

Social and Institutional Power Structures Meet Duoethnography: The Pedagogy of Negotiating Roles, Dismantling Santa, and “Tilting” bitch

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PROLOGUE

Shortly after convocation, I (Karen) received real (snail) mail from Callie’s father. In that truly gracious southern style, it was a handwritten thank-you note on personalized stationery. He closed with, “I have watched the relationship evolve from student, to colleague, and now friend.” He was right, and his words sparked conversations between Callie and me. We reflected upon how our relationship had evolved over the four years we had known one another. In order to do so, we turned to the methodology that brought us together in the first place: duoethnography. In this chapter, we will employ a screenplay format to duoethnographically

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explore the currere (Pinar 1975, 1995) of our student/professor relationship, tracing and restorying our experiences of navigating power dynamics as our institutional and social relationships changed over time. In order to provide a foundation for our screenplay, we begin by locating our duoethnographic exploration within a performance paradigm. This is followed by a rationale for the screenplay and an overview of three acts. After we present our three acts, the epilogue offers some lessons learned about engaging with duoethnography.

Duoethnography Within a Performance Paradigm

We “met” duoethnography in 2011, and chose to employ it to help us explore our collective experiences and our currere of watching the reality television show, *The Bachelor*. Little did we know that this methodology would challenge individual (social) and university-level (institutional) power structures. We performatively applied duoethnography to learn about our scripts of femininity as we watched *The Bachelor*, but found that our performances of and within the methodology led us to challenge personal, professional, and institutional power structures. This statement, we recognize, suggests that we are imbuing a methodology with, perhaps, an undue amount of power.

Can a methodology reconceptualize the way we think about doing research? Can a methodology challenge both institutional and social power structures? Can a methodology shift the way we, as researchers, see ourselves? It is nothing new to state that methodologies shape the way we think and perform research (which often pushes against institutional power structures). A look at the “eight historical moments” in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), exemplifies how methodologies can fuel “turns” (such as performance and interpretive) in qualitative research which then guide how we do the work of knowledge seeking and knowledge production (if we think knowledge is seekable and producible). However, duoethnography is a rather insidious methodology. It takes from the researcher just as it gives. *Personal* change is inescapable if one chooses to undertake a duoethnography. Duoethnography asks researchers to figuratively “bare their own breasts” (Behar & Gordon, 1995) rather than those of the ethnographic Other. And, in contrast to examining one’s own breasts in solitude, as can be a solipsistic autoethnographic temptation, the challenge is for a researcher to bare her breasts

in front of another researcher who is also baring hers. The goal is to understand oneself better through the performative (Butler 1988, 1990) moment of encountering oneself in front of the Other. The performative element is important to the way we see duoethnography not only as methodology, but also as pedagogy. The performative element inextricably links duoethnography with power because, as Alexander (2011) reminds us, “power is performative in every one of its hyrda-headed forms” (p. 4). Therefore, we camp our duoethnographic work within a performance paradigm.

According to Conquergood (1991), “the performance paradigm privileges particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency, and ideology” (p. 187). All of these elements parallel the tenets of duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). The groundedness of performance in ideology and historical process alludes to the power structures within which all performances are steeped. In this chapter, we focused on our *embodied performances* as we negotiated roles both with another student/professor, and within and outside of the institutions that guided the norms for those relationships.

Performance has historically been viewed as *mimesis*, *poiesis* (Turner 1982, 1988), and *kinesis* (Conquergood, 1995). Performance as mimesis is often attributed to Aristotle, who saw performance (specifically in theater) as mimicking, imitating, or reflecting culture. “Mimesis is associated with ‘faking’ and falsehood—the pretend world of make-believe and play” (Bell, 2008, p. 12). Turner (1982), who brought the idea of performance out of the realm of theater and into the everyday, thought of performance not as faking but as *making* (poiesis) culture. For Turner, the ways in which we perform as student/professor actually make us as subjects and creates a certain culture of students and professors. Finally, Conquergood (1995) suggested that performance not only had the ability to be a mimesis and a poiesis of culture, but that it could be a *kinesis*, a “breaking and remaking” of culture (Bell, 2008, p. 13). For Conquergood (1985, 1998, 2002), performance can change a culture. Performance “can transgress boundaries, break structures, and remake social and political rules performance can both sustain and subvert social rules” (Bell, 2008, p. 13). In our screenplay, we relay three pivotal moments in our relationship with one another that acted as a kinesis of culture, both of student/professor as well as that of the university.

Why A Screenplay?

Creative Analytic Practice (CAP; Richardson, 2000, 2004) emerged as a solution to the crisis of representation faced by qualitative researchers. Many writers had experienced a disconnect between the depth and emotion of their research and the comparatively stoic approaches available for dissemination. Authors sought to honor both the scientific and the literary (Richardson, 2000) in representing meaning. Ultimately, “CAP reflects a deliberate attempt to demonstrate that the processes and products of qualitative inquiry are inextricably linked” (Parry & Johnson, 2007, p. 119). One approach to CAP is a screenplay (see Berbery & Johnson, 2012).

Acknowledging that we are far from professional screenwriters, our goal in presenting our stories in three acts is to enact a version of “poststructural praxis.” In poststructural praxis, meaning is challenged in three ways. First, meaning is challenged through “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 2003), involving a critical restorying of self through encounter with other. Secondly, meaning is also challenged through the synergy of data collection and analysis. As Pollack (1998) states, “writing is performative.” Even as we write these stories, they are continuing to write us; we are always simultaneously collecting and analyzing our data and reconceptualizing meaning over time (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Finally, meaning is challenged by the signature of the reader. You, as our reader, are challenging and rewriting meaning as you interpret our written words through your lenses and overlay your own experiences onto our stories. The choice to write this duoethnography as a screenplay speaks to poststructural praxis in that it invites all three vehicles for meaning to be challenged.

Because the currere of our student/professor relationship spans not only the four years we have known one another but is also influenced by our past experiences of student/teacher relationships, we have chosen to tell our stories in three acts that exemplify turning points in it. It is in exploring these influential moments that we have been able to examine and restory our relationship and the ways in which we understood the duoethnographic methodology. Following is a brief introduction to each act for context.

Act One presents our first encounter with duoethnography and how the methodology began to have its impact on our relationships with one another. When we began a duoethnographic (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013) study of our experiences watching reality TV (Spencer & Paisley, 2013), we were focused on negotiating femininity

in leisure spaces. However, we were thrown into a tempest of roles and power structures (personal, institutional, and societal).

The second act occurs after our first duoethnography, as we were involved in a second study on women who read *Fifty Shades of Grey* in a book club. We were becoming colleagues, and this involved leveling power differentials to some extent, a process we refer to as “dismantling Santa.” As fallible humans, we imbue Santa and other mythical creatures with supernatural powers, rendering them unattainable beings. To a lesser degree, this process of “Santification” can occur between a doctoral student and her Chair.

In Act Three, as friends, we are learning to both support and challenge each other through that which cannot be changed. The case in point in this act revolves around the word “bitch” in the title of Callie’s dissertation, revealing interpersonal, religious, and administrative power structures and our decision to tilt (or not?).

An Invitation to the Audience (You): Reading the Screenplay

As we performatively write (Pollack, 1998) this piece, we invite you to join us as we reposition ourselves back into our stories in order to pedagogically “disrupt our perceptions of our lives (or gain a greater awareness of them)” (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012, p. 297).

Our screenplay is modeled on Berbary and Johnson’s (2012) poststructural screenplay using CAP to explore sorority women’s experiences. There are four distinct elements of the document, set off by different textual styles. First, right-justified, bold, and in all caps are the camera instructions (e.g., cut to a particular scene). Second, a description of the scene is left-justified and set apart in brackets. Third, dialogue between actors is centered on the page. Finally, each act concludes with Director’s Comments from both Karen and Callie. These comments include our present (duoethnographic) thoughts and analysis as we revisit our data and write this piece.

ACT ONE: NEGOTIATING ROLES

CUT TO:

KAREN’S LIVING ROOM

[We zoom in from a bird’s eye view of Salt Lake City, UT to a brick ranch house with a pool, BBQ, and landscaped, fenced-in backyard. A fluffy black dog is running near the kid’s playhouse nestled under an apricot tree kitty-corner to the pool. We enter the house through the back

patio door and zoom down a flight of stairs to the basement where we find ourselves in a large master bedroom divided into a sleeping/bedroom area and a lounge area with an oversized denim loveseat. A flat-screen TV is mounted to the wall and flanked on one side by mirrored closet doors. Here, we see **Karen** in her “good” blue jeans, red patent leather flats, and an oversized gray cable-knit sweater.]

Karen Voice Over (V.O.) (Inner thoughts)

I’m her Chair! How can I watch the show and really enjoy it? Can I be catty in front of her? She won’t be able to take me seriously! Feel like I’m already walking a line, anyway, as she’s WAY smarter than I am. Poststructuralism? Not sure that even existed when I was in school.

[Flustered, she is furiously vacuuming, making the bed, and shoving piles of shoes and clothes behind closet doors.]

Karen (V.O.: Inner thoughts)

That’s why I’m SICK of others in the Department not taking her work seriously or trying to sabotage her or just make things harder. Intellectual snobbery! I get so frustrated with it ... especially when our field is so behind in so many ways.

[She pauses, looks in the mirror, smoothens her short blonde pixie cut, and turns to quickly setting up the video camera on the loveseat facing the TV.]

Karen (V.O.: Inner thoughts)

As an administrator, though, I do wonder if it matters that my name is on work about drinking, reality TV, and smutty novels ... Or if I should care more about that, anyway.

[She switches the TV on to ABC, takes a look at her watch, and runs upstairs to grab a “blue soda” (Miller Light). KcSsshhhh we hear the inviting sound of a freshly opened can of beer and see her visibly relax as she sips and surveys the scene.]

CUT TO:

STATE LIQUOR STORE

Callie stands under fluorescent lighting in the middle of an aisle lined floor-to-ceiling with wine. The floor is a bit sticky. She looks overwhelmed as she rushes to choose a bottle.

Callie (V.O.: Inner thoughts)

Why the hell did I think watching *The Bachelor* with my professor was gonna be a good idea? It’s just super high pressure. I feel like I really need to impress her and I genuinely want her to like me. But how am I gonna

pull that off when we're watching trashy TV together and drinking wine? And what wine does she like? I don't want her to think I'm cheap ... gotta find an expensive looking label within my \$8 price range. Hurry up, Callie. Shit ... what time is it?

[Callie's brown pony tail whips as she lifts up her red cashmere sweater to snatch the cell phone out of the back pocket of her dark wash, skinny blue jeans and check the time. A panicked look crosses her face. She returns the phone, grabs a bottle from a lower rack at the height of her brown riding boots, and bolts for the check out.]

CUT TO:

CALLIE'S HONDA ELEMENT

[We zoom in to the interior of Callie's black Honda Element as she is stopped at a light. She inspects herself in the rearview mirror and then digs through her purse. She grabs a tube of lip gloss and a wand of mascara and hastily applies them both.]

Callie (V.O.: Inner thoughts)

I wish I was in my sweats right now. I usually go bra-less, remove my "smart academic critic" filter, and just relax when I watch reality TV. What if Karen thinks this version of Callie is crass? Rude? Dumb? And this duo-ethnography thing was my idea. What if it doesn't "work?" How is this whole thing gonna change our relationship? What if it gets too personal? I usually talk about boys with my girlfriends while I watch. I still have to work with her for several years. She's my Chair!!

CUT TO:

KAREN'S BEDROOM

[We see Callie and Karen sitting on the floor leaning against the denim loveseat, both cupping a stemless glass of red wine. The camcorder on the tripod is perched on the loveseat to capture both the backs of their heads and *The Bachelor*. We zoom into the TV screen and see a scene from the opening show where the bachelor is meeting each bachelorette for the first time. He stands in front of a mansion and hugs each woman as she exits a black limousine. The final bachelorette, Lindzi, arrives via horseback.]

Callie

Ahhh!! [screching] Seriously?!? I'm scared of horses! I would NOT do that.

Karen

The *only* reason you wouldn't do that is because you're scared of horses? [laughing] Lindzi with a "-zi?" Really?!?

Callie

Oh, yeah. There's one with a "-zi" and one with an "-sie." I know I don't know about the way people are choosing to spell baby names these days adding "y's" and "z's" all willy-nilly, trying to be creative. Sometimes I just think it comes off as tacky, trashy, or plain dumb.

Karen

When I was pregnant, we used the "office door" rule for testing Hannah's name. It's my friend Bonnie's thing: you should pick a name that sounds professional on an office door because the kid will be stuck with it for her whole life. Pretty sure a "-zi" sounds like a stripper ... not so good on a door. We thought Hannah was feminine (not fluffy), so we went with it.

Callie

She has riding boots! Oh, and that is a *cuute* dress.

Karen

It is, but she just showed up on a horse. So ... NO!

Callie

Yeah ... she didn't say something crazy, though!

Karen

But she showed up on a horse ...

Callie

Solid point!

Callie and Karen

[Both laughing hysterically.]

[The show cuts to a commercial break.]

[**Short but awkward silence**]

Karen

Want some peanut butter-filled pretzel pods?

Callie

Hell, yeah!

[Karen leaves and returns two minutes later with a Costco tub of peanut butter pretzel nuggets.]

Callie (while chewing audibly)

I forgot how much I love these things! Heavenly.

Karen (also chewing loudly)

And deady. At my age, I gotta watch it or these things land straight on my ass.

Callie

No way! You are young! So I have this friend, Jenny, who is 45 years old. I used to watch *The Bachelor* with her when I lived in Colorado. I was

chatting with her earlier today and telling her we were doing this study, and she was jealous.

Karen (in a half-kidding tone)

You trying to talk smack about us “old” ladies who watch *The Bachelor*?

Callie

No way! Speaking of old, I was feeling that way today when I was reading over the data that JJ and I generated from our study of youth experiences on Facebook

[Callie and Karen continue talking, the sound fades. Callie continues to do most of the talking, as Karen listens politely and laughs courteously. The vibe is one of familiarity, but not comfort.]

Director’s Comments (Karen):

Looking back at this now, I realize I was worrying (or at least thinking) about all the wrong things. I was raised a southern woman so, of course, I care what my house looks like when company comes over—and Callie was definitely company. I could count on one hand the number of people I’d ever invited downstairs to watch TV, and they were all close friends. I was worried about being clever and witty, and about my daughter being able to sleep through the noise and the excitement of having Callie (whom she adored) in the house.

I didn’t know to worry about the emotional energy it would take to pave the way for a doctoral student to do something completely different in our Department (including involving her Chair in a study). I didn’t know that it might be perceived as threatening. I didn’t worry that I would be personally criticized for being honest about my behavior in efforts to normalize honest discourse (not my behavior). I didn’t know that transparency and authenticity would become so central to the lens through which I view research (e.g., if it matters that data were collected in Salt Lake City [with its unique culture], then just say so—rather than “a metropolitan area in the intermountain west”).

I didn’t know to think that this duoethnographic study of *The Bachelor* would lead to the study (and the fallout) you’ll read about in Act Two, which led to other presentations ... I didn’t know that Callie and I would still be working, writing, and thinking together almost three years later. I didn’t know that this study would make me miss reading, writing, and thinking as I took on full-time administration with little time for such. I didn’t know that I would care about postfeminist culture and what it means for my daughter and other women (of all ages). I didn’t realize I was making a commitment to authentic vulnerability, with other approaches and interactions now left feeling hollow.

Director's Comments (Callie):

As I relive this moment as we write it, I can feel (and remember) the awkwardness that is dripping from the script. I didn't know Karen outside of the classroom, and there I was, sitting in her bedroom. I was actively censoring myself to perform intelligent, critical student, not wanting to let her "in" on any of my personal life so to not cross any student-professor boundaries. This is evident in my re-direction of our conversation to work and research. During those first few episodes, I talked the whole time through the commercials, trying to impress Karen with humorous and interesting stories (always about someone other than myself). Karen would humor me with a courtesy laugh. I tried to distance myself from any social awkwardness by constantly reminding myself that what we were doing was "research." But it wasn't just any research ... we were guided by the tenets of duoethnography. Upon reflection, the importance of the role of duoethnography in facilitating the relationship between Karen and me is apparent. I had no idea how powerful an agent a methodology can be, nor what I was getting myself into.

After the first episode, I wrote the following in my journal:

I appreciate that Karen cusses. I think that it is refreshing that she feels comfortable enough to say what she wants to say. I am getting more comfortable with that too, but there is definitely a level that we haven't quite reached, everything is still shallow. I'm not sure if we ever will be able to go to the deeper level, the level that might make this experience more intimate ... and perhaps more interesting from a research perspective?

For me, the methodology itself facilitated the level of trust I hadn't thought we would reach after the first episode. The tenets of duoethnography invited us to explore one another's life stories as part of our currere of watching *The Bachelor*. They invited us to reflexively explore our own lives in conjunction with the Other. In order to do so, we had to share, we had to open up, we had to become vulnerable, we had to allow ourselves to be changed by our interaction with the Other. As Sameshima (2013) summarizes, "duoethnography is not a 'research tool;' rather, it is a way of living in a contingent and uncertain curriculum of self-accountability and reflexivity" (n.p.). Now, three years after the first episode, Karen and I (re)turn to duoethnography to help us explore our curriculum of our student/professor relationship. The methodology is clearly rooted in my way of life, seeping rhizomatically into the way in which I not only view

problems, research questions, and teaching, but also how I view relationships and, ultimately, myself. Am I imbuing a methodology with too much power, deifying it in a way? Perhaps. But I am confident of its role as a catalyst (at the very least) in shaping my relationship with Karen and my worldview.

ACT TWO: DISMANTLING SANTA

CUT TO:

STAUNTON, VIRGINIA

CALLIE'S PARENT'S LIVING ROOM

[We see Karen and Callie sitting together in two jacquard upholstered chairs atop a large red and blue Oriental rug in a posh living room. They are chatting in preparation for their guests, but we cannot hear what they are saying. The camera pans the room, showing a martini bar, a selection of red and white wine, and a bottle of Prosecco chilling in a metallic ice bucket; a coffee table full of appetizers; and seating around the table in antique upholstered chairs. The following words scroll up the screen, "*Star Wars* style:" "May 2011: Karen and Callie are in Virginia to interview a group of southern women who read the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy in their book club." The next shot shows Callie at one end of the appetizer table, Karen at the other, with four middle-aged white women, martinis in hand, sitting comfortably, and munching appetizers off of coordinating paper cocktail napkins.]

Callie

So again, we want to thank y'all for being here, and if there aren't any further questions, we will go ahead and get started.

[Callie pushes the record button on the digital recording device.]

Karen

We want this to be a relaxed conversation, just like your book club. So, (winking) what did y'all think of the books?

[The sound fades as the camera begins to pan the room slowly in a circle, capturing the whole group as well as zooming in on each woman's face as time elapses. In the first circle around the room, the conversation looks a bit stiff but enjoyable. All the women are sitting backs straight, legs crossed, arms in tight, both hands on martini or wine glasses, but with smiles on faces and an occasional, somewhat nervous laugh. We follow the camera on a second circle around the room and notice more relaxed and open postures. The room is roaring with laughter and conviviality, the

appetizers are nearly finished, a bottle of wine is empty, and the martini bar has been well-used. The camera slows on the third lap around the room and the volume increases as we begin to make out phrases spoken with slight slurring through wine stained lips. **Wilma**, one of the women in the study, comically raises her hand to make a comment.]

Wilma

So we have told y'all allllll about our love lives, our men, and the impact the book had on us. What about you two?

[The camera resumes to the panning view and the sound dims, as Karen shares. The mood becomes subdued as the camera zooms into Karen's crying face. The camera pans around the room capturing the concerned and caring looks of the women in the study and stops on Callie's face. She looks particularly stricken and relatively sober.]

CUT TO:

**CALLIE'S SHARED GRADUATE STUDENT OFFICE
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH**

[Callie sits at her desktop computer in her graduate student cubicle, her body language and strained face convey that she is sad, stressed, and sleep deprived. The following words appear on the screen: "One week later: Callie and Karen have not spoken since leaving Virginia." She is typing and deleting and typing and deleting.]

Callie (V.O.) (Narrating what she types)

Dear Karen, I am disappointed. Delete that.

~~I am disappointed.~~

Dear Karen, I feel like you let me down. No, delete *that*.

~~I feel like you let me down.~~

I can't do this ... Maybe I just need to go talk to her ...

[Callie stands up and walks down the hallway, which feels exceptionally claustrophobic. We see her gripping her fists then wiping clammy hands on her dress. She pauses to take a deep breath to calm herself before knocking. The door opens and Karen looks equally nervous and worn. They sit facing one another, Callie on the edge of her seat and Karen perched nervously, legs crossed on the corner of her chair.]

Karen (with tears welling)

Callie, I am truly sorry. Last weekend was not my best moment ...

Callie (with tears welling)

I tried to write you a letter, but I couldn't ... It's just, I had such high expectations and looked up to you so much. I feel like you killed Santa ...

Director's Comments (Callie)

This moment in my relationship with Karen was pivotal. Now that I am looking back on the dialogue, I am questioning my comparison of Karen to Santa Claus. Why did I hold professors to a high standard? What made me think that professors were infallible, like mythical creatures? My vision of a professor was rooted in my days as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia. I saw my professors as great thinkers with beautiful minds who had the privilege of changing society with their ideas. I envisioned professors drinking beer in pubs together, smoking cigars, discussing Marx, and coming up with the next brilliant theory on bar napkins. The moment I realized that Karen was a *real* human with real problems who made real mistakes, I think that knowing that “Santa” didn’t exist rocked not just my relationship with Karen, but also with the academy. In this scene, the academy became human, Karen became human, and the institutional power structures that had previously guided our professor/student relationship became more personal. As a child learns that Santa Claus isn’t real in a step toward becoming an adult, I had realized that the rosy image I held of professors and the academy wasn’t real as I took a step toward becoming colleagues with Karen.

Director’s Comments (Karen)

For me, this Act has very little to do with institutional structures, aside from the fact that I was still her Chair. When Callie told me I had “killed Santa,” I was devastated. (I love the magic that Santa and Christmas conjure, making the metaphor particularly painful.) Then I felt attacked: I never asked to be put on a pedestal ... as a fall is inevitable. I never knew I was being held to superhuman standards. Courtesy of the “impostor syndrome” (Clance, 1985), I would not have assumed I was a role model of Santa’s stature. Finally, I was a bit angry. Not to be naïve, but it just wasn’t *fair*. The incident has had, and will continue to have, an effect on how I work with students.

At a conference where Callie and I presented, a colleague of mine congratulated us on the “boldness” of our work together as it was a “dangerous endeavor.” Over extended periods of writing, working, and traveling with Callie, I began to grasp his meaning. These moments fuel self-disclosure, for better or worse, resulting in more honest presentations of self. Another contributing factor stemmed from our commitment to study “that which people actually do” (watching reality TV, book clubs, etc.), which (sometimes? often?) involves alcohol. Joseph and Donnelly (2012) address the role of alcohol in ethnographic studies and suggest that ignoring it as part of the experience does a “disservice to future researchers

seeking guidance about the fieldwork challenges they should anticipate” (362). We had made choices, and it mattered.

De-Sanctification would not have been possible if the student/teacher (institutional) dynamic were the only one at play. We would not have been in situations that afforded such vulnerability. I don’t invite students into my private home to dish over bad television and better wine (see Act One), nor do I risk my professional reputation studying “racy” topics without believing in the value and rigor in doing so. We were colleagues, in my book, and “becoming-friends.”

ACT THREE: TILTING BITCH

CUT TO:

KAREN’S OFFICE—UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

[“Dr. K. Paisley,” reads the placard on the door. The door opens and we scan the room from right to left. We see a sleek black bar-height work table with three chairs stacked with several folders, a wall of bookcases full of books and photographs, and finally Karen sitting on a blue yoga ball behind a stylish, black, modern desk, typing on her keyboard with a furrowed brow. The camera cuts to a shot over Karen’s shoulder of the email she is writing.]

Karen V.O. (Reading what she types)

Subject: Graduation-IMPORTANT

Hey Callie,

I don’t even know where to start with this email, and would prefer to discuss this with you over the phone. Something has come up regarding the title of your dissertation and how it will be read at graduation, in particular, the word “bitch.” I am frustrated. *Delete that ... it isn’t strong enough. I am frustrated.*

I am pissed. Call me ASAP.—K

[Almost immediately, Karen’s office phone rings. The caller ID shows that it’s Callie calling from Washington. Karen rises from her desk and shuts her office door rather forcefully before picking up the receiver.]

CUT TO:

CALLIE’S OFFICE—EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

[Callie is sitting at her desk in her office, drumming her fingers on the metal surface and bouncing her knee. She is visibly agitated.]

Karen (V.O.: On phone, sternly)

You will *NOT* believe this shit.

Callie (almost frantically)

What happened? What's going on? I thought we ran the title past everyone who needed to know and they all thought it was fine? Academic or intellectual freedom or whatever ...

Karen (V.O.: On phone)

[deep sigh ...] You know the conservative water we swim in here in Utah. Beyond that, apparently, there will be several major donors at our convocation ceremony and the "powers that be" don't think it's a good idea to risk offending them by reading a dissertation title with the word "bitch" in it. So you've got two choices: "Wow! That CHICK is crazy!": Exploring gendered performances in leisure spaces surrounding reality television" or "Wow! That WOMAN is crazy ..." What do you think?

Callie (vehemently)

What do I *think*? I think this is insane! Other departments have racier titles than this! I think we should say "bitch" anyway! It's a direct quote from the study—we can't just change it. I think we should write a letter to the editor of the Trib about being stifled and censored by the University. Universities are supposed to encourage dialogue and different ideas ...

Karen (V.O.: On phone)

[interrupting] I know! I know. Breathe, Callie. It's frustrating as hell, but there are bigger forces working here. This one isn't win-able, trust me, so it's not worth wasting energy tilting. Let's get your signatures and your piece of paper for now. That's the most important thing. Just pick a title. We can write about this later ...

Director's Comments (Karen):

In Act Three, institutional power structures play a major role. Leading up to the "Bitch Incident," as we affectionately call it now, Callie had been forced to defend her work at multiple levels within the Department. Faculty and fellow graduate students were skeptical of her methodology and topic: what does reality TV have to do with leisure? What's feminist poststructuralism? As her Chair and someone who thought her work was smart and innovative, I was almost "mama-bearish(ly)" defensive of Callie and her ideas. As a tenured faculty member, I fully believed in students' rights to pursue their intellectual passions with support (or at least without interference) and had some power to afford such protection. And, as an administrator, I realized that all of these roles were subject to greater influences.

With the Bitch Incident, while Callie and I were in it together to some extent, I had to support the institutional stand. It pained me to "give up," but I understood the bigger picture: offending the conservative culture in

which the U is situated was not worth what would be reduced to shock value. No one in the audience at the convocation would learn anything from hearing “bitch” read out loud. It was not the time nor place ... We navigated the incident via our academic (structural) relationship, but I felt I’d let Callie down. I also began to wonder about the greater ramifications of linking myself, as an administrator, to such work.

Fast forward almost a year, and we encountered a very similar situation while finalizing this chapter. I had flown to Spokane to give two presentations with Callie, and we were capitalizing on the opportunity to spend face time together writing. One of the presentations was part of a lecture series on contemporary issues in feminist research on her campus. Our title was “From Fairly Tales to ‘Kinky Fuckery:’ Women, Leisure, and *Fifty Shades of Grey*,” and was based on data from the study you read about in Act Two. The room was packed, with folks sitting on the windowsills, and hot with the closeness.

We had intentionally chosen the title and the topic, working within Lather’s (2007) notion of “voluptuous validity.” We suggested that being afraid of words makes us afraid of conversations—which is antithetical to dialogue and growth (not to mention the mission of a university, in our minds). After we presented, students and faculty raised interesting questions and a lively discussion followed. The next day, however, Callie received a call from her Department Chair.

A student who had attended the presentation had sent an emphatic email to the Chair. He was personally offended by the material and the delivery as it was outside his moral frame. He failed to see how it had anything to do with recreation of leisure. And, as a result, he was “embarrassed” to be a major in the Department. This time, *we* chose the topic and title together but *she* was faced with the ramifications alone. The institutional power structures were no longer *ours*.

Director’s Comments (Callie):

Our title for this act is “Tilting Bitch.” However, now that I am revisiting this scene, I am wondering if we should have called it “Tilting(?) Bitch.” We never really tilted bitch, but instead accepted the censored title without pushing back. At the time I was so tired of fighting to get that dissertation completed and signed off that I was partially relieved when Karen told me not to fight this one. But now, with space and time, I think we should have fought to keep the word “bitch” in the title. It was calling to attention the performative injurious illocutionary speech act (Butler, 1997) that women use against other women when watching reality TV shows.

In not fighting to include “bitch,” I think we took the safe way out. But I do have my diploma so, for that, I am grateful. As I am writing this, however, I am realizing that in this chapter we are, indeed, speaking up and speaking out against the “bitch” censorship.

The story that Karen tells above regarding a student’s livid and offended response to our *Fifty Shades* presentation is now just days old. This experience still gives me pause and I am chewing on it and playing out scenarios in my head for how I might move forward in a positive direction with the student and my Department Chair. While I stand confidently that I would not do a thing differently had we to present again (I believe students who are earning a liberal arts degree should learn about people and cultures who look, think, and act differently than them ... including regarding sexuality and sexual practices), I am questioning my urge to be continuously and, perhaps, forcefully voluptuous when I write or present within the leisure studies field. Have Karen and I turned into the “Slavoj Zizek” or the “Miley Cyrus” of leisure studies? Have our “vulgarity” and methods of delivery begun to get in the way of our message? Or is this attention-getting (with a purpose) tilting through our papers drawing us the audiences (there were 70 people at the “Kinky Fuckery” talk, a campus record for that lecture series) that allow us, as women, to *be heard*?¹

Both during the Bitch Incident and the newly named “Fuckery Incident,” I recognize the shift in the relationship between Karen and I from professor/student (Act One) to colleagues (Act Two) to, now, friends. It was the same institutional power structures that set the script for our performances as student/professor that also brought us together as friends. Although Karen and I collectively navigated a shared set of institutional power structures (University of Utah) with the censoring of my dissertation title, the Fuckery Incident took place at Eastern Washington University, where I am now navigating my institution’s power dynamics on my own. However, as soon as I hung up from the phone call with my Chair, I debriefed with Karen (who was, conveniently, sitting on my couch). Our relationship continues to afford me both emotional and philosophical support, and we are still tilting together.

EPILOGUE

We have shared three acts with you to trace our currere, the transformation of our student/professor relationship. One of the conditions we feel is necessary to make duoethnography successful is mutual commitment

to the process and project, full “buy-in” from all involved. In our initial study, we watched *The Bachelor* weekly and recorded ourselves doing so. We wrote in our individual journals after each episode. Then, we spent a long weekend watching the recording of ourselves watching the show (over 24 hours of footage) and analyzed our conversations and behaviors. Obviously, this was a substantial investment of time and energy and was a writing-intensive effort. And, equally obviously, the study would not have “worked” if we did not both engage at this level. Duoethnography needs multiple honest voices engaged in dialogue and open to transformation. And maybe it also needs CAP to solve the crisis of representation, as we could think of no other meaningful way to share our stories.

Duoethnographers, in addition to sharing commitment and ability, must also be like-minded in terms of topic and purpose. Duoethnography is one way to study understudied processes, activities, and phenomena—and we believe these are worth studying (as they may be more consistent with lived experience or what people actually *do*, whether it be watching reality TV or navigating graduate school with your major professor). We also believe this approach may offer the least amount of “Othering.”

Johnson (2009), discussing the practice (and obligation?) of *Writing Ourselves at Risk*, states that “testifying in writing on the page, even if it does feel unsettling—and it does—is imperative” (p. 488). While we have strived consistently to “bare our breasts” (Behar & Gordon, 1995; Villenas, 2000) in order to model authenticity (Brown, 2011) and practice the version of feminism we espouse, we now recognize the fine line between baring breasts as a powerfully authentic moment and baring breasts as a personally painful moment. Today, as we revisit our experience again in dialogue with each other, we both still feel a slight sting and want to be careful to guard our current friendship, which we value highly. As such, we chose to not describe the event that led to dismantling Santa, which some might say was inauthentic.

It reminds us of *The Tyranny of Transparency* (Strathern, 2000). In a research world which increasingly values transparency, Strathern questions if making the invisible visible is always a good thing. This is certainly magnified when considering making *others*’ invisible visible (see, again, Johnson, 2009). In enacting duoethnographic studies, focusing on *our* invisible, we realize that duoethnographers must walk this line very carefully.² As we become vulnerable with one another, trust one another, and learn about some of the intimate details of one another’s lives, we must be

cautious when telling our stories. In making the (our?) private public, we risk our vulnerable authenticity becoming tyrannical voyeurism.

Though others seem more comfortable reverting to our initial student/professor dynamic (e.g., “It’s so wonderful that your mentor came here to present with you!”), we see the relationship as more evolved. As we continue to work, write, and think together (and we will), social and institutional forces will continue to affect our relationship. We will experience changes in our families, jobs, health and financial status, geography, the windmills we choose to tilt, and others we cannot anticipate. And, as we do, we will ...

NOTES

1. Patti Lather (2007), when introducing her term, “voluptuous validity” asks whether or not it is possible, in our current culture for a woman to speak and be heard. This echoes Guyatri Spivak’s (1988) question, “can the subaltern speak?” Whether a woman can speak and whether or not she can be heard is a question with which we grapple.
2. See Le Fevre and Sawyer (2012) for a discussion around the risky business of conducting duoethnography and having vulnerable conversations. See Sitter and Hall (2012) for a duoethnographic discussion on carefully navigating professional boundaries.

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