to do so can perpetuate the ways this oppression is already playing out in schools and society. This is not to say that educators and researchers must always address all forms of oppression, since the multiplicity and ever-shifting nature of oppression make any attempt to be fully inclusive impossible. However, they do need to address ways that their efforts to address some forms of oppression might be complying with others. Education researchers cannot engage in anti-oppressive research if they are only willing to engage with knowledge that allows them to repeat their social identities (based on race, gender, etc.) in comforting ways.

Anti-oppressive research involves disrupting our resistance to critiques of our own practices. Research should not be done in ways that merely repeat the researcher's desire to affirm their identity as an anti-oppressive educator. I concede that it is often difficult for researchers to acknowledge their own complicity with other forms of oppression, especially when they are trying to challenge multiple forms of oppression. Yet, since educational practices cannot help but be limited, they also cannot help but be problematic, which means that complicity is always and necessarily in play. The solution, then, is not to say, "I do my job and you do yours," as if change can be brought about additively. The solution is not to repeat our practices as if our practices were not themselves oppressive. Rather, the solution is for all of us to rethink our practices constantly. Anti-oppressive research involves responding to other researchers and their research in ways that interrupt our complicity with multiple forms of oppression.

The third repetition consists of researchers doing research in ways that reinforce their desire for detachment. Educators and students in K-12 schools have often told me that they feel that professors of education do little to try to improve schools. They complain that many professors have lost touch with reality, and that their distanced existence in the ivory tower gives them little credibility as teacher educators and reformers. They suspect that schools of education are potentially rich in resources but that these resources are barely tapped by schools. For their part, education professors do not always dispute these perceptions. Some assert that their job is to do research, not to try to improve schools; they are scholars, not educators, and certainly not reformers. Others insist that they do try to improve schools but do so indirectly by providing, through their publications, new knowledge for schools and teacher-education programs to use. Even researchers committed to anti-oppressive education do not always try to do much more to change schools than publish articles in journals read primarily by other researchers. Some professors of education have told me that they do not engage in school advocacy and reform because they are trying to produce research uninfluenced by such activism. As an outsider, they expect to be able to produce research from a more objective perspective.

This desire for detachment is problematic. Feminist researchers have long critiqued the masculinist desire for objectivity and detachment, the researcher's desire to refrain from disclosing personal opinions and feelings and from developing personalized relationships with the participants (e.g., Fine, 1994; Oakley, 1981; Richardson, 1997). In fact, some have argued that full detachment is impossible, since what the interviewees say is highly influenced by how they read, feel about, respond to, and relate to the interviewer at any given moment (Foster, 1994; Scheurich, 1995). The impossibility of detachment extends beyond the researcher's interpersonal interaction with the participants. Activist researchers have argued that research and the con-

struction of knowledge cannot take place without the researcher's presence, involvement in, and attachment to their research. Since the researcher will always have an impact on the lives and communities of the researched, the researcher should try to have an impact that works against oppression. As Delgado-Gaitan (1993) explains, research should construct knowledge "through the social interaction between researcher and researched, with the fundamental purpose of improving the living conditions of the communities being researched" (pp. 391–392). To do otherwise is to expect the participants to participate and labor in a study that benefits only the researchers.

Similarly, when presenting the results of research, the goal cannot be to produce objective knowledge. Because knowledge is always partial (Haraway, 1988) and can always be used in multiple and contradictory ways (Lather, 1991), researchers cannot continue to assume that their production of knowledge is neutral with regard to oppression. Engaging in anti-oppressive research involves more than researching the topic of oppression, and even more than researching in ways that challenge oppression in the lives of the participants.

It also involves researching in ways that result in products and reports that can be used by others to work against oppression in larger society. Richardson (1997) tells us that the process of choosing how to write about and textually re-present research findings

involves many major and minor ethical and rhetorical decisions. . . . But because there is no such thing as "a thing" speaking of "itself," because "things" are always constructed and interpreted . . . there is no getting it right about who or what another is; there is no essence defining what "right" is. . . . We are always viewing something from somewhere, from some embodied position. Consequently, the problem becomes a practical-ethical one: How can we use our skills and privileges to advance the case of the nonprivileged? (p. 58)

Because any "story" we use or tell makes possible and impossible different knowledge and practices, the value of research derives not from its purported truth, but from our ability to use the research in anti-oppressive ways. Doing anti-oppressive research requires that researchers look at "how the stories we tell do and do not reinscribe tyrannies, large and small — do and do not improve the material, symbolic, and aesthetic conditions of our lives" (p. 77). The question researchers need to ask themselves is, "What are we doing with the knowledge we produce to challenge oppression in schools and society?" Research cannot be anti-oppressive if it continues to repeat the desire among researchers to be detached.

I do not often see education professors doing much to get involved in changing oppression in schools near their university or college, in schools that they research, or in schools where they supervise. I do not often see education professors doing much to get involved in education reform more broadly, such as through advocacy in local districts for marginalized groups,

testimonies during statewide policy debates, or publications that reach schoolteachers nationwide. Nor do I see education professors place on activism the type of value placed on scholarship, and while this problem may result from the pressure on departments to ensure that their faculty are doing what is necessary to get tenure, it seems that the field of researchers as a whole are not doing enough to change the ivory tower.

This is not to imply that there is a best or even agreed-upon way to engage in activism. I do not believe that research translates directly into specific classroom practices or policies, nor do I believe that large organizations of educators and educational researchers like the American Educational Research Association will be able to reach consensus on which anti-oppressive practices or policies should be implemented. However, I do agree with Berliner (1997) that educational researchers have an ethical obligation to work against oppression through the kinds of activities and efforts mentioned above: "We need educational activism with regard to our research and educational activism in conjunction with other agencies to promote social justice" (p. 15). We need to disrupt the repetition of commonsense discourses that define a researcher as an individual who is detached from real schools and the problems in schools. Researchers can never be detached, and to think that we are is to fall prey to the hegemonic discourses that mask our own complicity with oppression.

### Conclusion

There is not one right way to be anti-oppressive educational activists. Even the framework of repetition that I have developed in this article to understand that the problem has its limitations. There are multiple ways of conceptualizing oppression, including ways that researchers have yet to imagine. The notion of repetition makes some critiques possible but leaves others silenced; it makes some changes foreseeable and closes off others. However, the notion of repetition does provide those committed to anti-oppressive changes with a framework that complicates many commonsense approaches to learning, teaching, supervising, and researching. I urge researchers to continue to explore ways to disrupt these and other harmful repetitions in our practices, as well as to explore insights on challenging oppression that have yet to be explored by many educational researchers in the United States. I urge educators to explore the changes made possible when they juxtapose the insights in this article with their own current practices. Of course, such work is not easy. As I have argued throughout this article, anti-oppressive education involves entering and working through crisis. However, I believe more and more support is out there to help us in these processes. Clearly, increasing numbers of educators are committed to engaging in anti-oppressive practices in education, and I hope that this article helps advance our efforts.



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