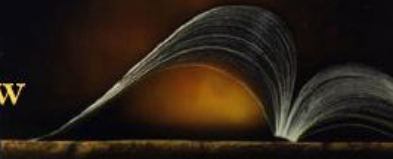


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He, Ming Fang & Phillion, JoAnn (2008) *Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry into Social Justice in Education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

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The most enriching and defining moments of life are unscripted: the jubilant ecstasy of new found love, the howling pain of suffering and indescribable loss. In He and Phillion's *Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry Into Social Justice in Education* (2008), life unscripted is explored and celebrated as the seventh moment of inquiry-based research.

In a provocative exploration of culture and identity, *Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry Into Social Justice in Education* makes good use of an array of research traditions to expose the reality of the minority and underprivileged experience and inspire a call to action to examine mainstream curriculum. He and Phillion present a persuasive case for qualitative researchers to become personally involved and subjective in their research. They maintain that personal interest and subjectivity are required for passionate commitment and advocacy in social-justice oriented research.

About the Authors

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Included among this social justice-oriented body of work are critical narratives (both fiction and non-fiction) of injustice and discrimination dictated by place, race, class and gender. From a rural Indiana school district to an inner city school in Atlanta, Georgia, each chapter takes the reader across time and place and reveals problems embedded within the larger society that require critical attention.

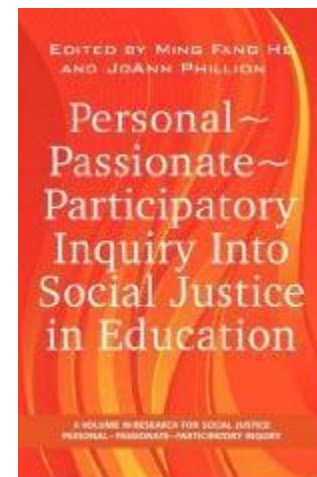
Featuring a foreword and an epilogue from University of Illinois at Chicago Distinguished Professor William Ayers, the book comprises sixteen chapters organized topically and culled from a group of social justice researchers who present their data in unstructured, passionate narratives.

Experience is determined by theory (He & Phillion, 2008). The seventh moment is presented in memoirs, oral history, poetry and personal narratives that push the boundaries of more familiar modes of traditional research whose tenets of objectivity and fitting data into predetermined categories are rendered obsolete by the newest direction the seventh moment takes social justice-oriented work. Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry research thrives on intimate subjectivity and an unwavering commitment to social justice by researcher-advocates.

What modes of injustice are operationalized by mainstream curriculum? As we sift through memory and experience and draw connections between the personal and the political, how can we take that transformative knowledge and utilize it for positive social and educational change? In other words, how can the experiences of both the researchers and participants be used to solve some of our most pressing social problems?

Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry research taps into the deepest, intimate, and often most uncomfortable reaches of our lives and enables us to understand a lived experience on its own terms. The fluidity of inquiry that characterizes Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry research demonstrates that there are autobiographical roots to our inquiries and fosters a critical consciousness that compels us to consider things as they are presented to us. By seeing past the veneer, uncovering the truths behind the manipulated images, and seeing things as they truly are can we be motivated to provide counter stories and compelled to take action for social change.

We go into the journey of Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry research with open minds, not knowing what to expect. Will we choose to speak? Will we choose to listen? Will we pay attention? The unexpected makes us *care*. If we endeavor to become agents of positive social change, we



must experience the triumphs and struggles of these authors and their participants as they evolve.

In the opening chapter, “Research for Social Justice”, He and Phillion urge researchers to be passionate about the issues they discuss. Together, they advocate for bringing visibility to and raising critical awareness of accurate and realistic representations by offering an alternative lens and counter stories to confront stereotypes, thus enabling readers to pay attention and recognize things as they are.

In Chapter Two, “Stitched from the Soul: An Autobiographical Inquiry of a Black Woman Principal”, Sonya D. Jefferson uses critical race theory in education to expose the myth behind the landmark 1954 *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision. While *Brown* is generally perceived as a positive step towards civil rights, Jefferson points out that it was not wholly beneficial to black students in that desegregated classrooms resulted in loss of identity and membership in the black community. Jefferson exposes the dichotomy of post-*Brown* school systems “serving as well as betraying” (2008) the needs of black school children.

Jefferson’s inquiry into urban school transformation stems from her concern for her daughter’s disinterest in maximizing her educational potential; despite the precedent older generations in her family have set. Throughout this process, Jefferson realizes that the question is not what is wrong with her daughter’s lack of motivation, but what is wrong with a school system that does not nurture its black children. By examining the experiences of four generations of black women in her family, she finds voice in her work as a principal in a Title I school, and also learns to question the “official” story behind *Brown* and its ramifications on the black community.

Citing her family’s historical relationship with segregated and desegregated classrooms, Jefferson searches for lessons and counter stories to address the pressing need for improvement in public education. Jefferson questions the price paid by black communities and argues that *Brown* failed to deliver what Black communities felt it promised, and ultimately urges schools to reflect a care-and-justice ethic in order to truly offer students of color an opportunity to succeed.

In Chapter Three, Advis Dell Wilkerson uses autobiography and black feminist perspective to conduct her research, in which she shares an intimate portrait of her experiences as a teen mom. Wilkerson utilizes autobiography as her methodology to decode her experiences that are fraught with racism, poverty, and unjust socially constructed barriers.

Prior to her pregnancy, Wilkerson's standing within her community is unblemished; a motivated, dedicated, and *responsible* student athlete. After her pregnancy is confirmed, Wilkerson experiences the first of many prejudice-motivated betrayals dictated by race, class, and gender by her once welcoming school. Being black, an unwed mother, and poor are socially assigned labels that she must contend with throughout her life as she struggles to raise her child and empower herself through a better education.

"Teen Mom" shows how Wilkerson grows and contends with society. Through the nurturing support of her mother, Wilkerson demonstrates that the values of the black community are not necessarily those of the status quo. She paints a story of love, courage, and resilience and makes meaning out of her life's journey. Her experiences strike a raw emotional chord and put a face on harmful stereotypes that are deeply embedded in our society. A promoter of black feminist education, Wilkerson advocates for a supportive and nurturing environment for black teenage mothers and their children.

The discussion on Black feminist theory and themes of racism, classicism, and sexism continue in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter Four, "Resilient Lives: African American Women Scholars", Paula Booker Baker uses black feminist thought and critical race theory to examine the impact that these social constructs have on the challenges that five black women scholars experience in predominantly White colleges and universities.

Baker's inquiry begins several years before her research is formally conducted, as she notices inconsistencies in expectations between the dominant culture and her own values, beliefs and experiences within academia. She realizes that story telling is a formidable pedagogical tool in that it enables individuals to "challenge beliefs and mores and explore personal expressiveness" (2008).

Baker points out that academic status and social class does not make black female scholars immune from discrimination. Through her findings, Baker exposes subtle prejudices embedded within an often hostile academic community, focuses on the uniqueness of women's voices, reveals connection in experiences, and emphasizes the importance of support structures and mentorship to the success of black women in academia. Finally, she calls for a commitment to Black feminism and mentorship in the education of black women.

In Chapter Five, "Self, Others, and Jump Rope Communities: An Oral History of the Triumphs of African

American Women”, Wynetta Scott-Simmons describes the lives of four black women who attended an all-White, all-girl schools in the late 1960s-1970s. Using critical literacy and critical race theory, Scott-Simmons gives resonance to their stories by connecting the *dailiness* of their lives and lived theories of communities where action and reflection take place.

What counts as knowledge? How can students achieve in the face of adversity? Scott-Simmons identifies correlations in the individual lived experiences of her participants and exposes parallels between the challenges facing her black women participants over 30 years ago and the challenges that students of color currently face in today’s classrooms. Common themes that Scott-Simmons finds include the lack of minority teachers who possess generational pride and cultural expertise, and negative descriptions assigned to minority students.

Cultural capital is crucial to the success of every student. Scott-Simmons concludes by urging pre-service teachers to make up for the increasing deficit in cultural sensitivity by bringing passion and their personal selves into the classroom. By doing so, Scott-Simmons maintains that the cultural capital that is unique to each student is not only discovered, but validated.

In Chapter Six, “Using Literature to Develop Empathy and Compassion in Preservice Teachers: A First Step in Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers”, Lyndall Muschell shares her passion for incorporating culturally responsive teaching in the classroom.

Like Scott-Simmons, Muschell is deeply concerned with the disproportionate ratio of minority students to minority teachers. As the student body becomes increasingly more diverse and the teaching population becomes less diverse, Muschell calls for a renewed focus on students’ experiences, identities and aspirations. Cross-cultural narrative and narrative imagination are used in her inquiry, where she finds that the critical examination of one’s autobiographical roots results in empathy for others.

An educator for over 20 years, Muschell utilizes biography to establish trust, develop empathy, and inquiry among her students. Her reflections on the causes of marginalization and disenfranchisement of students show that too often students’ perspectives are ignored and the expertise they offer is rendered as insignificant to the classroom dialogue. Muschell maintains that the time has arrived for educators to recognize and utilize storytelling as a means of inviting dialogue about power structure and prejudice into the classroom. Her

work calls for the incorporation of culturally responsive pedagogy in classrooms and staff development.

Imagination as a facilitator of social and political awareness is addressed by Robert Lake in Chapter Seven, “A Curriculum of Imagination in an Era of Standardization”. Lake contrasts the impact that standardization has on not only personal development, but the limitations it imposes on imagination. Imagination, Lake says, is crucial to developing personal and critical awareness.

Lake asserts there are few, if any, limitations in creative narrative. Using a fictional dialogue between Paulo Freire and Maxine Greene as a theoretical framework, Lake explores the spaces of possibility by envisioning a curriculum that is both theoretical and practical. By drawing upon connections between democracy and living curriculum, Lake maintains that education renews itself through creative reflection and action, which is, in essence, a curriculum of the imagination. He concludes by encouraging the use of multiple forms of literacy, and advocating the use of curriculum of the imagination as an educational practice to counter standardized testing.

In Chapter Eight, “A Quiet Awakening: Spinning Yarns from Granny’s Table in the New Rural South”, Angela Haynes uses oral histories to describe her experiences growing up White and poor in the rural south. Using oral history as a research methodology, Haynes uses her life-based experiences and that of her family and surroundings to illustrate a southern-situated curriculum. Through the arenas of place, class, and race she discovers a unique regionality that enables her to better understand her environment.

She uses these stories to benefit Southern school children by opening the discussion on controversial and significant issues that permeate Southern, rural mentality and calls communities to action to recognize these issues and act for change.

In Chapter Nine, “African American Students with Reading Disabilities: A Critical Race Inquiry”, Margie Sweatman utilizes critical race theory to inquire whether the racial minority status of black students with disabilities contributes to the inequalities in the education they receive.

Based on personal perspectives shared by participants, Sweatman constructs a reality that demonstrates that black students with disabilities do attempt to become involved in their own educations. Like Jefferson in Chapter Two, Sweatman discovers interconnectedness between race, socioeconomic status and student outcomes. She realizes that the problem lies

not with the students, but with the instruction being administered by the school district.

From her research, Sweatman recommends that a diverse range of resources, instructional methods and approaches be utilized to help overcome this dilemma. She maintains that incorporation of a critically responsive pedagogy is needed to help meet the needs of students who learn differently and suggests that educators possess a comprehensive knowledge about what actually transpires in the classroom in order for positive change to transpire for black children with learning disabilities.

In Chapter Ten, “Language, Culture, and Identity: Immigrant Female Students in U.S. High Schools,” Joanna Stoughton Cavan uses cross cultural narrative inquiry to interview three female immigrant students to ask how cultural bias and prejudice impacts literacy of ESL students.

Suppression of culture by schools is detrimental to immigrant student success, Cavan argues. She urges educators to recognize that continuity in immigrant students’ language, culture and identity are needed in order to cultivate motivated and educated students. Without culturally responsive teaching and respect for individual, cultural and linguistic difference and experience, student success is greatly hampered.

In her quest to promote a deeper understanding of issues that are unique to immigrant students, Cavan turns rhetoric into action by conducting foreign language workshops in schools and sponsoring an after school club for immigrant students focusing on language, culture and identity development.

What are the differences between high- and low-level learners? What cultural influences facilitate or diminish personal reading motivation? How is the motivation to read revealed in personal stories of high- and low-achieving African American middle grade males? Using critical narrative inquiry, Clara Taylor addresses these questions in Chapter Eleven, “Reading Through Brown Eyes: A Culturally Congruent Reading Curriculum”.

In her study, Taylor uses critical race theory to explain how racial identities, learning styles, and popular culture influences impact learning styles. By sharing vignettes of six middle school-aged black males enrolled in an inner city school in Atlanta, Georgia, she determines that cultural influences have a tremendous influence as motivators or impediments to reading. Taylor urges a move toward developing a culturally congruent reading curriculum to advance the education of students of color.

In Chapter Twelve, “Dalton’s Suicide: Dealing with Student Death in Education” Teresa Rishel uses critical narrative inquiry to investigate the climate of public schools whose faculty and staff are largely unaware of the conditions at school that exacerbate the phenomenon of student suicide. Rishel, who lost her own son to suicide, provides an intimate account of growth and acceptance as she uncovers the layers of action and reaction by staff at a rural Indiana school that led to a student’s suicide. Citing the alienating effects of traditional school practices, she urges educators to confront and address, rather than ignore the issue of student suicide. Rishel insists that educators must recognize and support student experience and problems as part of the learning process and calls for the inclusion of suicidal issues in school corporation policy making and instructional practices.

In Chapter Thirteen “Stories of Successful Native American Women in Academia,” Angela Jaime’s inquiry primarily serves to address the injustice of Native American women often being depicted in non-tertiary roles by non-Native Americans. She uses portraiture to capture the stories of and accurately portray the experiences of three Native American female researchers about the discrimination they endured to find success in academia. What does it mean for female Native American researchers to be successful? Jaime points out that success within Native communities is measured by a different standard than what is traditionally considered as success (e.g. publications and promotion to tenure). Success to Native American researchers is gauged by giving back to communities, preserving indigenous knowledge, and advocating an agenda of self-determination for Native Americans. Moving beyond a post-colonial perspective, Jaime’s work provides Native American women educators with an understanding of what challenges to expect when pursuing a career in higher education. Her research also benefits researchers who interact with these women to better understand and value their perspectives.

In Chapter Fourteen, “It Starts at Home: The Familial Relationship of Scholarship, Education, and Advocacy,” Tammy Turner-Vorbeck advocates for family diversity in curriculum design. She asks *How is and how should the construct of family be represented in curriculum?* Turner-Vorbeck’s inquiry stems from the negative impact school curriculum involving the concept of family has on students who come from families whose diversity extends beyond the scope of the assignment. According to Turner-Vorbeck, the negative psychological impact seemingly innocuous assignments such as the tracing of family trees or the writing of Mother’s Day cards have on students from diverse

families is tremendous. By failing to cultivate a multicultural learning environment or take into consideration students' experiences and knowledge of diverse family structures, educators fail to recognize and validate the diversity of family demographics. While race and ethnicity form the basis of multicultural studies, family diversity cannot be overlooked, as the demographics of families continue to shift and change. Educators must recognize the increasing diversity of families and incorporate it into their curriculum. Turner-Vorbeck advocates for the inclusion of antibias activities in the classroom that are inclusive alternatives to mainstream curriculum.

In Chapter Fifteen, "Becoming an Agent of Social Change: Women's Stories of Sweatshops, Sweetshops and Women's Social Activism," Betty Eng addresses the autobiographical origins of her inquiry. She recounts how the process of paralleling her family narrative with the historical narrative of Asian Americans provided her with the means to reflect upon and make meaning of her experiences in relation to social activism. Through reflection, Eng recognizes the significance of lived experience and attributes her self-awareness to the Asian American Movement of the 1960s, when she began to critically examine the fallacy of the American Dream and the myth of Asian Americans as the model minority. In her quest for identity, culture, and belonging, she is able to displace and redefine assumptions about the formal and informal curriculum being learned. The stories of her mother and other Asian American women inspired Eng to connect with the community through the Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres to actively advocate for social change and dispel damaging assumptions about Asian and Asian American women.

In the final chapter "Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry: Potentials, Contributions, Concerns, and Future Directions," He and Phillion discuss the possibilities for Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry and its place in the seventh moment. It should be noted that both He and Phillion are students of renowned narrative research advocate F. Michael Connelly. His influence as well as the philosophical ideas of John Dewey are present in this collection of essays. Specifically, this Deweyan-infused research for social justice allows participants to explore meaning and articulate feelings. It is characterized by discovering meaning in counter stories provided in personal narratives, identifying patterns of inequality, and synthesizing the material into a platform of social justice. Utilizing specific methodologies and focal outcomes, the distinguishing characteristic and strength of Personal-Passionate-

Participatory Inquiry is the passion and commitment to advocacy that researchers bring to their inquiries.

Compared to more traditional research methods, Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry is daring, unconventional and unfamiliar- particularly when it is coached in conventional terms of analysis and trustworthiness. It is principally characterized by the following descriptors: data presented in a lifelike way; uncovered hidden and untold stories counter the “official story”; and by researchers who demonstrate a strong commitment to the plight of their participants. He and Phillion acknowledge that the very strengths that are unique to Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry can also be somewhat problematic as researchers who engage in this research act as both participant/researcher and cannot yield control over the setting.

This book is an appropriate introduction to qualitative researchers exploring appropriate narrative methods for their inquiries. Through its title alone, it clearly distinguishes itself from other narrative research methodologies. In Personal-Passionate- Participatory Inquiry, the deeply personal becomes extremely relevant. The process of research becomes a lived experience in that researchers who engage in this research must be personal stakeholders in the inquiry they are undertaking. In a tenuous balance between past, present and future, their research is subjective, intimate, and raw. The ultimate purpose of this collection of essays is to illuminate this distinct form of research where narrative and inquiry converge, and solutions to social problems are found in lived experiences.

My belief that individual and cultural stories serve to counter hegemony in mainstream curriculum is reinforced by this book. Themes of power, identity, and community have always fascinated me as they infiltrated my life from the moment I was born. As an adoptee, a female minority, Asian American Studies graduate instructor, and person who grew up in a small southeastern Colorado town fraught with prejudice, the research presented in this anthology is personally relevant.

The stories in this book had a profound effect on me. As I read each chapter, I fell into a deep introspection as I was forced to reflect upon my own experiences and how they influenced my quest for answers while simultaneously fueling my passion to speak out against stereotypes (both positive and negative) of Asian Americans. Through experience, I shaped my own identity. I too, witnessed how my rural high school dealt with the suicide of one of my classmates and friends. I, too, experienced the confusion of displaced identity as I struggled to find a sense of belonging in a community where few Asian

Americans lived. Although the experiences of these researchers took place at a different time and place, the challenges they uncovered resonated with me and struck a familiar chord; thus deepening my understanding and educational experience as a whole.

This collection of essays provides a solid case for the use of Personal-Passionate-Participatory Inquiry in the classroom and in qualitative research. Fresh and provocative, the stories that emerge from these pages display an accurate picture of how we, as humans, experience the world.

About the Reviewer

Kate Agathon is a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum Studies at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. Her research focus is on Asian American identity issues including the portrayal of Asian Americans in the mass media and popular culture, and also identity development of Asian American adoptees.



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