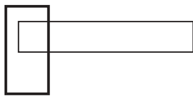

Disciplining the Discipline: Anthropology and the Pursuit of Quality Education

by Norma González

Disciplinary knowledge in anthropology occupies a unique position in relation to quality education: anthropology in education and the anthropology of education. This essay differentiates between anthropology as a field, as a repository of content and disciplinary knowledge (anthropology in education), and anthropology as a tool, as a theoretical and heuristic device that allows us to study students, schooling, learning, and teaching (the anthropology of education). Drawing on Bakhtin's formulation of centrifugal and centripetal forces, the author argues that anthropology has both enabled and limited possibilities for quality education. A retrospective look at the construct of culture is emblematic of this process. The author claims that the disciplining of anthropological boundaries has often resulted in disengagement of anthropology as a field from issues of practice. Furthermore, the argument is made that an engaged anthropology must confront the implications of its theories, especially as they are applied in the crucible of education and schools.

The year 2002 was an auspicious one for the field of anthropology, as the American Anthropological Association celebrated 100 years of existence. The word *anthropology* itself, meaning the study of humankind, tells it all: Nothing is outside the purview of anthropology, and anthropology is said to ask that most important question, "What does it mean to be human?"[1] The luminary anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in celebrating the association's centennial year, proclaimed of the field of anthropology (in perhaps an overstatement of self-congratulation) that

> we [anthropologists] have been the first to insist on a number of things: that the world does not divide into the pious and the superstitious; that there are sculptures in jungles and paintings in deserts; that political order is possible without centralized power and principled justice without codified rules; that the norms of reason were not fixed in Greece, the evolution of morality not consummated in England. Most important, we were the first to insist that we see the lives of others through lenses of our own grinding and that they look back on ours through ones of their own.

While other disciplines might add their own claims to these insights, anthropological disciplinary knowledge lays claim to all that is encompassed in the five fields of anthropology: archeology, sociocultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, biological anthropology, and applied anthropology. This special issue is about the links between disciplines and quality education. As a donor discipline to the social foundations of education, anthropology could arguably position itself as a necessary component of the infrastructure of quality education, linking and relating human activities, past and present, within a "complex whole." However, the term *quality education* is by no means unproblematic, especially to anthropologists, who tend to insist on an acknowledgment of diverse perspectives.

We might begin by asking "What is quality education, for whom is it 'quality,' and, more important, quality education for what purpose?" There are those who would argue that the purpose of quality education is to produce students who score well on standardized tests. Standardized tests, however, historically and to this day, have persisted in producing a top echelon of White males while students of color, females, and students who are poor do not fare as well. As noted by Jonathan Kozol (1991, p. 158), "behind the good statistics of the richest districts lies the triumph of the few. Behind the saddening statistics of the poorest cities lies the misery of the many." Current U.S. federal reforms such as "No Child Left Behind" tacitly assume that quality education is measured in restricted and unequivocal benchmarks that will ultimately result in marketable "products," leaving no child out of the job market. Yet, is the vocationalization and/or commercialization of knowledge the endpoint to which we subscribe? Is our notion of quality education tied up with global economic practices and texts that define educational achievement and success in an atomized fashion, conflating education with discrete skills and market performance?

What can anthropology contribute, in terms of its unique theoretical and methodological insights, to the studies of schools and schooling and, hence, to quality education? Increasingly, educational researchers and practitioners are facing the issues that anthropologists find most compelling: effects of globalization, identity formations, articulation of the local and the global, and the nexus of power and knowledge (K. Hall, 1999). There is no doubt that anthropology is capacious enough to engage these issues. Educational inquiry as a whole has developed a broadly based, cross-disciplinary approach to addressing issues of quality education. Anthropology, as a foundational discipline in this pursuit, draws from multidisciplinary perspectives and has much to offer in terms of the current and core issues that undergird teaching and learning, that is, the relationships among power, knowledge, and identity. In fact, as Kathleen Hall (1999) argues:

> Anthropology and cultural studies are uniquely positioned to provide such analytic tools. Anthropology itself, over the past decades, has been in the midst of a struggle to expand its own conceptual

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> capacity to address the types of cultural complexity generated by processes of globalization and local responses to such forces. Critical to the study of globalization and shifts in global dynamics of power are concerns with the interrelationships among power, knowledge and identity. (p. 123)

Anthropology, in conjunction with other disciplines, has alerted us to alternative perspectives on differential educational outcomes. As one anthropologist (Borofsky, 2002) notes, anthropology acts as a witness in out-of-the-way places explaining how and why "the local" works in ways that diverge from our expectations. It punctures myths; it challenges us to rethink our frames of reference. Anthropology also is attuned to how we affect others. It explains, in terms of real people and real lives, how we are interconnected, how "A" in one country affects "B" in another. Finally, anthropology emphasizes the survival value of diversity. It resists bland homogenization of people and places around the world (Borofsky, 2002, p. 6).

Moreover, anthropology occupies a unique position in relation to education: anthropology *in* education and the anthropology *of* education. In this essay, I differentiate between anthropology as a field, as a repository of disciplinary knowledge (anthropology *in* education), and anthropology as a tool, a theoretical and heuristic device that allows us to study students, schooling, learning, and teaching (the anthropology *of* education). Furthermore, I argue that anthropology has not as of yet been fully effective in its contribution to quality education because the tools of anthropology and the field itself have not moved in smooth alignment in regard to education, schooling, teaching, and learning.

In addition, "quality" has been conceptualized quite differently in these two spheres. Because "quality" in anthropology as a field has often been defined as quality of anthropological theory and method, issues of practice and application have often been casualties of the policing of disciplinary borders. On the other hand, "quality" in the anthropology of education has often been coterminous with "equity," that is, principled work based on a vision of advocacy as well as scholarship that displaces both disciplinary boundaries and government definitions of disciplinary rigor. Although these approaches are by no means mutually exclusive, teleological arguments about quality are necessarily open-ended and ongoing.

Anthropology as a Field/Anthropology as a Tool: The Centripetal and the Centrifugal

Within the binary of anthropology as a field/anthropology as a tool, one central concept cross cuts both perspectives and has deeply influenced the field of anthropology as well as research on quality education for all students: the construct of culture. Although culture and its twin pillar, ethnography, have been explored in depth by a number of anthropologists of education (e.g., Eisenhart, 2001a, 2001b; Yon, 2003), my purpose here is to situate culture within a consideration of centripetal and centrifugal forces (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272) operating in anthropology and to explore both the practicing of theories and the theorizing of practices within a discourse of quality education. Centripetal forces impel us toward a centralizing and unification of theory, while centrifugal forces hurtle toward heteroglossia and multiplicities.

I argue that the lack of alignment between anthropological theoretical constructs and the real-world effects of anthropological theorizing has positioned the study of teaching and learning on a collision course with the traditional anthropological stretch for the pattern and complexity of students' lived experiences. While anthropology as a field has contributed centrifugally to the expansion of possibilities for teaching and learning, anthropology as a tool has many times swirled centripetally toward reductionism and reification. The disconnection between disciplinary knowledge in anthropology and the practicing of disciplinary knowledge has not always served the interest of quality disciplinary education or educational equity.

Although the binaries just described might appear as oppositions, dualistic thinking of an either/or nature tends to be reductionistic and does not allow us to interrogate the chains of signification between oppositions. Indeed, much of the poststructuralist project has been an examination of the gap between opposing terms, erasing oppositions yet preserving them within connections of intertextuality. Rather than binaries, I would suggest that we consider these positions as multiple continua with chains of meaning that lead one term to inhere in the other, rupturing an either/or perspective and acknowledging that both imply possibilities and limitations.

As an illustration of how these metaphorical spirals have played out in real-world settings, I present a retrospective view of culture and argue that the concept is malleable—that it can be used for progressive as well as for oppressive purposes. In this diachronic snapshot, the picture that emerges is not one of an accumulation of disciplinary truths, continually moving onward and upward toward a more refined and elevated production of knowledge. Instead, in order to further rupture the oppositions of anthropological disciplinary knowledge and the application of anthropological tools in educational research, I frame the guiding questions for this essay as interconnected points on multiple continua: (a) How has anthropology, as a field and as a tool, mediated quality education? (b) How have disciplinary knowledge in anthropology and anthropological constructs both enabled and limited quality education? and (c) How has the discipline of anthropology "disciplined" the filtering of educational research in anthropology?

Culture Redux

No consideration of quality education, however we choose to define it, would be complete without a retelling of how culture has occupied an ineffable space in anthropological as well as educational theorizing.[2] The concept of culture, deconstructed as it has been in postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial theories, historically emerged in anthropological theory as a powerful tool that served as a counterdiscourse to the then-prevailing scientific racism that ranked the evolution of social groups. Because evolutionism at the end of the 19th century (e.g., Tylor, 1871/1958) conceived of the progress of human societies in terms of evolutionary stages, from the simple (or, in the parlance of the times, more primitive) to the more complex, it was a small leap to conceive of these hierarchical stages as encompassing all areas of social life. Eventually, this form of evolutionism became congruent with the then-accepted ranking of racial groups in terms of intelligence and biogenetic inheritance. It was a commonly held belief, as Stephen Jay Gould, in *The Mismeasure of Man*, points out, that "leaders and intellectuals did not doubt the propriety

of racial ranking—with Indians below whites, and blacks below everybody else" (Gould, 1981, p. 31). Indeed, there was a relegation of "the dark-skinned savage to a status very near the ape" (Stocking, 1973, cited in Gould, 1981, p. 73).

The pseudo-scientific basis for ascribing these hierarchies came from a number of measures. Craniometry and supposed evolutionary distance from other primates and measurement of skull size were held to correlate to brain capacity (and hence intellectual capacity), and other anthropometric measurements gauged the "apishness" of individual traits. Thus, it was unremarkable, in what was not anthropology's finest hour, that the anthropologist Brinton (1890) could claim:

> The adult who retains the more numerous fetal, infantile, or simian traits, is unquestionably inferior to him whose development has progressed beyond them. . . . Measured by these criteria, the European or white race stands at the head of the list, the African or Negro at its foot. . . . All parts of the body have been minutely scanned, measured and weighed, in order to erect a science of the comparative anatomy of the races.[3] (cited in Gould, 1981, p. 116)

Against this backdrop, Franz Boas, as the representative voice for disciplinary knowledge in anthropology, began to argue against the unilineal progression of evolutionary stages and, more important, against the racial implications of this argument. His weapon to combat this reigning paradigm was the concept of "culture." Given these disparate perspectives, we can apprehend that anthropology is heir to a contradictory legacy, claiming as intellectual ancestors "both the founders of scientific racism and important pioneers of the antiracist movement" (Hill, 1998, p. 680).

At the beginning of the 20th century, culture was associated with "the progressive accumulation of the characteristic manifestations of human creativity: art, science, knowledge, refinement—those things that freed man from control by nature, by environment, by reflex, by instinct, by habit, or by custom" (Stocking, 1968, p. 201). For Boas, culture was heavily imbued with the underpinnings of the German "culture-history" that had grown out of the earlier emphasis on the "history of the spirit" (Wax, 1993, p. 103), and he soon embraced culture as the "genius of a people."

While Boas did not set about the task of defining culture, he did put the evolutionary framework to the test of actual rigorous and scientifically tenable ethnographic fieldwork. Through his extensive time in residence with various North American Indian groups, he was able to critique the claims of evolutionary stages and argued for a historical comparative method that recognized the possibility of multiple historically conditioned cultures that often strategically borrowed from each other. By arguing that human behavior can be conditioned by the historical circumstances in which it arises, he transformed the biogenetic argument of human development. Culture, as extrinsic to the human organism, could account for human behavior without recourse to a biogenetic etiology, and a powerful argument could be made for the relativism of human societies. No longer could race and hierarchical racial classifications be scientifically defensible. Thus, "by changing the relation of 'culture' to man's evolutionary development, to the burden of tradition, and to the processes of human reason, [Boas] transformed the notion into a tool quite different from what it had been before" (Stocking, 1968, p. 233).

The implications of this paradigm shift were enormous. While many social scientists continued to see race as a way to account for human differences, "Boas, almost single-handedly, developed in America the concept of culture, which, like a powerful solvent, would in time expunge race from the literature of social science" (Degler, 1991, p. 71).

Yet, this does not mean that anthropologists were marching evenly, onward and upward, toward a vision of racial and social justice. In fact, there are some who argue that the attempt to expunge race from anthropology, by assigning it to biology, actually resulted in a continuation of scientific racism (Visweswaran, 1998). Culture came to stand as a proxy for race, and thus, in the absence of a sociohistorical construction of race, was "asked to do the work of race" (Visweswaran, 1998, p. 76). In fact, the concept of culture can make race invisible, and race becomes "a metonym for culture; and it does so only at the price of biologizing what is culture or ideology" (Appiah, 1986, cited in Visweswaran, 1998, p. 76).

This eliding of race into culture has had deep implications in terms of quality education for minoritized students. On one hand, it continues to obscure race and racism as interpellating cultural practices. On the other hand, it has offered a set of code words (e.g., "inner city," "at risk") providing a subtext for avoiding the taboo term "race" (Lee, 2003, p. 3). This, too, is part of the anthropological legacy of culture, centrifugally allowing for expanded possibilities of quality education yet centripetally moving toward a unification of multiplicities. Central to the concern of this article, though, is how the concept of culture came to be transferred to educational discourses and, especially, how it has operated within the notion of quality education as seen by teachers.

As the field of anthropology and education (differentiated here from my labels of anthropology in and anthropology of education) began to emerge, it drew heavily from the "culture and personality" studies of anthropology in the 1940s and 1950s, especially the work of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Melville J. Herskovits. These three anthropologists focused on the patterns of culture acquired by children (and, by extension, students) as part of their enculturation process. For Herskovits, enculturation included the "aspects of the learning experience which mark off man from other creatures" (1948, p. 39). Education in this sense was broader than schooling and encompassed both formal and informal learning within a given body of culture. These early anthropological insights were instrumental in fostering a concern with looking beyond the institution of the school as the locus for teaching and learning. As the field of anthropology and education grew, culture was an important tool in understanding both cultural continuity and discontinuity within schooling processes as well as an important antidote against the assumption of genetic differences as causative explanations for disparities in academic achievement (for overviews of the growth of the field of anthropology and education, see Eddy, 1985; Nash, 1974; Spindler, 2000).

The work of George and Louise Spindler in the area of cultural transmission was a formative force in unpacking the multiple perspectives of cross-cultural education. Teacher education programs began to take note of this paradigmatic shift in how teaching and learning processes were positioned across cultures. Work in linguistic anthropology opened up new spaces for considering

language practices in communities and advocated for cultural continuity and congruence between classroom and community. Anthropology was seen as an essential element in the social foundations of education, and culture was one of the most potent remedies in its dispensary.

Now, having foregrounded the contribution of the culture concept to quality education as both disciplinary knowledge and equity, one might suppose that the concept of culture would necessarily be a positive affirmation of diversity. This has not always been the case. In fact, the culture of poor and minoritized students came to often be targeted as the cause of educational failure. Because culture had come to be viewed as a holistic configuration of traits and values that shaped members into viewing the world in a particular way, these assumed rules for behavior were seen by some as the root of the educational failure of minoritized groups. Explaining educational achievement disparities and differences in social mobility through recourse to forces within the "culture," in the private, domestic realm, and hence outside of the public purview led to aspects of the dominant writing of anthropology being conscripted in the service of legitimizing the marginalization of a large number of students, negatively valencing the resources available in households and communities. Perhaps the most infamous example of how the centripetal forces of reductionism came to affect quality education is the culture of poverty model. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis argued that membership in a group that has been poor for generations constitutes membership in a separate culture. Paradoxically, the culture of poverty, for Lewis, is a progressive concept:

> It is the label for a specific conceptual model that describes in positive terms a subculture of Western society with its own structure and rationale, a way of life handed on from generation to generation along family lines. The culture of poverty is not just a matter of deprivation or disorganization, a term signifying the absence of something. It is a culture in the traditional anthropological sense in that it proves human beings with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems and so serves a significant adaptive function. (Lewis, 1966, p. 19)

For Lewis, the culture of poverty model was a counter-discourse to notions of familial instability and disorganization, as well as an alternative to biological notions of race and poverty, which implied that inequalities were inevitably determined and fixed. To counter claims of instability, he claimed that the behavior of people within the culture of poverty "seems clearly patterned and reasonably predictable. I am more often struck by the inexorable repetitiousness and the iron entrenchment of their lifeways" (Lewis, 1966, p. 19).

Unfortunately, the anthropological stretch for the pattern resulted in a distortion of the complexity of the lives of poor people. While the theorizing of the concept implied that inequalities could be addressed through policy, particularly educational policy, the practicing of those theories often resulted in centripetal, reductionistic limitations in quality education. Although Lewis described a number of clusters or traits shared by families caught in the culture of poverty, two are particularly relevant here: "strong present-time orientation, with relatively little ability to defer gratification and to plan for the future[, and a] sense of resignation and fatalism" (Lewis, 1968, p. 188).

The idea that poor students were shaped by a culture of poverty that was considered to be antithetical to the deferred gratification inherent in school achievement was in large part responsible for the development of cultural deficit models in schooling. Poor and minoritized students were viewed through a lens of deficiencies, seen as substandard in their socialization practices, language practices, and orientation toward academic achievement. The exemplar of such deficit approaches is the oft-cited Moynihan report (1965), which stigmatized the Black family as pathological and dysfunctional, lacking in male role models and networks of support and solidarity. For Latinos, culture was invoked as the most important contributing factor to a supposed lack of family support for education as well as lack of motivation for educational achievement (Samora, 1970). The culture of the Latino family was indicted for stressing cultural norms that hindered educational progress: family ties, male authoritarianism, and living in the present (see Ybarra, 1983, for a review of the deficit literature on Latinos).

In a more elliptical vein, as already noted, culture was deployed within these circulating discourses as a metonym for race. When the culture of poverty was referenced, the image conjured up was generally that of people of color residing in inner-city ghettoes and barrios or on American Indian reservations. Although a protest was marshaled by anthropologists (Leacock, 1971; Stack, 1974; Valentine, 1968) who noted that this psychological concept of culture was missing the larger sociohistorical dimension (see Foley, 1997, for a history of the concept as well as a class-based analysis of the culture of poverty), these deficit conceptualizations tended to become fossilized in the public mind and often emerged decades later, fully formed, around flashpoint issues such as affirmative action.

One case in point is the furor that erupted in the 1990s over comments made by a University of Texas law professor, Lino Graglia, who asserted that minority students were not academically competitive with Whites in selective institutions. Graglia invoked a culturological explanation for "failure" by claiming that "it is the result of primarily cultural effects. They have a culture that seems not to encourage achievement. Failure is not looked upon with disgrace" (Mattos, 1997). Deficit conceptions of how the "other" lives and thinks are alive and well, a legacy of a culture concept that failed to align a theoretical and methodological stance with historically embedded contexts of power. Implicit in deficit conceptualizations of culture is a further binary: a dominant culture whose valencing was nearly always positive. A culture of domination was a hidden and invisible corollary to the culture of poverty, whose end of the continuum is inscribed and pathologized. Because the culture concept could be appropriated and transformed to fit multiple political agendas, it became a two-edged sword. "Culture" became the roadblock that many students had to hurdle on their path to a quality education.

Furthermore, since culture was assumed to be equally shared and equally distributed among particular populations, it was a small leap into the abyss of reification and reductionism. Culture X (often read as a racial and ethnic category) was said to share Y and Z traits, and one instance of the extreme to which this trajectory can lead is exemplified in discourses that came to affirm that Whites "know through counting and measuring," Asians "know through striving toward transcendence," and Blacks, Hispanics,

and Arabs "know through symbolic imagery and rhythm" (Harris, 1995, pp. 12–13). Culture had cyclically metamorphosed into the biological reductionism it was intended to combat.

Critiques of the Concept of Culture

Although the idea of culture interpreted as a holistic configuration of traits largely remained as an organizing concept of anthropology, anthropologists in the 1980s and 1990s mounted a critique of culture that resulted in a major paradigm shift in anthropology. Indeed, a multipronged onslaught threatened its dominating presence. As noted by Eisenhart (2001a), "postmodernist ideas from philosophy, feminism, literary criticism, ethnic studies and cultural studies have driven the point home in anthropology" (p. 17). Culture had lost much of its utility as a way to describe the diversity within societies. It came to be viewed as more of a burden than a useful tool and was examined critically from a variety of perspectives. Some anthropologists even suggested doing away with the term altogether. Lila Abu-Lughod, in her essay "Writing Against Culture" (1991), explained that individuals often improvise daily decisions and do not always adhere to "cultural" norms and prescriptives:

> The particulars suggest that others live as we perceive ourselves living, not as robots programmed with "cultural" rules, but as people going through life agonizing over decisions, making mistakes, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragedies and personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of happiness. (p. 58)

Refinements of the culture concept were advanced as alternatives in the form of the "dialogic emergence of culture" (Tedlock & Mannheim, 1995) and "distributive models of culture" (Rodseth, 1998). However, it became increasingly apparent that anthropologists were beginning to write not only "against" culture, as Abu-Lughod (1991) suggested, but also "beyond" culture (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992): "critiquing" culture (Marcus & Fischer, 1986); "revisiting" culture (Keesing, 1974); putting "culture in motion" (Rosaldo, 1989); examining the interstitial space for "locating" culture (Bhabha, 1995), the "breakdown" of culture (Fox, 1995), and the "demise" (Yengoyan, 1986) of the culture concept; and "forgetting" culture (Brightman, 1995).

Within the field of anthropology and education, anthropologists (e.g., Levinson & Holland, 1996) had already begun a trek away from reproductionist notions of culture. Other anthropologists of education (Varenne & McDermott, 1998) signaled the dialogical emergence of culture, especially in schools, as a space for interrogating culture as a property of the individual: "Culture, as a pattern of interaction among certain people, is itself not a property of persons and thus must be investigated by looking directly at interaction. It is interaction that makes people visible as particular types of people, not the other way around" (1998, p.17).

Slowly, fewer and fewer anthropologists were viewing culture as the organizing concept of anthropology. Indeed, as one anthropologist stated, "One of the major things that has been happening in anthropology is that, little by little, the god term 'culture' is being eclipsed by the new god term 'power'" (D'Andrade, 1999, p. 96).

As is evident, deconstructions of culture have been surfacing for nearly 20 years. Yet, only relatively recently have these issues been taken up in teacher education programs (if at all). The centripetal and centrifugal forces surrounding culture in anthropology and quality education beg the following questions: Now what do we do about culture? Do we expel it? Do we continue to use the term under erasure, as Derrida (1976) would suggest, cognizant of its inadequacy yet acknowledging that it cannot yet be replaced? Do we replace it with "ideologies"? Are our analyses centered only on power and hegemony, with no nod to the collective ties that bind? In an attempt to synthesize the various strands surrounding arguments about culture, the *American Anthropologist* gathered several culture theorists (Borofsky, Barth, Shweder, Rodseth, & Stolzenberg, 2001) to consider the following framework:

> For decades now culture has been a topic anthropologists argue about: WHAT [it] does or does not mean. IF it should or should not constitute a central concept of the discipline. This essay steps outside these arguments to rephrase the issue and our approach to it. It explores WHEN it makes sense to use the cultural concept. (p. 432)

In the words of one author in this series of essays,

> The concept of culture serves the basic need of naming such ineffable and inexplicable features of human existence as "meaning" and "spirit" and living together with others. Stop thinking of it as a name for a thing, and come to view it instead as a placeholder for a set of inquiries—inquiries which may be destined never to be resolved. (Stolzenberg, 2001, p. 444)

By thinking of culture as a set of inquiries—that is, questions that may never be resolved—we inexorably are confronted with the reality that educational practitioners must address in their everyday classroom practices: How can we become a community of learners, dialogically creating knowledge through our discursive practices and articulating linkages to multiple knowledge bases (González, in press)? The hybridity and inquiry-based nature of conceptualizing culture in this way may be one avenue through which centrifugal spaces might be opened up that allow for heteroglossic and multiple spheres of interculturality.

Hybridity and Interculturality

Increasingly, the essentialization and notions of boundedness of cultures gave way to ideas of interpenetration and hybridity of cultural practices as well as disciplinary boundaries. As a counterdiscourse to essentialism in both anthropological and educational research, hybridity opened a space for theorizing a quality education outside of the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge by drawing on multiple frames of references and discourses. Often, these concepts were predicated on examining borderlands that are often riddled with emergent practices and mixed conventions that do not conform to normativity, and borderlands came to be a fertile metaphor for educational theorists. Students were portrayed as "crossing borders" (Giroux, 1992) on a number of fronts, and figurative and literal borderlands came to signify a third space (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 2000) in which students could draw from the hybridity of spaces at the interstices of "here" and "there."

Drawing on cultural studies theorists such as Homi Bhabha, an argument was made for examining "border lives" as exemplars of moments "of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, 1995, p. 1). These "in-between" spaces, Bhabha argued, "provide the terrain

for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, 1995, pp. 1–2).

Hybridity is closely tied in with a topic of extensive anthropological interest: economic globalization, that is, the penetration of goods and services into every corner of the globe. Because of the push-pull factors of the global movement of people and ideas, students, especially children of immigration, diaspora, and transnationalism, increasingly and self-consciously syncretize, select, modify, and adapt cultural practices from multiple discursive fields. Stuart Hall describes these globalized identities through a conception of identity that "lives with and through, not despite difference: by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1999, p. 235).

As anthropology took a reflexive turn, the idea of general models and grand theories gave way to a postmodern consideration of multiplicities and ambiguity as well as local and contingent ways of positioning knowledge. These trends were mirrored in educational research as well. An increasing emphasis on textuality and "discourse" came to dominate discussions about the cultural, as well as the discursive constructions of social institutions such as schools. Discussions of culture gave way to exploration of discourses that have the capacity to construct, rather than merely reflect, our realities. For educators, this heralded a shift in how educational texts and discourses are produced, focusing on the constitutive process of social formations. If we might project out that this is the most current theoretical instantiation of disciplinary knowledge, this is the moment to ask what issues might be raised as the discursive turn is translated (institutionalized) into educational practice. How can we learn from the historic centripetal uses of anthropological theories in proactive ways? More important, how can we rupture the binary between anthropology as field and anthropology as tool?

Disciplining the Discipline

Since anthropological constructs have been extensively embedded within educational discourses, we might assume a deep investment of the parent discipline of anthropology in issues relating to education. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. In fact, issues relating to schools and schooling have been largely peripheral to what are taken as the central concerns of anthropology. In one of the few articles relating to education published in the flagship journal *American Anthropologist*, Bradley Levinson critiques the field of anthropology for this neglect:

> Why do most cultural anthropologists outside the educational subfield now ignore or downplay the role of modern schools in structuring identities and power relations, both locally and globally? How and why have cultural anthropologists thereby rejected educational discourse and the critical public intervention it might afford? (Levinson, 1999, p. 595)

He then cites several examples of anthropologists whose work could have been greatly enhanced by engaging with schools as pervasive products of modernity and as powerful sites within and against which identities are constantly being constructed, and he laments the fact that "we have tended to concede the study of schools to sociologists. Perhaps more tragically still, we have often surrendered our discourse of 'education' along with the schools" (p. 597).

In spite of this abrogation of responsibility toward education, anthropologists are often mystified as to why they are left out of conversations about multiculturalism and multicultural education. If anthropology claims culture, they argue, why are there so few anthropological voices contributing to the debates on pluralism and diversity in multicultural education? Terence Turner, in making a case for anthropology in multicultural discourses, notes:

> Anthropologists have been doing a lot of complaining that they are being ignored by the new academic specializations in "culture," such as cultural studies, and by both academic and extra-academic manifestations of "multiculturalism." Few anthropologists, however, appear to have made the effort to comprehend the reasons for that indifference from the standpoint of what multiculturalists are trying to do, and fewer still have taken an active part in the discussions surrounding multiculturalism. Most of us have been sitting around like so many disconsolate intellectual wallflowers, waiting to be asked to impart our higher wisdom, and more than a little resentful that the invitations never come. (1993, p. 411)

Returning to the question of how anthropology has mediated quality education, it is striking to note that at the very moment anthropologists are deconstructing the notion of culture, and in many cases discarding it in favor of poststructural notions of text and representation, the notion of culture is more prevalent than ever in discussions of educational practice—particularly discussions about multiculturalism and multicultural education. This raises some questions: Why is this happening? If anthropologists by and large no longer find the concept of culture useful, why is it prospering in the field of education, and what are we to make of this? Why do educators find the concept of culture useful, while anthropologists no longer do? And, conversely, why is it that educators do not seem to find poststructural notions of culture—notions that are now attractive to anthropologists—very useful?

This last question lies at the heart of how anthropology as a field and anthropology as a tool must deal with the practical and ever-present effects of practicing theories and theorizing practices. As anthropology as a field continues to privilege the academic and theoretical dimensions of the discipline, very often the pragmatic, practice-based implications of theories are not well thought out or, more commonly, are ignored. In the debate over the abandonment of the heuristic value of culture, there has never been any mention of the fact that, for teachers, culture has been a central unifying concept that has been engaged in both reactive and proactive ways. To deconstruct culture because of the theoretical abuse and misuse of the term completely erases the battle that brought culture to the forefront in the first place: How do we account for human diversity without recourse to a discourse of biogenetic difference? What tools can be put in the hands of educators that can replace a concept that in many ways did break down the insidiousness of scientific racism? How do we account for diversity if the central concept that led us to that place is both vilified and abandoned, with no similarly powerful concept to replace it? Can theoretical conceit claim that only theory and not the implications of theory are the focus of our anthropological concern?

Even though many applied anthropologists point out that praxis (i.e., achieving understanding through action within political and ethical contexts) is "a fully legitimate way to understand the world" (Chrisman, 2002, p. 4), many departments of anthropology do not legitimate this view. Rarely are anthropologists of education located in departments of anthropology; rather, they find their homes in faculties of education. Although anthropologists of education can often find more affinity in departments of education, this perpetuates the structural disconnection between what has come to be perceived as mainstream anthropology and the applied fields. Outside of the subfield of anthropology and education, the publications of anthropologists of education are rarely if ever included in graduate course readings. Graduate students who specialize in linguistic anthropology and who do their fieldwork in schools often take great pains not to be labeled as educational anthropologists. It is entirely possible to go through an entire graduate program in anthropology and never hear of George and Louise Spindler or the founding parents of anthropology and education. Wrapping back around to the statement made by Clifford Geertz, anthropologists may claim to be the first to insist that we see the lives of others through lenses of our own grinding, but it seems that they are the last to see that power and privilege are inscribed in disciplinary mores that have ground an anthropological lens that often fails to recognize its applied sisters.

This point is particularly relevant as we consider disciplinary knowledge and quality education. In the view of many anthropologists, disciplinary knowledge in anthropology can be produced only by "true" anthropologists located in departments of anthropology. Enforcement and policing of the boundaries around the discipline—"disciplining the discipline"—are very much in evidence:

> For only two centuries, knowledge has assumed a disciplinary form; for less than one, it has been produced in academic institutions by professionally trained knowers. Yet we have come to see these circumstances as so natural that we tend to forget their historical novelty and fail to imagine how else we might produce and organize knowledge. (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, & Sylvan, 1993, p. viii)

Although this statement might be interpreted as an indictment only of anthropology, the reality is that it applies not only to anthropologists who work in education but to sociologists, psychologists, historians, and philosophers as well. "Education" has been of low status in academic and university circles for several reasons: (a) Teaching is a mass occupation, and entry standards for teacher/training/education are thought to be not as stringent as standards in other fields; (b) it was historically conducted in separate, lower status institutions such as normal schools and teachers' colleges; and (c) it was and is associated with women and children (see Cuban, 1999).

For anthropologists who work in education, the connection of anthropological theory to practice cannot be dismissed. The "So what?" question to theoretical formulations must be laid out. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the complexity of applying both disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge in the real world of public school education. Teachers and students operate in a context that isolates practitioners, mutes autonomy, and pushes for standardization and homogenization embedded in relations of power. Perhaps one lesson to be learned is that as postfoundational theorists problematize the insularity of disciplinary knowledge, it is equally problematic to disengage disciplinary knowledge from power in academia and in schools. Disciplinary knowledge has been and is defined by the "knowers," and until it is redefined to include "practitioner/knowers," the nexus of knowledge/power will remain unchanged. Disciplinal policing limits the claims of those beyond the disciplinary boundary.

The ultimate question is whether anthropologists, learning from the very processes that are studied, can syncretize, hybridize, and pull from disparate arenas, both academic and applied, to create new meanings of quality education. If anthropological "quality" in theory and method is to be embedded in issues of equity, anthropology as a field cannot be *in absentia*. The forces of institutionalization of knowledge occur, even when and if anthropologists disengage from the world of application. Furthermore, all educational researchers, regardless of their disciplinary training, must share a mission of engaging multidisciplinary knowledge within the ethical reflection of quality education. Educational research is at its strongest when it incorporates into its view of applied issues the insights of a multivocal chorus of interdisciplinary practitioners and knowers and communities, dialogically transforming conversations about quality education. What cannot be forgotten is that, in the vortex of centripetal and centrifugal forces, there are flesh-and-blood students and teachers caught in the eye of the storm. When disciplinary, ideological, political, and social borders cease to be the focus of attention, perhaps we can turn to what really matters in quality education: students and teachers.

NOTES

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[1] The American Anthropological Association, as part of its fund-raising Centennial Campaign, published a brochure detailing the history of the discipline and the association. The quotations included here are from the brochure and can also be found at the American Anthropological Association's Web site (www.aaanet.org).

[2] Portions of this section appear in González (in press).

[3] For an overview of this history, see Gould (1981).

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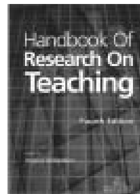

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