TELLING TALES IN THE FIELD
Understanding How Educational Practitioners Determine the Credibility of Ideas About Poverty

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Qualitative research about poverty has the unique potential to inform educational practitioners who work with poor youth and their families. According to Van Maanen's (2011) classification of different audiences that engage with ethnography, however, most educators are "general readers" unfamiliar with such inquiry. To consider the significance of this distinction, we explore how educators determined the credibility of ideas they encountered in the particular professional development training of Ruby Payne. Payne's work on poverty has prompted both substantive and methodological criticism from academics, but her influence as perhaps the most visible contemporary authority on the topic has persisted amongst practitioners in the United States and expanded abroad. Through our study, we find that educators deem Payne's ideas as credible because they (1) defer to the judgment of others, (2) identify with her perspective as fellow practitioners, and (3) accept storytelling as just a different type of research. The implications of these results are especially relevant for qualitative researchers seeking to affect educational practice because Payne characterizes the foundation for her controversial ideas in explicitly ethnographic terms.

Qualitative research about poverty has the unique potential to engage educators who work with poor youth and their families—enriching their understanding of poverty's pervasive effects, humanizing the experiences of people of living in poverty, and illuminating the web of complex social relations that contribute to poverty's persistence. This potential is achieved not only through the exercise of technical rigor by qualitative researchers as they conduct their studies but also through the artful crafting of their work's final accounts (Eisner, 1981; Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2006). Attending particularly to what Van Maanen (2011) calls "textwork" has allowed qualitative researchers to consider the "innumerable [choices] concerned with such things as voice, authorial presence (or absence), analogies and metaphors, allusions, professional dialect and jargon, imagery, interpretive moves, tone,

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empirical or theoretical emphasis, truth claims (or lack thereof), figures of speech, and so on" (p. 159). It has also freed qualitative researchers to experiment with form (Gillborn, 2010; Pifer, 1999) and draw inspiration from such fields as poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction (Banks, 2000; Caulley, 2008; Lester & Gabriel, 2011).

While methodological developments like these open the range of scholarly possibilities, they also warrant necessary cautions for the engagement of audiences unfamiliar with qualitative research. Given the mainstream proliferation of "do-it-yourself ethnography" that "looks to the uninitiated as a semirespectable form of hanging out," what results may be "empirically unsound and conceptually empty" tales devoid of the requisite "invisible work" qualitative researchers invest over time and with great effort (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 164–165). The consequences of such dubious work are great, especially when there is a pressing need for broad understanding about issues like poverty and the results are likely to have real effects on people with histories of being marginalized or "othered" (Gans, 1995; Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012).

One case in point for examining these issues is Dr. Ruby Payne, who over 2 decades' time has become arguably the most visible authority on poverty and education today. Payne is a former teacher, administrator, and founder of aha! Process, Inc., a professional development and consulting company that began by training pre-K through 12th grade educators on how to work with students in poverty. Central to her more than 100 self-published materials is one book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, that has sold more than 1 million copies, been translated into other languages, and was most recently released in 2013 in its fifth edition. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, Payne reported training approximately 40,000 educators a year and working with 70% to 80% of the nation's school districts (Shapira, 2007). Her reach has expanded to include additional audiences in higher education, social service, nonprofit, health care, criminal justice, faith, and business sectors. And according to her company website, her speaking career has now taken her to all 50 American states and 10 different countries around the world (http://www.ahaprocess.com/).

Though Payne's popularity cannot be disputed, the substance of her ideas has provoked tremendous criticism from researchers in the academy. Some critics have challenged Payne's characterization of poverty as almost entirely an individual phenomenon without attention to how different social structures systematically influence the distribution of opportunities, advantages, and material goods in unequal ways (Ng & Rury, 2009). They have also questioned Payne's deficiency-oriented descriptions reminiscent of the 1960s "culture of poverty" thesis that poor people are disproportionately more immoral, lazy, and promiscuous than middle-class or wealthy individuals (Bohn, 2006; Ng & Rury, 2006; Gorski, 2006a, 2006b; Osei-Kofi, 2005; Valencia, 2010). And still other researchers have disputed the validity of the 607 "truth claims" Payne makes in her *Framework* text to demonstrate the majority of her assertions (Bomer, Dorin, May, & Semingson, 2008). That "poverty" applies to anyone who carries the mindset of the poverty culture, that poor households are always noisy with the television on or people talking at once, and that poor people live only in the present moment without concern for the consequences of their actions, for example, actually contradict the findings of empirical work in fields such as education, anthropology, and sociology.

In addition to these substantive issues, the methodological criticisms of Payne's work are especially significant to the focus of this article. As self-published material, her ideas have not benefited from the scrutiny of academic peer review. The absence of even the most basic methodological details about what evidence informs her thinking or how she draws her conclusions is also problematic (Baker, Ng & Rury, 2006). As Bomer et al. (2008) note in their discussion of her "hidden rules" claim

that certain unspoken cues and habits typify the existence of people by way of their poor, middle, and wealthy class membership, for example:

> Payne offers no citations for any statements about hidden rules. She does not inform the reader how these hidden rules came to be revealed to her, nor does she explain the means by which they are supposed to be hidden, or from whom. This "hidden rules" approach is central to Payne's perspective and an area in which she claims special expertise. However, Payne has not conducted any research regarding hidden rules nor does she offer any evidence to support them. (p. 2506)

Though Bomer et al. (2008) are skeptical of Payne's ideas being premised upon research, Payne comments in the introduction of her fourth edition text that she collected "data" over a 24-year period (2005, p. 1). In the 2013, fifth edition, she elaborates just a little more in a section titled, "Research Base of this Book." She explains:

> This work is based on a naturalistic, longitudinal inquiry based on a convenience sample. I was closely involved with a neighborhood of generational poverty for 32 years. The neighborhood included 50–70 people (counts fluctuated over time based on situation, death, and mobility), mostly Caucasian. During this time I—coming from a middle-class upbringing—encountered the vast range of ways that the neighborhood's understandings, actions, and responses differed from my own. I undertook an interdisciplinary analysis of the research to explain these differences. Additionally, I lived in Haiti for 3 and a half months to study poverty and engage in service while in college. Then I lived among the wealthy for 6 years while my former husband was working with the Chicago Board of Trade, which taught me much about wealth.
>
> During and after these experiences, I took on the methodology of the anthropologist: I "went native" and then relied on research to explain these experiences. (2013, p. 4)

The prominence Payne has garnered as a supposed expert on poverty should be of concern to all researchers, and it is particularly relevant for qualitative researchers to consider given the ethnographic character she explicitly cites as the foundation of her *Framework*. After all, her work has been deemed credible and influenced thousands of educational, social service, and healthcare providers as well as religious, corporate, and community leaders in spite of the many challenges from academics over its merits. How did this happen? And what might researchers gain by understanding this select case? Thus far, published critiques of Payne's work have come primarily from members of the academy involved in teacher education and educational research as referenced in the preceding discussion. Published defenses have come from Payne herself (see for example, Payne, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). An effort to understand the perspectives of people who constitute the audience for Payne's work—individuals whose judgments are key in the calculus of her continued influence—has been missing.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Van Maanen's (2011) typology of readers of ethnography provides a useful conceptual lens through which to consider how and why different audiences might engage qualitative work differently. As fellow fieldworkers in the academy, for example, *collegial* readers tend to be "concerned with matters of technique, definition, coverage and scope, levels of generalization, and the informing analytic apparatus and claims that surround and comprise ethnography" (p. 28). These readers of ethnography also do ethnography. *Social science* readers are likely to be peers in higher education, though their interests lie primarily in the information produced by ethnographies "as merely a method among methods" contributing to their interests (p. 30). These readers are knowledgeable about research generally and turn to ethnography for what can be learned as a result

of the specific approach. Audiences for Payne's work, on the whole, are notably different and perhaps best characterized as *general* readers: nonspecialists attune to the "allegorical nature" of ethnographic work (p. 31) as relatively jargon-free, interesting stories that provide "comparisons to the reader's own [culture] or as contrasts to what the reader may well take for granted or expect to be true of the culture studied" (p. 33). These readers may be quite unfamiliar with ethnography but find it enjoyable and something they can associate with aspects of their individual lives.

Since relating research to practice usually involves the interaction of people across collegial or social science and general reader types, Van Maanen's classification of different ethnographic audiences lends special insight to our study purposes. In particular, it highlights the varied backgrounds, interests, and means of engagement different readers may bring to the same work. Focusing on the particular case of Ruby Payne, our study explores how educational practitioners as one group of general readers determined the credibility of the ideas they encountered during her professional development training on working with students in poverty. An analysis of their accounts helps us understand how they experienced and evaluated Payne's work. The implications of our study are then considered with respect to the efforts of educational researchers, particularly those who do qualitative research and seek to capitalize on its unique potential for influencing educational practice.

STUDY METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

To explore how educators determined the merit of Payne's ideas, we conducted a series of in-depth, individual interviews and one focus group with a total of 15 educators working in five different school districts. These meetings ranged from 1 to 2 hours each and were semistructured around a question protocol that elicited information in the following broad areas: participants' professional backgrounds and day-to-day interactions with poor students; overall experiences of Payne's professional development training and resulting insights or concerns; impact of Payne's ideas on participants' existing beliefs about poverty and education; and critical considerations regarding the merit of Payne's work.

Participants were initially solicited through an email sent to the instructional coaches of 25 public and charter schools in seven districts, all located within one Midwestern metropolitan area. Once we began making contact with study volunteers, we also asked them to help us identify other individuals they knew who might be willing to participate. All of these participants completed Payne's program within the last 3 years through staff-initiated efforts as well as districtwide mandates. A number of them also served as discussion leaders for building-based book studies, formally presented Payne's ideas to their school colleagues after becoming trainers themselves, or led follow-up mentoring programs and instructional brainstorming sessions based on Payne's recommendations that students in poverty need middle-class role models as well as particular cognitive interventions.

We carried out our analysis in an ongoing manner, reviewing transcripts of recorded interviews first, coding openly for insights within individual cases next, and then considering patterns of similarity and/or difference within particular schools and districts as well as between various schools and districts in a constant comparative manner (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). While we did not purposefully select only educators who held favorable views of Payne's program for this study, it is fair to say that most of our participants shared a positive overall opinion. In contrast, our own assessments of Payne's work are more aligned with the criticisms described in the background discussion provided earlier, which we readily shared if asked but also took care not to impose. At the request of two participants, we shared a list of published critiques about Payne's ideas after our interview and continued correspon-

dence briefly over email to discuss their reactions and related questions. Our sense is that these individuals sided neither wholeheartedly with Payne or her critics. They understood why certain concerns were raised about her *Framework* and gleaned some additional information about poverty and its persistent effects. They were willing to try anything, though, if there was a chance their students might benefit.

Because our ultimate goal was to gain a candid understanding of practitioner perspectives for which there are no right or wrong answers, we deliberately posed open-ended questions to elicit participants' descriptions of their own experiences and thoughts. The total number of people we interviewed was not large, and our findings cannot be generalized in a statistical sense. However, our participants described what we believe is a broad cross-section of ways that practitioners have been introduced to Payne's ideas. After hearing similar responses repeated by these educators who serve in such varied capacities as elementary and secondary classroom teachers, instructional coaches, and counselor across different schools and different school districts, we believe that the three primary means by which our participants assessed the merits of Payne's work may be transferable to similar other general readers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS

In the sections that follow, we discuss three findings in greater detail: (1) that our study participants depended upon the judgment of others to determine Payne's credibility, (2) that our study participants deemed Payne credible because her ideas resonated with them as practitioners and what they viewed as common sense, and (3) that our study participants accepted her work as simply a different type of research that should be given credibility.

Its Credibility Has Been Determined by Others

As educational practitioners whose training and daily duties were mainly in the classroom, many of our participants cited their own limited ability to evaluate Payne's ideas. Therefore, they relied upon *the judgments of others.* They assumed—and indeed, expected—that their school and/or district leaders were equipped to scrutinize Payne's work and had done so. Respondents frequently expressed trusting in the quality of professional development provided by their district leaders, and in select instances where administrators were participants in the training themselves, their presence and visibility were also viewed as significant. One teacher pointed out, for example, "[Administrators] were part of the training.… [If] this is important to them, it should be important to you." Even in an instance where the cost of districtwide training was scrutinized because it required administrators make substantial financial investments at a time of lay-off and severe budget restrictions, another teacher described deferring to the "head shed" of "theoretical" and "semitheoretical" superintendents at the top of her school district. She explained, "These guys brought [Payne] in, it was their idea." Because they deemed it worthwhile, it went without much question that it must be credible.

Participants also indicated Payne's reputation as an expert preceded her through word-of-mouth testimonies by colleagues within the same school or district. It was not uncommon to hear as we did in one school, for example, that an instructional coach was sent to complete the training first. This person then returned with a favorable recommendation for the principal, who in turn also went through training. The principal then endorsed it to the school's leadership team, and, "As a leadership team, we decided that this was something our teachers needed to hear."

Collegial recommendations across different school districts were also given great esteem, especially where educators' relatively recent experiences with poor children prompted them to look to their more experienced neighbors where poverty had been an enduring challenge. One teacher who was originally trained

in a central city district but now taught in an increasingly diverse suburban area explained,

> The school I am in now has a great deal of diversity—migrant families, ESL students, and we are getting more and more African American students coming from [the central city]. So, with these growing demographics—we are the only school in [this suburban district] with a trailer—we needed to do something as a staff. As a staff, we did a book study over [Payne's] book that our principal started in preparation of our seeing her speak. But the teachers took the lead. Several of us had come from [one of two major central city districts].

Another respondent referred to information sharing through a larger professional affiliation as well, recalling that, "I first heard of Payne at a professional development for principals." Individual testimonies, recommendations by peer districts, and referrals through professional organizations were all instances of relying upon the judgment of trusted others.

It's Credible Because it Resonates With What I Know

By far, the most powerful mechanism through which Payne's stories seemed to resonate with teachers was their *personal identification* with her as fellow practitioners. This enhanced her credibility as an expert on poverty in contrast to other possible experts on poverty they did not believe had credible knowledge of the classroom. As one teacher explained, Payne was familiar with the "trench talk" of their professional lives, and ultimately, "I give more credibility to people who I feel like could understand what my reality was." Another respondent reasoned, "Her stories of her experiences in the classroom and the things that she said that she did … you know, they are things that I do or would do. She speaks from the perspective of the classroom teacher."

A shared orientation to educational practice meant respondents made certain allowances for Payne's work. One interviewee said,

> I was taking a class at the time [I went through Payne's training], and some of the professors were cautious of her work because they thought there was some faulty research. But as a teacher, I am not looking at it as if she didn't do this, she didn't dot her i's or cross her t's. I'm looking at it as, I can relate to this.

Payne's ideas about poverty bolstered what teachers themselves considered self-evident, too. Several teachers said, for example, "There were pieces that were valuable that kind of explained what we already knew," or, "More than anything, it kind of reinforced what we already knew." And respondents frequently characterized Payne's ideas as being commonsensical, like in the following recurring sentiment:

> I look at what I have learned in my work, and I think that it makes sense.… I have experienced scenarios in my own work that [are] similar to what she presented in her work. You see it happening. Her stories made sense, you know. What she said just made common sense.

Insofar as Payne's training appeared valid and reinforced how participants already thought about poor children and their families, it legitimized their reasoning. Importantly, it also provided participants a common vocabulary with which to narrativize the main challenges poor people face and their own roles as educators seeking to help.

It's Credible as Just a Different Type of Research

As an audience of "general readers," our respondents described Payne's preface to her professional development training as *an approach that uses stories.* They found her stories readily engaging, and her explanation helped them accept the material as simply being a different type of research than the traditional sort using numbers, with which they were more familiar. One interviewee com-

mented, "It is a rare instance where you find statistics tell the true story." And, at the beginning of the training, this teacher recalled,

> [Payne] owned up to [her critics] and said, "This is what you are going to hear, this is what you are going to read. Let me just tell you from my perspective." She kind of told her story, but in listening to her story she was very sensitive and had lived enough of it to have credence.

Another respondent argued,

> Even if it is not research in the regular way, what she is doing and how she does it just makes common sense. These are not new ideas. She is just bringing it back to the forefront and putting it in a logical format. That just makes sense.

If respondents indicated they were aware of existing critiques about Payne's work or said they could imagine bases on which it might be critiqued, the concerns they expressed were associated with Payne's storytelling approach and how stories as mechanisms for communicating research might sacrifice substance for style or be viewed as unacceptable to the mainstream academic community that does more conventional scholarship. The lone teacher we interviewed who remained skeptical of Payne even after his training experience said, for example,

> Her seminar is touching people, but I feel she should be providing something more … something more than general, sweeping, entertaining stories. There were just a lot of entertaining little stories about kids with different scenarios—stories—that teachers buy into her and listen to her stories.

However, if Payne's stories themselves were reason for pause, another teacher argued, "I feel like she addressed [her critics] well. She addressed them by citing research. Each time she mentioned something, she would cite research, listing two or three research studies to support everything that she said." Probing for more detail, this respondent confessed that the specifics of any research Payne may have cited had been forgotten, but the fact that something of the sort had been referenced was nevertheless memorable.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Throughout our interviews, it was clear that the educators we spoke to were dedicated, accomplished, and hard-working professionals seeking to make a difference in the lives of their students. Their receptiveness and desire for information to enhance the work they do should be commended, and by no means were they indifferent or mindless dupes. Indeed, with the exception of one person, our respondents found Payne's training to be valuable overall because it raised their awareness about poverty, fostered greater intentionality about individual and schoolwide plans for addressing the issue, and provided them some suggestions they felt they could use. In their essence, these are positive effects. However, these outcomes are not exclusive to Payne's program, and as Pate (1981) cautions, good intentions themselves do not preclude ill effects. Providing educators a *Framework* that reinforces seemingly commonsensical but empirically questionable, deficiency-oriented stereotypes of poor students and their families is problematic, especially when research could instead prompt critical reflection and new insights needed for social change (Kumashiro, 2009).

The means by which our study participants determined the credibility of Payne's work are not ultimately surprising. For example, theories of isomorphic change processes that help explain why different organizational forms and practices become so similar over time (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) illustrate how Payne's credibility might be socially constructed in the manner our respondents described, with individuals repeatedly relying upon the judgment of others and thus spreading Payne's influence from school to school and district to district.

Of particular relevance are the *coercive* public pressures that schools face to serve all children well regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. Uncertainty about how best to educate poor youth could understandably prompt *mimetic* tendencies. And the diffusion of ideas and behaviors across professional organizations and local peer networks could foster certain *normative* orientations. As Bomer et al (2008) suggest,

> Schools look for help. Principals and superintendents ask their neighboring counterparts for advice. The easiest answer is to bring in a program, especially one that will not overly drain already depleted budgets, one that does not ask too much of already overworked teachers. An affordable program is identified, and its language begins to form ways of thinking for the teachers in their interactions with the children from the identified group. (p. 2498)

Sociological perspectives on teachers and teaching (Lortie, 1975) also provide insight into why our respondents' identification with Payne as a fellow educational practitioner mattered so much. Drawing on Neumann, Pallas, and Peterson's (1999) point that many teachers experience "epistemological confrontations" while in doctoral programs socializing them to become researchers, for example, Labaree (2004) explains:

> The scholar's analytical mission is not an easy one to appreciate for practitioners who have been deeply immersed in the arena of moral action. Teachers entering doctoral study in education find themselves being asked to adopt a mode of professional practice that appears to be not only sharply different from their own but also morally suspect. From the teacher's perspective, the scholarly approach to education may seem coldly distant and unconscionably unconcerned about student outcomes. The elementary and secondary classroom is a setting in which it is neither practically possible (given immediate demands to act) nor morally defensible (given the need to do the right thing by one's students) for a teacher to adopt the analytical distance required for scholarship. But scholars of education are freed from direct responsibility for the students in the K–12 classrooms, so that, unlike teachers, they have the time and space to focus their attention on what is going on and why, instead of having to focus on what to do and how to do it. (p. 94)

Tensions like these have even led others to suggest metaphorically that educational researchers and educational practitioners inhabit two communities (Levin, 1991), two cultures (Ginsberg & Gorostiaga, 2001), or even two worlds (Hammersley, 2002) given their quite distinct priorities and concerns.

Our last finding—that educators accepted characterizations of Payne's work as just an alternative type of research that uses stories—is of particular relevance given the central questions explored in our study. In many instances, the responses we heard were tinged with a defiance of sorts against the assumed goodness of research, at least in the narrow terms participants understood "research." Participants seemed willing to accept the use of stories. Indeed, they even seemed to welcome stories as valuable and legitimate ways of knowing. This finding suggests interesting potential for relating qualitative research to educational practice, but it is problematic as well if general readers are not provided means by which to engage critically. As Richardson (2000) argues,

> Claiming to write "fiction" is different from claiming to write "science" in terms of the audience one seeks, the impact one might have on different publics, and how one expects "truth claims" to be evaluated. These differences should not be overlooked or minimized. (p. 926)

Effectively communicating qualitative research to varied audiences requires thoughtful deliberation that includes the unique dilemmas and ensuing implications of textwork (MacKenzie, Christensen, & Turner, 2015; Van Maanen, 2011). This point is important to consider not simply because research can be

used to inform the practices of general readers like the participants in our study but because general readers may first need to distinguish between credible information and other ideas purported to be "research." Ruby Payne and her *Framework for Understanding Poverty* provide a unique case for critical examination since poverty is an enduring problem about which educational practitioners and educational researchers can jointly make a difference. Such partnerships do not seem to have materialized, however, and educators have instead seized upon the recommendations of another source. As St. Clair (2004) points out, "Practitioners do, in the final analysis, decide which results are worthy of their attention and effort" (p. 231).

In the current educational policy environment that Cox (2012) notes is decidedly quantitative and positivistic, we are heartened that our findings lend support to Sallee and Flood's (2012) suggestion that qualitative research might be especially compelling to educational practitioners given its characteristic focus on context, emergent nature, and aim for thick description. As general readers of research who recognize their own efforts as educators are also shaped by varied circumstances, unanticipated opportunities and insights, and rich observational understanding, the possibility of mutual appreciation seems great. Capitalizing on such potential for understanding requires explicit elaboration, though, to broaden singular notions of what constitutes research and also introduce audiences to what can be generally expected from these "other" types of inquiry. In other words, as qualitative researchers, we should actively orient general readers to what qualitative research is good for and what makes qualitative research good (Peshkin, 1993). This is not to suggest singular notions of what constitutes goodness in qualitative research, but we should provide general readers insight into how the familiar material of people's stories is treated in likely unfamiliar ways as data.

Additionally, as the select case of Payne highlights, relating research to practice sometimes involves more than researchers within the academy and practitioners in the field. Intermediary agents can be quite influential in the production and dissemination of ideas, and they may not hesitate to prescribe overly simplistic remedies for quite complicated social ills. This is a significant challenge since educators' day-to-day circumstances necessitate action and, as Labaree (2004) points out, "It is not very helpful if researchers answer every important question in the field by saying, 'It all depends'" (p. 75). Yet, we wonder whether Erickson's (1984) assurance might be satisfactory enough for educational practitioners, that: "To people of action, our ethnographic inquiry can be useful by providing new vantage points for reflection; a modest goal, but an honest one resistant to that inflation of hope whose end is cynicism," (p. 66)? Our own conclusion is that such a position must be sufficient. Knowing anything in this sort of tentative and ongoing way seems again compatible with teachers' notions of their own work as an artful craft (Klehr, 2012) that entails "posing, not just answering, questions, interrogating one's own and other's practices and assumptions, and making classrooms sites for inquiry" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 17).

Lastly, on deciding certain issues like the case-to-case generalizability or transferability of knowledge derived from qualitative work, readers' involvement with ideas, texts, and settings is acknowledged as a vital component (Firestone, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Collegial, social science, and general readers alike should be similarly invited to take active roles in asking how individuals doing research sought "disciplined subjectivity" (Erickson, 1984, p. 61) as the primary instruments of the studies they report (Merriam, 2002). This may be a particularly difficult position for educational practitioners as one group of general readers to assume given their scarcity of time, limited access to resources, or historically low occupational status relative to others in the production of research. However, the question of disciplined subjectivity makes clear that people are involved in all aspects of the

research endeavor as well as its application to practice—people who may otherwise be conveniently or inadvertently obscured in the "best practices," "what works," and "scaling up" arena of universal prescriptions where research seems infallible (Moss et al., 2009). People claiming to do research cannot simply recount their faithful adherence to standard procedures and techniques, nor should readers be asked to trust in the mystification of the process. As Maxwell (2013) argues, citing personal communication with Fred Hess, the question of whether one's research is valid or credible is not so much a matter of proving one is right but instead taking seriously how one might be wrong. Ultimately, this requires researchers as well as readers to engage one another about ideas with integrity, not indifference (p. 124).

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