Over-Medicated Boys and Girls Down the Well:

The Politically Awkward 'Imaginaries' of Education Liaisons in the U.S. and Pakistan

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the lived experiences of education liaisons in Minnesota and Pakistan in the context of cultural myths of modern educational progress, as envisioned in world society theory. Using a multi-sited ethnographic and narrative inquiry approach with 10 core participants over a discontinuous, more than five-year time period, it finds that an important aspect of education liaisons' work is re-interpreting and re-working dominate social imaginaries of the meaning of mass education, such as those involving urban Black communities in the U.S. and rural, Pashto-speaking communities in Pakistan. This study both supported and challenged aspects of world society theory, resulting in four core analytical themes emerging from the work of liaisons: The social construction of marginality and its imaginations as an institutionalized expertise; the importance of 'awkward' political social imaginaries in relation to educational myth-making as everyday liaison work; understanding institutionalized manifestations of power and silence as enduring practices of bewitchment, and the tensions of engaging with particular legacies of racial and gender oppression, while constructing imaginative possibilities and social identities in institutional contexts. This study contains practical recommendations for educational policy and practice.

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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

Arriving at the Study: A Storied Encounter Part 1 (Pakistan)

Over the course of two months in 2008-2009, I found myself shuttling between Pakistan's capital of Islamabad and Quetta, the high-altitude capital of Balochistan Province in the southwest, interspersed with a visit to a remote valley in northern Pakistan. I hadn't originally intended to plane hop - to further embody, if it was even possible as a decidedly non-South Asian expert from 'fly-over territory' Minnesota, the "mercenary-missionary-misfit" stereotype that short-term development aid professionals are often judged by (Stirrat, 2008).

But a combination of security concerns and a continuing push to improve girls' education project in rural Pakistan meant the international non-government organization (INGO) that had offered me a graduate student research partnership well over a year ago, did what they could to work around an unfolding and unforeseen chain of events. "Well, you were already in the air," my INGO sponsor told me later, confessing that she had phoned to cancel my research assignment, since the INGO's work in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) - the original site of my assignment - had been temporarily suspended due to armed conflict.

But the change in plans gave me an opportunity to work unexpectedly closely, in mostly unstructured spaces, with more than half a dozen local educational staff and gender liaisons who were employed by the INGO. These talented women, who in INGO terminology paradoxically represented and promoted female 'empowerment' - an ubiquitous term in development, and one that when taken seriously is a principle focus for feminist social change (Paterson, 2008), also embodied an important aspect of the

complex and understudied realities of global modern educational 'progress' and institutionalization, I will argue, including the advent girls' education. In Pakistan, for example, 'empowerment' for female development fieldworkers also has been described as inexorably linked to withstanding negative judgments by communities who lack access to efficient government services in a developing country context, and to negotiating multicultural and multi-gendered environments in which female NGO staff are rarely consulted during policy making, given management power, or trained, even though as a gender they are often favored by donors (Siddique & Ahmad, 2010).

It was a situation that seemed to demand complicated social performances, and the INGO gender liaisons I met - Pakistani and Afghan women who varied in age, education, social status, and language abilities - appeared to be intriguingly adaptable and adroit at dancing within refracted social mirrors, mimicking cultural mannerisms such as the airy, tri-part social kiss of a British visitor and the sternness of an expatriate security official in playful, cheerful ways. These gender liaisons, an umbrella term I will use as a shortcut for a range of titles, acted as 'cultural brokers' and as gender sensitive project managers with girls' education programs. In coordination with male INGO staff, they conducted outreach with families and community and village leaders, interceded with and worked with teaching staff at girls' schools, and coordinated with government educational managers or relevant officials (in the case of refugee camps) to establish functioning schools and oversee the distribution of food, resources, and in the case of refugee schools, teacher remuneration and training in gender appropriate ways.

Girls' education, at least in rural areas, was still a fairly novel development in its modern, government-run guise. In Battagram District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

province, for example, the number of girls' schools had increased by about 25 percent in less than a decade, although many of the 209 schools weren't actively functioning (Government of Pakistan, 2007). Girls' primary school completion rates in rural parts of KP and Balochistan was often less than five or ten percent (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

Figure 1: Map of Pakistan

(Source: Wikipedia)

Such statistics seemed at first to provide a solid common ground for Western education consultants such as myself and local education fieldworkers and managers. During formal meetings, the evident need for better girls' schooling seemed to be unproblematically part of a larger, official discourse in which education was a tool for

socio-economic development and the promotion of universal human rights for children, as outlined in national and global documents and agreements.

But even so, I sensed an unspoken dialog during our group discussions at the development organization's central offices in Islamabad. While the concrete girls' participation strategies our joint research project uncovered and which was supported in international education development literature – giving girls' minor allowances, giving them less housework, taking paths to school that avoided the market – appeared to be unproblematic, they also failed to generate much interest or excitement. Instead, less definable education interventions - families' strategies to circumvent teachers or secure teaching jobs for relatives, girls' successful forms of resisting an overly suspicious older brother or other male relative, or mothers' and girls' cleverness in securing a male relative to champion education within an extended, rival-riven family, often fascinated the education staff, and particularly gender liaisons.

These stories often, but not always, were shared in gendered spheres of space - such as inside apartments and extended family compounds, and girls' schools, in particular constellations of relatives, kin, and peers that I for the most part dimly understood. While these 'messier' experiences of successful girls' education achievement could be read as displacing preferred Western and modern cultural interventions in which sensitive tribal traditional and patriarchal customs were given wide berth, or even as on-going feminist struggles with politics and power - layers of oppression that include neo-colonial forms of exploitation and control -, they also, I believe signaled something more.

The stories, and how gender liaisons re-told them, at times escaped dominate ideologies, or even simple binaries of good/bad girl, modern/backward, feminist/non-

feminist, empowered/non-empowered or secular/religious. They also did not fit comfortably into education development discourses of rationally understood, orderly progress. The stories were often too dramatic, at the intersection of too many sensitive topics.

These included 'non-successful' girls' education stories that happened around the time of my visit – the girl in Quetta who had run away from home and was beaten to death, the refugee girl who swallowed poison after she was caught stealing jewelry from her mother-in-law, and the 5th grade refugee girl who was sexually assaulted by an older relative and thrown down the well by her family, erased without explanation from the school's rosters. Education was uneasily associated with *spin satargee* (i.e., girls with 'white eyes,' meaning a girl without shame who lost her shyness and respect for elders and can speak everything) my co-participants told me on several occasions. Yet they also pointed out with a mix of admiration and apprehension that many literate, educated girls were fetching ever larger bride prices, a practice that has been linked to South Asian specific forms of gender violence (Parveen, 2011).

I came to think of these tales as 'back' stories, involving larger questions such as extrajudicial power and contested understandings of customary legal norms within a context of shifting and influential value systems (Rzehak, 2011). The gender liaisons were inadvertently troubling the global social imagery of girls' education and the outcomes of schooling as a normatively 'good' and orderly process, instead quietly re-narrating girls' education as mythic and non-orderly stories of breathtaking struggle, successes, and tragedies. The link between such stories and program outcomes seemed tantalizing, yet oddly elusive.

Arriving at the Study: A Storied Encounter Part 2 (Minnesota)

In Minnesota, I encountered equally rich, emotionally packed stories about African American students and families in schools from the education liaisons who worked with them. These stories revolved around the darker corners of school life - out-of-control or 'dead' urban classrooms, fraught administration battles and legal grievances, and disturbing and sometimes frightening encounters with colleagues and former friends. These stories could also involve the death of students, although in different circumstances - mysterious suicides, gang-affiliated activity, and the metaphorical invocations of systematic racial and cultural genocide.

But similar to the tales of gender liaisons in Pakistan, the stories seemed largely irrelevant in terms of their public or professional visibility, or their impact on the day-to-day governance of schools. I found this odd, all the more since more than two decades of educational research argued for the importance of community and diverse voices as part of school restructuring efforts to improve educational outcomes for students, parents, school staff, and school districts (Rutherford, 1995).

One reason for this obscurity may be that the stories of liaisons, many of whom identified as Black, African American, or people of color who entered the education field without professional licenses, did not fit neatly into dominant institutional and public discourses of closing academic achievement gaps and improving education for all students, discourses that have been described as often existing uneasily with those in minority communities. The linguistic negotiation of racial and economic stratification, a difficult feat achieved by some middle-class Black organizations, should not be underestimated, local publisher and media blogger Don Allen has noted (Allen, 2015).

Furthermore, progressive educational movements and educational reform movements - the movements dominate in education discourses - are too often dominated by White liberals and/or White agendas, some researchers and activists have argued, continuing a long history of appropriation, paternalism, and neo-colonial attitudes (MSR Online, 2015; Perry, 2014). Linguistic terms and concepts such as the 'achievement gap' have been described as itself signaling fancy racist rhetoric (Stewart, 2016).

The school liaisons I met, as often over-stretched school employees, for the most showed little interest in the 'pick a side' battle between pro-public or pro-reform education adherents (RobPM, 2015), or in mastering the talking points of political activist discourse. They could appear inconsistent as education allies in these battles, or too likely to 'point fingers' and name 'enemies' - a perennial and closely guarded local public secret, as evidence by former Minnesota Teacher of the Year Tom Rademacher (2015) in a blog post named *No Enemies*. If, like some education leaders and activists, liaisons tried to evoke a mythic 'silver bullet' – an often-used metaphor in the education field for a quick and effective solution, which itself is based on folklore that silver bullets are the weapons of choice against werewolves, witches, and other monsters (Wikipedia, 2015) – it was usually in chorus with other and louder voices, such as hiring more Black teachers and adopting Afro-centric curriculum.

But the stories liaisons told and re-told in discussions that involved an on-going network of diverse people working across at least a dozen school districts, often veered into awkward spaces challenging educational ideologies and dominant social imaginaries of educational progress. These included perceptions of a promiscuous, virulent and tenacious racism permeating hopeful and 'well-intentioned,' multi-million dollar

diversity management initiatives in school districts, the notion of 'professionalism' and its voracious appetite within an era of neoliberal reforms, racial reflexivity and accountability pressures, and socially complex relations with students in expanding and commoditizing systemic social support systems.

In certain respects, as in Pakistan, these stories could be argued to fall into a longer history of resisting or negotiating neo-colonial governance and attempts at cultural conquest, dating at least back to what was then the Minnesota Territory's establishment of its first 'Commissioner of Emigration' in 1856, Eugene Burnand. Until the 1850s, Native Americans outnumbered White settlers of European ancestry, although ethnic divisions were considered vague during this era (Kaplan & Ziebarth, 1999). Minnesota, despite its location in the north and the existence of a White, Protestant, Anglo American Yankee elite that was primarily antislavery (Green, 2007), also had a complicated history in relation to Black residents.

The arrival of enslaved and freed African Americans in Minnesota led to the short-lived but infamous *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) decision, the ruling that Blacks were not, and never had been, citizens of the United States. This made explicit a racial ideology of Black inferiority to Whites in intellect, as well as other dimensions, a "color of mind thesis" legitimized and reinforced over decades through unequal school policies (Rury & Darby, 2016, p. 9).

In what become the capital of St. Paul, a multiracial city on the heavily trafficked Mississippi River, that decision coincided with an intensified racism as St. Paul grew more 'civilized' and created segregated schools for Black children (Green, 2007). Minnesota's relative leadership in later establishing political and civil rights for Blacks

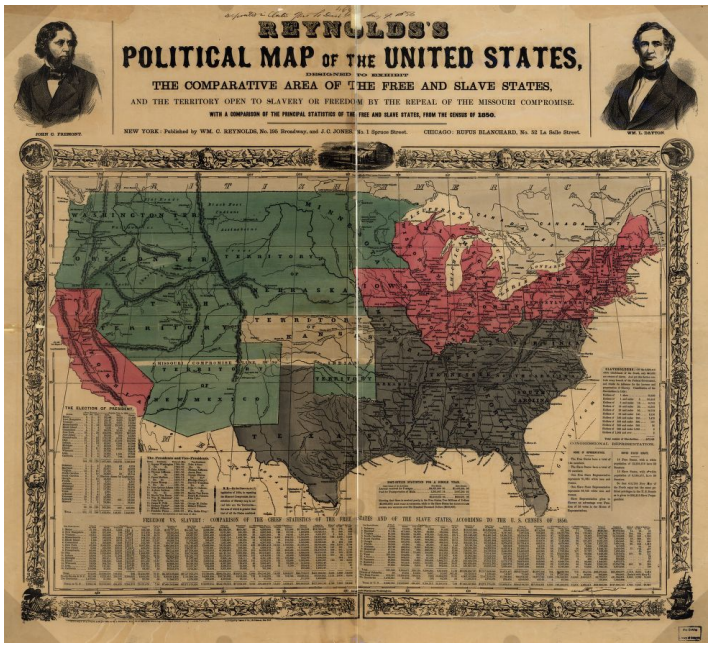
and advancing racial achievement through better education also co-existed alongside intra-racial stratification and social and economic oppression through the guise of a 'kindly,' paradoxically 'sincere,' and sometimes self-congratulatory White patronage that failed to disentangle race and 'character' from pre-exiting racialized systems (Green, 2015).

The relatively modest influx of Blacks who arrived during the Great Migration (i.e., 34,868 Blacks reaching Minnesota by 1970) (McGill, 2003), and later the tens of thousands of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, joined a by that time predominately White community already richly invested with the work of "race men," a term historian William D. Green (2015) has used to denote "the admittedly indelicate purpose of labeling black men who dedicated themselves to advancing the welfare of their people because it was widely coined by African American men and women during the nineteenth century" (2015, para 15). Green noted that the history of Black women, who also played important roles in political activism, was uniquely layered with sexism, racism, and classism, and their labor was more thus more likely to be inconspicuous (Green, 2015). Thus race had a complex lineage in Minnesota's continuing concern with educational assimilation and immigration, as a state with almost 10% of its population foreign-born in 2011 – a percentage almost equal to the percentage of Black students (Vu & Walters, 2013).

Yet this so-called orderly assimilation narrative and even its counter racial assimilation narrative, in which Minnesota's school liaisons in the 20th and 21st century are continuing to carry on a tradition as cultural brokers, translators, and 'race work' between dominant and sub-dominate groups, looked decidedly messier through the lens

of liaisons' stories and accounts of small events. In many ways doing 'inconsequential' and invisible work in schools, since school districts often task Black women and men to work with Black students in low-profile liaison roles, liaisons faced complex dilemmas, priorities, strategic choices, and perceptions of social reality – situations that uneasily mapped onto the notion of racial educational advancement.

Figure 2: Map of United States, 1856



Source: Reynold's Political Map of the United States (1856), Library of Congress

For example, one day a liaison named 'Regina' recalled having to deal with the 'monkey' issue, *again*. Monkeys, Regina recounted that she had learned after decades of living in the U.S. as an immigrant from West African, were often perceived by Blacks as insulting, pseudo-scientific tropes of racial superiority in the hands of Whites and culturally White institutions. But Regina also realized, she said, that monkeys could be a

Curious George symbol of childhood innocence to White teachers and parents. Still, after years of district-wide, all-staff equity training, Regina was both outraged and astonished to find a school staff member had created a flyer with a monkey to promote all-day kindergarten, primarily to Black, low-income families. Although 'a-b-c' blocks and a little teddy bear was also on the flyer, Regina said she was horrified as soon as she the flyer, which had been sent to her for review. She stated,

> The first thing I saw was a monkey. I said, "That monkey needs to go! It serves no purpose." But I was thinking, "Really? In this day and age you're going to send out a flyer to the Black community with a monkey on it?" The (school staff person) said, "Thank you." She removed it. I think what happened is, someone brought that monkey thing up to her. She (the school staff person) said, "I don't see anything wrong with it." So they sent it to the equity department for review. (If the school staff had gotten) push back from the parents, they could have said, "Our equity department reviewed it, and they didn't say anything." They're not racially conscious (sigh). They're still not there. (Fieldnotes, 2/13/15). Regina believed the staff person who had created the flyer – a White district spokesperson who she described as always "wearing nice clothes and always looking sharp, with her hair already cut and looking immaculate" – had sent her the flyer because she was primarily interested in impression management and avoiding accountability, in case of blowback. In Regina's opinion, that was progress, of a sort. Over the phone I heard Regina, who was normally upbeat, heave a sigh. She stated,

> "I've been on the ground for 15 years, and its gotten worse. We're good at lying and making empty promises. We come up with committees, and after one year, the conversation goes away. Whatever recommendation you make never goes into action. I'm tired. I need to get outside the box. (Fieldnotes, 2/13/15).

Statement of the Research Problem.

Schools around the world are struggling with how to include, engage and/or acculturate populations perceived to be disengaged from, or for different reasons missing out on, educational opportunities that would prepare them to socially and economically function in 'modern,' increasingly globally connected societies. This includes historically segregated populations in the developed world, such as politically and economically disenfranchised urban African American communities faced with high student drop-out rates and low-performing public schools, and out-of-school children among rural and low-income households in South Asia, particularly girls.

One strategy commonly drawn upon by education institutions is the use of education liaisons, or community outreach workers. Liaisons, who are often cultural 'insiders' in terms of racial, ethnic or gender identity and language, function as go-betweens or 'brokers' of information and cultural knowledge between 1) 'modern' schools and education organizations such as NGOs, and 2) marginalized sub-groups or 'traditional' (i.e., 'non-modern, non-rationale') communities.

But Regina's stories of the difficulty of negotiating and bridging perceptions of cultural symbols within the complex of particular socio-political interests at her school, and that of the gender liaisons I worked with in Pakistan, are a poorly understood dimension of the mass education process, loosely understood as a global structural and

cultural phenomenon, as argued by world society theorists (Meyer, 1999). Furthermore, not enough is understood about how global ideologies of educational progress, based on contested perceptions of Western-centric, global cultural models of schooling (Myer, 1999; Carrey, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012; Anderson-Levitt, 2012), are perceived and negotiated from alternate, historically and narratively experienced vantage points, such as those of education liaisons. This is important, since mass education, which has been long recognized as shaped by structures of power, inequalities, conflict, and systemic logics of domination (Foucault, 1977; Bourdieu, 1988), has been argued to be in core ways a politically myth-driven phenomenon (Meyer, 1999), political myths being a concept that only modern societies have reluctantly embraced (Bottici, 2014; Bottici & Challard, 2006).

Global education ideologies, particularly those around inclusion, equality, and equity, such as the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in the U.S. and UNESCO's Education for All (EFA), which includes global benchmark goals for gender parity, have been argued to be a "new global orthodoxy," which arguably co-opt more contextualized and plural understandings of inclusion and social justice within education systems (Grimaldi, 2012). But the rise of mass education globally has also been described as involving elements of global political imaginaries and myths around education. Political imaginaries can be understood as the social construction of politics and images (Bottici, 2011), such as the cultural tropes of troubled Black boys and oppressed Moslem girls, and myth understood as a socially meaningful response to something of significance that is neither true nor untrue (Bottici, 2014; Bottici & Challard, 2006). Myth can also be a

culturally conditioned, cognitive model of reality that can be hard to gain perspective on, in contexts of global diffusion (Meyer, 1999; 2008).

Yet even so, relatively little attention has been paid to the lived experiences and everyday, hard-working narratives of staff such as education liaisons, especially as contributing to locally situated, socio-political imaginaries and myth making around education. I will argue that despite their relatively invisible and low-status role within schools, this aspect of engagement – a cultural process of meaning making (Anderson-Levitt, 2012) – is important to understand, especially in light of the gap between ideological proclamations of educational progress, the realities of stalled, and arguably worsening, indicators of educational inequalities, and a lack of attention to the social imaginaries of relatively 'low status' educational staff such as liaisons and 'marginalized' populations. Liaisons also offer a means to explore how power – such as the institutional power to dominate ideological educational discourses of progress – is understood and co-constructed in communities who are thus dialogically and discursively positioned globally as being uniquely in dire educational need. Examples include the specter of incarceration hanging over Black communities in the U.S., or the specter of immanent Islamic radicalization or continuing developing world 'poverty' in Pakistan, neither of which are directly connected to each other in public discourses, yet which are categorically connected as educationally deprived. Not enough is understood about how these forms of reifying discursive power, alongside oppressive structural dynamics, are experienced by education liaisons, who are themselves complexly positioned within race, class, gender and other social hierarchies and categories of identity.

Therefore, there is a need to analytically explore how powerful global concepts related to educational inclusion, equality, and equity are constructed in relation to the needs of both education institutions and marginalized communities, as a global phenomena in which different, historically positioned localities contribute, directly or indirectly, to emergent understandings of local/global 'progress.'

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research project is to explore the lived experiences of education liaisons in schools and education NGOs, and how through their lived experiences we can better understand how inclusive and equity education projects and practices serves or fails to serve marginalized communities and children. I pay particular attention to how liaisons, whose name implies a 'binding' of mutual understanding and contact, also serve as situated brokers of global social imaginaries, myths and uncertainties around mass education in two different geographic locations, with two very discursively different, 'marginalized' populations. Liaisons' relative invisibility – they are relatively few in number and often institutionally marginalized themselves in multiple ways despite holding relatively high community status – suggests this work is not widely heard or well understood.

The use of two locations, I will argue in more detail later in this paper, offers a means to help make visible aspects of a global political myth such as world culture theory (i.e. a global model of reality that emphasizes individual empowerment, scientism, and rationality), through its local discontinuities and particularities, such as telling educational narratives on the 'wrong' side of global political imaginaries. .

In this study, I will focus on liaisons who work with Black students in the United States, and draw to a limited extent on the experiences of liaisons who work in Pakistan. My research project will include the following questions:

- What are the formal and informal functions and responsibilities of education liaisons?
- How do education liaisons, as actors constituted to some extent by the institutions of which they are a part, enact, make sense of, and perform notions of culture and inclusion?
- What does the lived experience of education liaisons imply about how notions of inclusion and equity are understood and practiced in the 'modern' mass education system, and what that may mean for communities who are marginalized or perceived as excluded?

Geographic Context of Study

This research study takes place in two geographic sites on opposite almost sides of the world: Minnesota in the U.S. Midwest, and northern and southwestern parts of Pakistan. As I will discuss later in Chapter 5, geography in the context of multi-sited ethnography can be conceptualized as a space of field of action oriented to the ethnography itself (Marcus, 2011). In this sense, I am conceptualizing the U.S. and Pakistan as geographic regions located in specific spatial dimensions (e.g., locations in North America and South Asia separated by 6,043 nautical miles and a 10 hour time difference), but also as educational sites within a global geography of mass education, with its discontinuous pockets of educational marginality.

The concept of marginalized students, families and communities is itself a cultural product, or symbol. By positioning Black students in the U.S. and South Asian girls as 'marginal,' they are at a border or 'marked,' to use the etymologically associated Old English '*mearc*.' Their symbolic marginality, a marginality that is flattened and over generalized, contributes to an overall historiography of morally evolving, modern mass education and larger cultural discourse across different contexts.

One of these contexts is the meaning of modernity and progress as part of 'nation-building' in the Middle East and South Asia post 9-11, or what is now often referred to as governance reform, including "security governance" reform (Agborsangaya-Fiteu, 2009, p. 3-6). Another very different context is the meaning of progress in an era of neoliberal corporate reform of education in the U.S., following decades of civil rights advances. In both cases, education-related tropes – (i.e., 'oppressed' girls in South Asia and 'oppressed, semi-criminal' urban African American youth) - appear to circulate widely as

public symbols of idealized progress through invoking technologies of educational exclusion-inclusion.

I have focused primarily on the work of education liaisons in Minnesota around the schooling of students of color, particularly African Americans, contrasting specific dimensions of this work with that of education liaisons in Pakistan around girls' schooling. In both locations, I will argue, liaisons provide a means through which to understand global schooling processes as involving not just literal, but cultural, metaphorical work on a global scale, in which notions of justice, inclusion, and imaginative possibility are at play.

This research spans fieldwork done primarily from late 2008 to early 2009, and from late 2011 to early 2014. During this time I became involved with projects focusing on gender education disparities in Pakistan and racial education disparities in Minnesota. In Pakistan, I undertook research in collaboration with an NGO interested in better understanding challenges facing girls' education, particularly in rural regions where they had on-going education programs. I returned to Pakistan for about two months in 2012. Although I did not specifically gather field data on girls' education during that time, working on an evaluation of a national-level education project allowed me to better grasp some of Pakistan's systemic education issues.

In Minnesota, following four years implementing professional development grants focused on educator cultural competency as part of a university research center, I began a three-year project specifically focusing on racial education disparities, one element of which involved providing professional development for liaisons who worked with Black, primarily African American, students and families. Although I worked with

about 60 liaisons from different racial and ethnic backgrounds from more than a dozen school districts, in this study I primarily worked with five co-participants who were liaisons at the time of the study.

Roadmap to Study

This study is divided into the following chapters. In the next chapter, chapter two, I will provide background context to the study that is focused on liaisons as school and their roles within education institutions in two different geographic locations. Liaisons are elusive due to the literal and metaphorical nature of their work, I argue, and thus 'placing' them within the education field is a necessary first step. In the next chapter, chapter three, I will examine research literature around the educational context for Black students in the U.S., and girls' education in Pakistan, including the rich scholarship around education and race and questions of 'voice' in a context of dominate White ideologies and discourses, and education and evolving understandings of girls' education as part of neo-colonial discourse and feminist debates. In chapter four, I will turn toward of theoretical review of literature, including debates around the use of world society theory within the education field. In chapter five, I will present my research design and discuss why I used two approaches and methodologies, ethnography and narrative inquiry. I will also discuss my reasons for selecting a multi-sited ethnographic approach.

In chapter six, the findings chapter, I have divided my fieldwork into eight sections. The bulk of these sections are based on my work with liaisons in Minnesota, with the final section a selection of findings from my work in Pakistan. I begin by exploring how liaisons develop complicated yet intense beliefs around education, as the result of cycle of enchanting and disillusioning personal and professional experiences

with education. Although their experiences include surviving some of the uglier sides of American schools and history – the racial backlash of desegregation, and psychologically demeaning placement into limited cognitive categories and school sites of de facto abandonment – liaisons paradoxically maintain, in different ways, a 'true belief' in education, a transcendent faith in its possibilities given alternate realities.

The next section, imaginative geographies, explores how liaisons perceive schools as sites of inclusion and exclusion as racialized professionals, located within culturally and historically situated institutions. Despite schools' veneer of 'modernity' and neutrality, perceived exclusions can take multiple and overlapping forms, leading to dynamics of concealment and further differentiation. The following section builds upon the idea of exclusions and differentiation, and looks at how liaisons bring 'unprofessional' perspectives to their work – unprofessional in the sense they unsettle normative ideas of 'good' educator professionalism and dispositions and suggest expanded, possible meanings of professionalism. Next, I turn to liaison experiences and understandings of schools' practices of equity trainings and conflict associated with such trainings, and the ways liaisons contest school registers of moral and cultural expertise despite their relatively low organizational status. After that, I explore how liaisons, as in some ways embattled true believers in education, mediate the concealed and more hidden dimensions of educational experience for marginalized students and families, working within inter-governmental structures of authority and surveillance to create spaces of respite for marginalized students and families without disrupting fragile illusions of educational progress. I then present gender liaison experiences in Pakistan, which in some ways echo, and in other ways differ from, the experiences of liaisons in Minnesota.

In chapter seven, I then revisit the idea of contrasting sites in Minnesota and Pakistan to gain insight through a parallax view of education liaisons. I argue the experiences of liaisons in Pakistan deepen the way in which the experience of liaisons in Minnesota can be understood. I use three primary analytical findings to make this point – 1) an important aspect of liaison work is re-interpreting and re-working dominant social imaginaries of education, or institutional myth making (e.g., offering plausible, plural understandings of the dominate global myth of educational progress in different historical, socio-cultural and geographic locations; 2) that as mediators of marginality who 'cross' into 'non-rationale' epistemological territory, liaisons are subject to forms of power and silencing that can be thought of as partial bewitchment – a socio-cultural struggle over local and global structurings of social reality, such as the idea of a dominate world culture structured through neoliberal, globalizing trends, and 3) liaisons embody the tension between claiming and forgetting the past, in the pursuit of constructing the present and future. In this process, power as the negation of oppression – especially on a transnational scale in which stigmatized identities are in relation to each other – is visible. I also offer three recommendations for practice – re-conceptualizing liaison work through registers of possibility and uncertainty along with raced, gendered, and other forms of identity, an orientation toward Deweyan-style, pragmatic flexibility as a means to counter the rational 'magic' of education institutions, and the importance of creating parallel, 'disruptive' spaces and positions.

I end with chapter eight, my conclusion. One of the important conclusions of this study is that from the perspectives of liaisons located in some ways opposite sides of the

mass education trajectory, the state of 'educational progress' is a political and social imaginary, more than a universal and modern march of progress, or lack of progress. The social construction of and understandings of mass education in marginalized communities, with different histories and needs, is a process that draws on unfolding beliefs and perceptions, whether 'wrong' or 'right,' and experiences that are informed by local and global discourses and structures of resources, in complicated ways. Liaisons play important roles not just in the day-to-day implementation of increasingly professional and scientifically vetted educational programs that aim for promoting forms of inclusion, equity, and equality for disenfranchised or oppressed populations such as Black students in the U.S. and rural girls in Pakistan, but as mirrors to the socio-cultural, or imaginative metaphorical work, of education institutions themselves. This is important to recognize, I argue, in bridging not just school-community relations, but the myths versus the reality of education as an individual and social good.

CHAPTER 2 – EDUCATION LIAISONS

Organizational *Ligare*: Liaisons in Minnesota and Pakistan

Education liaisons in many ways occupy liminal roles. They are employees within school districts or NGOs, who are hired as bicultural translators and go-betweens – brokers of student marginality, of culture, and of racial and gender identities. But despite the vital work they do, liaisons are themselves in multiple ways excluded and marginalized within education organizations.

In the U.S., liaisons broker relations between culturally white schools and black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and other racial and ethnic communities to improve black educational outcomes. Many come from the same disadvantaged communities as the struggling students and families they interact with, which is partly why they have keen insights into the dysfunction in schools. In Pakistan, gender liaisons broker relations between secular government and NGO-run schools and conservative rural communities, where strictly enforced norms of seclusion or *purdah* is believed to limit female participation in schools. In both geographic contexts, liaisons – related from the Latin *ligare*, to bind - thus bind and tie across perceived differences, linking disparate others.

But this binding and brokering is elusive work, involving the conjuring of uncomfortable (i.e., race in Minnesota) and modern (i.e., "gender") in Pakistan differences, and concurrently erasing them under cosmopolitan rubrics such as "education for all," neoliberal conceptions of uniform, rights-bearing individuals, and global citizenship. Additionally, liaisons are often physically on the move, traveling between schools and communities.

Within schools, they may be somewhat hidden - supervising 'time out' rooms or running after-school parent groups in Minnesota. In Pakistan, liaisons are often in the 'field' - visiting female teachers in difficult-to-reach village and refugee schools, and meeting community elders, education managers, and religious leaders. Located at the center of relational networks of exchange, liaisons broker information and trust across disparate social worlds across dialects and languages.

Even direct supervisors often find the work of liaisons elusive. During more than three years of working with liaisons in Minnesota, I was repeatedly asked by supervisors and education administrators to clarify what their liaisons did, and how to capture or measure it. Liaisons seemed to embody murky roles, even though formal job descriptions can run several pages and be minutely detailed. Their work was generally acknowledged as in some way important, but they were constantly butting heads with licensed staff – 'interfering' in the work of teachers, social workers, special education staff, and principals, or not quite getting gender parity issues – letting too many boys enroll, or not asking the 'right' questions.

This elusive dimension of liaison work is the starting point I will use for framing the work of liaisons in both Minnesota and Pakistan, despite very different contexts. A key way liaisons are elusive, I will argue, is through their embodied role as *ligare* between global, public ideals of 'education for all' and the situated, complex realities of educational practice on the ground. Liaisons broker, both literally and metaphorically, the ideal of educational progress in its broad sense, as an ever more educated global citizenry within an interdependent world.

Liaisons are not the only educators whose work has an elusive quality. Mass education has overlapping, symbolic and cultural meanings. This includes the production of a skilled workforce, and literate citizens and credentialed individuals, as David Labaree pointed out in his taxonomy of education as a public and private good (Labaree, 1997). But more than most people working in the education sector, liaisons straddle the optimistic public discourse around educational progress, and the ground-level realities of educational inequities and challenges for marginalized communities.

Geographic Contexts: Contrasting Minnesota and Pakistan

In Minnesota and Pakistan, liaisons are 'front-line' workers with in ways that are similar and diverge. One school day in Minnesota, for example, a liaison held a mediation session for two African American girls who had been accused of fighting other girls. Suddenly the liaison heard the footsteps of a highly agitated mother, coming down the hallway. The mother yanked the girls, her daughters, out of school, shouting that she had given permission for her daughters to fight, and insisting she wouldn't talk to the liaison, who was African American, or anyone else at the school. Such confrontations could echo those half way around the world. On a different day, an elderly Pashtun man suddenly confronted a young female teacher in the dusty street outside a school in a Pakistani refugee camp. "I know what's going on," he says, angrily shaking his finger at the teacher who also worked as an education liaison, referring to rumors of teacher-student orgies behind the high, mud-brick walls of the school. In some ways, these two scenes are worlds apart. The complex, institutional environment of an urban American high school, with its mix of ethnically and racially diverse mobile students and staff, is at first glance nothing like the gender-segregated schools along the Afghan border in

Pakistan. .In Pakistan, largely first-generation students sit on mats on dirt-packed courtyards. Their schools are likely to be buildings that have been donated by a landowner who knows everybody's family. The girls have few extra-curricular or academic options beyond passing the 6th grade, and most drop out by 3rd grade. Yet in both locations, education liaisons do very similar, very "modern" jobs. Education liaisons mediate troubled school-community relations. They are hired to bridge mistrust between marginalized students and families and schools, making sure students get into and persist in school. In the U.S. this can mean working with students and families of color (i.e., English Language Learners, Native Americans, and African Americans), whose high school graduation rates can be below 50 percent. In Pakistan it often means working with rural and low-income girls and their families, whose primary completion rate statistics in places like Balochistan can be below 10 percent.

In both communities, schools can be likened to islands in a sea of social and institutional mistrust. Schools in marginalized communities may be seen as outposts of a dominant culture –whether in terms of Western hegemony or neo-imperialist Western hegemony - that can aid as well as harm children. An urban parent in the U.S. may view a school as just "holding their child till they go to the grave" (juvenile justice). An uncle in a rural village in Pakistan may blame a school for a niece who writes a taboo love letter or who attracts attention while walking to school, endangering the reputation of the entire family. For their part, teachers may physically fear the community they drive through on their way to school, or fear being entangled in the problems of socially vulnerable tenants and refugee families, which are likely to be complexly linked to the local elite.

Because of their institutional role, education liaisons negotiate this invisible boundary between communities and schools. They use cultural knowledge of their own institutions (public schools, NGOs, and governments) and their own communities to bridge school-community gaps. In this sense, the education liaison position is in alignment with global educational inclusion policies, whether in the developed countries of the West or the developing and "emerging" countries of Asia, Africa, and much of Central and South America. Yet, though these positions are manifest in very different countries and contexts, little is known about them.

Situating and defining education liaisons. Education liaisons can be difficult to define, since this school and organizational position is often fluid, and can be situated in different departments focused on different students and stakeholders. This role also lacks its own professional associations or preparation pathways. But the use of "cultural mediators," "cultural brokers," "family liaisons," and "school liaisons" have been more-or-less interchangeably used in education research literature in the U.S. dating back to at least 1998, and often refer to staff who represent families' cultures, have succeeded in the education system themselves, and can help families interpret and navigate the education system (Howland, Anderson, Smiley & Abbott, 2008). Family-school relations have also been prominent in the international literature, with the shift from 'parent involvement' to 'parent participation' signaling a more collective approach to the well-being of the school and all children, including children from different social economic standing (SES) backgrounds, according to one study on family-school liaisons in Cyprus, which also noted a paucity of liaisons despite Cyprus's highly centralized educational system (Symeou, 2001).

Although their titles can be similar, education liaisons differ from the school resource officers (SRO), who have served in schools since the 1950s and 1960s, and who represent a multiply funded police presence that has, and continues, to generate both support and concern (Stinson Sr. & Watkins, 2014). While sworn police officers serving as SROs have been described as primarily hired to improve the safety of students and school personnel, studies have also found SROs are used to teach, mentor, and council students (Stinson Sr. & Watkins, 2014). A number of studies have found that school-police partnerships can be challenging because they bring "together agencies with potentially competing orientations, practices, and assumptions regarding the behavior of K-12 students" (Cray & Weiler, 2011, p. 168). Education liaisons, by contrast, do not have the authority to arrest students, although they can play a role in behavior discipline and management processes, a fuzzy continuum that can overlap with SRO's self perceived roles as law enforcers, mentors, educators and surrogate parents, and with emergent school-based police departments, where peace officers are school employees under the direct control of a school district (McKenna, Martinez-Prather, & Bowman, 2016).

In terms of status, liaisons (e.g., navigators, urban liaisons, cultural liaisons, gender liaisons, parent liaisons, equity specialists, student learning advocates, etc.) are usually considered to have greater responsibilities and influence than para professionals. But as non-licensed and non-trained staff, liaisons formally and in practice hold less authority than positions such as instructional coaches, counselors, and behavior deans, although their day-to-day activities usually include similar functions (e.g., observing teachers and giving them classroom management advice when requested by teachers to

do so, talking to students about personal and academic issues such as college preparation, calling parents about discipline incidents, interceding in student-staff disputes, and running discipline or time out rooms. The titles and job descriptions of education liaison also vary, depending on the era, the school district or organization, and the population the liaison is hired to work with (e.g., urban, low-income, Black, West African, Hmong, Spanish-speaking Latino, Native American, etc.) While school districts in Minnesota often tried to hire liaisons who reflected in terms of race, ethnicity, and language ability the populations of their students, in practice cross-racial and cross-ethnic work was widespread – African American liaisons were offered Native American-oriented positions, non-Latino Spanish-speaking White European Americans worked with Latino communities, African, Hmong and European American Whites liaisons worked primarily or a significant amount of time with African American students, to name a few combinations. In Pakistan, no men held gender liaison or specialist positions, although male NGO staff participated in girls' education programming through their interaction with male village heads, heads of households, and education officials and staff of either gender.

Historically, the role of what became education liaisons has been described as emerging as movements of people and large-scale migrations and disruptions took place that necessitated cultural as well as linguistic translation. Early liaisons, in a loosely defined and conceptual sense, included traders, missionaries, persons of mixed race, and teachers who came into contact with Native Americans as part of the European expansion and colonization of North American, and children of immigrants who played the role of "cultural border crossers" (Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007).

Later, parent liaisons emerged as school volunteers, often "stay-at-home mothers" who were active in school, and then became more institutionalized through the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the development of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I schools (Martinez-Cosio & Iannocone, 2007, p. 355), as well as state legislation.

The passage of ESEA in 1965, in which ESEA Title 1 was originally designed to promote integration and provide financial assistance to low-income schools, formally institutionalized the role of parents within schools, although the shape of parent involvement shifted – from active and involved advisors to a much more passive role – through seven authorizations and changing political landscapes (Moles Jr. & Fege, 2011). With the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Amendments, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) were encouraged to hire liaison staff, along with other parent-oriented provisions such as school resource centers and resources for home learning (Moles Jr. & Fege, 2011). In this sense, education liaisons have been envisioned as part of larger school-family-community collaborations, in which educational research has supported positive outcomes such as higher student achievement, improved student behavior and attendance, and more positive school climates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), despite a large body of literature documenting the difficulty Title 1 schools have had with gaining productive or meaningful parent involvement (Sanders, 2008), or indeed desiring to seek anything beyond ritualistic parent involvement (Doucet, 2011).

In Minnesota school districts, many education liaisons are hired through at least some use of Title 1 funding. Integration funds are also commonly used for hiring liaisons, with a minority of school districts funding some or all of their liaisons through special

education funding, which has been an option since the passing of a state statute in the 1970s. Passed in the context of state racial and ethnic disparities in the special education placement and discipline of special education students of color, the Minnesota state rule defines cultural liaisons as:

> "Cultural liaison" means a person who is of the same racial, cultural socioeconomic or linguistic background as the pupil, and who:
>
> A. Provides information to the IEP team about the pupil's race, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic background;
> B. Assists the IEP team in understanding how racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic factors impact educational progress;
> C. Facilitates the pupil's parent's understanding and involvement in the special education process.
>
> If a person who is of the same racial, cultural, socioeconomic, or linguistic background as the pupil is not available, then a person who has knowledge of the pupil's racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic background may act as a cultural liaison. (MN Rule 3525.0200 Subpart 1h)

Thus, partially due to different funding sources, defining the role of education liaisons in Minnesota schools reflects long-standing and shifting federal and state policies, as well as individual district needs. Anecdotal evidence from school staff and liaisons suggests liaisons have been hired in response to sudden or perceived demographic shifts in neighborhoods around schools and during periods of heightened racial tension. For example, an African American administrator at a large school district recounted in 2012 being among the first liaisons hired at his district more than 20 years ago, in response to racially oriented cross-burnings and resulting widespread fear among

the districts' local African American community. The formal and informal job description has not changed much from that time, he continued, although the terminology around school-community relations and helping schools work more effectively with students and communities of color has evolved. For example, one school district's description of the liaison role during the 2012-2013 school year stated,

> SLA MISSION STATEMENT
>
> The Student Learning Advocates' mission, in collaboration with the administration and staff of Anoka-Hennepin School District, is to support the efforts of our students to succeed academically and socially as well as strengthen our relationships with the families and the communities our students represent. An SLA is placed at each middle and high school to better serve K-12 students and their families. (Anoka-Hennepin School District, April, 2013)

An analysis of job descriptions from five Minnesota schools in 2012-2013 showed liaisons, who can number more than 30 in large school districts, are given a wide variety of tasks. These include staff development training, working with students to improve attendance and academic performance, facilitating meetings with parents, staff and students, and advocating on students' behalf. The same analysis, with about 30 participants from a non-random sample of five districts, showed that liaisons thought working with staff and colleagues was their biggest challenge, followed by working with parents. This may reflect their use as "firefighters" – a term education liaisons apply to themselves - to put out conflict between staff and parents, and as disciplinarians with low social status.

The titles and roles of education liaisons can also change abruptly from year to year. The Osseo Area School District, for example, switched from the title 'student learning advocates' to 'equity specialists' in the 2013-2014 school year. The job description also changed from, for example, working less with student discipline to working more with school leadership around equity. The Minneapolis School District, during the same year, returned to a more traditional notion of 'cultural liaisons' and the strategy of working closely more race- and ethnic-specific cultural groups in the community instead of across communities. No credentialing program exists for cultural liaisons (i.e. liaisons who are not second language translators), although some Minnesota policymakers have sought for years to establish a higher education certificate program for cultural liaisons.

The liaison position in rural Pakistani schools, by contrast, is not embedded within the governmental PK-12 school structure so much as working alongside it, in the form of locally hired NGO staff. In girls' schools I visited in two Pashto-speaking provinces of Pakistan, the number of students could range from several hundred at the *kachi* level, to a handful at the upper primary grade levels. Schools were often run by two or three teachers, in large tents in earthquake-hit areas or in buildings on land donated by a local landlord. NGOs, however, hired liaisons, such as gender liaisons, to promote girls' education through supporting and building relationships between teachers, parents, and community organizations such as local councils and parent-school associations, with one liaison typically working with dozens of school across several refugee camps, or across dozens of villages. Unlike in Minnesota, where liaisons usually functioned individually in

a school except for departmental meetings, the gender liaisons I worked with in Pakistan generally functioned as a team of two to three people.

A gender specialist job in Islamabad from 2012, for example, includes the following description:

> As a key member of the Program Development and Quality unit, this potion is responsible for ensuring that gender issues are considered and appropriately addressed in the assessment, design, development and implementation of programs (both emergency and development programs). The Gender Specialist will take the lead in increasing gender awareness and understanding among Save the Children staff. The Gender Specialist will represent Save the Children in any networks and clusters and also build the capacity of Save the Children staff, parent's staff, and other stakeholders.

Defining everyday terms: Culture, acculturation, equity, equality, and inclusion. As staff who work in bureaucratic contexts, education liaisons both embody and negotiate the intersections of bureaucratic terms such as culture, acculturation, equity, and inclusion. But they do so from positions of relatively low professional status, making formal definitions and negotiations of such formal definitions complexly linked. In this section I will briefly define these common terms, and describe some of the ways in which formal definitions fail to capture some of the complexity around their use as it involves liaisons.

Culture has been defined within education, for example, as "information – norms, values, and beliefs – that is acquired from others and is capable of affecting behavior" (Broesch & Hadley, 2011). Acculturation has been defined as "the process through which

an individual's cultural models become increasingly divergent from the shared cultural models of their previous social group, and become increasingly similar to the cultural models held by member of the social group… in a given domain" (Broesch & Hadley, 2011). A large body of educational research has critiqued the uncritical use of culture and acculturation – often terms associated in different ways with the education of racially and ethnically marginalized students - in school policies and practices (Riley & Ettlinger, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Ngo, 2010), practices that often involve education liaisons. Yet less attention has been paid to the way liaisons both embrace notions of essentialized group culture – be in U.S. Black urban culture or 'traditional' Pashtun or Pakistani culture – and re-negotiate its meanings in the historical and 'real' context of school practice.

For example, some scholars have argued that African Americans, in contrast to other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., have been assumed by psychologists to have little or no culture and thus denied valuable acculturation educational approaches and programs offered other groups (Landrine & Klonoff, 2012). While other scholars have cautioned that even an 'appreciation' or 'celebration' approach to culture can reify and exoticize others, without altering "the power relations and conflicts that compromise cultural difference" (Ngo,2010, p. 476). The notion of acculturation, which surfaced repeatedly in issues education liaisons struggled with, has also entailed questions over the need for and the relevance and ownership of teaching 'slave culture' in schools (i.e., the continued relevance of 'slave culture' was a topic education liaisons often grappled with in mixed race professional settings a la Sterling Struckey's 1987 *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America)*, and debates on the meaning

and educational value of strategies such as 'code switching' and teaching African American Vernacular English (Young, 2013) and the cultural interpretation and recognition of racialized performances, such as urban 'cool' (Majors & Billson, 1993).

The liaisons I worked with also found urban assimilation-related theories, such as John Ogbu's 1986 theory of oppositional culture and 'Acting White' as an African American strategy of achievement while maintaining a Black identity (Ogbu, 2004) and Roslyn Arlin Mickleson's 1990 'Attitude-Achievement Paradox,' the theory that Black have a high regard for education but show poor academic performance – useful, despite their contested place within educational scholarship. The cultural contrast between diverse students and institutionally white schools loomed large for liaisons, and they resonated with culturally oriented analysis of issues such as poverty (Tileston & Darling, 2008) and school-community relations. As education psychologist Carrie Rothstein-Fisch and Elise Trumbull stated in describing their 'bridging cultures framework,'

> As we seek to build bridges between home and school cultures, we must not reduce complex individuals to simple categories; nevertheless, we cannot ignore the compelling influences of children's home culture on their education (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 19).

Culturally inclusive school-community partnerships, similarly, have been described as authentically addressing the "endemic problems confronting multicultural learners," who occupy urban "locales where the prevalent problems include poverty; poor health; hunger; physical, mental, or substance abuse; unemployment; and teen pregnancy" (Ford, 2011, p. 335).

The terms ‘equity,’ ‘equality,’ and ‘inclusion’ also differ in formal and everyday usage by liaisons. Equality is a notion implying parity. In education, it can refer to measurements of gender parity and measurements of educational outcomes, such as results on statewide, national and international comparison tests. Equity, a more philosophical term, has been used in K-12 education to refer to:

> …a “ comparability of learning opportunities, the idea of comparability rather than sameness is the key, and which in turn necessitates an understanding of how culture shapes learning styles, teaching behaviors, and educational decisions, and that educational excellence for any students can’t occur when exclusion occurs” (Gay, 1994).

The use of equity has replaced culture in the title of some liaisons in urban metro districts over the last few decades, as explicitly equity focused initiatives were embraced by school leaders. ‘Cultural liaisons’ remains a term used more often in outlying suburban and rural school districts.

The term ‘inclusive’ within education has been associated with students with disabilities. But inclusion has also been used more broadly within social justice frameworks to indicate structural barriers to meaningful participation in education for children marginalized due to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other categories. Special education scholars Elizabeth Kozleski and Kathleen King Thorius, for example, have defined inclusive education as constant flux, with new margins and centers, as inclusion and exclusion is continuously contested and redefined through new modes of assessment, new forms of agency for marginalized families, and the redistribution of educational resources (Kozleski & Thorius, 2014). Other scholars have noted that the landmark

passage of what is now known as the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, has been closely intertwined with notions of justice, exclusion, and racial segregation, although the roots of IDEA ebb and flow in terms of its prominence in education policies around disabilities and inclusion. Definitions of cultural exclusion and disabilities have been argued to be profoundly cultural, reflecting white, middle class norms (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999) and Western, temporally located, epistemological approaches to 'science' that disadvantage already marginalized sub-student populations (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Liaisons thus work around and through bureaucratic, historical and everyday definitions of educational terms central to their role. Their titles and position place them at the forefront of the practice and performance of such abstract concepts as culture, such as serving as 'authentic' cultural and racial interlocutors, leading diverse student and parent groups, and doing semi-formal, hallway and classroom 'drop by' teacher and administrator coaching. But they receive little training, no accreditation, and carry little authority and legitimacy to define such terms for themselves.

Next I will turn to describing some of the day-to-day activities of liaisons in Minnesota and Pakistan.

A 'Day-in-the-Life' of a Minnesota Liaison: Interfacing with Educational Inequities.

In Minnesota, a typical day for an education liaison often varies. It may include hosting an early morning or afternoon student support group, supervising hallway breaks and lunch periods, visiting a classroom to observe a student and give a teacher advice, meeting with individual students for informal counseling, attending administration, equity staff, or committee meetings, serving as a football and sports coach, and

organizing parent engagement sessions. Liaisons also frequently recount being called by administrators to 'run interference' with parents, grandparents and caretakers, especially if the administrators are White and perceive visitors as angry and Black. Liaisons also reported frequently talking to parents about special education issues and/or attending formal IEP meetings, where their formal role is to provide cultural insight and facilitate school-community communication to prevent the inappropriate placement of students in special education programs.

Liaisons may work in just one school - often a high school - or work across multiple schools, and typically have dual reporting responsibilities to school principles, along with chief diversity, equity, special education, or student support directors and supervisors. Resources such as counselors are stretched thin in many school districts (Fitzgerald, 2009), and liaisons fulfill multidimensional roles as quasi and unofficial counselors, behavior specialists, teachers of Black history and important struggles such as the Civil Rights movement, administrative and teacher coaches in regard to student and community engagement, and parent advisors. Still, Minnesota's race-related disparities are some of the worst in the nation across sectors of health, criminal justice, and employment (Rose, 2013).

The daily routines of liaisons in Minnesota in many ways reflects the unofficial, but de facto, racial segregation that permeates Minnesota's educational system. Within this system, racial segregation can be seen in multiple forms, from predominately White licensed school staff, to the increasing ratio of racially isolated schools (Lonetree & Matos 2015). A persistent educational achievement gap, or opportunity gap, impacts students of color – particularly students categorized as Native American, Latino, and

‘Black,’ a category that includes about 10 percent of Minnesota’s around 800,000 public students, and which has increased 59 percent over the last decade due to an influx of African Americans from rust-best cities during the 1980s, and refugees and immigrants from Somalia and other parts of Africa during the 1990s (PolicyLink, 2014).

Despite a reputation for progressive education policies, many scholars have argued, Minnesota’s complicated legacy of choice-based school integration has failed to eliminate deeply entrenched racial educational inequalities (Hobday, Finn, & Orfield, 2009). For example, Black students received nearly 40 percent of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions during the 2012-2013 school year, in a statewide context where 40 percent of all suspensions and expulsions during that year were for ‘disorderly/disruptive’ behavior (Butrymowicz, 2014). Around 20 percent of Black students in Minnesota are in special education, compared to 14 percent of White students. Of special education students who are labeled Black, a disproportionate number are in high-incidence disability categories, namely emotional or behavior disorders and specific learning disabilities (OLA, 2013). African American youth in the metro area’s 14 counties are three times more likely to be ‘disconnected’ from education and employment than White youth, with about 20 percent compared to 7 percent, meaning one in five African American youth is disengaged (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012). This gap is larger than that in other metro areas across the nation (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2013). Just 25 percent of African Americans have at least associate degrees, compared to a state average of 45 percent, which makes Minnesota one of the country’s most educated workforces (PolicyLink, 2014).

School districts have been under pressure at community, state, and federal levels to address a host of racial disparities and raise overall test scores. Minnesota received waivers under the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, many of whose accountability provisions, such as student proficiency and teacher quality measures, have been in practice dropped under a series of waivers in exchange for state compliance with federal education redesign priorities (Klein, 2015). Additionally, racial disproportionality across one or more federal special education indicators has impacted most metro-area school districts, with some districts flagged for 'significant disproportionality' – a state-specific definition in Minnesota - over three consecutive years - and many found to have over-representation of Black students in special education and disproportionate discipline indicators for special education students who are Black.

In late 2015, a class action lawsuit was filed against the State of Minnesota and other entities for failing to desegregate schools, a repeat of a similar lawsuit by the same civil rights attorneys in the 1990s. The lawsuit claims that students in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the core of the Twin Cities region, are segregated by race and socioeconomic status in numerous "hyper-segregated" schools, a situation made worse by numerous segregated charter schools (Lonetree & Matos 2015). Also recently, civil rights officials in the U.S. Department of Education launched an investigation into discipline practices in Minneapolis Public Schools (Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

School district officials have responded with public pronouncements to address racial and other educational disparities, using strategies such as sometimes abrupt policy changes, large-scale professional staff development, and programs such as nationally networked parent engagement initiatives. Liaisons seldom play key decision-making or

implementation roles in such strategies, which can be guided by vague statements. The strategic objective of one local school district on January 19, 2015 read, for example, "By 2015, all will articulate, plan for, and progress toward their evolving dreams; choose to contribute to community in a mutually meaningful way; and demonstrate initiative and persistence to continually learn that which is important to them."

A 'Day-in-the-Life' of a Liaison in Pakistan: Gender Disparities

In rural parts of Pashto-speaking Pakistan, a liaison's day may include visiting elders at their homes to encourage girls' enrollment or participation in a parent group, conducting gender sensitivity training for teachers, or in refugee camps, overseeing the hiring of teachers and budgeting of programs. Daily schedules varied depending on organizational needs, the weather, and field situations. Liaisons sometimes spent an entire day visiting a school or village, which could involve bumpy car rides of up to five or six hours, or spend the day working in their office, a shared room or cubicle. Liaisons may have a direct supervisor in another city, due to large geographic territories of project implementation, and report to several bosses.

The gender liaisons I worked with held relatively high social status through lineage, family connections, and education credentials (i.e., most gender liaisons could speak some English, a generally prestigious language skill in Pakistan, and had at least a secondary education certificate and often a university degree, placing them within the top quarter or single-digit percent of Pakistani and Afghan adults). In some ways, it can be argued, gender, like race, constitutes marginality in the context of Pakistan, where patriarchal norms are widely regarded to disadvantage and/or raise particular challenges for women, even in professional and public political life (Haeri, 2002). But gender

liaisons did not seem to perceive gender as discrimination in the same way black liaisons perceived forms of racial discrimination in Minnesota schools. In part this may be because females already constitute a large part of the teaching and administrative corps in Pakistan, where gender-segregated schools are the norm. It may also be because although gender liaisons told stories of forms of gender-based exclusion, discrimination, and even sexual harassment at work, the meaning they attached to these experiences were different from those of liaisons I worked with in Minnesota.

Gender equality and empowerment is a discourse with increasing visibility in Pakistan, with "progress" and "lack of progress" often measured through quantitative comparisons to regional and global norms. According to the Millennium Development Goals, for example, which launched in 2000 and is the basis for the U.N.'s new Sustainable Development Goals, Pakistan is lagging in three out of four indicators in meeting Goal 3, which calls for achieving gender equality and empowering women by 2015 (UNDP, 2013). Pakistan's Gender Parity Index (GPI), the ratio of females to males, still lags at 0.76, with a disparity in favor of boys at all levels of primary and lower secondary education (Lynd, 2007).

Only 55 percent of the girls between the ages of 5 and 10 are enrolled at the primary level (Education Census, 2005), and Pakistan lags behind a South Asian female literacy norm of two-thirds (UNDP, 2003), which Anita Weiss has argued means "culture" cannot be used as the only explanation for slow progress in female education (Weiss, 2014). In Pakistan, access, in terms of personal safety and thus the honour of girls, is the primary concern of parents, according to a wide range of international donor

agency research and research conducted by the Ministry for Women's Development (Weiss, 2013).

Educational opportunities for Pakistani girls - 14 million Pakistani girls participated in the basic public education sector in 2006, with 31 percent in private school (Lynd, 2007) and the large number of refugees along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan – is also tied to the larger challenges facing Pakistan. This includes a relatively low literacy rate of 58 percent (UNDP, 2013), natural disasters and on-going conflict, large rural/urban disparities, and the poor quality of many government schools, which girls' activist Gulalai Ismail has compared to "not studying at all" (Haq, 2015). Although poverty rates have fallen in Pakistan (i.e., absolute poverty was controversially estimated to be 12.4 percent in 2011), a large proportion of the population remains economically vulnerable (World Bank, 2014), Available data including all education institutions suggests a 62 percent primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER). This means a significant proportion of students, about 35 percent, are out of the education system (Lynd, 2007) or not receiving age-appropriate education. (NER, as opposed to the Gross Enrolment Rate, excludes under- and over-age students.)

The percentage of out-of-school students in rural regions and in regions and provinces such as Balochistan is much higher, although reliable data on gender disparities at such level of analysis is not available (Lynd, 2007).

'Wild 'Institutional Terrains

Institutions have long been described in various literatures, including world culture theory, as places that can be highly irrational. Bolman and Deal have described organizations as "wild and primitive workplaces" (Bolman & Deal, 2011, p. 8), places that can be deceptive, confusing, and demoralizing, as well as exciting and challenging.

But the experience of liaisons suggests their complicated role within education institutions as sites of modern-day disenchantment and enchantment, or magic. As employee at the 'frontiers' of schooling – such as urban schools where some state bureaucrats and education consultants I met had given up on, until and when 'toxic' leadership was removed – a stance also taken by some national consultants in regard to entire school districts – liaisons often operated within some of the 'wildest' terrains of public education. This played a role, I will suggest, in how they engaged with and experienced educational discourses around marginality.

In both places, liaisons, through their institutional roles, encountered issues of socio-economic marginalization and insecurity - high unemployment, violence and crime, the widespread availability of illicit and legal drugs, and the daily struggle for basic physical necessities – adequate electricity, food, and health care (i.e., paying the electrical bill in Minnesota, or having enough money for solar light bulbs or batteries in parts of Quetta and Balochistan, where 'loadshedding' is common and only the relatively well off an afford generators).

Operating in the "downstairs" (i.e., unlicensed) areas of education, liaisons in some ways perceived themselves as always 'trespassing' into potentially hostile territory, as staff with complex 'insider-outsider' identities. This could include affiliation with pseudo-government institutions and authorities (e.g., social services, NGOs) and dealing with labels such as being seen as spies or 'sell-outs.' Additionally, in both places, liaisons often directly worked with what education staff and officials perceived to be as 'difficult,' unruly, and chaotic subjects – mobile and hard-to-reach or 'confrontational'

parents and caretakers in the Twin Cities, and demanding refugees and 'backward,' sickly villagers in Pakistan.

In Minnesota, for example, one African American father arrived at his daughter's elementary school upset after being mistakenly told by a school counselor she had placed a suicide video on social media, and had been slapped with a restraining order by the young new principal, a white woman, a liaison recounted in 2013. It had happened on a day that there had been diversity training on black student suspension rates, a coincidence that was "just too crazy," the liaison said. Coinciding with other high-tension, race-related incidents in the local media, the liaison felt unexpectedly insecure and vulnerable, involved in mediating the situation at multiple, unexpected sites – school, sports event, community spaces – months after the initial incident.

My co-participants in Pakistan regularly perceived themselves as facing life-threatening situations in a context of frequent attacks on aid workers and the risks of working as a professional woman in rural areas, which was still relatively rare. In 2013, according to Humanitarian Outcomes, 81 relief staff in Afghanistan were killed, with Pakistan the country with the fourth highest number killed (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2014).

CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW: EDUCATION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Mass education is a worldwide phenomenon, but one composed of specific historical trajectories that involve situated educational ideologies, socially orchestrated movements of bodies and material resources, and legacies of governance and resistance in myriad forms. Liaisons function in the midst of this context. Ostensibly tasked with pragmatic, institutionally fairly low-status roles – (e.g. bridging 'pre-modern,' rural parts of Pakistan and the advent of modern, government-funded schools, or bridging 'post-modern,' economically marginalized pockets of the U.S. with re-structured, middle-class school systems) they nonetheless negotiate and are part of sweeping and contested historical education legacies whose similarities, and differences, I will argue later, can have uncanny, mirage-like qualities.

In this part of my literature review, I will providing a rationale for my study by attempting to situate education liaisons within the contexts of particular mass education systems – that of shifting racialized schooling processes and systems in the U.S., and that of successive economic development political regimes and infusions of external funding in Pakistan, particularly in regard to its growing focus on gender and girls' education. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, I will then propose a theoretical framework for understanding the significance of education liaisons within education systems and communities, and how contrasting locally specific and globalized educational processes can yield important insights about the relation of marginality to education.

Education and Racial Legacies in the Historical Context of the U.S.

Scholarship around the relation of education to race in the U.S. is vast. In this section, I will focus on the historical emergence of a public education system as a

profoundly racialized process, and the important and complex role of Black and African American communities and leaders in its development. I will briefly draw on scholarship in history, critical race and education studies, and educational anthropology, while recognizing this approach is limited in its perspective and full of gaps. I will also briefly explore what has been termed a parallel Black scholarship in higher education, in which writing about the political, social, and historical developments specific to Black communities was itself marginalized due to exclusionary practices within higher education, different goals and objectives, etc. (Franklin, 2015; Sitkoff, 2011).

Scholars of U.S. educational history have explored race as integral to shaping and defining public education. Sociologist David Labaree (1997) has argued that mass education in the U.S. developed alongside the Jeffersonian idea of political economy and the Hamiltonian reality of economic inequality. These were translated into three broad goals that historically underlie publicly funded mass education: Democratic equality (education as a public good), social efficiency (education as a means to create productive workers to fit diverse market needs), and education as a private good to enhance upward social mobility (Labaree, 1997). According to historian James D. Anderson (1988), race-infused educational laws and ideals were deeply entangled within core national myths of 'American' identity and meaning, dating back to the European colonization of the North American continent and the 17th century use of black slaves throughout the new American colonies.

This meant, Anderson has stated (1988), two parallel American education systems emerged: One ideologically and practically explicit, and the other its shadow. This shadow was visible in 1787, when Thomas Jefferson championed the vision of a free

society and proposed three years of free public schooling for every white child in the commonwealth of Virginia. The 40 percent of Virginia children who were enslaved at the time were not eligible for free public schooling and thus became objects of containment, Andersonhas argued, a legacy of exclusion from literate culture that has flowed into the present (Anderson, 1988).

Between 1800 and 1835, most states in the Antebellum South (loosely defined from the adoption of the Constitution in 1789 to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861) had enacted legislation making it a crime to teach enslaved children to read or write (i.e., compulsory ignorance laws) (Anderson, 1988), although schools for African American children that were not under church or missionary sponsorship and which had a commitment to greater racial equity had appeared in Northern cities following the American Revolution of 1776 (Rury & Darby, 2016). This oppressive environment and the establishment of around 3,000 freemen schools during the Reconstruction era (1865-1877) preconfigured the development of universal public education in the U.S., but one in which schooling for Blacks was inferior and unequal (Anderson, 1988). The legal struggle for educational rights in the Jim Crow era, and the overturning of 'separate but equal' public education with *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* (1954), has been the focus of much scholarship.

Critical scholars such as political sociologist William H. Watkins (2001) have argued that Black schooling in the U.S. has been essentially a colonial project, in which primarily White, visionary, corporate philanthropists funded models of organized education in which dominant colonial, racial and ethnic ideologies were supported, and Black students were slotted into subservient political, social, and economic roles.

"Accommodationist education" taught "conformity, obedience, sobriety, piety, and the values of enterprise (Watkins, 2001, p. 182), a major policy issue that has profoundly shaped the social-political formation of the U.S. Watkins stated,

> Black education invited Blacks to participate in, without disrupting, the social order. Education could offer promise, vision, and dreams in the absence of immediate material prosperity…. The shaping of race relations was inextricably connected to Black education. The objective of the ruling order was to wed Constitutional freedom with social subservience. Free became the form, subservience the content. (Watkins, 2001, pp. 181-182)

John L. Rury and Derrick Darby (2016), however, have argued for a more nuanced approach to understanding Black education in the U.S., including the early role of anti-slavery philanthropists and the development of African American political and intellectual elites, the surge of enrollment in Reconstruction era schools that matched or exceeded White enrollment, and the questioning of "prevailing ideas of social superiority, especially those based on race and economic status" during the Great Depression and the Second World War (2016, p. 19). Although the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 is often heralded as a major benchmark in the struggle for racial equity, the upheaval of wars and the underlying U.S. ideologies of both freedom and equality, rose to prominence and to greater reflection during different periods of history, providing spaces of opportunity and reversal for African Americans and proponents of equitable schooling (Rury & Darby, 2016).

Desegregation as an evolving phenomenon. Since *Brown v. Board of Education* and the struggle to racially desegregate schools, a number of scholars have

noted that racial segregation is as much a factor as it was at mid-century, especially in the North. The virtual end to progress in school desegregation nationwide – and the high correlation of race and poverty and inferior schools - means racial inequalities in education "are large and deeply entrenched in society," and likely to continue with a trend toward stronger district boundaries and a recent court rulings placing obstacles before desegregation plans (Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012). The desegregation of schools also continues to be controversial. The successes of public school desegregation in the *Brown v. Board of Education* era, as James Anderson has argued, "devastated Black educational leadership and also ended the careers of thousands of African American teachers," which reflected "the hostile manner in which states and localities prepared for desegregation" (2015, p. 330). The highly visible events in places such as Birmingham, Alabama – where children and students participated in non-violent protests and were caught in a violent local government crackdown in the spring of 1963 - also masked the educational inequalities of the North.

African American experiences of education in the North. By 1970, less than half of African Americans remained in the South. But the estimated 5-6 million Blacks who moved to the industrialized North between about 1915 and 1970 during the 'Great Migration' faced unwritten laws and patterns of discrimination masking the seeming racial equality of Northern cities such as Chicago and leading to internalized ideological understandings of race categorization, according to Historian James R. Grossman (Grossman, 1991). Structural exclusions and racial hierarchies also existed alongside dominate dynamics of assimilation, limiting the economic and social mobility of African Americans in the North (Restifo, Roscigno & Qian, 2013).

This disenfranchisement, similar in some ways to that of poor White immigrants, was initially addressed educationally through Protestant-driven "Americanization" programs. But a 'progressive' agenda that promoted the power of education and ideas such as district-wide intelligence testing to provide "appropriate education" justified putting Black students into all-Black schools with industrial education curriculum as early as 1913 (Franklin, 2015). Although African American researchers such as Howard Hale Long and Horace Mann Bond eventually disputed associated concepts such as the "mulatto hypothesis" – the idea that the "admixture of white blood" led to greater intelligence – could be challenged (Franklin, 2015), processes were in place. Migrating Black youth ran into challenges such as well-intended, but harmful testing results (i.e., being labeled "regarded" or "lazy,"), racially isolated, over-crowded neighborhoods, and White flight instead of better educational opportunities (Savage, 2013). Such practices built upon previous assumptions, such as the idea prior to the 1940s and 1950s that Black people were deemed inherently unassimilable, David Theo Goldberg (1993) has suggested. Even if they were willing to renounce subjectivity and culture in the name of core 'American' cultural and political values, African Americans were regarded as unable to blend into the mainstream melting pot because of color (Goldberg, 1993). Thus, northern assimilation strategies failed for migrating African American youth, educational scholar Carter Julian Savage has argued.

Education and the Black Scholar Activist Tradition

In this section, I will examine some of the issues in scholarly literature on the importance of the scholar activist tradition among many Black scholars and educators, and how this tradition has played a large role in African American struggles for

educational equity and in diverse and unfolding understanding of the educational social imagery. I will briefly explore some of the tensions in the field along racial and social identity, geographic, political and class, and other lines, since these debates often surfaced – in different guises and under terminology – among education researchers, school staff and education liaisons.

Black and African American scholars have been deeply engaged in public education issues since at least the 19th century, generating a distinct scholarship. Educational historian V.P. Franklin, has described the distinctive aspect of the African American intellectual tradition as the relation between theory and practice, such as leading movements for social change (Franklin, 2015). In the early 1920s, for example, Carter G. Woodson helped organize the first 'Negro History Week,' which was announced to school districts and teachers and was intended to combat the educationally spread belief in the inequality of races (2015, p. 7).

Similarly, but from a comparative standpoint, historian Harvard Sitkoff has examined the history of scholarship about African American history. There has been a tensions between "detached scholarship and history of advocacy," with the former group sometimes compromising neo-abolitionists from different races (Sitkoff, 2001). Black scholars since the era of Booker T. Washington's *Story of the Negro* and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Negro* (1915) have often tended toward the latter approach, Sitkoff has argued, in which "this challenging scholarship emphasizes African Americans as makers and shakers of history, not hapless victims" (Sitkoff, 2001, p. 6).

Current trends in Black activist scholarship. Recent scholarship on African American education has also explored the need for more Black narratives and voices, and

for greater complexity and subtlety in approaches. Vanessa Siddle Walker has pointed out that the advocacy of ordinary Black educators in the decades before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision has been discounted, in part due to the assumed explanatory power of 'fear narratives' – fearing desegregation would lead to loss of jobs - and in part due to operating through concealment strategies such as organizational activities, due to the threat of personal and professional attacks (Walker, 2013). The complex history and legacy of these visionary, yet "hidden actors," thus remains relatively untold, overshadowing a more inclusive narrative in which African American educators as well as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) shared important agency (2013, p. 216). Even W.E.B. DuBois, a prominent figure in domestic narratives of U.S. education, has not received the recognition he deserved as an international figure in pursuing a cosmopolitan, globally just politics at the interwar intersections of anti-racist and anticolonial struggles (Elam, 2015).

Black theorists as important. From a different perspective, kacia hayes (2010) has argued that the scholarly and public attention paid to the poor educational outcomes of many Black students pose a danger of reifying and essentializing negative narratives of African Americans. Such attention has also coopted a previously cohesive sense of purpose in Black communities and in Black social networks, who had engaged the pursuit of quality education as a collective rather than an individualistic enterprise (hayes, 2010). The community's vision of education equality, hayes has argued, needs to avoid the "illusion of representation in the system" – such as narrowly prescribed parent involvement – and include authentic engagements, such as those around governance,

curriculum, and educational equity with respect to standards and assessments for credentialing (2010, p. 228).

Jawanza Kunjufu, in *There is Nothing Wrong with Black Students,* also addresses what he views as an over-focus on poor educational outcomes for Black urban students and education practitioners who want to "fix bad black children" and close the racial academic achievement gap – a topic surrounded with "the smell of racism" (Kunjufu, 2012, p. v). Aundra Saa Meroe, by contrast, has discussed the pervasive invocation of the ideology of meritocracy in the face of entrenched educational inequality as "a malignant variant of 'double consciousness' and a collective act of bad faith, for which not only all levels of education professionals but "adult citizens of conscience" should take responsibility (Meroe, 2014, p. 495). Drawing on, among others, Judith Butler's notion of "critical recognition" and the need to not only describe social suffering but to describe how "cultural and ethical conventions constitute the recognizability of others," Meroe goes on to advocate applying the same logic to the failures of the U.S. public education system for lower-SES students (2014, p. 492).

Sociologist Glen E. Bracey II, on a conceptual level, has argued that theories of inequality, race and antiracist social movements often contain problematic, tacit, White-centered assumptions and perspectives (Bracey II 2016). Therefore, (re)positioning Blackness within theory means oppressed people must address ideological (e.g. rearticulating the dominate racial groups' meaning of race) and structural components, such as resource distribution patterns, since race scholars see culture and structure as linked, unlike assimilation and acculturation theorists (Bracey II 2016). Furthermore, Bracey II's notion of 'inclusion' depends on a White racial frame in which there is "an

assimilationist understanding of race and a race-neutral concept of the state," instead of a conception of Black resistance and the continuing privileging of Whiteness within White institutional spaces even after formal exclusionary rules are discontinued (Bell, 2016).

Sociologist Joyce M. Bell has argued too little scholarly attention has been paid to the Black radical tradition in sociology and understanding racialized movements and institutions in the U.S. Concepts that could be useful, Bell has argued, include Feagin's notion of systematic racism and core racist realities in education (e.g., social institutions, small group formations, and individual actions) (Feagin, 2001), Bonilla-Silva's concept of a racialized social system (Bonilla-Silva, 2001), and Omi and Winant's classic concept of racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1994). Together, Bell as argued, these frameworks point to the centrality of racism in American society and the fact that "racism is a process that operate within and through social institutions" (Bell, 2016, p. 6). Focusing on the institutional and socio-political level, critical race scholars and sociologists have noted that the social and political activism of the 1960s and 1970s, and which was led by Black/African Studies departments in higher education institutions, has been 'broken' for different reasons, including the time and energy needed to spend justifying their existence (Franklin, 2015).

Racially hostile education climates. Utilizing perspectives of race scholars in sociology, the lived experience of working in racially hostile education climates has been an area of growing scholarship, which intersects with strands of scholarship in multiculturalism, critical education, and topics such as school climates. Tamara Nichele Stevenson (2012) found, for example, that African American faculty she interviewed at a community college experienced inter-related components of racial stress: micro-

aggressions, stress response types of 'Racial Battle Fatigue,' and dimensions of role strain, such as role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity. Racial stress was intensified in encounters with Whites, even though individual components could originate with colleagues of color as well (Stevenson, 2012).

Other scholars have highlighted the successes and resiliency of Black staff in predominately White public schools, given such environments. This includes the ability of African American women to be positive "forces of power" as public school superintendents (Brown, 2014, p. 592); African American educators' deft negotiation of the inter-lapping roles of race, racism, and gender (Johnson, 2015); the existence of powerful teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2012), and the successful caring practices of Black educators, which can be transforming when oppositionally framed against an ethics of care that presupposes a White, middle-class, heterosexual outlook in which moralities of exclusion operate (Johnson, 2015).

Theorizing Black identity. Another strand of scholarship in Black studies has debated intra-racial identity claims and the meanings around Black, African, and African American signifiers and culture, alongside how these debates relate to meanings and practices in U.S. public schools. For example, education institutions and schools, who bureaucratically participate in the federal, state, and school use of racial categorizations such as "Black," often 'translate' technocratic policies and guidelines into crude practices of color coding, such as assigning "Black" liaisons to work with "Black" students and families – a model that belies the complexity of a state (i.e., Minnesota) where an estimated 25 percent of Black students are English Language Learners or from immigrant families from Somalia, Liberia, Nigeria, and other countries. Schools are thus, in some

ways, 'un-doing' the "limits of transcendental Africanism" that the late anthropologist Archie Mafeje wrote about in describing the return of ex-slaves to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In his analysis of the differences between Afrocentrism and Africanity, Mafeje pointed to the danger of attempting to re-appropriate voice and culture under the illusion of a 'universal' and timeless culture, be it Eurocentric conceits or over-reaching Afrocentrism (Mafeje, 2011, p. 38). Mafeje, who argued against hegemonization while recognizing the need to collectively "think, speak, and do things," (2011, p.38), complexly defined Afrocentrism as an epistemological/methodological 'inside' position in studying society that is free from alienating intellectual discourses and is thus referential, and Africanity as a pervasive ontology with an emotive force that is partly in reaction to degradation and "supremacist European self-identities" and involves the idea of a distinct inner quality (2011, p. 35).

Juxtaposing Race, Ethnicity, Culture and Educational Inequalities

Scholarship around education and marginalized urban youth of color – particularly Black youth – is broad, drawing on such disparate domains as critical race studies, special education, anthropology, psychology, neurocognitive science, cultural studies, and sociology. In this section, I will explore some of the juxtapositions around terms such as 'race, ethnicity, culture and educational inequalities,' since their use within institutional contexts often involves shifting semantics and socio-political understandings that are negotiated by and shape the professional world of education liaisons.

Race and ethnicity. Within the bureaucratic environment of education, normative, socially constructed definitions of race and ethnicity are used to comply with

reporting requirements and as practical, everyday forms of understanding. For example, the Federal U.S. Department of Education's (2007) taxonomy of racial and ethnic categories, which are based on factors such as geographic origin, "racial groups," and "original peoples," currently contain five categories for race (along with a multiple race option) and two for ethnicity (i.e., Hispanic or Latino of any race, or not Hispanic or Latino). An African American or Black person defined as someone who "has origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa," with terms such as "Haitian" or "Negro" also acceptable (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Under current Federal anti-discrimination laws, race, color and national origin are protected classes – meaning a disparate treatment claim can be filed if an individual is discriminated against based on their class or group membership. Protected classes also include age, religion, sex, disability, and veteran status. This bureaucratic, normative definition of race is embedded within a history of biologically and ideologically driven definitions of race, such as the 18th and 19th century use of race to justify the non-human status of Africans during slavery (Smedley & Smedly, 2005), the historical use of the "one drop" rule in the U.S. to classify anyone with known Black ancestors as Black, and the political furor over early 20th century 'racial science' and hereditarianism movements.

By contrast, critical education scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV (1995), along with many social constructivists, have defined 'race' in the U.S. as conceptual Whiteness or Blackness, in which everyone is positioned as White or non-White during specific points in time, due to the centrality and particularity of race in the U.S. (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). A thread of scholarship, some of which I will explore in the next section, has examined the historical legacies of race and how it

remains associated with current, institutional and individual educational practices of doing 'race' and its uncritical conflation with culture. Such historical movements, Richard Valencia has argued, underlay education practices such as 'deficit-laden' versions of intelligence testing and the pseudoscience of high-stakes testing in public schools (Valencia, 2012). It also has been argued to include the nexus between race and disability in education, such as the tendency of teachers to more readily label African American boys as having hyperactive problems (Perry-Burney, 2007). Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) the most commonly diagnosed childhood psychiatric disorder, is a label that has been given to more than 14 percent of African American students in special education in 2002, despite concerns about the physical and emotional effects of psychostimulant medications such as Ritalin (Perry-Burney, 2007).

Historically ethnicity or 'ethnicization' – ethnicity being defined as notions of difference based on language, geography, etc., - has been used as a tool of political emancipation and consciousness and as a means to escape racialization, the process of ascribing racial identities to individuals, groups, and institutions as a function of being entangled within social racial projects. Afro-Mexicans or *Morenos* in Latin America, for example, were subjected to particular 18th and 19th century racialization processes that positioned 'Black' as inferior, resulting in a 20th century *mestizaje* ideology in which race and the concrete experiences of particular groups were ignored, but which continued to reinforce a normative understanding of racial identification (Hoffmann & Rinaudo, 2014).

Culture and race. Culture, a common-sense concept with hundreds of definitions – such as Clifford Geertz's interpretive, semiotic conception of culture as symbolic

systems of meaning (Geertz, 1977) – has also been understood as distinctive and inherited behavior linked to biology. This latter definition has been one of the characteristics of racial ideology in North America (Smedley & Smedly, 2005). This culturally framed discourse of the 'other' is rooted in the 19th century basic trope of the modern versus the racialized Primitive, who is conceived as childlike, intuitive, and spontaneous, with "no history, no past, and no movement from one time to another" (Goldberg, 1993, pp. 156-157).

Scholarship on urban education, complexly linked to such understandings of race and culture, has a history dating back to the early 20th century and is thus itself historicized (Grossman, 1991; Savage, 2013). This includes "neo-abolitionist" scholarship by scholars of all races from the 1930s to the 1960s (e.g., scholarship that focused on the oppression of Blacks by Whites while attempting to counter demeaning stereotypes) (Sitkoff, 2001), and a large body of scholarship over the last decades examining education as a deeply rooted racial cultural project, such as work within critical race studies, Marxism, Whiteness studies, and cultural studies (Leonardo, 2013).

Educational inequality. The concept of 'educational inequality,' generally defined as differences between academic and efficacy outcomes between different categories of students, is also a phrase with often contextualized and awkwardly juxtaposed meanings within educational discourses. Inequality can refer to 'inequality as disadvantage,' evoking inequality as an individually oriented, meritocratic opportunity such as grades and graduation rates that has been a focus of much critical race theory and multicultural education critique (Leonardo, 2013). Educational inequality can also refer to cultural reproduction approaches, which tend to emphasize systemic and contextual

productions of inequality, such as institutional practices of selection, divisiveness, and discrimination (Troyna, 2012).

While educational inequality is often used within education discourse to reference student outcomes and experiences whether from individual or structural perspectives, inequality has also been used more broadly in other domains, such as to unpack institutional inequalities impacting diverse workers. Feminist sociologist Joan Acker (2006), noting inequalities produce disparities, has defined inequality in organizations as,

> …Systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organized work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards, respect; and pleasures in work and work relations (2006, p. 443).

Most organizations contain different forms of inequalities, Acker has argued, and most involve class, gender, and race processes, with Acker defining 'race' as "socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture, and historical domination and oppression, justified by entrenched beliefs," a definition that may involve ethnicity or stand alone (Acker, 2006, p. 444).

Multiculturalism, and Critical Race Theory

In this section I will briefly review scholarship on race and education in the context of multiculturalism and critical race theory. Both have been primary approaches to the on-going racial organization of education, scholars such as Zeus Leonardo (2013) have argued, and in many ways are interrelated projects. I will also briefly explore

tensions around applied approaches to race and education, as emergent critical, reflexive and constructivist concerns with language-as-reality have risen to the fore.

Race has been argued to be a powerful mediating tool, with post-racial discourse – the critical assessment of race in an aspirational as opposed to descriptive sense – involving questions around the need to eliminate the racial signification of race in order to end racism (Leonardo, 2013). According to this approach, race and racism need to be decentered in favor of "race constructing choices" within institutional/structural racism in a neo-liberal era (Parker, 2015).

Racism. Racism itself has been defined as "a system of advantage based on race" (Marx, 2006; Wellman 1977). Scholarly efforts to locate racism range from individual-based psychological explanations, to cultural and structural approaches, which I will explore further below. For example, "'passive racism" – a racism based on a biologically, ethnically, or economically and nationally different paradigm - , has been argued by some scholars to be the most common form of racism in the U.S., in contrast with extreme and unusual events and "irrational," hate-filled individuals (Marx, 2006, p. 10).

Educational psychology researcher Russell Skiba and his colleagues, who have studied racial disproportionalities in special education placement and discipline nationwide, have argued zero-tolerance discipline and other practices likely disproportionality impact students of color, in part due to the difficulty of proving racial discrimination in today's legal system, which has drawn upon an increasingly narrow definition of discrimination since the mid-1970s (Skiba, Eckes & Brown, 2010, p. 1112). As Anne Gregory, Russell J. Skiba and Pedro A. Noguera have argued, not enough is known about "gap-reducing" discipline and academic interventions,

Effectively addressing these questions poses a serious challenge to researchers, as it necessarily involves attention to the complex, politically charged, and often personally threatening topic of race (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010).

Multicultural education. Multicultural education scholarship arose as an important strand of research as public schools shifted to an integration model in their approach to race and the desegregation pressures of the mid-20th century. The multicultural education movement is often described as growing alongside and as a response to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Some scholars have argued the cultural wars it generated – a more inclusive curriculum and a general challenging of Eurocentric assumptions – peaked in the 1990s, with the fight over how much and what type of multiculturalism to include (Leonardo, 2013). Multiculturalism has been redefined along more conservative lines in climates neoliberal discourses and disenchantment (Buras & Apple, 2008).

Definitions of multicultural education vary, with "weak" versions tending to accent cultural differences such as beliefs, values, and 'cultural artifacts' such as dress and gestures. Christine Bennett, one of the theorists in the field along with seminal critical multicultural scholars such as James A. Banks, Sonja Nieto, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Christine Sleeter and Carole Grant, has argued multicultural education should – despite how it has been used in practice (Ladson-Billings, 2011)- fall into four genres – curriculum reform, equity pedagogy, multicultural competency, and societal equity (Bennett, 2001).

Gloria Ladson-Billings notably applied the term 'culturally relevant pedagogy' (1995) specifically to African American students, a move that has been further developed

by other theorists such as Geneva Gay (2013). Culturally relevant pedagogy involves an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Building on previous work in education anthropology on the perceived 'cultural mismatch' between schools and marginalized communities such as Native American and Hawaiian students and Black feminist thought, Ladson-Billings (1995) identified the dilemma for Black students as being how to maintain cultural integrity while succeeding academically, further stating,

> Three of the terms employed by studies on cultural mismatch between school and home – culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, and culturally compatible – seem to connote accommodation of student culture to mainstream culture. Only the term *culturally responsive* appears to refer to a more dynamic or synergistic relationships between home/community culture and school culture (1995, p. 467).

Educator resistance to multicultural initiatives have also been a growing area of focus for multicultural researchers. With the percentages of White students in public schools projected to be less than 50 percent by 2014, and a teaching force that, as of 2014, has remained more than 80 percent White (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), teacher preparation and in-service professional development around multiculturalism has been growing. Research focused the implementation side of multiculturalism has included theorizing patterned modes of staff resistance within schools (Muhammad, 2009); the codification of particular definitions, attributes, and skills of educators (Borko, Liston & Whitcomb, 2007; Diez & Murrell Jr., 2010); the nee to recognize resistance in schools and incorporate flexible pedagogical practice into teachers' work (Gay, 2013),

and the gap between an educator "discursive mask of equity" and actual beliefs and practices, which favor assimilationist modes of cultural dominance under the guise of 'achievement' in the face of the complexity of deeply embracing difference (Mason, 2016, p. 218).

Christine Sleeter, long a key figure between multiculturalism and critical race theory (Leonardo, 2013), has argued school staff often interpret multicultural education as teaching children from different cultural backgrounds or teaching about people from other countries, instead of adopting its more radical components to challenge structural school processes that reproduce inequality (Sleeter, 2012). According to Sleeter, both conservative and liberal perspectives of inequality and the 'American Dream' have fallen short of the radical engagements needed to disrupt structural inequalities, such as explicitly teaching sociological theories of oppression and culture and challenging the continue dominance of Euro-American perspectives in schools and curricula (Sleeter, 2012; 2011).

In her study of valued and stigmatized teacher identities, Sally Campbell Galman has argued that multicultural initiatives should be understood in the context of embedded, hegemonic teacher identities and dispositions. The performance of the self as "the sweet, encouraging welcome" and impression management work leaves little time for instructional objectives, Galman has argued in her study of pre-middle school teachers (Galman, 2012, p. 27). Dominant White group culture and working environments work against the possibility of transgressive feminized practices in schools and teacher education programs (Galman, 2012, p. 170).

Multicultural researchers have also called attention to, among many other topics, the hidden transcripts and "dialect of disguise and surveillance the pervade relations between the weak and the strong" (Scott, 1990, p.4); the continued framing of racism as a past event or isolated occurrence in U.S. textbooks (Brown & Brown, 2010), the "veneer of harmony" that can hide racial tensions in schools (Eisenhart, 2001), and the use of 'deficit' diversity narratives built on dominant worldviews of "otherness" by diversity gatekeepers (i.e., teachers) within schools (Swartz, 2009).

Critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT), developed in the 1970s as a means to bridge race, education and law by scholars such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado, has provided an analytic framework for understanding race and education through drawing on select philosophers, radical traditions, and legal and civil rights scholarship to broadly question "the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). Leonardo (2013) has argued that while multiculturalism was a response to Eurocentrism, intercultural education, and ethnic studies traditions, it was followed roughly two decades later by critical race theory as a related response to the perceived limits of liberal and Marxist perspectives on the law in a color-blind era. In education, this really began with the 1995 publication of *Toward a Critical Theory of Education* by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (Leonardo, 2013).

Using critical race theory, Ladson-Billings and Tate (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) seminally argued that racism exists in schools and is normal, and that structural inequities shape institutions such as schools. Writing both with and against

multiculturalism, they argued (1995) that race remains untheorized in the analysis of educational inequality, unlike class and gender, and that U.S. society is based on property rights, which in turn is related to education in explicit and implicit ways, and that the intersection of race and property rights creates an analytic tool to understand social inequality. Naming one's reality, or voice, is a way to counter a mainstream scholarship oriented toward universalism over particularity, to address psychic pressures and mental violence felt by marginalized groups, and to create necessary cognitive conflict in oppressors (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

More recently, concepts in critical race scholarship such as differential racism – the idea that "each race has its own origins and ever-evolving history" – intersection and anti-essentialism, and "the voice-of-color thesis" – the notion that "minority status… brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism" – have been added and exist in sometimes uneasy tension with each other (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 9-10).

For example, the 'ordinary theology' of Black female principals has been explained using critical race theory as seeing educational inequities in part as spiritual issues, and as advocacy on behalf of the institutional marginalization of students (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). This spirituality was not the "overly applied notion of care" in which spirituality assumes negatively gendered and raced dimensions within education scholarship, but a form of Black leadership outside gendered and raced norms and within critical race theory's larger narrative of race and racism as at the center of social structures, practices, and discourses (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009).

Ladson-Billings, similarly, used critical race theory to compare the experiences of African American teacher educators in predominately white institutions to the 'Big House' mansion on large plantations where the owner and his family lived, to draw attention to the prioritization of institutional values at the expense of marginalized groups and to make a historical comparison with current racial social structures (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Thandeka Chapman and Kalwant Bhopol (2013), using critical race theory to explain 'cultural' conflict between school staff and parents of color, have argued the extensive literature on poor parental involvement by parents of color has obscured narratives of structural racism, a hostile history of school integration, and the ways 'parent involvement' is structured as female white and middle-class. They stated,

> …the struggles for equity are well known events that play out in the public discourses concerning achievement gaps, district policies, and socially and racially stratified understandings of 'Equity.' (Chapman & Bhopol, 2013, p. 581).

Within the critical race body of scholarship, racial counter-narratives, a methodology or method often associated with critical race theory, have been used to examine educational concepts, policies, practices. Maria C. Ledesma and Dolores Calderon (2015), in a review of critical race theory literature in education, suggest that counterstorying telling must be used critically across races, in conjunction with critical educators and thoughtful pedagogical practice, and in more powerful contexts, such as campus racial climate and micro and macro structures and processes (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Racial counter-narratives have also included countering colorblind ideologies in schools (Bonilla, 2014); decentering 'objective' and traditional forms of

educational analysis (Solorzano, 2002), and as a means of valuing the everyday knowledge and values of marginalized students and families through additive storytelling and the 'Funds of Knowledge' concept (Moll, 1990; Monzo & Rueda, 2003).

The Growth of 'Diversity Infrastructure' in PK-12 Education

In this section, I will review literature on staff within PK-12 schools and education development institutions whose primary focus involves liaisoning or brokering 'diversity' across racial, ethnic and gender differences, community and parent engagement, equity work, and similar concepts and programs. Since this scholarship is relatively scant, I will first draw on some overlapping literature from the experiences of staff working in the diversity infrastructure of higher education.

The growth of what has been called a 'diversity infrastructure' (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013) or the incorporation of diversity into organizations - 'the management of diversity identity' (Cole & Salimath, 2013) - is an emerging area of institutional scholarship. It includes non-profits, PK-12 schools, higher education, and other organizations. Professional diversity roles and work have been examined organizationally (e.g, the vertical and lateral arrangement of chief diversity officers, committees, local champions, affinity groups, etc.) and as activity, such as the shift away from defending the need for diversity through arguing its link to academic success, according to education researchers Damon A. Williams and Katrina C. Wade-Golden, to a more proactive and professional approach focused on diversity strategies, implementation, and performance metrics (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Modes of 'doing' diversity, such as the continuum from surface or cosmetic level diversity (e.g., visible differences between individuals based on gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities, etc.)

to the implementation of core diversity beliefs to external and internal stakeholders, have also been examined. These have been described as dynamic processes that can involve the coercive, normative and mimetic pressures theorized by institutional theorists, and can involve backlash and other systems-type effects in relation to perceived as excessive or under-emphasized diversity management, such as the hiring of equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action (AA) specialists in response to the introduction of federal legal mandates of the Civil Rights era (Cole & Salimath, 2013).

Critical scholarship has also focused on the growth of diversity infrastructure within educational systems. For example Sara Ahmed, drawing on Joan Acker and others' work on 'inequality regimes' and her experience in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia, has written about the politics of diversity and equity and their institutionalization at the higher education level. Education institutions can allow racism and maintain inequalities through happy talk, success stories, institutional speech acts, and "diversity inclusion" that occur within the terms of the institution (Ahmed, 2006; 2012). Institutional speech acts, which 'give' institutions interiority, such as a stated commitment to equality or antiracism, Ahmed further has argued, allows nonperformativity – a paradoxical outcome in which failing to bring about change is precisely what 'works.' This conversion of an implicit admission into a declaration functions to conceal the original admission, such as the existence of inequities or racism (Ahmed, 2006). But as Ahmed has noted, less attention has been paid to institutional failures and the messy conditions of diversity workers and practitioners, who can be argued to be engaged in "a phenomenological practice: a way of attending to what

gets passed over as routine or an ordinary feature of institutional life" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 22).

Similarly, scholarship on the conditions and experiences of diversity workers in PK-12 schools tends to focus on descriptive and pragmatic issues rather than conceptual or 'messy' conditions, and is often framed as part of a larger scholarship on how to addresses educational inequities and improve or better understand school-parent-community engagement, particularly in urban schools. School-parent engagement has its own rich body of literature (Lareau & Munoz, 2012; Robinson & Harris, 2014; Williams & Sanchez, 2012), where the experiences of school-employed parent liaisons are sometimes highlighted (Hermanson & Hoagland, 2002; Howland et al., 2008; Martiniez-Cosio & Innacone, 2007; Naraian, 2015; Sanders, 2008). Differing conceptualizations of school-parent-community interactions may frame how, or if, school liaisons are perceived to play a role.

For example, many scholars have highlighted the difficulty of school-community partnerships and parental involvement, omitting or paying scare attention to the role of staff who implement partnerships and parent involvement programs. Noting previous work on 'school-centric' versus 'community-centric' views of involvement (Lawson, 2003) and on barriers to African American parent involvement such as lack of money, time and energy (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007) and previous negative school experiences as a student (Lightfoot, 2004), Terrinieka T. Williams and Bernadette Sanchez (2012) found a lack of research on inner-city African American parent perspectives of involvement. Their research found that African American parents may have reasons for being 'uninvolved,' such as giving up on being involved, and may be 'involved' in ways that

are misunderstood, such as safety precautions as a form of involvement, parental aspirations and spirituality, and sensitivity to perceived school receptivity. Interventions to address this gap should involve synchronizing parents' and school staffs' value judgments on certain activities, and staff training on poverty and privilege (Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Annette Lareau and Vanessa Lopez Munoz (2012) have argued, conversely, that "too much research has been placed on the cooperative and positive ramifications of parent involvement in schooling," (2012, p. 13) and that more of an effort should be made to understand the differing status and priorities of school staff and parents (e.g., maintaining an orderly, safe, bureaucratic environment in contrast to a warm, friendly, nonbureaucratic parent group), and resulting structural conflicts and "the collective character of involvement" (2012, p. 207).

In their study of an upper-middle-class parent-teacher organization and a Hispanic female principal, Lareau and Munoz suggested more parental involvement may paradoxically lead to more conflict with time-constrained principals, who themselves serve as liaisons to central administration and may be dragged into issues such as parent-lunch aide conflicts. They speculate that some of the same patterns may hold true for working class parent involvement, although the character and form of such conflict could be different (Lareau & Munoz, 2012).

The liaison's role in school-community-parent relationships has been more obscure. Attention to the staff who serve as liaisons to 'non-involved' – for whatever reason - parents and the community was the focus of one study more than a decade ago, involving paraeducators serving as liaisons in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded

schools in five states, including Minnesota. The study found that the benefits of utilizing liaisons included a connection to parents, the use of community resources to enhance classroom activities, the utilization of community resources to create educational activities outside the classroom, and better community-school communication. Obstacles included confidentiality concerns involving teachers and liaisons, uncertain job descriptions and parameters of duties, lack of liaison knowledge of students and school procedures due to inability to attend school meetings, lack of training, and interference with the liaison's image in the community (Hermanson & Hoagland, 2002).

Despite such research, other scholars have noted that little is known about the increasing professionalization of the school role of liaisons and "cultural brokers" and the resulting ambivalence that surrounds it (Martiniez-Cosio & Innacone, 2007; Naraian, 2015). Maria Martiniez-Cosio and Rosario Martinez Iannacone found that "institutional agents," or school liaisons who worked with Latino, Asian, and African American parents, encountered at least three tensions in attempting to bridge school-parent capital – struggles over resources, power sharing in terms of negotiating stakeholder roles, and institutional decision making, such as parent representation on school governance committees (Martiniez-Cosio & Innacone, 2007).

Srikala Naraian, also noting tensions associated with the liaison role, found that emotional agency played a complex role in her study of an African American parent liaison in a large urban school district. The liaison's ambivalence about her role and her use of polarized discourses may have involved feelings of anger and injustice, which may have reproduced and sustained power relations within the district.

The district already had an entrenched school narrative of adversarial relations with parents, Naraian (2015) pointed out. But the liaison's mirroring of school-parent adversarial relations in her understanding of her own position, Naraian concluded, in some ways may have limited the possibility of moving from a purist position to "working within and against prevailing narratives of families, schooling, and students" (Naraian, 2015, p. 107).

By contrast, Mavis G. Sanders, drawing on Epstein's (Epstein et al., 2002) six types of ways schools can involve parents (e.g., parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community), found that the experiences of 10 part-time parent liaisons in one diverse suburban school district showed that liaisons could play four essential roles – a) provide direct services to families at risk, b) provide support for teacher outreach, c) provide support for school-based partnership teams, and d) provide data for program improvement, with degrees in education, social work, or related fields important to furthering school's partnership efforts (Sanders, 2008). Sanders concluded by recommending that school liaison programs should 1) ensure sufficient funding, 2) identify and train qualified personnel in 'relational' work in addition to knowledge about education and related fields, and 3) provide adequate support from colleagues and supervisors. Noting the extensive literature on 'the gap' between homes and schools, Sanders stated,

> …schools can create cultures that promote relationships among teachers, building administrators, and family members that minimize the effects of socioeconomic class and ethnic differences on families' involvement in their children's learning at home and school (2008, p. 287).

In the next part of this chapter, I will focus on educational issues in Pakistan. I will start with a historical and global overview of education development in Pakistan, including foreign aid controversies and the growth of girls' education in developmental contexts. I will then provide an overview of girls' education in Pakistan as part of a larger literature on gender and bureaucracies in South Asia, in which girls' education, and girls' education in socially conservative Pashtun-speaking areas, can be framed as involving complex socio-political histories. I will concluded with an overview of feminist discourses within the context of Pakistan, since the role of gender liaisons, and how gender liaisons make sense of their work as NGO representatives, takes places within this larger discourse on the place and identity of girls and women in the midst of sweeping social changes.

Education Development in Pakistan

In this last half of the chapter, I will turn to providing a context for understanding education liaison work, or gender liaisons who work for international NGOs, in Pakistan I will review education development in Pakistan from a historical and global perspective, particularly foreign aid controversies and the growth of girls' education worldwide and in Pakistan. I will then move to the situated contexts of working within bureaucracies as a woman, and research on girls' education in Pakistan and South Asia, with a focus on Pashtun-speaking regions. I will conclude with a brief review of feminist discourses in a Pakistani context.

A large body of research has examined the development of mass education in Pakistan, which emerged out of colonial-era and missionary drives to Westernize the "uncivilized" world (Bornstein, 2005). Although Pakistan's modern education system

developed after independence from the British Raj in 1947, education in what is today Pakistan has a long and rich history. In this section, I will briefly review some of the key issues and debates around education development aid globally and in Pakistan, in order to situate the work of education liaisons as part of a larger global educational sphere.

Education Development in Pakistan: Historical and Global Perspectives.

Pakistan's leaders, led by Pakistan's founding head Muhammad Ali Jinnah, envisioned an important role for education since the 1947 "All Pakistan Education Conference," in which a modern education system was viewed as a means to throw off colonial administration objectives and pursue social, economic, and technical aspirations as a new country. In colonial India and Pakistan, which predates the public schooling of today, boys' and girls' education was informal, according to Muhammad Farooq, with education for girls arranged within affluent Moslem families through the use of lady teachers or elderly men and in poor and middle class families through *maktabs*, primary Qur'anic schools (Farooq, 2013).

Scholars have examined Pakistan's emergent mass education system as part of an ideological movement to create a Moslem, Islamic and Pakistani identity and ideology in the context of strong regional identities and interests outside and inside what is now Pakistan (Jalal, 1995) and as a modernist, progressive, non-theological development project, in which the motto "Unity, discipline and faith" signaled a general socio and political uplift for the Moslem masses of South Asia, whose perceived experience of discrimination and "economic backwardness" Mohammad Ali Jinnah adopted as a personal concern (Ahmed, Ahemed, & Saeed, 2013). But the growth in a public system of mass education in Pakistan, around the time of independence in 1950 had an estimated

literacy rate of around 14 percent (UNECSO, 2006), also evolved hand-in-hand with large-scale foreign aid donations and technocratic interventions, such as the training and funding of teacher colleges, building schools, and the institutionalization of paper and then digital systems of data collection systems. Adopting a mix of educational policies particular to Pakistan, such as the requirement to teach Islamic studies up to the pre-university stage, and as well as policies in line with global norms, such as the 2010 constitutional right to free and compulsory education, educational institutions in Pakistan currently reflect a mix of particular and universalizing trends.

Pakistan, for example, is a signatory to a host of international policy frameworks such as the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, the 2000 Dakar framework for action (UNESCO, 2000a), the United Nation Millennium Development Goals of 2001, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Pakistan's perceived educational challenges, as is taking place in other countries throughout the world, has been the subject of on-going scholarly scrutiny. Absentee and unqualified teachers, "ghost schools," unreliable student exams, and political inference in education management levels, and lack of political will have been some of the issues that regularly surface in public discourse (Bashar, 2014; Ahmed et.al, 2013; Abbasi, 2015). Even global education policies themselves, Shalinee Priya argued, can also be artifacts whose culturally driven reliance on quantitative data is easy to manipulate by education bureaucracies for their own ends (Priya, 2014).

Foreign aid controversies. Scholars writing about Pakistan have focused on the ambiguous role of international aid and development in Pakistan in the particular context

of the country and its regional location. The U.S. has been a major donor in South Asia and in Pakistan in particular, averaging 20 percent of total aid between 1971 and 2010 – (Pakistan received roughly $50 billion dollars of foreign aid in nominal terms in the 40 years since 1917) (Khan, 2014). U.S. foreign aid has been described as being motivated by three main objectives: strategic self-interest in achieving security, the idealistic spread of American political and economic values, and humanitarianism (Ruttan, 1996).

Khan has argued, however, that aid flows were often controlled by a few elites, helping to block the formation of a more democratic governing body despite the U.S.'s focus on "good governance" in the 1990s and the promised expansion of civilian aid in 2009 (Khan, 2014).

The $7.5 billion non-military aid promised by the U.S. in 2009 as part of a five-year spending plan tied to stipulations over civilian control of Pakistan's powerful military, has generated accusations from Pakistani government representatives that the money, including education funds, is self-serving, non-transparent and/or wasted. The massive influx of foreign aid within the education sector is publicly perceived in Pakistan as a form of neoliberal, imperialist intervention, distorting education governance and the functioning of schools (Ahmed & Khan, 2009). Furthermore, flows of U.S. foreign aid that have dramatically veered from being developmental to security oriented has been argued to have negatively impacted governance, institutions, and development - such as the government's reluctance to authorize international NGOs (Khan, 2014).

International donors have had a disproportionate impact on Pakistan's educational policies and priorities. Foreign aid supplemented Pakistan's public spending on education by an average of 10 percent during the 1990-2006 time period, with structural

adjustments pushed by international donors blamed for Pakistan's spending below 2 percent of GDP on public education for the past 20 years, half of what is estimated as needed (Malik & Naveed, 2012).

Researchers have also noted increased scrutiny of international NGOs and of their perceived agendas. Pashtun schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, for example, described as Pakistan's best-known activist, has been praised by some prominent politicians, but has also, alongside girls' education and empowerment Pashtun activists Gulalai and Saba Ismail, been seen as a Western stooge (Malik 2014) of Western governments "too involved" in improving systems and governance and assuming an unwarranted "moral responsibility" (Imtiaz, 2015). Gulalai Ismail received the 2013 Democracy Award from the National Endowment for Democracy, one of several international recognitions that she has claimed have resulted in local threats and oppression (Briggs, 2015).

Shenila Khoja-Moolji, writing about transnational campaigns for girls' education, has highlighted how international organizations working in Pakistan have "re-amplified the already-established consensus around possibilities and limitations for girls in the global south," (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 2), shutting out Pakistani girls' voices – especially marginalized girls – that speak of supportive families and communities, and of a different view of rights and responsibilities.

Similarly but from a historical perspective, Saba Gul Khattak has argued that racism and subtle misogyny have marked donor agencies. International funding agencies "quietly sanctioned" the stark rollback of women's rights for the more than 3 million Afghans who sought refuge in Pakistan since 1980, Khattak wrote, reflecting women's historical manipulation as gendered symbols by "the infamous Lawrence of Arabia." In

1928-29, Lawrence incited tribal elders to revolt against the liberal Afghan King Amanullah by claiming Amanullah disrobed, unveiled and dishonored Afghan women (Khattak, 2004, p. 218). Similarly, when the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1996, they did so after receiving U.S.-backed training in the 343 refugee camps and *madrassahs* (religious schools) in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces and being allowed to implement "extreme checks on women's mobility and literacy" (Khattack, 2004, p. 219-220). Although aid agencies appeared to provide girls' education, access to education depended on declaring allegiance to one of the seven *jihadi* reigning political parties, and women were subject to frequent *fatwas* (religious decrees).

Scholars utilizing global frames of reference have also developed a body of literature critically examining the impact of global education frameworks and interventions. They have been described as technologies of power in neoliberal interventions (Klein, 2007; Taylor, 2009), as a "new consensus" that reproduce inequalities as part of a world agenda (Tarabini, 2010, p. 208), and as part of a global "logic of success" that deeply structure all interventions in a global and complex systems of mutual dependencies and fear of losing power (Grieff & Grieff, 2014, p. 108). Paul Farmer, for example, has described a largely irrelevant 'gender sensitivity' workshop in the context of genocidal violence in Guatemala, and of the danger of development practitioners becoming better at managing social inequalities within a neoliberal humanitarian aid paradigm instead of addressing the structural violence perpetuated against the relatively powerless everywhere (Farmer, 2004).

Education development and girls' education globally. Scholarship around girls' education scholarship has expanded, including research drawing from education development practitioners, social justice advocates, critical feminists, and human rights advocates arenas. Because the gender liaisons in this study worked in education development, I will briefly describe core education development approaches below.

Comparative education scholar Fran Vavrus (2003) has described three historical approaches to girls' education that overlap to some degrees. Women in Development (WID) is a functionalist, modern approach that drew attention to gender stereotypes and prejudice. This framework promoted women's access to schooling as form of modernization and national development (Vavrus, 2003). The Women and Development (WAD) approach, by contrast, was influenced by neo-Marxist understandings of socially reproduced inequalities, capitalism, and patriarchy, and advocated a dialectical model of development. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach recognized the power of discourse on material reality, and advocated a postmodern understanding of how reality is constructed – calling into question, for some, the very notion of patriarchal oppression (Vavrus, 2003). Xx have also categorized girls' education approaches, describing major frameworks and their approaches to understandings of equality as including WID (i.e., equality of resources or parity), GAD (i.e., the redistribution of power or equity), post-structuralism (i.e., a stress on difference), and human development (i.e., equality of rights and capabilities) (Unterhalter, 2005).

Although the relative merits and drawbacks of each approach continue to be debated, Vavrus has argued that a combination of political engagement and discourse analysis is needed to understand how women and girls continue to be disenfranchised.

For example, the recent trope of the feminist-modern, an empowered figure with 'transformative powers of agency,' presupposes a particular kind of modernity and ignores situated political-economic realities (Vavrus, 2003).

Gender, Bureaucracies, and Education in Pakistan and South Asia

Recent scholarship on girls' education in South Asia has expanded research beyond empirical, developmentally oriented approaches. In this section, I will briefly review girls' education as perceived resistance and cultural struggle, girls' education in Pashtun-speaking regions, and examples of gender and education/institutional scholarship in Pakistan from fields such as organizational studies, postcolonial and feminist studies, social justice and human rights studies, history, and sociology are framing girls' education from different lenses.

Symbolic meanings of girls' education in Pakistan. Although girls' education in Pakistan has been widely embraced as a form of modern progress and as something compulsory for both men and women under Islamic law (Ahmad, Said, Hussain, & Khan, 2014), it also continues to be a subject of controversy. In this section I will explore the perceived positive understandings of girl's education as a modernist, normative project, and other, more critical meanings and interpretations of girls' education in Pakistan.

Girls' education in Pakistan has dramatically expanded and evolved, although co-education is largely resisted and girls' schools are largely absent in traditional and conservative areas throughout the county (i.e., interior Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) (Ahmad et al., 2014). A large body of research has documented significant progress in designing and implementing girls' education programs to tackle commonly perceived barriers, such as early marriage, distance to school, and household

chores. In *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World*, Barbara Herz and Gene Spelling (2007) synthesized research on the state of girls' education in Pakistan and other selected countries, concluding that evidence points to the efficacy of strategies such as "girl-friendly" schools, affordability, gaining community support, quality education, developing comprehensive national education strategies, and mobilizing external and internal resources (Knapp & Spelling, 2004). The economic and social benefits of girls' schooling, they argued further drawing on a host of developmental research, includes increased income and productivity, smaller, healthier, and better-educated families, the reduction of diseases, and the empowerment of women within families and society (Knapp & Spelling, 2004).

Critics and contested understandings. But the expansion of girls' education has also been interpreted from more critical frameworks. Despite Pakistan's formal adoption of universal primary education and commitment to gender-segregated schools, contested meanings around girls' schooling – dramatized by the shooting of girls' education campaigner Malala in northern Pakistan by local Taliban assailants and "I am Not Malala" events – remains an issue with complex ideological, political, and economic roots. This includes the "interlocking oppressions" that disproportionately impact the poor, such as the low-cast men in one study who felt a responsibility to assume breadwinning roles and acquire dowries for daughters through selling kidneys (Yousaf & Purkayastha, 2015). More than a third of the children under the age of 5 are inappropriately underweight – an indication of widening differences in per capita income (Weiss, 2013), and school enrollment disparities between "high-caste" and "low-caste" households is almost as great as gender disparities (Jacoby & Mansuri, 2011).

The importance of class has been overlooked in normative, neoliberal understandings of girls' education, some researchers contend. Caste – the identities embedded within occupations – have received little attention among scholars of Pakistan, Hanan Jacoby and Ghazala Mansuri have argued. But many low-caste students live in settlements (a cluster of "villages") dominated by high-caste families, and thus face discrimination and ostracism (Jacoby & Mansuri, 2011). The custom of female seclusion, or *purdah*, which is tied to a girl's reputation and family honor (*izzat*), means more girls might benefit by locating schools within settlements, although this would be a relatively less economical option (Jacoby & Mansuri, 2011, p.1). Furthermore, research points to the conclusion that low-caste households, who have looser ties to ancestral kin networks and are disempowered by 'traditional institutions' such as caste, perceive greater returns to education (Jacoby & Mansuri, 2011; Luke & Munshi, 2007; Munchi & Rosenweig, 2006).

Lubna Nazir Chaudhry, focusing more on the dynamic quality of complicated, agentic gender identities, has described the important "axes of difference" between women in Pakistan as including class, caste, religion, and geographical regions. In different contexts, these axes "complicate, intensify, or contradict hierarchical power relations (Chaudhry, 2010, p. 59). In the regions of rural Sindh and Punjab that Chaudhry studied, girls faced different types of obstacles in going to school, with comparatively economically better off girls from landed backgrounds (Syeds or Khans) facing family resistance to going to school as they got older, while less well off girls faced obstacles related to finances, need for labor, and the perceived relevance of education (Chaudhry, 2010).

Tensions involving ideology and politics. English-language media in Pakistan has long noted the discrepancies and tensions between international discourses, laws and policies, and local practices around gender and education in Pakistan, where females constitute a majority of the teaching staff in Pakistan's gender segregated schools, and belong to highly politicized teaching unions. Girls' education has been critiqued as being used in an instrumental way as imagined solutions to larger global problems such as terrorism and trafficking, and as a means to produce neo-liberal citizens. According to this line of inquiry, international discourses of feminism, leadership, formal education, and community bypass local contextualization efforts and village women's resistance in Pakistan (Khoja-Moolji, 2014; 2015).

Scholar Namrata Ganneri (2013), similarly, has called for attention to the complexity of gender dynamics and the dangers of a simplistic equivalence that links girls' education to progress with regards to gender equality. Women can be not only complicit, but actively involved in communal violence and threats of communal violence by using violence against women's bodies, and perpetuate "traditional" South Asian practices such as early marriage, girls' restriction on mobility, and early withdrawal from school (Ganneri, 2013). Girls' education, while in some respects an achievement of Pakistan's developmental agenda, is also part of this larger discourse on gender and women's role and place in a fast-changing country.

Similarly, historian Muhammad Farooq has called attention to more opaque and complex dimensions of girls' schooling in Pakistan. Farooq (2013) has argued that due in part to the *Ulama's* (i.e., elite, Moslem scholars) response to perceived Western cultural domination, girls *madaris* are not only expanding – an estimated 1.5 million students in

Pakistan attend *madaris*, of which an unknown number are girls - but are re-interpreting both the gender biases of colonial state bureaucracy and modern feminism. Today, madrassa-educated girls – the majority of whom are thought to come from the lower financial strata – are prepared for "the civilizing mission of the home" (Farooq, 2013, p. 73) and in Deobani *madaris* are taught ideals of Moslem womenhood, in which a woman's power lies in her submission, a disciplining of feminism, despite the new presence of qualified *'alimas* (women religious scholars), as "docile bodies" are created "through subtle forms of disciplining" (Farooq, 2013, p. 79).

Girl's schooling as sites of gender discrimination. Other scholars have explored bureaucratic environments as patriarchal sites of oppression. Meenu Anand has argued that gendered discrimination, a global reality, is primarily due to socialization processes in the family and education system, and discrimination takes places through institutional deprivations, such as disregard, insult, control, and violence throughout women's life span (Anand, 2014). Similarly, Maryam Tanwir has taken issue with some international characterizations of Pakistan as having a relatively Weberian, ideal-type, gender neutral bureaucracy. Instead, invoking other feminist critiques of the masculine norms that dominate bureaucracies worldwide, Tanwir has described Pakistani bureaucracies as very much influenced by the patriarchal environment of the larger social-cultural milieu, with women bureaucrats deprived of field postings, subject to sporadic transfers, denied portfolios, excluded from networks and clubs, pressurized, tokenized as symbols of gender sensitivity, and subject to glass ceilings (Tanwir, 2015).

Elizabeth Reilly and Qurin Bauer, in a study of Pakistani female educational leaders at colleges and universities, found that the high status connected to being a

teacher (*muallam*), conferred in Islam because of the Quran emphasizing knowledge and knowledge-giving as attributes of God and the legacy of prophets (Shah, 2006, as cited in Reilly & Bauer, 2015), and by a leadership position, often was nullified by gender. That said, women located in perceived public space (i.e., university of co-ed settings) could call on greater positional power. As they stated,

> Gender inequities are deeply embedded in organizational and social structures…Therefore, even when in leadership positions, a woman's wielding power can be seen as a gender transgressive performance. Female leaders may have control over resources and decision making in organizational contexts, but their knowledge of these codes of order imposes self-regulatory constraints on their power as leaders (Reilly & Bauer, 2015, p. 169).

Similarly, cultural anthropologist Shahla Haeri wrote *against* "orientalist" stereotypes of Moslem women, while describing professional Pakistani women as working within a male-centered honor (*izzat*) culture influenced by an oppressive feudal system. Haeri stated,

> Being a working woman in Pakistan almost by definition involves some kind of conflict with one's family, husband, lineage, and various social institutions (Haeri, 2002, p. xxix).

Girls' education in Pashtun-speaking communities. The education of girls in conservative and/or tribal regions in Pakistan such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Balochistan, has generated its own body of research. Pashtuns, the major ethnic group in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA and along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, are traditionally guided by *Pushtunwali,* a

cultural code of ethics and behavior for Pashtuns. Exacting social codes of behavior and character for women as well as men include strictly observed rules of gender segregation, communication, and assertiveness in appropriate situations (Grima, 2004). Politics and ethnicity are deeply intertwined in Pakistan (Weiss, 2014), despite the fact that Pashtuns, like other ethnic groups, have settled in all parts of Pakistan since Pakistan's four major provinces were created after the country's separation from Bangladesh in 1971.

But as scholar Nasreen Ghufran has argued, Pashtuns themselves share a politically diverse and complex legacy, including their attitudes toward education and girls' education (Ghufran, 2009). For example, the Taliban movement, associated with the Pashtun community, has often been opposed to women in public life and Western-style girls' schools. At the same time, Pashtun women and girls have demonstrated subtle forms of agency in negotiating girls' education. In the northern valley of Swat, where a militant group of Taliban fought for control of the region in the late 2000s and attacked and shut down girls' schools, women without male partners in a de facto sense both resisted and supported the militants, performing identities that ranged from pious Moslem, to wise matriarch, to social and family rebel, to oft-and-on Taliban supporter to resist the landed and locally powerful Pashtun Yusufzai clan through the Taliban or to restore the perceived golden era of Swat sovereignty (Chaudry, 2015).

Traditionally, progressive and ethnonationalist movements such as the Khudai Khidmatagars and secular Pashtun political parties have favored girls' education as a vehicle for social progress (Ghufran, 2009). Pakistani scholar Aamir Jamal, on the other hand, has explored how the deeply patriarchal nature of Pashtun communities both enables and constrains male and female engagements with gender justice (Jamal, 2015).

Drawing on data from men in both rural and urban parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Jamal found men could be involved in seven "points of leverage – places where action may be usefully applied to overcome barriers to girls' education" (Jamal, 2015, p. 278). They included constructively engaging community elders (*Masharan*) and religious leaders (*Imams*); the strategic use of community institutions such as the men's guest house (*Hujra*), council of elders (*Jirga*), and mosque (*Jumaat*); increasing school accessibility, including "horse schools" where teachers travel to students; increasing the number of female teachers; community ownership and trust, such as better communication with school staff about curriculum, food supplement as motivation, and a good working relationship with local and provincial government.

Pakistani Feminist Discourses as Context.

South Asian and Pakistani feminist-oriented scholarship, while not always linked to girls' education, is helpful, I will argue, in understanding some of the challenges and issues facing gender liaisons on the front lines of implementing girls' education. In this section, I will briefly explore some key issues such as the impact of Westernization and globalization, the growth of Islamic movements, and neo-colonial uses of gender.

Many feminist scholars of education gender development and/or gender studies in the Middle East and South Asian context have emphasized the importance of situated, historical, and critical understandings of gender in an Islamic and Eastern context, given Western feminist concerns and a history of Western textual imperial domination of 'others' (Abuj-Lughod, 1999). Almost two decades ago, for example, Bangladeshi scholar Rounaq Jahan (1996) called for a less simplistic gender focus and the recognition

of changing gender landscapes, such as the emerging role of South Asian women as cash income earners.

More recently, the military engagement of the U.S. in the Middle East and South Asia and events in and around 9/11 has also been linked to changing gender landscapes. Moon Charania, for example, described Westernization as complexly mapping onto "the political and cultural labyrinths in which Pakistani feminists are caught and within which they do feminist work" (Charania, 2014, p. 319). The accusation of "Western" is a loaded construct for women activists in Pakistan, she wrote, in part due to the intersections of colonial memory, geopolitics, and "brutal U.S. intervention in the region" (Charania, 2014, p. 319). Similarly, sociologist Saadia Toor has argued that the moral regulation" of women in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan needs to be understood within a global phenomenon "fueled by economic and cultural globalization, and (for Moslems, specifically) the Global War on Terror" (Toor, 2014, p. 140).

The nexus of gender, modernity, and Islam has received much attention. Historian Margot Badran (2008) described feminism in the Moslem world as falling roughly into two camps (i.e., 19-century secular feminism and 20th-century Islamic feminism), with the latter a combination of intellectual and activist work in which "inherited patriarchal Islam" is being challenged by an "egalitarian Islam" (Badran, 2008). Anita Weiss (2014) has approached unfolding cultural understandings of gender, including the place of feminism, by calling attention to the gaps between modern, secular-style democracy, with its formal laws (i.e., Pakistan's Protection of Women Act of 2006 and Anti-Rape and Anti-Honour Killings laws of 2014) and the lived, social construction of Islamic society. Weiss has argued that while patriarchy remains relevant almost everywhere in the world,

in Pakistan the interpretation of what constitutes patriarchy and patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an is very much alive, and needs to be viewed within a context of an emergent Moslem civil society, revitalized Islamic worldviews, a social order based on core values about what constitutes the roles and rights of women, and a functional illiteracy rate of 73 percent for adult women. Weiss has suggested the importance of the notion of *itjihad*, informally understood as a process of "integrating understood Islamic norms, mores, and values with perceptions on society" (Weiss, 2014, p. 1). In Pakistan, the major school of Islamic jurisprudence is Hanafi *fiqh,* Weiss has stated, but "there is no consensus on what actually comprises that framework," (Weiss, 2014, p. 9).

By contrast, feminist Amina Jamal has suggested traditional Sunni Islam in South Asia is heavily influenced by Islamic mysticism and flexible notions of gendered modesty. The entanglements of feminism and fundamentalism and different schools of Sunni Islamic thought in a country where 80-85 percent of people are Sunni Moslem, Jamal has argued, continue to unfold "in a contested and never-finished project of womanhood" (Jamal, 2013, p. 8).

From a different perspective, it has been argued that 'secular' feminists such as Shahnaz Rouse, Farida Shaheed, and Fouzia Saeed still have greater relevance to the majority of women in Pakistan because of their work on issues such as public education (Shah, 2014). Yet in some ways they have had to take a backseat to Islamic feminism and its use to combat institutional misogyny – a type of feminism most accessible to Urdu-speaking middle and upper middle classes, due to its emphasis on academics, and a bridge to other Moslem women around the world (Shah, 2014). In a critique of the global politics around gender, Afiya Shehrbano Zia has argued further that "the women

question" has become a claim to political relevance that secular feminists, traditional Islamic feminists, Islamic revivalists and women's piety movements, and diaspora groups who tend to "fetishize and romanticize" Islamic movements all claim (Zia, 2009). This has fueled what she has termed "benevolent neo-colonialisms," a toxic complicity involving international academia and international development agencies that undermines radical, structural change. Such complicity "actively upholds a patriarchal coercive social order," Zia has argued, in which the expression of neo-colonial, Islamic revivalist political belief is an (illusory) way for women to cross the traditional private/public divide and seek empowerment or to even actively subvert women's constitutional rights and commit epistemic violence, such as discrediting NGO women health workers as "prostitutes" and "servants of America" (Zia, 2009; 2013).

In the next chapter, I will move to a more theoretical discussion of how to understand and conceptualize education liaisons from a comparative standpoint within the U.S. and Pakistan. I will examine neo-institutional approaches such as world society theory, and scholars drawing on globalization studies and neoliberal frameworks, particularly work on political imaginaries.

CHAPTER 4 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper has thus far described educational issues in the U.S. and Pakistan, as an instrument of civilization – both in forming citizens within a racialized historical context in the U.S. and in creating a modern institutional system within a 'developing,' patriarchal context in Pakistan. In order to understand this topic from a broader perspective, in which education as an institution is part of a dynamic and not-well-understood global system, I will now turn to theories that can help provide another way to conceptualize the process and effects of education development. These include theories in neo-institutional sociology, particularly world culture theory, and theories related to globalization, neoliberalism, and political imaginaries, as a theoretical way to understand global processes and social reality. I will conclude with a brief review of theoretical issues around voice, representation, and intersubjectivity.

Education from the Perspective of World Society Theory

World society theory, also referred to as world culture theory and world polity research, is an approach to global change that emphasizes the impact of modernity on individuals, organizations, nation-states, and societies. This framework grew out of comparative research on education and governance in the 1970s, when world society theorists observed that schools systems across the globe began to look like those in the West despite differing resources, local needs, and ground-level realities during the post World War II period (Schofer et. al, 2012). World society theorists, drawing on neo-Weberian understandings of culture, generally emphasize the power of cultural models – or blueprints or myths – to shape the international sphere as new nation-states seek a means of gaining legitimacy, in the process "becoming a key component of the

institutional environment surrounding and constituting nation-states" (Schofer et. al, 2012, p. 59). The foundational cultural assumptions underpinning organizations globally are rationalization, progress, and individualism, which "are assumed to shape complex organizations in similar ways, regardless of the substantive field or specific location (Powell & Bromley, 2013, p. 8).

Associated with sociologist John W. Meyer and collaborators at Stanford University, world society theory is an approach within neo-institutional theory, a body of scholarship with many strands that in turn is part of a much larger scholarship on organizations and culture spanning political science, economics, sociology, and other disciplines such as management (Powell & Bromley, 2013; Wiseman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014). Meyer's approach to world society theory – frequently described as a culturalist-social constructivist approach that draws on the work of sociological thinkers such as Max Weber, Alfred Schulz, and Peter L. Burger and Thomas Luckmann (Schriewer, 2012) – has in its conceptual, epistemological orientation been distinct from other, more empirically and descriptively oriented world society schools of inquiry within the neo-institutional studies paradigm.

New institutional studies – a shift that Walter W. Powell and Patricia Bromley (2013) have described as occurring during the 1970s and 1980s – has emphasized diffusion, isomorphism, and decoupling, with newer, 1990s and onward debates including micro institutional processes, institutional logics, translation and editing, and renewed debates over world society theory and macro level research, a trend Meyer & Rowan began in 1977 with their foundational paper (Powell & Bromley, 2014).

> According to Meyer and his associates, world society, or modern society, is organized around general and cultural models, as much as around hard-wired organizational structures. In this view of world culture, "older social forms – bureaucracies, family structures, traditional professional arrangements" have been transformed into organizations (Meyer, 2008, p. 804), which make up a world institutional system (Meyer, 1999). Within this system, the "whole edifice of modernity" is seen as cultural, with Meyers defining this world culture not so much as a set of values and norms, but as a set of cognitive models (Meyer, 1999, p. 126). It draws on Weber's insights on bureaucracies and the "rationale restlessness" of the modern system, in which the transcendental-spiritual domain is diminished and agency is relocated within society's structures and rationales (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000, p. 103).

Analytically, this version of world society theory asks "whether fresh insights can be generated if one starts with institutions" (Ramirez, 2005, p. 427). Institutionalized forces are held to hold general sociological explanatory ideas that are central to explaining large-scale, global social change (Meyer, 2008), and social actors are viewed as products of their culture within a world culture (i.e., modernity,) that emphasizes rationalism, universalism, belief in progress, and individualism (Schofer et. al, 2012). Meyers has described this cultural milieu as producing "newly empowered persons" who engage in "conforming non-decision," as opposed to autonomous rationalized actors (Meyer, 2008, pp. 804-805).

Theorizing the place of actors has received particular attention by scholars using and/or critiquing world society theory. Powell and Bromley (2013) have argued actors

and organizations are highly scripted in world society theory, a constructivist view in which actors play an important role in creating themselves as constituted by their organizational environments, in contrast to the constrained pursuit of self-determined interests (Powell & Bromley, 2013). Other scholars have found world society's categorization of actors and actorhood as reified, essentializing, and unhistorical, since the world society model is itself based on reified models of change and history (see more in this section below). Meyers and his associates, using different somewhat terminology, have explained actors as having "culturally devolved agency" that is situated within and against post-Christian standardized technologies of agentic authority (Meyer & Jepperson, p.117). Meyers has argued that while he views world society theory as situated along a realist-phenomenological continuum, the phenomena of a suprasocietal or transcendental cosmos is not in itself a normative or political concept (Meyer, 2010; Thomas et al., 1987). More recently, Meyers has described this cultural cosmos as more of a dialectical flux in which the "inegalitarian logics of capitalism" and the "egalitarian logics of democracy" intersect on normative, cognitive, and practical levels (Jacobson, 2013). Direct mechanics of state and organizational power are mediated through a global culture (Meyer, 2008), in which the "pretense to homogeneity" is a powerful force – e.g., resulting in a social order consisting of the empowered, rights-endowed actor, scientization, and a quasi-religious institutional and individual "Otherhood" who act on behalf of others (Meyers, 2010, p. 7). Such processes, currently undergirded by massive economic expansion, are not fixed (Jacobson, 2013). Meyers further stated in an interview with David Jacobson,

> But anybody would be foolish to imagine that the world is – that Americanism which has been – Americanism, meaning liberalist forms of lots of association and massive amounts of educational expansion, lots of science, and tremendous expansion of individual rights. That format isn't going to necessarily continue over time…. So I'm very sympathetic to multiple modernities" (Jacobson, 2013).

Debating 'World Culture.' World culture theory has generated a great deal of debate, with criticism often centered on its over-socialized view of actors and lack of attention to coercive forms of power (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012: Powell & Bromley, 2013; Wiseman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014), its misinterpretation or selective readings (Wiseman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014; Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012), and its perceived over-simplistic, Western-centric, overly prescriptive and teleological assumptions (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014; Anderson-Levitt, 2003, 2012; Schriewer, 2012; Schwinn, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012).

Complicating matters further, world society theorists themselves have branched into different lines of inquiry, such as documenting the existence of institutional isomorphism, a phenomenon in which nation states begin to formally look like each other as they adopt global templates such as mass education, despite internal organizational inconsistency and 'irrationality' (Schofer et. al, 2012). In its sociological variant form, world society theory is often used to explain common cross-national trends (Wiseman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014) and to theorize the fundamental changes to society and substantive outcomes that result from global institutional processes – "the massive expansion of education, the bureaucratization and rationalization of society, and the broad empowerment of individuals" (Schofer et. al, 2012 p. 67). Even local variations, a

concept often attributed by world society theorists to *loose coupling*, has been invoked as evidence of world society's impact - a move that Stephen Carney and his colleagues have argued has been useful in engaging with world society theory's many critics (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012).

The role and source of power, which has arisen in theoretical arguments about neo-institutionalism and "value-free, objective sociology" (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012, p. 386) and in scholarly work drawing on post-structural, post-colonial, and neo-liberal governmentality frameworks, is of particular importance to this study. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, for example, have explored the link between institutional isomorphism and local power elites, suggesting coercion, mimetic, and normative forces may be at work (DiMaggio & Powel, 1983).

Pursing a contextually European scholarly reading of Weber, Carney, Rappleye and Silova (2012) have suggested that world society theorists have largely failed to deal with Weber's ambivalences of modernity (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012), in which the devaluation of mysticism in modern society and the resulting tensions between forces such as self-interested pursuits (e.g. materials gains and capitalism) and rationality (e.g. the growing role of bureaucracy) leads to social disenchantment, multiplicities and ambiguities. As a genealogical approach to modernity sandwiched between Friedrich Nietzsche and Michael Foucault, philosopher David Owen has similarly argued Weber believed modern man has the capacity to be autonomous, but lacks a cultural ground of values and institutional conditions in which to do so, a historically situated questioning of modernity that attempts to elaborate "a mode of thinking which can articulate an understanding of its own historical conditions of possibility" (Owen, 2013, p. 214). This

reading is in contrast to a Talcott Parsons-like, functionalist emphasis on Weberian common values and normative conformity, such as sociologist Ann Swidler's description of Weber's emphasis on the powerful sway of culture within a causal explanatory framework and its structuring' worldviews – "ideas that describe the world and specify what one can seek from it" (Swidler, 1995). For Carney and his colleagues (2012), this latter reading of Weber, a reading they argue is indirectly shared by world society theorists (e.g., universal messages are purposively adopted at the collective level and social action is either rationale or socially constituted) – is crucial in understanding world society theory as relatively normative and ideologically driven. For example, they suggest, world society theorists, in documenting the existence of isomorphism, have focused on the "myth" of progress as perhaps a way to inadvertently "re-enchant the world through universal appeals to a normative conception of progress through schooling" (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012, p. 385). This critique is also made by Willy Oppenheim and Amy Stambach in their study of how global norm-making, enacted through world society theory and other approaches, can privilege certain questions, agendas and practices around the normative establishment of girls' schooling in locations such as northern Pakistan (Oppenheim & Stambach, (2014).

Other scholarly critics of world society theory have likewise focused on some of its key concepts and components, in different guises. Gita Steiner-Khamsi, for example, has critiqued Francisco Ramirez (2003) and David Baker and LeTendre (2005) for using the concept of loose coupling as an explanation it itself, instead of comparatively thoughtful reflections on the global/local nexus, such as Susan Robertson's (2012) more specific typologies of the condition of the world, such as discourse, project, scale, reach,

and the under-researched, relational nature of local/global (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Similarly, other critics have argued more localized and qualitative comparative education studies are needed, since a commitment to the "predominately phenomenological and diffusionist assumptions" of world society theory miss the ways institutional education is not so universal in nature and the possible existence of other more complex global models and concepts, and ignore the evolution of culturally deep structures around the globe, among other things (Schriewer, 2012. p.414).

Kathryn Anderson-Levitt, from an anthropological standpoint, has focused on divergences and the contested process of meaning making, such as the differences that can productively be found in the gaps between models and actual practice (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, p. 17). Furthermore, Anderson-Levitt has argued, world society theory fails to take into account that "local" and "global" can be situated, subjective terms with hazy boundaries, such as "global" potentially implying not only the common-sense meanings of ideas and norms spread throughout the world, but implying traveling and translation as in Amy Tsing's (2005) sense of something appearing to be widespread because of translation in a new setting (Anderson-Levitt, 2012). In a similar way, Anderson-Levitt has argued, the use of "culture" by world society theorists such as Ramirez (e.g. scripts) (2003); Chabbott and Ramirez (e.g. actors as development professionals, NGOs, and organizations such as UNESCO and the Ford Foundation (2000); and Lechner and Boli (e.g. socially shared symbolic and meaning systems that become embed in objects, organizations, and people') (2005, p. 16), implies a symbolic, cognitive, or body-of-knowledge definition of culture that has evolved since the 1980s, when many anthropologists shifted their focus to "practice or performance and hence emphasize the

process of making meaning over the meanings themselves," (Anderson-Levitt, 2012, p. 443). This means groups, even if they deliberately and strategically engage in group identity work, do not 'own' cultures and ascribing beliefs and norms to a particular society – including world society – is something "we avoid" (Anderson-Levitt, 2012, p. 445.) Furthermore, power in the form of hegemonic operationals such as past influence, wide distribution, cachet, and persuasiveness, such as the power to conduct research, is relational and re-made in local arenas and in a contest with global actors (Anderson-Levitt, 2012).

World society theory in comparative education. In this section, I will briefly review the use of world society theory within comparative education research. As Weisman and her colleagues recently observed, neo-institutional theory has been at the center of many debates among many comparative education researchers, in tandem with the rise of globalization scholarship. But its trajectory within comparative education has become a subject in itself (Weisman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014).

Some scholars have called for moving past the associated internal divisions generated by the topic of world society theory (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012). Wiseman and her colleagues, by contrast, have called for a more thoughtful examination of how world society theory has been used in the comparative education field. Too often, they have argued, it has been used in a narrow, 'world culture strand' sense associated with Meyer and his colleagues and classic sociologists. Researchers using neo-institutional theory have often been misunderstood as seeking to produce global homogenization or valuing Western hegemony (Weisman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014). Furthermore, the use of neo-institutional frameworks with a larger neo-institutional body

of scholarly work has been diverse but less recognized, since the world society variant has dominated (Weisman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014).

The world society variant of education, as explained by Meyers and his associates, is that the institutionalized advent of mass education was used by both former aristocratic dynasties and colonies as a central means to enact proper nation-state identity (Meyer, Ramirez & Soysal, 1992). Operating within this rationalizing myth of a national community with a need for national citizens, a new "educational logic of confidence" operated in tandem with other modern key myths (Ramirez, 2012, p. 429), with actors embedded in a "cultural matrix which provides actors with a sense of who they are, what their world is, and what their perspective ought to be" (Ramirez, 2005, p 431).

But other variants of neo-institutionalism, such as political institutionalism, anthropological versions, macro- and micro-institutionalisms, and globalization studies have also been used in comparative education research (Weisman, Astiz, & Baker, 2014. p. 696).

Globalization, Neoliberalism and Political Myth 'Imaginaries'

In this section, I will briefly review how concepts such as globalization, neoliberalism and the concept of political myths are pertinent to my study, since they add a different and important dimension of understanding to neo-institutional understandings of globalization, neoliberalism, and identity. I will also briefly discuss identity and agency in relation to these concepts.

The terms 'globalization' and 'neoliberalism' have widely different definitions within and between fields of study, but have often been entangled. Globalization has been roughly used to imply, according to some scholars, the visualizing of a rise of a

borderless market in which competitive logics predominate, and neoliberalism to imply – often in a pejorative sense - a political project to realize these conditions, and more lately, a political-economic-cultural phenomenon and social-scientific signifier (Tickell & Pack, 2003; Peck, 2013). In anthropology and globalization studies, interpretive frameworks of globalization and its processes have included Gregg's work on peripherization – the permanent culture of peripheral societies (Gregg, 1990); Sahlin's argument that people are able to resist neo-liberal policy prescriptions despite scholarship positing the systematic hegemony of imperialism (Sahlins, 1999); Nordstrom's examination of the ways in which ordinary people are creating legal and often extra-legal flows of political, economic, and poetic networks (Nordstom, 2007); Kearney's concept of global hypertexts (Kearney, 1995); Friedman's argument that terms such as globalization and neoliberalism are often fetishized, confounded with and derived from the system with which they are a part instead of being used to account for the genesis and dynamics of the contemporary situation (Friedman, 2014), Peacock's work on the abstractness yet reality and force of 'culture' (Peacock, 1986), and Appaduria's much cited work on the role of imagination in global flows and resulting "relations of disjuncture," such as those involving cultures, religions, and global capital (Appaduria, 1990, p. 213).

Neoliberal framings. The exclusions produced through globalizing educational processes have been productively explored through neoliberal theory. Neoliberalism has been widely adopted within anthropology as link between 'globalization' (i.e., broad economic changes) and issues of governance (Hilgers, 2010; Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008). Hilgers has argued (2008) that within anthropology three paradigms predominate: Neoliberalism as culture (Camaroff & Camaroff, 2000), neoliberalism as system (Harvey,

2005: Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Wacquant, 2000) and neoliberalism as governmentality (Agamben, 2005; Ferguson, 1990; Ong, 2006). Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008), alternative, view the predominate paradigms as Marxist-capital class power oriented; post-structural approaches to the unevenness of geographical and institutional modalities of governmentality such as subjectification and reterritorialization, and Giorgio Agamben-inspired views of governance malleability and assemblages, as in Aihwa Ong's (2006) scholarship. The concern of these paradigms differs, yet in general, Kingfisher & Maskovsky (2008) argue,

> The concept of neoliberalism is often invoked to make reference to the specific market-triumphalist manner in which capitalist globalization has been shaped and reproduced in recent decades (Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008, p. 116).

Within this larger body of scholarship on globalization and neoliberalism, scholarship on education and neoliberalism is broad and has been growing. "Neo-liberal imaginary" has been described as the complex convergence of policies around private and philanthropic solutions to the problems of education (Ball, 2012, p. 66-67); and neoliberal modes of governance and management have been described as transforming education (Davies & Bansel, 2007). This happens, education scholars Bronwyn Davis and Peter Bansel have argued, through the "capitalization of existence itself," where the market is normatively perceived as having the ability to dictate fates, and collective responsibility for the marginalized and vulnerable is abandoned. In this transformed, heroic administrative state, "people are reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives," and the newly "responsibilized" citizen is expected to be "unequivocally middle class," enthusiastic consumers of good and investments, and

believers in their governments being beyond moral approach as protectors from "inevitable" economic forces (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252).

Likewise, Tarabini (2010) has argued that the current neoliberal 'global agenda' is reinforcing inequities. This occurs three ways: By overemphasizing the power of education, by relying on neo-liberal prescriptions, and by omitting social and educational inequality as explicit goals. (2010, p. 210). Focusing on the use of equity narratives in Australian schools, Thompson (2013) has argued they involve an overall logic couched in neoliberalism in which responsibility for inequalities and "the causation of problems is directed away from policy and the central government and its political vulnerabilities," and directed toward those in charge of educational institutions and parents and students, through 'terrorization' techniques such as using context as a rhetorical strategy of sequestration and confining policy solutions to the education sphere (Thompson, 2013, p.178).

Michal Foucault's approach to neoliberalism is particularly relevant to my study, since Foucault influentially studies the workings of power and its visibility or lack of visibility in institutions. Michael Foucault (1977), for example, examined the flow or structure of power as used by modern institutions, such as schools. Schools, like other institutions, use disciplining practices, which Foucault described as complex technologies of control that involve the participation of diverse individuals (Foucault, 1977). Because "the play of desire, power, and interest" are complex and may not involve direct links between interests, execution, and the right to exercise power, discourses of struggle within "institutionalized networks of information" are more productively viewed as a struggle over the secretive, not the unconscious, Foucault has argued, adding that prisons

are the only institution in which power does not need to hide or mask itself (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, p. 2014-2015). Although Foucault in later work emphasized to a greater extent technologies of the self in his concept of governmentality, his work on schools as institutions remains influential.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, emphasizing symbolic power in contrast to Foucault's disciplinary power, had examined symbolically mediated interactions between individuals and their environment. Bourdieu (1998) introduced the idea of schools as social fields were students negotiate identities and possible futures within constraints. 'Cultural capital,' or 'habitus,' Bourdieu argued, is a person's character and way of thinking, which interacts with social structures and thus underlies the dynamics of power relations in social life (Bourdieu, 1998).

Educational institutions are influential in reproducing social inequality through the notion of cultural capital and its conversion into other forms of capital through school practices (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1998). Bourdieu's work can be read informatively alongside world culture theory, since Bourdieu has been concerned with the power of states (especially through school systems) to impose categories of thought that make other thoughts unthinkable. This occurs both through 'objective' organizational structures and mechanisms and subjective mental structures and categories of perception and thought (Bourdieu, 1999). He stated,

> State bureaucracies and their representatives are great producers of "social problems" that social science does little more than ratify whenever it takes them over as "sociological" problems…. Yet the best proof of the fact that the thought of the bureaucratic thinker (penseur fonctionnaire) is pervaded by the official

> representation of the official, is no doubt the power of seduction wielded by those representations of the state (as in Hegel) that portray beureaucracy as a "universal group" endowed with the intuition of, and the will to, universal interest; or as an "organ of reflection" and a rationale instrument in charge of realizing the general interest (1999, p. 55).

Uses of 'imaginaries' and political myths. The concept of political and social 'imaginaries' has been used in disciplines such as anthropology, political theory, and globalization studies, but has recently been used more widely and has come under greater critical scrutiny (Grant, 2014). Before moving on to concepts of identity and agency, I will briefly explore imaginaries as they apply to political myth, which philosopher Chiara Bottici has described as to the left of myths and to the right of religion (Bottici, 2014). Although the scholarship embracing both political myths as imaginaries and myths as used in world society theory – arguably a form of political myth – appears to be scant, I find juxtaposing both approaches to myth useful to better inform this study.

Scholars on the left have been reluctant to focus upon political myths, Bottici has argued (Bottici, 2014), and the study of myths, such as that by Clifford Geertz, has been dominated by a *logos* approach which leaves out the ways myths function between the cognitive, practical, and aesthetic, both as philosophy and sociology (Bottici & Challard, 2006). Yet political myths, pervasive narratives who 'work' and respond to the need for significance and must be shared, are important processes whose political role has probably only been recognized in modern societies, although they also played important roles in ancient societies (Bottici, 2014; Bottici & Challard, 2006).

Myths are imaginaries. Bottici has described 'imagination,' the philosophy of the subject, and 'imaginary,' or imaginary as a social context (i.e., a new distance that is neither a subject who contemplates a world as given nor subjects that encapsulate the world within consciousness) (Bottici, 2011). Bottici and Challard have defined political myths, which also operate as symbolic power that also serves to conceal power, as,

> …best understood as a continual process of work on a common narrative by which the members of a social group can provide significance to their political conditions and experience (2006, p. 316).

Rather than an approach to truth, political myths express a determination to act that is neither bound by rationality nor political theory, but allows for the possibility of radical stories through their pluralistic nature, whose narrative core is always surrounded by variety, thus the particularity of its nature. At the same time, the constant exposure to the images and icons of political myths mean they can unconsciously influence our most fundamental perceptions of the world and serve as social mapping devices whose reach can be global, "leaving thus potentially no blind spots" (Bottici & Challard, 2006, p. 331).

Political myths thus also pose dangerous, self-fulfilling, modern techniques of divination, such as Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations.' A fragmentary and allusive set of images, or icons, the 'clash of civilizations' idea left out important political narratives and escaped critical scrutiny and functioned as an ideal-type that provided answers in a void of uncertainty in the post-Cold War era (Bottici & Challard, 2006), leaving the need for an "imaginal politics" that can help overcome the impasse of

imagination as a individual faculty and imaginary as a social context (Bottici, 2011, p. 69).

Critiques of Bottici's concept of political myths include the argument that political myths and social imaginaries are not analytically different, that she does not make a convincing case that a myth cannot be judged according to empirical evidence and truth value, and how power and myth function together in a positive form, not just a negative form (Grant, 2014.)

The production of identity. In this section I will briefly examine identity, a normatively common-sense notion (e.g., being oneself) that has been complexly theorized in scholarship, such as scholarship on social identity, a person's sense of who they are based on group membership and other social factors.

Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory has informed education research such as Paul Willis's (2003) influential study of how working-class youth negotiate modernization yet fail to achieve real choice, and Prudence L. Carter's study of how dominant and non-dominant forms of cultural capital interplay in the lives of low-income, African American youth. Carter argued few youth were able to effectively balance the two forms of capital to their advantage (Carter, 2003).

Annette Lareau's (2003) influential study of the cultural logics of social class among middle and working class parents found cultural logics led to a robust sense of entitlement among middle class children and an emerging sense of constraint within institutional settings among working class children. Over time, middle-class young adults became better at negotiating institutional bureaucracies and knowing the "rules of the game," while working-class and poor young adults were frustrated by bureaucracies

and could benefit more from middle-class "cultural guides" – teachers, counselors, coaches, professionals, administrators, and employers (Lareau, 2012), findings also supported by others (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Vallejo, 2012; Gonzales, 2011). Lareau has argued more attention should be paid by inequality scholars to non-economic forces such as cultural know-how (e.g., knowledge, expertise, and cultural skills) and the contingent and situated nature of life trajectories. "Little moments" can be more important than overly deterministic models of social theory (Lareau, 2015, p. 4).

Anthropologist Peter Demerath, similarly, found that students in Papua New Guinea who faced a marginalized role in relation to whites used "moral judgments about appropriate selves, social relations, and futures" (2001, p. 227). This preserved a Melanesian ideology of commensurate difference that, he argued, shaped their academic engagement and also led to the reproduction of inequality. In a later study of U.S. suburban schools, Demerath (2008) found reflexive modernization, identity, and class culture influenced 'modes of selfhood' adapted by high-achieving students. These models constituted new form of 'psychological capital,' a term originally coined by anthropologist Sherry Ortner, and lead to students who have 'extremely strong agentic beliefs, deeply held attachments to personal success, and highly specific aspirations (2008, p. 271). Paola Rivetti, writing about humanitarian and development agencies and their relations of power with Iranian refugees, focused on how cultural identities such as "refugeeness" may be imposed through institutional and performative pressures, with the paradoxical result that "empowerment" and claiming human rights "foster dominate relations of power" in which refugees' identity and agency actually conform to

international norms and NGO expectations instead of allowing complex identities to surface (Rivetti, 2013, p. 308).

Definitions and uses of agency. The concept of agency, the degree to which someone demonstrates intentionality, is closely related to identity and to debates over structure and agency, a key issue within neo-institutional and world society theory. Concepts of agency range widely, and include the self as a knowledgeable and rationale individual, as in the work of George Herbert Mead, to the self as a performed persona in the work of Erving Goffman, to the self as to some degree fragmented or unconsciously reactive in the context of current cultural conditions (Elliot, 2007).

For this project, I will draw on the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens (1998) and his notion of a self capable of autonomous thought and reflexivity within the context of a world increasingly constituted by globalization and information rather than pre-given, traditional modes of conduct. This view, in a way, it can be argued to provide a complimentary, more in-depth dimension to theorizing agency within world society theory, especially since Giddens' work ties together the forces of rationality, institutionalization, and perceived risk.

Giddens' concept of the 'reflexivity of modern social life' holds that the relationship between individuals and society is highly fluid, with humans engaging in reflexivity either consciously or on the level of "practical consciousness" – a type of going on with the rules and conventions of social life (1998, p. 78). According to Klaus Rasborg's (2012) analysis of work on reflexive modernity, in Giddens's work 'pre-modern' dangers and externals risks have been increasingly supplanted by existential uncertainty, risks related to man-made interventions in nature, and the "de-

traditionalization and institutional reflexivity of late modern society," producing the uncertainties of late modernity. These uncertainties, or the reduction of the 'ontological security' of the past, threatened "the creation of a coherent self capable of coping with the complexity of late modernity" (2012, p. 8). Giddens' structuration theory also seeks to replace the dualism of 'action/structure, individual/society, determinism/voluntarism' with dualities, or two sides of the same coin.

Giddens' work has been criticized as offering an uncritical, neo-liberal discourse of selfhood. From this critical vantage, Giddens' reflexivity – which is theorized to take on an extended role in modern contexts - is envisioned as a rational project undertaken by a core, non-dialogical self, ignoring the social embeddedness of reflexivity and the ways in which situated and historically imbued 'culture' escapes categorizations such as 'traditional' and 'modern' (Adams, 2003).

Voice, Representation, and Intersubjectivity

I will next turn to theoretical concerns around voice, representation, and intersubjectivity, since such issues are in some ways at the core of the imagined and actual work of education liaisons, as professional 'go-betweeners' or bridge-builders between the dominant, institutional environments of education organizations and marginalized populations and communities. Such concerns are also central to this study, since my work as a researcher attempts to engage in representation and give voice to 'others,' as at times defined by widely recognized social typologies of race, ethnicity, class, and location within institutional and bureaucratic environments where collaborative engagements can be tricky and fraught with the risk of transgressing written and unwritten norms and intersubjective understandings around revelation and transparency.

Attention to voice, representation, and intersubjectivity have been a central theoretical focus in the social sciences. It has been fueled by key theoretical developments, such as historian Hayden White's constructivist approach, developed in the 1970s, to the relationship between narrative and reality (i.e. historiography); the simultaneous 'reflexive turn' in anthropology, and the more recent attempted deconstruction of grand theories and narratives by postcolonial, critical, narrative, and other scholars. In this section, I will draw primarily on scholarship by cultural and linguistic anthropologists and narrative inquiry researchers to frame some of the theoretical challenges and intersections between these disciplines, to better inform my claims to intersubjective negotiations of experience and my representations of educations liaisons in geographically distinct, racially and ethnically diverse institutional and asymmetrically power-laden contexts.

Questions of voice and representation and their relation to power and authority have been a classic area of scholarly interest within anthropology. Anthropology has been closely associated with the notion of fieldwork and studying 'others,' an often imaginative enterprise that Jacob Pandian and Susan Parman (2004) have suggested allowed early professional anthropologists – often elite, Western, men closely tied to governments, missionary agencies, and universities – to "territorialize" particular non-Western societies and turn the resulting data, or "protean Other," into a commoditized mouthpiece that serves the "personal, cultural, intellectual, and theoretical needs of the anthropologist" (Pandian & Parman, 2004, p. 44). Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003), famously, theorized such concerns in his notion of the ambiguous status of the 'native voice.' The native voice is never as knowledgeable as that of the anthropologist,

yet serves as useful reference points in broader, largely unacknowledged fields of power, Trouillot theorized, calling on anthropologists to take the native voice seriously (Trouillot, 2003).

Yet in addition to on-going debate over the place and possibility of voice within fields of power, voice and representation have been approached differently by various schools of inquiry within cultural anthropology. In the 1970s, for example, Marvin Harris championed the analytic importance of an etic, objective perspective within a functionalist, cultural materialist approach, in contrast to James Clifford's interpretive and symbolic emphasis on the importance of the emic, or "subjective" perspective. In *Writing Culture*, Clifford and George E. Marcus classically problematized objectivity, colonialism, discourse, reflexivity, and textuality (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), arguing that fieldwork locations and historical moments constitute a specificity in which encounters entail a basic performativity of previous representations. More recently, Clifford argued there is still a need to reject "monological authority" – including the notion of a purely "inside" indigenous anthropologist - and pursue a "more contingent, multiply positioned realism" that questions machine-like subjective/objective divides (Clifford, 2003, p. ii). "Contact zones" - a term Clifford drew from Mary Louise Pratt's 1992 *Imperial Eyes* - are "never free exchanges" since they are structured by racial and political hierarchies, and contact relations "are never transparent or free of appropriation" (Clifford, 2003, p.31-34).

Referencing such work, assumed notions of 'culture' and the possibility of intersubjective understandings of culture have been interrogated more critically within the context of political marginality, feminist scholarship, and global political dynamics.

Lila Abu-Lughod, who has famously critiqued the productivity of the 'cultural concept' and its complicit use within anthropology to reify culture instead of understand cultural difference (Abu-Lughod, 1999), has argued for engaging in global injustices by exploring uncomfortable global connections that expose convenient cultural framings, such as understanding the history of U.S. military interventions in the Middle East and South Asia instead of understanding 'Moslem women' (Abu-Lughod, 2002). Abu-Lughod has also argued that anthropological and ethnographic typifications can create too-familiar analytical categories that feed into a language of power, which are in turn built on professional discourses of expertise and objectivity, and the erasure of contradictions and conflicts of interest through the imposition of homogeneity and coherence (Abu-Lughod, 1993). To counter this tendency, Abu-Lughod, in her ethnographies about Bedouin communities, turned to stories of particular Bedouin women and the "humanistic convention" of narrative form (Abu-Lughod, 1993, p.29), which she argues allows for particulars and the non-local dynamics that are manifested locally, to challenge standard constructions around culture, gender relations, and Moslem Arab society, and to deliberately break down distance and 'otherness' while conveying a deeper truth through the disjunctions and tensions between ideals and practices.

Other scholars have approached issues of voice and representation in the context of challenges posed by postmodern and poststructuralist theorists, such as Gayatri Spivak. Sherry Ortner, for example, has argued that voice – even supposedly "voiceless" subaltern voices – have a way of evading textual and other forms of domination. Ethnographers, she has argued, should seek – even if imperfectly - the socially and culturally constructed particularities of lived worlds, instead of responding to the 'crisis

of representation' with 'ethnographic refusal' (Ortner, 1995). Mayanthi Fernando, similarly, has called attention to the dilemma of 'ethnographic silence' and its ceding of the field to dominant power brokers, although unlike Ortner she raises ethical and political reasons as heralding limits of ethnographic representation, not epistemological ones (Fernando, 2014).

Others scholars have dwelled on the ontological nature of voice and inter-subjectivity, such as Veena Das's study of the aftermath of the Partition of India and the riots against Sikh residents of Delhi in 1984. Das (2007) has argued, for example, that violence can attach itself to everyday life in a way that is absent yet present through isolated individual realities, which confound the nature of the subject and boundaries. Voice is not the same as utterance, Das wrote, since the "fragility of the social" depends on access to and "trust that context is in place," a context that may be distorted by subjectively perceived registers of the virtual and the potential, such as an individual's socially unperceived, everyday fear (2007, p. 9). Michael Taussig, similarly, has called attention to the social nature of voice and inter-subjectivity, and the dialect between truth and untruth as forms of confusion, surreal reality and magic-like power (Taussig, 2003).

Attempting to summarize the central if hard-to-categorize place of intersubjectivity, voice, and representation within critical anthropology, Johannes Fabian has argued that negative, '*what it is not'* definitions may be more useful that positive ones. Within an era of reflexive postcolonial and post-imperial need for justification, ethnographic communication is tied to issues of memory and remembering, presence and co-presence, present and past, and identity and alternity (Fabian, 2014). But

intersubjectivity remains an *aporia* - a "method" of inquiry that is neither biologically given, an ethical concept, or a so-called transcendental process. As Fabian stated,

> Dialogue, arguably a softer version of intersubjectivity much debated in our discipline, can be manipulative and deceptive; selective emphasis, secretiveness, withholding information, and outright lying are also forms of communication and dialogue made possible by intersubjectivity (Fabian, 2014, p. 2016).

In a different vein, voice and representation have also figured in recent scholarly work as material artifacts and objects of circulation. Instead of focusing on the 'assumed equation between voice, representation, and agency,' Amanda Weidman, for example, in her research on female playback singers in India, explored how voice figured within models of reception and circulation. By using devices such as the microphone to distance their bodily presence, upper-caste women were able to negotiate traditional and modern notions of femininity and sign popular film songs, an ostensible cultural transgression (Weidman, 2011). Niko Besnier, also focusing on circulation and practice, has argued that intersubjectivity is a practice in which communicative competence within an era of globalization involves micro, local, and macro scales, a dynamic, intersubjective production that entails an "ethnographic focus on performance, language ideology, and the politicization of language practices" (Besnier, 2013, p. 470).

Narrative scholars – an extremely diverse field - have also grappled with theoretical issues of voice and representation, but from sometimes different frameworks, particularly that of narrative inquiry. Jean Clandinin, a prominent proponent of narrative inquiry as an ontological and methodological approach distinct from the use of narratives in other fields, has argued that although narrative scholars often operate within

‘borderlands’ in relation to realist, constructivist, postmodern or other positions (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), narrative inquiry is a unique and relational means of researching lived experience in which on-going negotiation, presence and investment are important features. These concerns take a backseat to traditional notions of voice and representation. As Clandinin stated in an article co-authored with Vera Caine and Andrew Estefan,

> As researchers we become part of participants’ lives and are often drawn in to participants’ ways of seeking narrative coherence. This way of researching is different to the practice of interrogating a research text such as a transcript – reading into it as if it were life – and extracting “the story” that foregrounds experience and voice (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013, p. 580).

Situating themselves within the narrative inquiry paradigm, other narrative scholars have explored the obstacles around voice and representation, even when privileging relational forms of inquiry, supporting ‘silenced’ voices, and using creative modes of expression. Sheila Trahar, for example, in introducing the work of various narrative scholars in the anthology *Contextualizing Narrative Inquiry: Developing methodological approaches for local contexts* (2013), pointed out many common issues arose in practice. These included ownership and questions regarding ‘whose story it is to tell,’ collaboration as a culturally alien or off-putting form of inquiry, and the co-produced dilemma of encountering unflattering or difficult realities, such as stereotypes and discrimination (Trahar, 2013).

Scholarship within other narrative paradigms have likewise problematized voice and representation. English and Women’s Studies scholar Susan Stanford Friedman,

arguing that narrative theory may currently be on the verge of a "transnational turn" after the "ethical turn" of the 1980s and the "interdisciplinary turn" that followed, has argued that the narrative field has been slow to embrace dialogic, global-local approaches that are "open to both commonalities and differences across cultures and through deep time" (Friedman, 2011, p. 5), in part because of academic discipline investments. In a different vein, critical narrative scholar Shari-Stone-Mediatore, pointing to the inherent complexity and contradictions of marginal experience narratives, has argued for the importance of narratives that forego dominate norms of logic, tone and structure and may be neither intended as positivist nor as ideologically conditioned discoursive realities, thus moving inquiry past the limits of knowledge (Stone-Mediatore, 2003).

Postcolonial and feminist scholars, alternatively, have focused on the uncritical use of narratives – implying, indirectly, some narrative inquiry research - within 'inescapably' dominate discourses and contexts. For example, "politically unpalatable" voices and agencies can be removed through ascribing 'false consciousness' to 'troubling' Third World voices (Grewal, 2012, p. 571). Mediated, "common-sense scripts" and life histories may be transnational narratives that favor ideological categories of cultural difference and patriarchy over systemic oppressions and structural inequalities (Chowdhury, 2015, p. 105).

Summary

This chapter has traced some key theoretical approaches to framing issues around education liaisons in the U.S. and Pakistan. I have discussed world society theory and some of the debates around it in comparative education, and theories drawing on the concepts of globalization and neoliberalism, especially the idea of 'imaginaries' and

political myths, which in some ways parallel ideas in world society theory. I have also briefly discussed issues related to the cultural production of agency, identity, and issues involving representation and inter-subjectivity. In the next chapter I will introduced my research design, methodology and methods, particularly my use of multi-sited locations.

CHAPTER 5 - RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I seek to provide a rationale for my research design, including the use of two approaches – ethnography and narrative inquiry – as the basis of my study. I will also discuss how I am combining elements of the methodologies of ethnography and narrative inquiry to better explore my research questions, and provide a justification for using a multi-sited ethnography framework. I will conclude with a discussion of the setting of the study, my participant selection and data collection methods, my use of notions such as validity, my analysis of the data, and a consideration of limitations.

Rationale for Approach and Methodology: Ethnography and Narrative Inquiry

In this section I will discuss my rationale for primarily using ethnographic and narrative methodologies to explore my research questions across multiple sites. First I will explore ethnographic and narrative methodologies and methods and their areas of overlap, and then I will discuss my reasons for choosing a multi-sited approach.

Because of the circumstances surrounding my access to the field, the form of collaboration preferred by my research participants, and the questions I have prioritized in this research project, subjective accounts of experience are central to my research design. Both ethnography, which has traditionally involved a Malinowskian ethos of face-to-face encounters *in situ* (Marcus, 2011), and narrative inquiry, which emphasizes understanding storied and lived experience in the context of time, space, and sociality (Clandinin, 2013), are conducive to focusing subjective accounts of experience as social processes, although in different ways.

Ethnographer Fredrick Erickson, for example, has described the interpretive goal of participant observational research – considered the core method of ethnography,

traditionally understood as the systematic study of people and cultures – as involving a substantive focus or intent to understand "the immediate and local meanings of action, as defined from the actor's point of view," which is ethnography's basic validity criterion (Erickson, 1986, p. 119). Issues of content, rather than methodological procedure, are foremost, with researchers engaged in making largely inductive, empirically based assertions that are then subjected to processes of reflective and sustained analysis, resulting in insights about meanings and actions within situated social worlds (Erickson, 1986).

Narrative inquiry, a similarly dynamic methodology, has been described by Clandinin (2013) as not so much seeking to uncover patterns of meaning or the sort of "logical generalization" Erickson has referenced (Erickson, 1986), but as seeking to respect an "ontology of experience" in which inquiry begins and ends with ordinary lived experience. Although narrative studies can include a wide range of characterizations (e.g., divergent theories, approaches and methodologies in social science and other fields (Stanley & Temple, 2008), in this study I am drawing upon seminal understandings of narrative inquiry that are based upon a Deweyan pragmatic ontology (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). John Dewey's later work has often been characterized as in some ways a partial and tentative forerunner to social constructivism (Jackson, 2012), whose "garden-variety" definition is "the belief that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge" and whose social strand emphasizes intersubjective understandings of specific life circumstances, as in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) (Schwandt, 2015, p. 37), and a general rejection of metaphysical realism (Jackson, 2012). Narrative inquiry scholars have also emphasized the culturally

contingent embodied reflexivity of Deweyan pragmatism, a concern with ontological commitments to 'transactional realism' with roots in Charles Sanders Pierce's triadic semiotics (Rosiek, 2013). The Deweyan-informed understanding of experience within narrative inquiry, Clandinin has stated, is relational across time places, and relationship, and is,

> …composed and lived over time, as studied and understood as a narrative phenomenon and as represented through narrative forms of representation (2013, p. 15).

Both methodologies, a term I am using loosely to also reference commonly associated approaches and methods, also enable an approach to fieldwork in which flexibility and adjustments to research questions can be justified based on unfolding lines of inquiry and the collaborative nature of research. Anthropologists Douglas Holmes and George E. Marcus, for example have described new forms of ethnographic collaboration as involving an "experimental ethos" in which reflexive subjects can be "epistemic partners" (Holmes & Marcus, 2012, p. 128-129). Narrative inquiry priorities relational inquiry, continuous, and social understanding of experience in collaboration with participants, meaning lives-in-becoming are also under study (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30) and there is an interactive quality to the research-researched relationship (Pinnegar & Dynes, 2007, p.7).

This flexibility was important to my research project, as I found education liaisons in both Minnesota and Pakistan preferred to bound their stories in many instances to specific times and spaces of sociality (e.g., small groups of other liaisons or like-minded colleagues in specific rooms inside schools or building or outside of school), and

to negotiate research questions or general inquiries based on what seemed like an almost intuitive assessment of risk over time and in certain situations (e.g., raising, retracting and rephrasing questions around sensitive topics such as funding, sectarian politics, concealed crimes, organizational corruption, etc.) Forms of epistemic collaboration entailed, for example, control over textual data (i.e., participants could view, have, and destroy notes), collaboratively thinking through what and how to share stories and in what contexts), and collaboratively anticipating the limits and possibilities of knowledge-seeking within organizational spaces.

Ethnography and narrative inquiry as borderlands. Methodologists have debated the feasibility of 'blending' narrative and ethnographic approaches. Such blends have been described as occupying narrative inquiry borderlands (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), or, in the case of an ethnographic narrative approach to analysis, as falling outside narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). The extent to which epistemic principles other than an individual's lived experience in many ways determines to what extent a study falls under the narrative inquiry 'field' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Such borderlands can be argued to include sociologists Jaber F. Gubrium's and James A. Holstein's view of the analysis of narrative reality as social, with a minimalist, pragmatic view of theory. They define narrative reality as the "socially situated practice of storytelling…. including accounts provided both within and outside of formal interviews," with 'the field' an extended framework that includes stories and storytelling (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p.2). This method of 'narrative ethnography' is "attuned to discursive contours and old-fashioned naturalistic observation," and is both theoretical and empirical (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p.22).

My study falls within this blended approach to ethnography and narrative inquiry, in that I have attempted to balance a prioritization of the individual lived experiences of education liaisons, with the systematic study of 'the culture' of my participants, as told through stories in situated contexts that include a theoretical understanding of 'culture' as shaped at some levels by dominate ideologies, forces and mythic imaginaries, such as global neo-capitalist formations. I also found education liaisons, as epistemic partners, co-directed the study toward stories and narratives as a primarily way to communicate how they made sense of the issues involved in working as a liaison in institutions, and as a form of communication and performance of the self.

Additionally, a traditional ethnographic method of seeking data triangulation through direct observation and involvement as a participant in field sites and access to multiple data sources had to be re-conceptualized in my study, given the physical and psychological riskiness of field sites (e.g., liaisons in Minnesota largely perceived school spaces as often unfriendly and often risky sites, given their lived experiences, roles as advocates in a de-facto racialized and segregated space, and the insecurity of their unlicensed and non-unionized positions, and liaisons in Pakistan similarly trod ambitious spaces, negotiating gender-based suspicions as working females in largely male spaces, the advocacy of gender rights in a patriarchal society, and interaction with post-colonial, Western people and institutions in a highly politicized context). My presence as a Western, European-American woman in some ways increased the perceived risk felt by my participants, and I thus tried to allow my participants to define the 'time-space' field site, which was often marginalized places within and outside education institutions (e.g., coffee shops, homes, or office space secluded from the traffic of everyday institutional

activity, and stories dislocated in time (e.g., being shared after official work days, or located in expansive sweeps of time or differently framed, recursive tellings.)

Rationale for using multi-sited ethnography. In this section I will discuss my rationale for choosing a multi-sited research field, with a particular focus on multi-sited ethnography as a method that logically fits with my research questions and with my overall framing of education liaisons as potentially embedded, in ways not well understood, in neoliberal global processes and educational cultural myths or constructions of progress, and social imaginaries. I will also discuss the circumstances that led me to define my field site as multi-sited.

Multi-sited ethnography, a term that has perhaps most prominently been developed by anthropologist George E. Marcus in the 1990s, poses a theoretical rethinking of the basic premises of fixed, culture-bounded, Malinowskian ethnography in light of the emergence of 'modern' field sites such as institutions, new ethical and practical challenges, and anthropological attention to transnational issues and flows. Marcus has described multi-sited ethnography as aesthetically challenging "certain kinds of research horizons," yet conceivably still falling within the realm of ethnographic method (Marcus, 2012) through the mapping of a space or field of action through the "orienting work of ethnography itself" (Marcus, 2011, p. 10). For example, Holmes and Marcus (2012) have argued that institutional milieus today offer poorly understood challenges related to transparency, information, knowledge, and the work of negotiation, and constitute a different fieldwork character in which a reflexive view of collaboration and the nature of the subject may mean a shift from the descriptive-analytics functions of ethnography to "acts of deferral" (Holmes & Marcus, 2012, p. 127).

Mark-Anthony Falzon (2012) has outlined three reasons for using multi-sited ethnography – 1) it can produce different notions of space, which is socially produced, 2) it can address the inadequacy of the notion of the 'local' in contemporary society, a "cautious analytical holism" that revolves around displacement and larger wholes such as transnationalism and globalism, and historical-pragmatic reasons, such as the academic practice of shorter field stints (2012, p. 5). Other ethnographers have articulated additional reasons for undertaking multi-sited fieldwork, such as Dominguez's (2012), metaphor of a three-person tango to make the case that switching fieldsites and disrupting the 'hegemonic here' and the 'hegemonic there' is useful.

Critiques of multi-sited ethnography have included a number of issues, as Falzon has noted (2012). These include a lack of richness and depth resulting from the re-definition of the ethnographic field site as a prolonged acquaintance with places and people, an implicit or tacit holism, and lack of reflexivity or a rationale in defining a 'site.' Hage, for example, has argued that "what is humanly and physically possible" has a way of defining sties, whether the 'site' is a transnational family in specific locations that are grounded in each other, or one specific location such as a village a – choice of transnational culture versus settlement culture, even though "one cannot be understood separately from the other." It may be better to use the concept of a single geographically discontinuous site than multi-sitedness (Hage, 2005, p.466-477). Falzon also has argued against conflating multi-sitedness with perspectivism, since multi-sitedness denotes some form of geographical-spatial de-centredness (Falzon, 2012).

Another indirect approach to the criticisms of multi-sited ethnography, namely that such ethnographies lack the ethnographic imperatives of time, depth, and field, is the

more recent emergence of global ethnography, such as the multi-sited global ethnography undertaken by Debbie Epstein and her colleagues, to use travel ideas and practices themselves to "foreground the intersections of gender, class, race, sexuality and locality and the complex renderings of power and politics that this involves and invokes over time and place" (Epstein, Fahey, & Kenway, 2013, p. 473). The global ethnographic approach was introduced by Burawoy et al. (2000), according to Epstein and her colleagues (2013), and includes three axes of globalization: global forces such as capitalism, modernity and colonialism, connections, and imaginations.

Drawing on multi-sited and global notions of ethnography, Cindy Katz (2004) developed the approach of 'countertopography,' which is more than comparative thick description, to describe spatialized abstractions "that challenge dominate ways of thinking about globalization and thereby may enable new political possibilities" (Watson & Till, 2009, p. 124). Katz has described countertopography as a way to explore "connections among particular historical geographies by virtue of their relationship to a specific abstract process," since topographies simultaneously offer a description of a particular landscape and produce the landscape itself, a means of creating global reality (2004, p. xiv). Katz more specifically stated, in describing a rationale for contrasting how children in Sudan and New York are both connected to and displaced from neoliberal global processes in order to gain insights through a parallax view,

> Drawing out the structural similarities between these two sites and examining how particular children are deskilled and marooned within them is a means of forging a different geographical imagination, one that might enable new forms of political identification (2004, p. xiii).

I draw upon Katz's work, particularly the idea of a parallax view, because it provides a way to conceptually and empirically consider how education liaisons in multiple field sites are linked to globalizing practices and imaginaries of modern education. At the same time, they can be seen as simultaneously displaced from local communities and institutions of practice through differentially experienced global political priorities around education. This includes the shifting production of marginalized identities within a local-global nexus, and processes of concealment and revelation around imaginaries, such as educational tropes such as urban Black youth and 'oppressed,' Moslem girls as symbols of the truth and non-truth of educational progress.

Although Minnesota and Pakistan are two very different sites with little that appears to be in common – one is in the 'developed' world and the other in the 'developing' world, one has a long history of racial educational inequities and the other a comparatively short history of gender educational inequities -– they represent, I argue in this study, two counter-intuitive, paired extremes of the imaginary of modern education. Salvaging the future rather than the past, the positioning of girls' education in Pakistan as a new and promising educational project within the legacy of a neo-colonial intervention can be contrasted with efforts to resuscitate Black education in the U.S., through a re-accounting of the past and dance of domestic political finger pointing. Positioning multiple field sites within a global field bounded by the conceptual and empirical practices of education thus provides a rationale for a study that seeks to understand the education liaison position as a complexly lived experience that can conceptually be viewed in relation to each other. .

Yet in both sites of this study, I did not initially intend to focus on the education liaison position. In Pakistan, the site I first visited for two months in 2008-2009, I was focused on understanding girls' education as an enrollment and persistence issue, using a primarily qualitative research design in partnership with the research needs of an INGO. I was impressed by the capabilities, passion, intelligence, and sheer stamina of the gender liaisons I worked with at the time, but it was only later that I reflected on the stories they told – stories often marginal to our 'real' research project – as signifying the complexity and importance of the gender liaison position itself, along with the practice and meaning of girls' education in Pakistan.

In Minnesota, where I worked on a grant for school liaisons who worked with African American students and families and special education disproportionality, it wasn't until several years of reflecting on the stories of the participants I'd met, that I began to perceive the lived experience of liaisons as raising fundamental questions about race and education. Separate from the grant, which involved about 60 liaisons and hundreds of licensed educators over about three years, I worked with a smaller group of liaisons interested in sharing and co-writing narratives and stories about their professional lives. In many cases, these participants already had or were working on, their own visual, textual and other expressive art forms about their experiences.

In working with liaisons in Minnesota, I found myself reflecting on my experiences with gender liaisons in Pakistan, as themes emerged through the juxtaposition of issues. One of these was the meaning of marginality as an insider-outsider. For example, negotiating Blackness and gender, in an official capacity, was something I perceived more clearly juxtaposed across geographies, where in different

ways, liaison voices were silenced, coopted, and amplified through the dominant ahistorical, optimistic social imaginary of education. The empathetic fallacy, as used in critical race theory, "recognizes a naïve tendency to assume a kind of linear morale progress in history, based on people's empathetic identification with the oppression of others" (Hennen, 2014).

I thus have attempted to position my research as multi-sited, in order to allow an analysis of such possible global connections and disjunctures around the process of school engagements with 'marginalized' students and communities, and vice versa.

Setting of the Study

The setting of my study takes place in two sites. My primary ethnographic field site and the site of most of my data collection took place in Minnesota, in the greater metropolitan area of the 11 counties that make up the 'Twin Cities' (i.e., Minneapolis and St. Paul.) In the Twin Cities, I worked with around 60 education liaisons from almost a dozen school districts over the course of two years, and then collaborated with five participants in this study for another two years. The Twin Cities has one of the largest racial achievement gaps in the U.S., particularly among Black students. The metro area has an estimated Black population of around 300,000 people, representing about 10% of the population, with schools and communities increasingly segregated along racial lines. Education reform has been a contentious topic in Minnesota and particularly in the Twin Cities area, where national and local non-profits have been accused of trying to privatize and profit off schools, and a charter school movement – the first in the nation – has been inroads in opposition to, in collusion with, other established educational factions such as teacher's unions, state bureaucracies, and higher education institutions.

The second site is in Pakistan, in the provinces of Kyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. In both provinces, I worked in areas with active girls' education projects funded by INGOs. Although in both locations residents were primarily Pashto-speaking, the settings were different in terms of their histories, language affiliations, and educational issues. In Kyber Pakhtunkhwa, my field site consisted of the Allai *tehsil,* a primarily Pashto-speaking part of Batagram District, which abuts the Indus River and Swat Valley. Allai *tehsil* was badly damaged in a 2005 earthquake, and at the time of my field site visit many girls' schools still consisted of tents. I visited six villages, some without paved roads and of various socio-economic status. In Balochistan, I worked and visited students, families, and educational staff in their homes and offices in Quetta, a city of around one million residents. I also visited two sprawling refugee camps from an hour to two hours outside of Quetta toward the Afghanistan border, about half a dozen times.

Participant Selection

My primary participants included five liaisons in Minnesota and five liaisons in Pakistan, who were drawn from larger groups of liaisons I worked with on different projects over a period of time (e.g., a five to six year period of time in Minnesota, and in Pakistan a few months timespan with occasional follow-up contact over the succeeding years with three of the gender liaisons).

I selected my participants in Minnesota based on several factors, such as time availability, an already established personal relationship, and interest in collaborating on exploring the lived experiences of liaisons in the context of schools, as per narrative inquiry methods. I also selected participants in different school districts, and in different

schools, due in part to look for broader ethnographic generalizations, and in part to bound personal and professional experiences. Liaisons, as individuals, sometimes had different versions of the same event, or competed for the same position in schools. Since we shared sometimes conflicted professional circles, trust and confidentiality was something we frequently discussed, although I found this became less of a concern over the years as our work and history with each other grew. Although race was not a factor in my selection – I also collaborated with European American, Hmong, and Latino liaisons as part of the grant – the majority of liaisons who I met who were working with Black students and families themselves identified as Black or African American, and my participants were all women who identified as African, African American, and/or bi-racial, although terminology and racial labeling was something that I found we treated as fluid, and in many cases situational. All were employed in schools as liaisons at the time of the study, and some had children in school. Some had worked in schools as a liaison or in other positions for more than two decades, and a few for only one or two years. Three were Minnesota natives, and two were from other parts of the U.S.

In Pakistan, my participant selection was similarly based mainly on time availability and mutual interest in the issues surrounding girls' education and the position of professional women in Pakistan. Because I do not speak Urdu or Pashto, my selection was also limited to gender liaisons who had at least some fluency in English, which included everyone except two women.

I kept my sample size intentionally limited, since my intent was to gain narrative and ethnographic insight about the lived experience of liaisons, rather than to seek empirical, post-positivist or positivist norms of generalizability and reliability. As a

participant observer, I also drew on my interactions with other liaisons, teachers, administrators, and policy makers and education government officials over the course of the study.

Data Collection Methods. I used in-depth interviews and participant-observation as my primary data collection methods, along with secondary document reviews. The bulk of my research was collected from 2012 through 2014, although I drew on some data collected during 2008-2009. The data collected during this time was approved by the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board approved the data collected during this time, and informed consent was verbally obtained from each participant.

Interviews with participants generally ranged from half an hour to several hours, and were co-directed by my participants and I. In Minnesota I generally interviewed participants once a month, and at times once or twice a week during periods of more intense interaction. All my participants worked in school districts that had been formally identified by the state as over-identifying Black students for either or both discipline and special education placements, and all but two worked in racially isolated schools.

Cumulatively, my notes from each liaison I worked with in Minnesota ranged from about 24 hours to more than 100 hours, and consisted of from 31 to 134 single-spaced typed notes for each participant. Interviewed took place over the phone and at different locations throughout the metro area, in coffee shops and homes and cars. I transcribed all notes in real time, and shared them with my participants for their review and personal records via email.

I was also a participant observer in the work of liaisons during visits to schools and school districts, and during conferences and trainings for school staff over this time

period. This level of participant observation gave me insight into how education policy makers, professional development experts, and administration and school staff made sense of and engaged in working with liaisons and Black students and families around issues such as racial disproportionality in the Twin Cities, without directly attempting to be a participant observer in my participants' schools – although, due to my multiple roles as a researcher and staff member, I observed some of my participant's school sites. I did not, however, include these field notes in my analysis. I also worked with more than 60 school liaisons from more than half a dozen school districts in the Twin Cities areas, although I did not draw on any of my experiences or material from that time for this study, other than as general background material.

In Pakistan, my data collection through interviews and participant observation with liaisons during 2008-2009 were generally confined to the two-month period during which I was in the field, although I was able to gather additional information from three liaisons via phone and social media at later points. I stayed in contact through word-of-mouth with the other two gender liaisons, but language communication difficulties and their changes in location hampered direct contact. I conducted liaison interviews in the three locations where I worked – Islamabad, Allai, and Quetta. Most interviews were conducted in private, in office-living quarters, during transit in SUVs, and at social events outside of formal work and living areas, such as in homes and restaurants. They ranged from 15 minutes, to several hours. Cumulatively from my five participants, they resulted in 60 single-spaced, typed notes about events and stories that lie 'outside' our formal data collection process that consisted of interviewing girls, families, and teachers.

As a participant observer, I also conducted interviews with about 60 girls and their families, and about 10 teachers, in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. I also drew as background material on dozens of interviews and focus groups conducted separately by other NGO staff as part of their research on girls' education. In Allai, this consisted of interviews in six villages out of the 24 villages where the NGO worked, chosen because they were heterogeneous along a rural-urban and socioeconomic axes, and because they had good relations with the NGO. In Quetta, this consisted of interviews during field site visits to schools in refugee camps and to two government schools in Pishin District, outside of Quetta. My face-to-face interviews were conducted primarily in English or Pashto with the help of one or several translators, who always were female when interviewing girls and women. A month-long follow-up visit to Pakistan in 2013, as part of an education project focused on secondary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sind provinces, also contributed to my background understanding of girls' education and education staffing issues in Pakistan.

Issues of quality and rigor. Qualitative research has its own logic and criteria of validity, but internal divisions means claims to validity, reliability and generalizability can range along different ontological and epistemological commitments, such as along realist to constructivist axes (e.g., claims to depict an independent social reality versus counter-claims of naïve realism), and the relationship of research to practice. In this study, I am drawing on general qualitative concepts of validity such as insight, verisimilitude (i.e., the quality of seeming real or true), and trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness was influentially defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as involving five criteria – credibility (i.e. internal validity such as prolonged engagement),

transferability (i.e., external validity such as thick description, dependability (i.e., reliability such as triangulation of methods), confirmability (i.e., objectivity such as data support for findings, interpretations, and recommendations), and reflexivity. More generally, a criteria of sound qualitative scholarship is that it is used within a larger alignment of premises, assumptions, and metaphysics – all part of the important question of what counts as knowledge (Lincoln, 2009).

Within the narrative inquiry field, validity has been re-conceptualized as apparency, verisimilitude, and transferability (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and has argued to be non-numerical (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative 'validity' is, it has been argued, is based on establishing authenticity and trustworthiness through presenting data and their interpretation that reveal the relation between the researchers and researched, and the questioning of meanings and explanations through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (i.e., space-time, location, and sociality) in a way that reveals questions of meaning, value and integrity (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In this framing of validity and reliability, 'one' is both enough, in a literal sense, and meaningless, in the sense that numbers alone can be sterile (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Other scholars have argued that narrative validity needs to move beyond researchers and the researched and embrace the perspectives of utility and audience, and take seriously issues of trustworthiness and quality (Loh, 2013). By embracing both a general qualitative definition of validity, reliability and generalizability, and attention to a narrative inquiry definition of important criteria, I aim to blend such criteria.

Analysis of the Data

My data analysis techniques are consistent with that of ethnography and narrative inquiry. As defined by Erickson (1986), ethnographic data analysis is a cyclical and both a deductive and inductive analytic process, involving empirical assertions and interpretations that lead to the vicarious experience of the setting, an understanding of the full range of evidence upon which interpretations are based, and the author's theoretical and personal perspective as it shifts over time. Data analysis informed by narrative reality approaches, more specifically, pays attention to both the internal and external organization of accounts and questions such as who produces particular stories, who listens and under what circumstances, where are they likely to be encountered, how are they accepted and challenged, and how narrative work and narrative environments are reflexively intertwined (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). Techniques of data analysis in narrative inquiry that I have used include an attempt to stay within three-dimensional spaces of temporality, sociality and place, by using long vignettes and collaboratively re-shaping them through on-going reflection with my participants, a process of analysis (Clandinin, 2013, p. 216).

Specifically, I approached my data analysis in two ways: First, by reflecting on narrative constructions of meaning with my individual participants, by reviewing the co-constructed material and field notes we had gathered over time. This process was done within a compressed time-space period with my participants from Pakistan, since communication posed practical problems. Second, I combined all my field notes both Minnesota and Pakistan, and used theoretically informed coding to interrogate the data using the ethnographic methods outlined above. Arriving at core assertions about the storied experiences and meanings of being an education liaison within local and global

contexts, I then arranged the data in largely a traditional ethnographic format, while including aspects of my textual analysis using narrative inquiry techniques.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations shaped this study in multiple ways. In addition to my Institutional Review Board approval process, I attempted to approach fieldwork with attention to the desires of my participants – an attempt which likely fell short in many ways - and reflexive, systematic questioning of my in many ways outsider status both in Minnesota and Pakistan. Examples of this approach included incorporating professional development coaching into discussions with co-participants as much as I could (i.e., reviewing resumes in both places, providing research on business-professional skills and leadership, utilizing coaching techniques on constructive feedback, etc.) Although the data is anecdotal, my co-researchers in many cases expressed interest and appreciation for this type of approach, and in most but not all cases, co-participants negotiated better salaries and/or positions during this study.

Narrative inquiry scholars have paid particular attention to the ethical issues involved in narrative inquiry, where trusting relationships are often formed through the relational emphasis of the methodology, such as the sharing of personal life stories and continuing relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et. al, 2007). Maintaining the trust and privacy of the people I include in my study is a priority, as well as trying to find ways to economically compensate participants for their time, and to ensure ownership of their work as much as possible. This meant omitting or changing the identities of locations, schools, and names, and being alert to any information that could identify participants.

Scholarship around ethnography has also been concerned with ethics, particularly the positionality of researchers since the reflexive turn often associated with *Writing Culture*. In retrospect, in positioning myself as a researcher, I began this study with little understanding of the scholarly, ethical, and conceptual issues of writing across, with and about race, class, nationality and other forms of historically and culturally situated 'difference.' As a Western, European-American woman from a middle-class background, I was in many ways in the ethically complex position of 'assisting,' within an institutionally hierarchical environment in which I held a position of relatively greater (although modest) authority, mostly "brown and black" men and women on how to help other brown and black people, to draw on Gayatri Spivaks' famous phrase about "white men saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak, 2008).

Additionally, the circumstances that enabled me to access field research sites involving stark power differentials - an economically challenged part of Minneapolis, and parts of Pakistan marked by uneven class differentials and armed conflict – also reflected a complex social ethical positionality and my cultural socialization, at some levels, into what has been described as a 'frontier mentality' – a neocolonial and imperialist comfort with a logic of domination (Minha-ha, 2014).

During the course of my study, I increasingly found reflexive attention to my positionality useful in better understanding methodological dilemmas (e.g., the data I gathered as in many ways a cultural 'outsider' to would likely have been quite different than that gathered by an 'insider,' etc.) but also as a kind of productive possibility in examining education institutions and schools through perspectival insight. This includes the possibility of constructing a more ethical sense of self with a broader and more

complex understanding of reciprocity and obligations. Additionally, reflecting on situations in which different perspectives of 'problems' seemed to arise, I tried to use such moments of tension and insight to consciously focus on a feminist conception of ethical, collaborative, reflexive practice issues – what Spivak might call the "uncorrosive rearrangement of desire" (Spivak, 2010, 2011).

Limitations. This study's limitations are many. They include my attempt to use multi-sited ethnography despite limited fieldwork opportunities in Pakistan, and using two paradigms of research that are not always compatible. My initial lack of familiarity with critical issues around race and gender, along with my lack of experiential knowledge of marginalized communities in Minnesota and Pakistan and positionality as a member of a dominant social group, impacted the quality of data I was able to gather. I also lacked important forms of insider status in both Minnesota and Pakistan (e.g., having a fulltime position within schools or an INGO), and had limited access to field sites in terms of time and daily access, which limits the trustworthiness of my data in both ethnographic and narrative inquiry terms in certain respects. This included my ability to engage in persistent observation of and thick description of liaison workplaces in Minnesota, and my limited ability to engage in member-checking and debriefing with participants in Pakistan.

In this section, I have presented my research design. In the next section, I will present my research findings, beginning first with data from Minnesota and concluding with data from Pakistan.

CHAPTER 6 - FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into the following sections, which build on each other to explore the experiences of education liaisons. Although my primary focus is on education liaisons in Minnesota, I will also draw upon the experiences of education liaisons in Pakistan to throw the cultural dimensions of liaison experiences into sharper relief. The sections include:

Section One: Introduction

Section Two: True Believers in Education

Section Three: Imaginative Geographies

Section Four: 'Unprofessional' Perspectives & Liminal Dispositions

Section Five: Equity Water Wells & Unruly Corridors

Section Six Contesting Moral and Cultural Expertise

Section Seven: Illusions of Transparency

Section Eight: The Practice of Girls' Education in the Field: Liaisons in Pakistan

Section One: Introduction

As previously discussed, the work of liaisons is often elusive. They are vastly out-numbered by licensed staff such as teachers, social workers, and administrators, and may never meet the majority of parents, caretakers, and students at a school. Also, their positions are relatively temporary both in funding terms – liaisons are mostly funded in line with state and federal policies and guidelines –and in conceptual terms, since their position is often linked to a school having a significant number of racially and ethnically diverse students. The work sites of liaisons are also fairly mobile, and may involve circulating throughout a school, a school district, to sites within the community such as organizations and home visits.

In the following sections I will attempt to trace the interactions of liaisons, therefore, through narratives and stories that create 'places' through re-constructed memories and re-tellings of events over time, in specific locations that acquire social meaning to my co-participants in ways that might not be visible to others.

Additionally, I will argue that although liaisons for the most part did not describe their experiences drawing on theoretical concepts such as 'neoliberalism' and 'governmentality,' as would be expected in a position that is focused on pragmatic concerns and issues, their stories and concepts of place often involved an over-arching engagement with and probing of larger economic forces and its impact upon marginalized communities and education institutions, and the forms power was wielded in schools.

Liaisons, for example, often spoke about schools as sites of inexplicable wealth generation, from which they often felt excluded. Money seemed to be 'dropped from above' in the form of multi-million dollar grants (e.g., the almost $12 million in integration funds St. Paul Public Schools received in 2013-14). The rumored existence of such money was almost a mystical 'half-truth,' and its disbursal a mystery. One liaison, who moved into an equity administration job in a large Minnesota school district in 2012, spoke of gaining an entirely different understanding of school as a political process after she began working with actual budgets. Another Minnesota liaison described people in positions of seeing power in schools as 'wizards' – people who had power to make things happen, in inexplicable ways to many liaisons, whose understanding of modern education organizations was from the ground up.

Liaisons in Pakistan also showed a keen interest in the relation of girls' education brideswealth. Educated girls' bride price, or *walwar* in Pashto, the money paid by the

groom's family to the bride's family, was a constant topic of conversation among liaisons in Pakistan, a sort of on-going and fascinating market in which high sums received special attention.

Schools also were becoming visible as places of political activity and hierarchy to liaisons. During my time in the field, the co-participants I worked with had become increasing aware of the existence and role of state education licensing boards, education administrator bodies and committees, teacher unions, and parent rights and parent education groups, in different ways in both Minnesota and Pakistan. Community oriented mass media, social justice-oriented parent training programs, and school equity training programs contributed to this trend, as well as the economic downturn in the U.S. and struggle for middle class jobs. In Minnesota, three of the five primarily liaisons whose experiences I drew upon in this study had their own or close family member's houses foreclosed upon within a three-year period, reflecting a gap in homeownership between whites and people of color that is the worst in 50 states (Matos, 2013). In Pakistan, education and reform and the need to address corruption, such as the hoarding of cooking oil meant for families who sent children to school and 'ghost' teachers, was an issue I found NGO staff, mostly young men, wanted to explore.

Terms such as 'institutionalized racism,' educational inequality, and the school-to-prison pipeline, also began to pepper the conversations of many of my co-participants in Minnesota during the course of this study, as a result of school-based professional development trainings, more discussion in the media, and the changing role of liaisons toward more explicit equity goals. In Pakistan, my co-participants largely eschewed educational jargon in our English-language discussions.

Thus, liaisons had a complex, if distinctly subjective, understanding of neoliberal education forces and forms of governing power in both locations, which helped shape their experiences of and understanding of marginality in complex. They also had an interest in what anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli has described as the liminal nature of social formations, in which certain "categories of life" gain "content, being, and enunciation" while others, who have no actual or potential relation to the market, do not (Povinelli, 2013, p. 556). This specter of death, or abandonment, had an ontological pull that underlay liaisons' metaphorical work in both locations. Liaisons in both Minnesota and Pakistan struggled to speak into being liminal categories of life in different contexts – for example, drawing on the suicide of an African American special education student "zombie" in Minnesota, whose last weeks on a new, prescribed medication led my co-participant to describe him as a "zombie," and the disappearances and dramatic circumstances and decisions, linked to the violent deaths of student and teachers in Pakistan.

Section Two: True Believers in Education

Although Western education institutions are in many ways modern, secular bureaucracies, they also function as quasi-sacred sites, places where there are almost messianic beliefs in education as part of a civilizing movement that can change the world for the better by helping to empower individuals as part of a rational process for seeking universal principals of justice and morality (Meyer & Jepperson, 2013). In this chapter, I will discuss how liaisons in Minnesota encounter beliefs around education, and how they subjectively experience their own personal beliefs around education as professionals.

This is an important place to start, I will argue, because the gap between education as an ideal, and education as a reality in which black students often encounter inequitable educational opportunities, loomed particularly large for liaisons. Their own histories as racialized, black students and professionals in schools, their daily interaction with marginalized black students and families, and the collective legacy of education as an often politicized pathway of freedom and opportunity contribute to the complexity of belief around education.

One example of this complexity is the publicly debated issue of a 'school-to-prison' pipeline' - the idea that urban schools function "as mechanisms to prepare select populations for underemployment, containment, or incarceration" (Meiners, 2007, 176). This issue loomed large for most of the liaisons I worked with, Sandra, Melinda, and Lea, in particular, spoke of seeing students and young relatives sucked into the system in ways that the education system seemed to enable, and that involved incidents at school – such as being perceived to ogle or steal from a teacher. At least a handful of liaisons I worked with in Minnesota from 2011-2013 left public education and found work in charter schools, citing this issue as the reason for giving up on public schools. Sandra, for example, at one point emailed a long poem to her colleagues in different schools and organizations around the theme of the school-to-prison pipeline, expressing an outrage that at liaison professional development events she usually kept subdued, allowing, like many but not all of the black women liaisons I worked with, black men to expressively dominate meetings. It stated,

> I am weary. Weary now of so much. So much that I have no words for. Weary of turning hurt into intellectual prowess and suffering into academic babble.

> Animals are not asked to mask their pain, but human beings whose skin triggers the fear of a nation are trained and expected to perfect the practice. And if we scream out – if we give voice to our suffering – we frighten you so deeply you lock us down.
>
> I'm weary of those whose voices are stifled, being persecuted for acting out what they can't say. What else is one to do but "act' if your screams are muffled and silenced under a blanket of bureaucracy and procedure, of indifference and acts as empty as the promises that inspired them.
>
> I'm weary of classrooms that serve as training grounds for prison – the fatigues they hand out look like report cards. The evidence is everywhere – the product of this design is to cage these children in lies that take shape into bars.
>
> I'm weary of a system that prefers robots to revolutionaries, and paper pushers to educators And talks about 'no tolerance' when they tolerate a miscarriage of morality daily. I'm wearing of watching my life played out on the pages of the youth I serve – the dark ink of injustice staining their pristine dreams (Fieldnotes, 9/27/13).

But the liaisons I worked with also tended to place huge importance on education, going to great lengths to ensure their children, grandchildren, and relatives got the most they could out of school. In some cases this meant quiet but persistent encouragement at home. In other cases it meant shuffling between charter and magnet schools, joining school boards, and getting kids into private schools. Regina, for example, made sure her daughter knew from any early age that she was expected to earn a college scholarship. She also went to great lengths, digging into her savings and spending many hours

commuting, to ensure her daughter did not have to attend school in the school district where she worked. When I asked her one day if it would be nice to know her daughter attended the same school district where she worked and had created so many creative programs for students, Regina responded,

> Heck no! I'm not sending her to (blank). (Blank) is a racist place to work and be. My daughter goes to that (a private) school. She's been there since she was in kindergarten. I'm blessed. She makes 'a's' and 'b's.' I made her know from an early age, "Mommy doesn't have money. So you have to work hard and go to college for free" (Fieldnotes, 6/19/13).

This dialectical encounter with belief appeared to a central to many liaisons' experiences with education, and belies the sometimes stereotypical, one-dimensional public portrayals of educational champions, such as educational reformer and one-time D.C. Public School Chancellor Michelle Rhee or Pakistani activist and schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, who survived being shot in the head in 2012. It signals a kind of 'true belief,' a belief in education despite disconfirming evidence.

But suspicion of educator's 'true motives' was also a common theme among liaisons within the crab-barrel-like environments that characterize Minnesota, where competition for jobs is rife due in part due to lack of equitable opportunities and high racial disparities in employment rates. This meant liaisons were neither simplistically naïve or complicit within bureaucratic education organizations, subjects of quasi-subordination, false racial and gender consciousness, or cynical careerism. The African American superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools, interviewed shortly after

retiring in 2014 after what she described as a hurtful Twitter campaign in which she was called an 'Uncle Tom,' stated,

> Politics are ever-present. There's an adult agenda that is so strong that it overshadows — I mean, everybody is for equity, everybody is for kids, but when it comes down to it, everybody is really for themselves. That's probably wrong to say, but I do believe that (Hawkins, 2015).

Liaisons also sometimes questioned their own, each others', and their supervisors' material interests as school employees. People often know each other and each other's family histories in spheres outside education, creating overlapping economic and moral economies. Ong has defined moral economies, as "a web of unequal relationships of exchange based on a morality of reciprocity, mutual obligation, and protection (Ong, 2006, p. 199). Yet most liaisons' belief in the importance of their work, alongside earning a living, manifested itself in long hours spent helping students and families after school, in the evening, and on weekends, and in persistence over years and even decades.

Performances of belief. Rather than a consistent and rigidly coherent view of modern public education, my co-participants often performed different states of belief in discussing their jobs. Public education could be framed as an almost mythical pathway to opportunity and a faith in a better tomorrow. But it could also be a dangerous pathway to ruin and further subjugation. One of the things I came to appreciate about Breanna over the years, for example, was her agility in expressing beliefs that seemed to contradict each other, a contradiction that she herself would note, sometimes laughing.

Assessing her third year as a cultural liaison in a predominately white school district one day, Breanna spoke heatedly about her school district's newest integration

plan. We were catching up by phone after the start of a new school year. Breanna's supervisor, with which she had a sometimes close and sometimes conflicted relationship, had told her "straight-out" that the plan was designed to enlighten the white kids in the district, despite the fact that the school district's students of color made up about half the student population. As part of that plan, more students would be directed into the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, a program which Breanna perceived as primarily geared toward white students within the district's racially isolated schools. Breanna stated,

> I'm starting to get so sick in my stomach sometimes when I watch what's going on at the school. It's disgusting now that I'm opening my eyes and seeing. I need to move on. I need to feel that my voice matters. I can't do this any more (Fieldnotes, 11/2/14).

Breanna was particularly ashamed, she said, that she hadn't believed her older son's stories of what went on at the school district "all those years," and had often disciplined him when the school called her to report misbehavior. Now, after working at the district herself, she reflected on her son's tales of staff lying, and believed her son had told the truth. Being a receptionist in the corporate world had been easier and "totally different," she continued, because practices of deception were much easier to spot. Communication was much more straightforward.

Yet Breanna's disgust co-existed with, and perhaps was in part constituted by, her belief in education. Over the three years I had know her, Breanna had been a passionate school advocate and believer in education, especially for the about 20 percent

of black students at her district. In the midst of a conversation about how new teachers were worse than in previous decades, for example, Breannas stated,

> The black family lacks the education, because its always been stolen from us from day one. So right now when we have the equal opportunity to get education, so we can take of our families, to have the knowledge and literacy to read simple things, like the mail - all of that starts right now with our kids.
>
> Let stop right now with the achievement gap, and start with the connection part. The academic part is really huge… we've been cheated out our education. But right now, we don't have the same compassion with the teachers… you've got kindergartners being sent out to time out. You've got them being diagnose being diagnosed with ADHD, EBD, not wanting to be in classrooms. Where did that come from? I don't remember being 6 years old and not wanting to go to school. Going to school was the best thing in your life at 6 years old (Fieldnotes, 3/6/15).

Brenna's continued to voice doubt about the effectiveness of schooling during the time I knew her, but she did so with more force and with more certainty as she learned more about issues and gained more experience in school. Reflecting with her later in the year, Breanna brought up a proposed legislative bill that would take into account teacher performance, along with seniority, during layoffs. When I asked Breanna if she agreed the argument that performance evaluations would create more competition and hurt a culture of teacher collaboration, I was surprised to hear Breanna's decisive answer. She stated,

> Good! I think (hiring-firing) teachers is great, because I think that puts the passion back into teaching for me. The people who have seniority may have lost the

> passion for teaching, or they don't' recognize their time is done….We've got to start building better relationships with the kids. Right now they're not feeling the connection with the teacher. If I see 20 (black) kids a day, I may get one person who expresses to me, "I love that teacher." That's not good (Fieldnotes, 3/6/15).

Breanna had just learned that teachers could gain tenure, a word she had been unfamiliar with until recently. But this knowledge, similar to her growing knowledge about special education, integration revenue, and other issues, seemed to fuel Breanna's expanding beliefs around education. Breanna's belief in the importance of her role also grew. The more she lost faith in her school district, the more she believed her job was needed. On another day, Brenna had reflected,

> I feel strongly about being the voice of the community for those not able to speak for themselves and their families, because they are intimidated by the staff or not sure what to say. I've come across that a lot. I have to ask the questions, "Do you feel this is true, that is true?" Some parents don't know what to say, they just go with the flow. They're taught the school is right. Or sometimes they believe the kid is right, they believe the kid over everything….. If I didn't have the integrity, the pride, the heart, and the compassion for this, I don't think I could help those families. It's so important for parents to feel empowered (Fieldnotes, 4/21/14).

In this way, participants' 'true' beliefs around education were alive, and not possible, I felt, to describe as belief or disbelief. In discussing the links between myths, belief, and denial, Stanley Cohen has described a form of denial that is 'implacatory' - information is not rejected or interpreted, but self-filtered in a way that exceeds the explanations of cognitive science. This is a state of knowing and not knowing at the same

time, a grey area between consciousness and unconsciousness, the realm of collective secrets and myths (Cohen, 2001). Liaisons, I felt, knew or believed the education institution was failing black students in many ways, but also believed in education as a day-to-day activity, not just as a future possibility.

Hindsight as doubt. Another way this 'true' belief in education was expressed was in liaisons' reflections on the ambiguous, hard-to-place role education had played in their own lives. Although because of the present-oriented focus of our research process, or perhaps because of my leeriness in attempting to assume too much 'voice' in re-constructing racial differences, I never asked to do formal biographical interviews. But my co-participants sometimes shared observations about their own experiences attending schools as students in different phases of integration and busing programs within Minnesota, stories whose painful details often echoed the difficult choices my co-participants viewed as often before students of color and their families currently. These fragmentary revelations, alongside a dearth of research literature on black experiencing of schooling in Minnesota, loomed as stories signaling a larger public silence. Although a few black educators had donated personal journals to institutions such as the Minnesota History Center and historian William Greene's book *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Equality in Early Minnesota* explored the brief history of segregated, colored schools in St. Paul before the turn of the century in 1900, I found very little written about the experiential, day-to-day experiences of African Americans. Reflecting on this fact with my primarily ethnically Norwegian grandmother, my grandmother recalled a pre-service teacher within her university teaching cohort complaining about "sassy black children," who she would grab by the neck.

The instructor, my grandmother recalled, had told the teacher he would report anyone who "raised a hand against a child." But this account clearly differed from that of liaisons such as Melinda, whose accounts of going to school – and her resulting beliefs about school today – shifted around themes of trauma, lingering questions and doubts, and passionate belief in the need for an educational justice that eluded and haunted our conversations.

Until a year ago, Melinda, who grew up in Minnesota, had worked in school that housed special education students from all grade levels. The students primarily had Emotional or Behavior Disorder (EBD), a broad, so-called "soft" or interpretively contested disability category that could include anxiety, emotional outbursts, and depression. The school itself was a warehouse, Melinda often said, a place where the predominately white staff had "no hope" for the students, especially the "unruly" African American kids. In Melinda's opinion, most of the kids, regardless of race and ethnicity, had been turned into over-medicated "zombies." Melinda's beliefs about the school, I gradually came to realize over a few years, also drew on some of her own experiences growing up.

One day Melinda, a light-skinned, red-haired, gifted mimic, came to my office. Upon arriving, Melina told me her locker had been in the hallway off which my office was located, in a three-story, periodically rodent-infested campus building that at one time had been a high school. At first I though Melinda was joking, as she often did. But Melinda was serious. As we stood in the quiet hallway after work hours, I could see the long hallway full of unused lockers and florescent lights brought back memories. But these memories appeared to be emotionally dense.

To my surprise Melinda, who other liaisons and I regarded as probably the most genial and easy going of any education specialist any of us knew, described being regularly in conflict with teachers at the school. She was frequently disciplined for being "very verbal," she said. At the time the school was considered liberal. It was an open high school where female students could wear pants, and the teaching corps included many "hippies" and a few openly gay teachers, Melinda said. Yet the politically relaxed and gender-friendly policies did not correlate with racial inclusiveness or critical racial awareness, Melinda continued. One time, Melinda recalled, she told her teacher she planned to be a lawyer. Her teacher responded, "Oh no, you probably can't be that." Another time the principal, who Melinda described as "a real racist," called her "You N (N word)." Melinda recalled blowing up, and her parents came to the school. After that, she became more racially politicized.

> I reached out to the African American Student Committee at Coffman Union, and they started coming over and speaking to the principal and the staff, and it helped. They became my heros and sheros. Wow, they are intelligent people, standing up for the cause. So I became involved in what was going on. We had started having movements at the time, and I started becoming an activist. We were one of the first schools to have Black history month. (Interview, March 13, 2014).

Melinda said despite the conflicts with staff, she was happy at her school, which was predominately white, given her experiences previously. Before arriving at the school, Melinda had been bused from her predominately African American neighborhood in North Minneapolis to a school in the Northeast part of the city, across the Mississippi River. The new school, Sheridan, had been a large, forbidding three-story school in a

predominately Eastern European ethnic neighborhood. It had been a traumatizing experience. Melinda recalled,

> They didn't want no black kids at that school. There were only 25 black kids, and they had people come out with shotguns. They had truckloads coming over, like the dirty South, that was a trip. It went on for a couple of days. That was my first experience of real racism. Kids were getting beaten up. Teachers were real mean and prejudiced. (Interview, March 13, 2014).

Melinda had been relieved to leave Sheridan. Despite conflicts with staff, she had learned to appreciate culturally white activities such as skating and violin from a white teacher. She also had been elected valedictorian after winning a speech contest, an event she recalled with irony. After graduating, she had enrolled at a historically black college in a southern state, where she developed a stuttering impediment. The stuttering led to her to drop out a few years later, after 'multicultural' racial identity and political views – so carefully developed in Minnesota - were challenged.

> Now I can't believe (I won), because I'm at such a loss for words…. At the time our school was fighting for so many things, and the Vietnam war was going on. I ended up going to a predominately black college, and not keeping in touch with the leadership. I love language, I love to hear people speak. I think what happened over the period, it's complicated, because trying to speak in a black environment, you get kind of caught up.
>
> I've always been a person, to say, 'What are you really saying?' Words can be used as weapons, in every sense of the word….I had black and white friends, but I was always identified as a black woman in every sense of they way, so you end

> up being challenged when you meet stronger black women and I know now, they didn't have a voice, and now everybody is trying to say something. (Interview, March 13, 2014).

Melinda's stories and beliefs around education were often nuanced, involving short- and long-term outcomes that were difficult to foresee. Her accounts of school as a liaison were often similarly open ended, recounting events that led to other events, in ways that often involved race, power, and personalities in which 'beliefs' – including her own – were questionable.

In this section, I have explored core beliefs liaisons hold around the meaning of education. Liaisons bring pre-existing beliefs around education to their professional roles, as well as further develop their beliefs as liaisons. Their experiences in school, while in most cases to some extent disillusioning, also strengthen beliefs about education as important, ambiguously knowable, or tragic.

Melina, for example, drew on her own experiences over a lifetime to question the social reality of the educational process, and what it meant as an African American woman. Melinda encountered overt hostility and rejection, but more subtle forms of prejudice at a 'progressive' school were arguably more damaging in the long run. She experienced a loss of agency – literally a loss of voice in both its "verbal" and "rationale" guise – the longer she remained in education.

In the next section, I will demonstrate how the beliefs liaisons bring to their professional roles exist in tension with lived experiences of schools. Similar to liaisons' shifting, agile ability to believe and not believe in the education institution at the same

time – liaisons know and don't know, I will argue, the imaginary zones of belonging and exclusion in schools.

Section Three: Imaginative Geographies

In this chapter I will focus on how liaisons perceive and experience school spaces as sites of exclusion and inclusion. These perceptions and experiences, which can take the form of certain rooms feeling unwelcome, or sensing suddenly chilly or alienating atmospheres, or perceiving 'off-limit' channels of language and data, parallel the larger metaphorical work of untangling educational ideals and the reality of schools as historically and contextually located social institutions, where individuals are engaged in the racialized social constructions of self and others.

Because in my experience the handful of white, Asian, and Latino liaisons I observed and worked with through different programs did not experience spatialized school exclusions in the same way as black liaisons, I will suggest in this section that race is a significant factor in understanding school exclusions as part of complex organizational performances of myths around modern education progress. This includes liaisons' beliefs about the role of race in education, as I explored in the previous section. But the position of liaisons as semi-invisible, relatively low status employees, and their role as 'carriers' of difficult cultural and racial issues, also likely plays a role in the production of invisible lines of territory that I am referring to as 'imaginative geographies.'

Spatial analysis has been used as a tool to study material forms of power and political forms of control (Low, 2009), as has the concept of affect. Ahmed, for example, has used the notion of affect – which she conceptualizes as something that exists apart

from and between individuals, in the sense it articulates past events and histories through "sticky' adherence to people and things – as ordering bodily and social spaces within institutions. In this way, 'diversity' can be incorporated into an institution on the institution's terms, such as institutional "success stories" that can constrain people of color (Ahmed, 2012). I am organizing this section around these constructs, rather than the more typical use of psychological measures such as implicit bias and perceptual schemata that are commonly used in school diversity training programs, because I am seeking to explore how exclusions work on a cultural level in schools. The gap between the ideology of how schools should function, as modern, professional, rationally neutral places, and the reality of schools as marked by signs and symbols demarking hidden rules and secret zones of sociality and access, is the landscape liaisons, saddled by their own true beliefs, wander within.

Negotiating 'racially hostile schools'…with other language. The idea that schools can be racially hostile, or have unwelcoming climates for students and staff of color, or are sites of racial confrontation, has been well documented (Solarzano, 2002; Hardie & Tyson, 2013). Despite color-blind assertions of commitment to diversity, U.S. schools have been argued to be race-making institutions, (Wacqunt, 2002). But less explored are the ways in which staff such as school liaisons negotiate schools they may perceive as racially hostile.

Liaisons' used expressive language such as 'racially hostile' to depict schools in which they worked, a term that I perceived to be different from, yet related to hostile workplaces. While a handful of liaison I knew during this study filed legal hostile workplace complaints through lawyers or directly with the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC), my co-participants' use of phrases such as 'hostile' appeared to be an attempt to name a phenomena that was challenging in its elusiveness. Part of this elusiveness was the very expression, 'racially hostile,' was used selectively and in semi-private and informal spaces.

Conversely, I never heard liaisons refer to 'school climate' – a more neutral term. In 2007 the National School Climate Council (NSCC) (2015) defined school climate, whose five dimensions revolve around safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, and staff (e.g., leadership and professional relationships) as,

> …based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (NSCC, 2015).

The incongruence of terms such as 'hostile' and 'climate' was one of the small ways, I came to believe, that my co-participants' experiences and language appeared to fall into strange voids.

One fall day in 2011, I was invited to a mandatory staff retreat for about two dozen cultural liaisons in suburban schools. The meeting was being held in a newly remodeled three-star hotel, off a major metropolitan highway. As I peered through a glass window at the meeting that was taking place inside, I could see a large semi-circle of glum faces. A widely respected African American equity director, who had negotiated significant pay raises for her district's liaisons, was leading the meeting and giving a presentation on being a systems 'change agent.'

But despite it being the beginning of the school year, many of the liaisons were already 'burned out,' I learned later, dreading returning to schools and working under principals on lingering, often racially charged issues. One of those issues had been about a service-learning project for students that involved global food issues, and social injustice. A white parent had objected to letting her elementary school daughter participate in the program, which a liaison had developed, and the school administration had denied knowledge of the service-learning project. The other liaisons in the room weren't surprised. The politics of decision-making in schools seemed to be a topic that had blanketed the room with a demoralizing aura. But I didn't realize until more than a year later that talk of 'systems, 'and change agents' could be visualized much more concretely in the perceptions of liaisons, at the scale of space and every-day encounters.

Staff lounges and other 'no-go' zones within schools. One day, during lunch at a café on Grand Street in St Paul with Melinda and Lea, who was in her late 60s, Lea casually mentioned she avoided the staff lounges at her school, a racially isolated high school with more than 600 students. I was surprised. I wasn't surprised that racial tensions had spilled over into spaces of sociality such as staff rooms – after all, Lea had just been talking about how little society and schools had changed over the last 30-40 years in terms of racial integration. But I was dumbfounded that Lea, an outspoken educational equity advocate, seemed to be admitting to feeling intimidated.

Lea never tried to come off as the "softest of the soft," as another black cultural liaison admiringly put it. Lea's courageous and bold outspokenness was greatly admired by many liaisons, especially when it was contrasted with the "Minnesota nice" culture many felt predominated among white school staff. Although this outspokenness could

lead to clashes with other liaisons around issues of racial identity, and claims of collective racial authority, and also often perturbed education officials in ways Lea did not always see, Lea had often been viewed as an informal leader among the dozens of liaisons at her district. Lea's personal background - she had survived growing up in Southside Chicago, where her brother had been shot dead by police and had for a time assumed caretaking responsibilities for her younger siblings, she said – was something she frequently drew upon when speaking about the need for racial pride, identity, and self-esteem as a black person.

So I was not just surprised, but almost shocked, that Lea would willingly conform to spaces of racial segregation at her workplace. Lea explained further,

> My motto is, you gotta cut me out or cut me in. If I go into the staff room, I'm looking for somebody. There are always a couple of people who crack jokes (about me) and say inappropriate stuff. I just look at them, and let it go over my head. If I say something, I'll go overboard. On the first floor, with the secretary, they have coffee in there. One day I went in to get popcorn, since I belong to the Popcorn Club. You have to pay $5 a year. The secretary said, "I know you didn't put your hands in that popcorn." I said, "Excuse me? Did you say, 'Wash your hands'? Get away from me before something happens!" She was treating me like a baby. You don't even want to know.
>
> Another time I went into the room, since I belong to the Coffee Club. Another secretary questioned me, "Did you pay?" I only drink coffee like once a week, and I didn't even drink it recently. I was like, "You know what…?" So this year when I came back to school, I didn't get in nobody's club. I'm not going through

> that. I bought my microwave, my cream, my little refrigerator, and put it in my office (Fieldnotes 6/1/13)

On one level, this was a tale of racial micro aggressions, petty exercises of power, and of the in-group and out-group struggles that occur in institutions. But on another level it also spoke to the history of social relationships within a school, and the sheer overwhelming exhaustion of embodying certain raced and outcast personas or even body parts. Could Lea's hands have been labeled as contaminated because they were black? Lea didn't address this question directly in her story, but she clearly felt excluded from the staff room, and the false safety of being a part of "clubs."

I turned to Melinda, to ask if she also avoided the staff lounge in her school. Melinda seemed to be slyly amused at my naiveté, I noticed, and nodded assent, clearly eager to talk. This surprised me. Melinda, I had observed, was extremely sociable and affable, and often described being 'popular' with the staff at her special education school. Although Melinda could be highly critical of the staff, all of whom were white except for one African American teacher, she tended to express her opinions in non-offensive, 'friendly' ways. Still, Melinda's experience with school staff lounges seemed even more traumatizing than Lea's. She stated,

> If you go in there (to the staff lounge), you'll hear everything about (black) parents, families, what they have and don't have. And they'll gossip all day long. They know exactly what you ate. I drink coconut water, and put it in a bag. I'm very touchy about my food. I'll bring a container with my greens, but I started taping it down, because they look in it.

> They knew too much about me. I would hear what's in my desk. I put a note in my desk that said, "Please don't take anything out of my desk." It's almost like you feel you're comfortable and not comfortable. You're walking on eggshells. People can be so rude. Even if I'm on the telephone, they'll interrupt me like they don't think it's important. They don't do it to anyone else. They're always talking about boundaries, "Don't come into my space." But they come into yours all the time. They're just bold. (Fieldnotes 6/1/13)

I was typing on my laptop as Melinda talked. But I stopped as Melinda lowered her voice and speculated about the possibility of her co-workers poisoning her food. This was the logical next step of violation, she felt, a toxic possibility in school infused with prescription drugs, both for staff and students. This was an imagined scenario that we both knew flirted with sounding paranoid if it was 'exposed' to public discourse, and was the reason I perhaps paused, even though the story signaled a truth that was not often voiced overtly. I knew Melinda's fear had a different meaning within the context of other stories of school-based intimidation shared by liaisons. This included stories of finding Klan symbols in staff lounges, fear of being watched and set up in ways that could result in criminal chargers, and suspicion of metro-wide 'blacklists.' Read as collective experience, shared in semi-private ways across informal social networks, the ripple effects of racially hostile encounters in schools were not isolated incidents, but part of a larger symbolic and actual landscape of perceived exclusions.

After talking to Lea and Melinda, I spoke to my other core interlocutors, Breanna, Sandra, and Regina. To my on-going surprise, a surprise that itself took me aback, they also all confirmed in a mater-of-fact way that they avoided staff lounges. Breanna, who

usually struck me as the epitome of a sort of sunny confidence and social extraversion, said she felt resentment if she entered staff lounges in her school district. Even soft-spoken Sandra, who worked in an upscale school where the lounge was relatively spacious and luxurious, described her school's mini-cafeteria as "purgatory." She stated,

> I felt really uncomfortable. I didn't feel welcome at all. I shouldn't say at all. There were two people I would eat lunch with. One was the secretary, and the other the special education teacher. She was really sweet – just normal, how you would act. Everyone else – they felt uncomfortable if I was in the same space with them. It just got quieter, like more hushed, like more self aware, looking me over. A couple of people even said 'hello,' but it was very forced. I'll just eat in my office. The special education teacher was just a light energy, I'm sure she did to some degree (make people comfortable with me). I just felt like, I wanted to get out of there. People obviously seemed stressed out by my being there" (Fieldnotes, 2/7/13).

Regina, alone of all the liaisons, said she used to go into her school's staff lounge, but had avoided the staff lounge at her school that year. Of the 150 staff in her building, including administrators, teachers, para-professionals, and support staff, only three others were black, she said. All of the black staff – and only the black staff - went out to their cars to eat lunch. Regina explained,

> I sit in the staff lounge, but I'm isolated. I better go find a table that's empty. I better. Already, you know, they don't talk to you. The physical ed teachers have never spoken to me in seven years. They see me in the hallway and avoid my stare. The fourth grade teacher, she reminds me of a big old German shepherd,

she's so rude, she never speaks. Most black people don't go in there. There's only a handful of us. (The teachers) are gossiping about the kids openly, which is illegal. Almost everybody. And that's one thing I did not like. The kids, the families, personal business.

I didn't go in (to the staff lounge) last year. I'd get my water, and go back to my desk. And if I'd eat there, I'd go in after recess when it's empty. I'm not going to kiss up to anybody who don't like me (Fieldnotes, 6//21/13).

Staff lounges, a symbol of sociality in schools, was also a space of exclusion for liaisons. But this exclusion existed in imaginary ways, in that it could not be 'proved' other than through perceptions of subtle behavior, such as looks. Like students who sometimes self-segregate by race and ethnicity in school cafeterias, adult professionals enacted similar practices, but in more hidden spaces.

"Big words - but they really don't mean nothing to me." Norms of school communication, including education-specific jargon, middle-class vocabulary and ways of speaking, was another way liaisons often felt excluded. One example of this way of speaking was a dislike of the 'high pitched' voices of many young white teachers, a complaint I heard commonly. Another was the perceived exclusion of African American ways of speaking.

One day right before the holiday break in December, Breanna told me about being asked by her supervisor to speak to administrators about the school district's racial climate. As we sat in a Starbucks coffee shop in Roseville, Breanna reflected on why she still felt so agitated. She stated,

> I think it's almost like being a tattle-tale, backstabbing each school. My supervisor said I would have an inside view (of racial climate). She said, "I know you see stuff that people don't see, so I want you to bring awareness to the school equity environment and cultural climate." Big words. But they really don't mean nothing to me. It puts me in an awkward position, because if I bring this to their attention, what am I offered afterward? If you don't have a solution, why mention it? It happened last Friday, at her (my supervisor's) weekly meeting. She didn't say racial climate, she said socially economically not balanced, she used some other words, I didn't really understand it – but she means racial. Part of me felt a little empowered, a chance to speak up. But part of me felt no. I'm there to support the institution, being African American. But I don't think it's my job to initiate discussions. I think it's my job to collaborate, to give insight. I think the reason I didn't have a feeling here or there (about giving the talk) is because maybe they do need to hear it from me in my own words. But when you're dealing with people in higher power and judgmental, it can backfire instead of being an opportunity to heal and grow (Fieldnotes 12/18/13)

In this vignette, how to communicate at a school function posed a dilemma for Breanna, for felt exclude from norms of communication. What she could say, how she would say it, what she should say, what her supervisor was saying, and the consequences of speaking were all dilemmas. Making the wrong move, Breanna feared, would lead to deeper forms of exclusion. As she reflected further, Breanna described feeling used.

Later that year, however, with practice and reflection, Breanna had begun see herself as gaining some confidence and being able to code switch. Code switching refers

to the gap between Standard English and African American English and the possibility of deliberately "switching" between the two norms, or codes. Scholars such as Vershawn Ashanti Young have argued code switching produces a "racial compromise" that has not been helpful to African American students because of its connection to racial self-understandings, and should be supplemented by "code meshing," (Young, 2013). But for my co-researchers, even code meshing could feel like a form of social exclusion in the context of their work, where the pressures of standardized testing and academic performance existed in tension with other, psycho-social goals.

One day Breanna described herself to me as being "hood with an education," compared to "being completely in the black community." We had been talking about school, and I realized with a sense of sudden pain, that my middle-class vocabulary had been intimidating and alienating. This was the first time Breanna had openly asked me what a word meant, and she began talking to me about looking up words on her own – an almost physical exertion to break through an imaginary barrier. She stated,

> If I could do it over, I would do over high school. I was a slacker. Like words, I wish I had talked myself into a bigger range of vocabulary. Articulate stuff differently, without saying, "I'm sorry, what does that mean?" When people (in school) used to talk to me, I used to nod my head like I understood. But now I don't have a problem saying, "That's a new word for me – what does that mean?" I wish I had had a pep talk (in high school) (Fieldnotes, 2/6/14).

The view of language as a sort of pervasive geography in its own right, with its own hard-to-discern symbols of power and exclusion, also extended to interactions between school staff and African American students and families. Even as Breanna was

becoming better at ‘code switching’ and ‘code meshing,’ she struggled to explain language as an imaginary geography to her co-workers. African American parents and community members were often intimidated by the staff, and thus not sure what to say. School staff could be “so caught up in their educational words” that they lost touch with the families, Breanna said.

One time, Breanna tried to arrange a school-parent meeting concerning a 2nd grade African American boy, whose behavior was becoming increasingly odd. The parent was purposefully dodging the school psychologist, afraid of words that would be too powerful and too influential, even through the phone. He wanted to know what the school psychologist thought, Breanna said. But by the end of the school year, a meeting had still not taken place. Breanna stated,

> The boy was clucking like a chicken, and hopping like a rabbit. I asked (the boy) why he did it. He said his friends did it. But the boy keeps going, he doesn’t stop. When he gets kicked out of his classroom, he gets so frustrated that it takes him an hour to calm down. I talked to the father, and asked about the boy’s previous school. The father (was concerned), but he didn’t want (the school psychologist) to call him. He knew he wouldn’t be able to understand her (Fieldnotes 4/18/14).

Melinda, by contrast, experienced the encroachment of white professional jargon and vocabulary within education, along with a knowledge based on books as sources of legitimacy, as alienating. For example, paras were increasingly becoming “over educated” and alienated from students, especially students of color, in Melinda’s view. Melinda stated,

> Most of the paras are in college. The new ones coming in - most of them have been raised in an all-white vocabulary. They don't want to go overboard. They teach whatever is in their books. It's one thing or another, trying to prove yourself. Then someone like (another cultural liaison) really loves his job, but is considered lazy. I even ended up going out to buy a few books, to get more information, but then I said, "I'm booked out, you know what I mean?" (Fieldnotes 7/21/14)

These and other experiences point to how geographies of language and communication in schools can be perceived as exclusionary. But more than one-on-one communication problems, language could create a cultural perception of 'friendly' and 'unfriendly' space. Liaisons could be stuck within or exploit these spaces, acting as intermediaries at times, and as observers and objects of school practice at other times.

"Dead zones" and exclusions of affect. Affect, a term related to embodiment, generally refers to visceral forces that are related to but separate from emotions or conscious reasoning. Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg defined affect, anthropomorphically, as

> "…the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) - across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p 1).

Affect for my co-researchers appeared to be less stable and more temporal than the stable measurement promised by concepts such as school climate. During times of stress, liaisons' descriptions of schools could feel haunting. Teachers looked 'old' even though they knew they were young. Schools radiated institutional sterility. Staff had lost touch with human reasoning, leaving behind a vacated sensibility.

But affect as a form of exclusion and alienation often appeared to be concentrated in certain symbolized spaces in schools. These could be the guns of school police officers, and publicly displayed wall spaces, posters, and flyers. Despite growing awareness that "holiday" or "calendar" forms of multicultural education could be problematic, my co-participants struggled emotionally over displays of Black history such as civil rights' leaders pictures or Black activities in school, and the affect around them.

Sandra, for example, experienced her school from the start as a place of unspoken, hard-to-pinpoint pressure. She wasn't sure if it was the school, where she puzzled over middle-class parents having the time to personally pick up their kids from school, or something to do with being African American in a school where there were only two other Black staff, a janitor and a secretary. Sandra was very conscious of the image the school was trying to project - an upscale, upper middle-class image. That image, she felt, did not include the about 10 bused students the school received from North Minneapolis, all of whom were Black. One of the first things Sandra did as a new cultural liaison at the school in 2011 was to fight for positive African American space on the school's main hallways.

> I was printing up posters of people of color, and putting them in the school, and saying these are images these kids need to see. Images white kids need to see, that African Americans are more than former slaves. What they were reading about was Tom Sawyer, how the Indians showed the pilgrims what to do. It was a very limited view, very dated, there were no modern heroes. There were no images for anyone to relate to.
>
> I think (the posters) shined a light on the ignorance of the staff – I don't think the staff knew who half those people were. They were like, "What's going on, is it diversity week?" The disconnect was really obvious. A couple of people were really excited about it. But whether they were excited or confused, the reaction was shock and awe (Footnote, 6/2/13).

In this story, the disconnect Sandra noticed was "really obvious," an admission of emotions that ranged from excitement to confusion, but that also involved shock and awe. 'Shock and awe' was a military term used in the 2003 invasion of Iraq to denote rapid dominance and overwhelming power. Sandra was perhaps highly attuned to an imaginative geography of affect in ways other staff didn't experience, I'll argue, because of her sensitivity to the symbolic battle being fought around racial exclusions in the school.

Objects, as well as discourses, can be used to achieve the "plausible deniability of racism," as Hardie and Tyson (2013) pointed out in their study of how blatant racism by redneck students was used to provide a plausible alternative explanation for institutional racism or deflect charges of individual racism at a Southern school (Hardie & Tyson, 2013). Plausible deniability is central to the language of modern racism, Liu and Mills

(2006) have argued, in that discourse that is "overtly concerned with issues of equality, or anti-racism," may mask a covert ideology that "functions to defend underlying global economic power interests" by co-opting the moral weight of egalitarian arguments to mask profit motives (2006, p. 86).

In Sandra's experience, textual images and pictures of Tom Sawyer, and Indians helping pilgrims, were outdated but did not generate the uncomfortable commentary and unease she felt around posters of Black leaders. But neither was she asked to remove the posters of Black leaders. Instead, school staff discursively placed the posters into what could be argued to be an institutional and systematic practice of the plausible deniability of racism, the anticipated and cyclical practice of diversity week in a school that Sandra felt resented the presence of bused minority students. The staff's reaction to Sandra's action and reaction to them, more than the absence of diverse posters, produced visceral tension. In this circumstance, Sandra felt affectively marginalized by the sterility of school, a place she compared to "a dead zone." She stated,

> The work that needs to be done is more spiritual…(In school) you're forced to be institutional.. It's just the nature of the work – it's a dead zone. My feeling is sometimes they prefer going in circles, because they don't really want to change. It's all systems-based issues, putting this bandage on a gaping wound, and I feel like it's exhausting for everybody, it exhausting for the kids (Fieldnotes, 2/15/14).

Affect could also linger in memories. One day, Lea described an African American first grader in her school, who had reacted angrily and with fear to a school police officer's gun. Lea became moved herself in describing the situation, and recalled her own fear of police as a child, a fear she never outgrew. This led to a momentary

immersion, a verbal outpouring about the utter strangeness of the institution of school, with its guns and drugs – drugs such as Ritalin, which was given to students with disabilities such as ADD. Growing up in her neighborhood, Lea said, Ritalin was a heroin enhancer. Then Lea repeated a story she had told me before about walking down the hallway of first-ring suburban school district where she used to work. A white teacher had put a poster on her door, Lea recalled,

> I kept looking at it, because it said "Iceberg." I never knew the world iceberg meant anything other than pimp. When you see it written in Standard English form you think automatically it means something else. I walked by every day looking at it. One day, I asked the teacher, "Why do you have that on your door?" She said, "This is a story about a frog." I said I was insulted by it. She said, "Why?" I said, "In my neighborhood, this means a cold-hearted man, a pimp. Imagine what a little kid thinks, when they're taking a test." She said, "Wow, that's deep" (Fieldnotes 7/27/14).

When I first heard this story, I thought Lea had said "Icebert." I had searched in vain for "Icebert the Frog." This miscommunication about another miscommunication – one I often found myself in with Lea – ended when I finally found the books of Robert Beck, a.k.a. Iceberg Slim, the author of eight acclaimed urban novels as well as the inspiration for the Ice-T produced documentary *Iceberg Slim: Portrait of a Pimp*. Lea's expertise on 20th and 21st African American urban history, a history she had witness and lived first-hand growing up in the Southside of Chicago, was rich and extensive. But it was an expertise whose revelation led to a sense of exclusion, an unpacked affect of alarm and 'otherness' that was sensed by both the teacher and Lea. Over-reliance on

colorblind curriculum and policies is a form of racially biased practice in schools, critical education scholars have argued (Kunjufu, 2012; Milner IV, 2010; Traoré, 2008). But in this case, Lea's knowledge of famous underground figures and gangsters – the stuff of legend in some circles – remained excluded, doubly marginalized as neither fitting into a colorblind curriculum not arguably translatable with the school institution into culturally relevant curriculum, given the lingering affect of an encounter that continued to hover around Lea and the teacher, and interfered with a more questioning, dialectical discussion of bridging the cultural symbols of 'Iceberg-the-frog' and Iceberg Slim.

"We use data to confuse everybody": Data 'no-go' zones. Data is pervasive in schools, a symbol and tool of knowledge and power. It is also materialized and located in printed reports, electronic reports, Power Points, and in the paperwork collected from parents and handed out in IEP meetings. But the liaisons I worked with were in many ways excluded from data. Data was experienced, in their stories, as oppressive, an almost hated symbol of racial oppression. Data was also experienced as a form of marginalization that filtered from above, in administrative reports, directives, and pronouncements. My co-researchers complied with requests to supply data, but seldom owned it.

One day, at a cultural liaison workshop, a participant showed a video of a school administrator showing multi-colored graphs and talking about the achievement gap. Many of the liaisons rolled their eyes and laughed for the length of the video, as if we were watching a stand-up comedian performing in a line-up. The video was all the funnier because it was shown in juxtaposition with African American students and

parents talking about their experiences in the school district, experiences with which the cultural liaisons were familiar, and perceived as growing every worse.

My co-researchers, in many cases paradoxically, often felt further excluded the more they were asked to engage with school data. Engagement could take the form of being asked to compile statistics on school discipline and drop out rates for students by race and ethnicity, or to listen to and 'understand' data – an experience that could be especially frustrating for liaisons, precisely because they felt such 'data' was pointless and an institutional performance that re-inscribed racial helplessness, marginality, and exclusion. When they tried to participate in the use of data, they could experience further exclusion.

Early in my work with liaisons in Minnesota, for example, I attended a liaison staff retreat at an urban school district. During a recess, a liaison described why she didn't want to know anything more about so-called racial disparities in special education, at least from school officials. She recalled a professional development conference she had attended the week before, stating,

> So I'm over at this silly old all-day conference. So I'm really irritated. The only workshop that was beneficial was a psychologist who works at (blank) talking about decreasing suspension. She was talking about special education, and what's the reason behind the achievement gap. She was nice. She was talking about it, and she has the data.
>
> The downside behind it was, it's still not going to change anything. It's nice we have this information, but there are still no changes. We're not policymakers, we're not administration. Do you really want the truth? There's an underlying

> message there – there is no point in you voicing your opinion, because then you'll have problems. I truly feel that way. The two people (liaisons) who spoke (and asked questions at the conference) – their questions was just looked over. There is no point in talking at all. I just literally felt like it was a joke! (Fieldnotes, 4/4/12).

The perception of school data as a tool of oppression often led to resistance around its use, even when liaisons had nominal ownership over its creation and use. Breanna, for example, rejected the idea of collecting data on her African American student group, saying she didn't want administrators "in her business." Lea similarly resisted efforts to collect data on student suspensions at her school for an equity report. Asking for the data from school staff only marginalized her further, she felt, as requests from liaisons never went smoothly. In any case, Lea, like most other liaisons, didn't believe in the truth and authenticity of data, perceiving it as a technology of deception and exclusion. Her school's definitions of suspension kept changing, Lea pointed out.

Among my co-researchers, Regina made the most effort to obtain and use school data. Still, she had mixed feelings about its significance, as artifacts of social reality in schools and as practical and symbolic knowledge for people of color. Speaking one day about Title 1 money, and how it was used for an after-school tutoring program to "babysit" kids and allow teachers and paras and "their little friends" to earn $22 an hour, Regina angrily commented,

> Data is meaningless – they are keeping record of kids not learning. They are keeping a record of many kids graduate at grade level, but special education kids are exempt from testing – why are they doing that? (Fieldnotes 1/21/13).

Later that year, Regina described attending a school meeting for cultural

liaisons, in which school district official trumpeted their progress in improving outcomes for students of color. Regina was not impressed with the presentation, describing it as a deliberate smokescreen. Yet alone among the dozen liaisons, she requested an overview of the school districts' progress as measured through data, in order to share with parents.

Regina had been working particularly intensively that year with a group of Liberian parents, trying to convince them that they needed to take a more active role in their children's education given the poor statistics for black students of color in her school district. African parents in general were too trusting of U.S. schools, Regina believed, and realized too late that their children were often labeled as poor performers and funneled into less demanding academic classes. This work could be controversial, and Regina kept her role as an informant low key at times, such as when parent groups attended school district board meetings to demand more black teachers be hired. Although her school district had asked about a dozen liaisons to lead eight-week parent empowerment programs, in different languages, using a national model that originated on the West Coast, school officials expected liaisons to be positive about the school district's performance, Regina said. The data was pre-packaged in such as way to reflect this positive message, but Regina believed if she could only deconstruct it – a feat that she incessantly worked at, particularly with regard to differences between African American and African students – she would be able to tell a different story. Regina recalled,

> The data they send to MDE every year, all the assessment, growth taking place, who understands all that mess. The group grew, this group came down, who the hell understands. So we didn't do crap. But we use data to confuse everybody. "As you can see here, what this data is showing, and you take this and that, and

> add it all together, and do the abstraction, and we had a growth of 5 percent!" Guess what, they failed. I'm so confused. I'm going to stop asking questions, because I'm so confused.The data comes out in the spring. It was fuzzy. I was having a parent group, and I needed to explain the numbers. So I requested someone from the district to come out. Luckily we had a teacher who was really data driven, and six or seven of us sat down, and he explained the data to us. I was still fuzzy. His explanation really didn't make sense… We're celebrating schools. Championing schools. But I don't know what you're celebrating. Because you brought the numbers down? Not by how I'm judging (Fieldnotes 7/18/13).

As this vignette demonstrates, Regina largely experienced school data as alienating and frustrating, part of a geography of deception and exclusion. In some respects Regina, who had a banking background and a relatively sophisticated grasp of the relationship of data to budgets and resource allocations, felt even more excluded than the other liaisons I worked with by the institutional flow of data. Our conversations around data, I noticed, often veered into conversations about money. Regina envisioned data as politically tied to the allocation of school resources and jobs by nationality, ethnicity, and race. She stated,

> We need to start identifying Liberian families, (not) clumping everybody as black. My child is born here, but you are Liberian household. Technically, that child is half Liberian, half American, because America recognized dual citizenship. If we need to be culturally competent, we need to recognize differences between African American and African students… I don't know if Liberian kids are worse than African American

> kids. What help do you really need? That's what we're not doing. Our needs our different, we have different family needs. And we don't do that. We call them black and white. (It) all starts at the enrollment center. Culturally Liberian, though papers American. Need to have Liberians working there. (Fieldnotes, 8/14/14).

In schools, a geography of exclusion is produced through access to data and the power to collect, define and use it. Liaisons often perceived themselves to be excluded from this 'zone.' They also for the most part perceived data itself, as a material artifact of oppression, as alienating. It in itself can be deceptive, or used in deceptive ways that place liaisons in passive and vulnerable positions.

Summary. Liaisons, I have demonstrated in this section, experience school as not just a modern, neutral workplace, but as a complex terrain of overlapping and often racialized exclusions that cumulatively shape their practice. Exclusions can consist of perceived access to communal space within schools, perceived access to modes of middle-class and specialized educational language and communication, and the perceived relevance, ownership, and meaning of 'culturally white' data. Affect - momentary feelings of alienation or of 'carrying' cultural and racial marginalized differences – is also an exclusion that is part of the lived experience of working in schools for most liaisons.

In this imaginative geography, "putting your beliefs on the table" – a challenge put forth by one district equity director during an inter-district special education meeting I attended in 2012, for example – raises questions about the table itself, to extend the metaphor further. Cumulative exclusions make this 'table' – a tangible place of shared

space - hard to locate, as a metaphor of physical togetherness and inter-subjective sharing. Although the categories of exclusion included here are not exhaustive, they suggest a rich continuum of experience on a professional, adult scale that is beyond the meaning usually glossed by terms such as cultural climate or even institutional racism. Furthermore, concealment of exclusions, due to personal and professional vulnerabilities, was tied to a dynamic of further differentiation.

In the next section, I will build on school as a site of complex belief and exclusions, to explore how liaisons in many ways can be said to hold unconventional, or 'unprofessional,' views of education. I will suggest that within the ideological environment of schools, where certain discourses can be argued to be privileged as part of a Western world culture of acquiring organizational legitimacy (Meyer, 2008), the perspectives of education liaisons is problematic in that they are not just different, but subtly epistemologically challenging.

Section Four: Unprofessional' Perspectives and Liminal Dispositions

In this section, I will explore liaisons' 'unprofessional' perceptions of educator professionalism, subjectivities that in uncanny ways mirrored and unsettled school practices and beliefs around education racial inequities. As racialized staff in liminal positions, I will argue, liaisons develop a perspective of school and acquire dispositions that are fundamentally different than those of other school staff, as well as diverging from those of licensed staff of color and each other. This perspective is in part shaped through on-going relations to school staff, and the experiences of perceiving multiple forms of exclusion in schools as a perpetual and relatively 'under-educated' underdog, able to observe students, classrooms, and administrative activities up close, but having limited

authority or decision making power to intervene or challenge the unwritten hierarchy of 'superior,' normatively professional educator demeanors and dispositions.

Perceptions of professionalism 'from below.' "Shut up!" Lea had had a rough week on February, as a substitute teacher in a first-grade urban classroom. She was between jobs as a liaison. After two difficult weeks of shaping an 'out-of-control' classroom into one with a noticeably different and more orderly atmosphere, Lea had snapped at, and possibly laid hands on, a few students one day. A school administrator had rebuked her. I heard the story from another sympathetic liaison, and Lea herself had told me part of the tale. "It's not easy being confrontational with a first grader," Lea sighed, acknowledging that in her late 60s, there was an age gap not only with the students, but with parents, some of whom "don't give a damn." The kids blame white people's racism for their not learning, a view reinforced by some parents, Lea said. Lea said she constantly tells students, nobody can take your education away from you unless you let them. "White people can't tell them that – I have to tell them that."

I checked in with Lea about an article I had sent her from an advanced graduate student and teacher coach, about comparing growing up with a violent father and domestic violence to racism, contributing to a school-to-prison pipeline swollen with youth from other 'marginalized realities.' I thought Lea might find the article's theorization of 'resistance ambivalence' among some students and teachers interesting, as a way to bridge ideas of professional dispositions beyond the usual black-white, 'social justice ally-oppressed group' binary. Pervasive family, neighborhood, and racial-based violence was a topic that frequently came up among liaisons, in trying to explain how many African American students and liaisons struggle with PSTD, hyper-alertness, and

the hovering presence of life-and-death situations while trying to show up for school. Just that week Lea had invited me to accompany her to a prison, where she volunteered to give a talk to 200 inmates on embracing education – and realizing how African American dialect is not a sign of lack of intelligence, but a cultural inheritance. Lea responded,

> Come on, honey. He's (the father in the article) one fucking man. A dog bites, and people are running throughout the house? She doesn't understand, she's never seen it first hand, she don't have a clue about fucking racism. Let's not cross lanes. I can relate to you having a weak daddy, may he rot in hell, but she's out of her league. We're talking about collective oppression (Fieldnotes, 2/27/14).

This differentiation from other apparently well-meaning claims to oppression, and insistence on a unique ontological reality for urban African American experience, was something I often came across. This may help explain that while Lea may have had mixed feelings about losing her temper with students, it was also not the 'big deal' that norms of educator professionalism might make it out to be, in comparison with what liaisons saw as much more important educator understandings and dispositions. It may also have explained why although many liaisons saw each other as no angels, engaging in off-handed rebukes of so-and-so who sat in their office all day, so-and-so who was too militant and lacked maturity, and so-and-so who was slippery or willing to throw colleagues under the bus – they also saw the overall structure of primarily white and blindly 'assumptious' school authority, in the guise of policymakers, state and university staff, administrators, teachers, and other 'overseers' as the much more pressing issue for marginalized black students.

Professionalism, in education as in other fields, generally refers to a combination of normative values and behaviors. In recent education scholarship, notions of professionalism often includes the concepts of identities, practices and dispositions, with professional dispositions a term that has recently come back into the forefront of teacher education after a more technocratic era of teacher preparation (Borko, Liston & Whitcomb, 2007). Mary Diez and Peter Murrell Jr., for example, define professional dispositions as "commitments and habits of thought and action that grow," a cultivating of flexible knowledge, skills and competencies, and professional judgment leading to a greater ability to meet student needs. (Diez & Murrell Jr., 2010, p. 14).

Education scholar Hugh Sockett has argued, in a somewhat different vein, that 'dispositions-as-virtues' should be part of teacher preparation programs, with virtues falling into three main categories – character (such as self knowledge), intellect (such as truthfulness), and care (such as compassion). Such a cognitive core allows a more thoughtful engagement with education goals such as social justice, a confusing term for educators who may also be committed to other education goals such as freedom and autonomy (Sockett, 2009).

But for liaisons, these dominant educator professional norms – even when practiced - were often perceived as filtered through – or co-opted by - white middle class techniques of authority and cultural capital acquisition, such as those described by Annette Lareau's work on working-class and middle-class parents (Lareau, 2000), and by Peter Demerath in *Producing Success: The Culture of Personal Advancement in an American High Schoo*l (Demerah, 2009). Furthermore, they perceived the donning of professional airs as displacing other staff such as themselves as 'non-professional,' forced

to take up the dirty work professionals couldn't or wouldn't do – matching the emotional vibe of angry parents, leveraging the hard-won knowledge of urban street credibility, and engaging in ambiguous practices of caring, such as helping 'uncaring' school staff place an African student in English Language classes, or helping the parent resist such placement.

Lea and Melinda often indirectly questioned this displacement in conversations with me, by pointing out how they had to compensate for the 'bad' behavior of teachers who were having relationships with students' parents, or teachers who used to be party girls but were pretending to have always been 'prim and proper.' Melinda, for example, was outspoken in her belief that African American boys had to be explicitly taught not to mistake white female teacher professional dispositions of open-mindedness at face value, given what she felt were still disproportionately harsh social sanctions for the perceived 'hyper-sexuality' of African American males.

Skepticism of educator professionalism and its associated dispositions was often in play, as was how to interpret it. Breanna pointed out one day that she had at first taken me for a snob. Surprised, I asked why. It was my professional demeanor – the dropping of vocabulary, she said. Liaisons thus problematized the meaning of professional dispositions as an abstract concept detached from situated realities and other's perceptions, an 'unprofessional' gaze in which educators often failed to live up to norms, and the norms themselves generated consequences for others that were reflected back in uncanny ways.

Valuing 'toughness' as a professional disposition. The willingness to trade in harsh truths about oneself and others and stand one's ground was a disposition liaisons

often valued and assessed in school staff and each other, in ways that tested friendships and psychological boundaries. This was variously referred to as toughness, as a willingness to stand up to others, to not be intimidated by circumstances or people, be it angry students, authority figures perceived to be corrupt, teachers and administrators having a difficult day, or colleagues drawing on street personas.

One rainy weekend, for example, I had agreed to meet Sandra for lunch and drive her to the airport. She had been visiting Minnesota to attend a funeral for her father. We had unexpectedly realized we had fathers in the same branch of the military in the same military graveyard. Temporarily cut off from the world in a suddenly heavy downpour, as we hurriedly backtracked from the airport after we realized we had forgotten Sandra's suitcase in the café where we had met, I was suddenly struck by the enormity of claiming any understanding about African American history and experience. We had been talking about genetic inheritance – a scientific relative to eugenics, the social movement of biological determinism in the late 19th and early 20th century that aimed to identify superior and inferior populations, and had major corporate and social support in the U.S., resulting in what are today regarded as horrific programs that disproportionality impacted marginalized populations. "You have a good heart, but you need to toughen up," Sandra told me in her calm and gentle way.

"Toughening up" and the ability to "handle someone" was a frequent admonishment and claim that liaisons made about themselves, and to each other. It was frequently linked, in over and direct ways, with the ability to perceive and understand the ramifications of trauma – how to tell someone else they were traumatized, or that traces of trauma affected aspects of professionalism. Toughness in handling traumatized people,

or compensating for your own traumatized ways of interacting with others in specific circumstances that was vaguely understood, was valued, especially in the context of a deep distrust of psychologists, psychiatrists and related professionals among all my co-participants. This distrust could be seen in their own personal stories of experiences with mental health professionals, and in stories of how they saw students experiencing mental health services in school.

The embroilment of students, especially Black students who liaisons perceived as having 'normal' behavioral issues, in special education processes with the oversight of mental health professional was a frequent narrative that my co-participants and other liaisons shared in workshops, in discussions at events where they ran into each other, and within our group and with me. Programs such as PBIS and RTI, based on positive psychology, were similarly widely scorned for how they were implemented – in an institutionally wooden manner, with no real understanding of student trauma and the importance of fundamental social and individual values such as basic self respect – not respect as the polite manners expected in teachers' classrooms.

One summer, following up on widespread liaison interest in the topic of 'trauma' and mental health, I arranged for a developmental psychologist to lead a small-group session for liaisons. The psychologist, a European American with experience in schools and social work and a track record of critical scholarly engagement with the shortfalls of mental health systems for vulnerable students, guided a discussion around trauma and self-care suggestions, such as taking time for enjoyable activities. Because one of her children had fallen ill at the last minute, she used a speaker phone. While all the participants commented later on the unusual session as interesting, at times emotional,

and a meaningful way to explore topics that had been brought up, all six participants perceived the self-care advice as racially irrelevant. Some found it insulting, since it involved assumptions of socio-economic standing such as being able to take time for enjoyable activities – a reminder of a gap in which "toughness" loomed large. Even staying home with an ill child instead of finding an alternative, one participant scoffed, showed a lack of the firmness and toughness of a professional.

Yet liaisons, as professionals in a liminal role, had little formal authority within schools to challenge professional norms, such as those involving desired or idealized educator dispositions. They straddled 'professional' school expectations around dispositions and the often divergent expectations of community members and students. In the process they adapted, mimicked, and rejected some school professional educator personas. As unlicensed employees, liaisons usually have little formal preparation or professional development training, such as the self advocacy training offered through teacher unions. Yet most of the more than 60 liaisons I worked with over a two- or three-year period were concerned with how to claim professional status, in order to address issues with other liaisons, claim legitimacy and job security in an educational environment, and assert their value, which was so often dismissed as lowly, down in the trenches with paras and janitors. One list that a liaison professional learning community group came up with after a year working together, for example, consisted of 10 items.

Table 1: Cultural Liaisons' Perspectives on Ideal Liaison Competencies

Competency	Description
Cultural competency	-Understand school and community cultures (i.e., African American, Liberian, Hmong, Latino, etc.) -Explain 'culture-power' struggles – for example, a nurse is mad a student didn't come for an appointment, not understanding the student's parent doesn't have a car -Have a critical understanding of racial identity
Integrity	Be willing to speak up about injustices and problems on behalf of students and parents of color
Good judgment	Be able to understand situations, gather background information from a variety of sources, analyze situations
Organizational boundary crosser	Ability to be proactive and work across many roles and departments – special education, administration, ELL, social workers, the community
Empathy	Be able to empathize and actively listen – "listening ear"
Special education knowledge	-See special education as a cultural process -Understand the meaning and significance of racial and ethnic disparities -Understand basic special education concepts & processes
Discipline policy knowledge	-Know where to find discipline policies at your school & that they exist -Understand discipline disparities -Understand how liaisons can be involved in the discipline process
Horizontal leadership skills	Ability to develop a 'professional self' and advocate for role Self-presentation skills – ability to gain respect, show strength(s), develop awareness of how one is perceived
Leading parent & student programs	-Understand critical parent & student engagement -Understand logistical challenges
Conduct staff professional development	-How to connect research to local knowledge -Understand the basics of good professional development (knowledge & practice)

(Fieldnotes, 5/12/13)

Being tough and not easily intimidated did not make the list, paradoxically indicative, I believe, of the assumption of emotional strength and lack of soft or negative 'feelings' my co-participants allowed themselves in their work.

"Everybody is just surviving": Social justice as multi-perspectival. A commitment to equity, fairness, and social justice, terms often associated with each other

in discussions of proper educator dispositions related to marginal students, posed a rich dilemma for liaisons. Liaisons often described critical scholars and teacher social justice advocates in ambiguous terms. As I have pointed out previously, the liaisons I worked with were in many ways leery of 'radical' language and people, as true believers in public education themselves. But liaisons also perceived the fight over material resources and the structural inequities through which groups could access materials with keen interest, and as a truer measure of social justice and equity.

The debate about the need for teachers of color, for example, was symbolic of unspoken tensions around the distribution of education material resources such as jobs and the notion of 'professionalism' as a mirage. By the time I began working with liaisons in 2011-2012, the need to hire more teachers of color in Minnesota schools was largely undisputed, at least within dominate public discourses about public education. As of 2014-2015, 96 percent of Minnesota's 55,457 teachers were classified as white, and just 1 percent as black, according to state data. Liaisons often drew on this apparent consensus around the need to hire more teachers of color, at times calling for re-segregating schools, supporting the community through job creation, and hiring all-black teaching staff, and disputing the possibility of adequate time and resources to train culturally competent white teachers. At other times, liaisons complained about the lack of cultural competency of middle class staff of color, or 'street' staff of color who had acquired positions of authority – the behavior dean who smoked weed outside the school building, or the principal with low expectations and deficit views. Social justice, as a disposition linked to practice and policy, was a morally complex, shifting issue, in the perspective of liaisons.

One day, Melinda called after spending a day in an urban middle school with a diverse staff, where she was helping to run a student program and elective classes as a contract employee. She was still a liaison, in her opinion, but since she had been laid off two years ago, she had found more liaisons positions as contracted work, disciplined through monetary rather than traditional supervisory means. Melinda was working with an older white teacher who "had some compassion" and who she liked, but who was in some ways defeated. A black teacher had presumptuously removed a student to eat at a McDonald's despite it being "pizza day," and there was nothing Melinda or the teacher could do about it, Melinda said. She stated, referring to a recent news incident about arrests of rampaging black youth on St. Patrick's Day in Minneapolis,

> Those kids are off the chain, out of control. Remember how the kids ran down Nicollet Mall the other day? That's just what happened in the hallway today. In a public school. Nobody is stopping them. They just ran out of the classroom, like hoodlums. Nobody was there to control them, and I ran to control them. I couldn't believe it. The kids ended up eventually going back to class. It was just a sad situation. I told the dean – a black guy – he said he can't get a teaching job because he doesn't have something, and he's been in the military and everything. Everybody is playing the game. There are black people who don't care, black people who care, white people who don't care, white people who care. But who is held responsible?
>
> These kids coming from Chicago, they are already in war zones. When I talked to the behavior specialist, she said nobody is going to say anything. They know who the drug dealers are, they know who's committing the crime, it's not rocket

science. But nobody is going to say anything, because its poor people, its injustice, it's a hustle. That's why the kids don't care. Everybody is just surviving (Fieldnotes, 3/1/15).

In this vignette, Melinda is invoking yet questioning the ideal of educator professionalism, as tied to goals of social justice, equity and fairness. Melinda has decoupled race from the wiliness or ability to 'care' about marginalized students, but in her story caring, or having a proper disposition, is not enough to change a 'sad situation.' The individualized, neoliberal conception of a competent and caring professional is a cause, in its own right of the continued marginality of urban students.

"That's when my principal got involved": Professionalism as deception. School staff enactments of professionalism, even when viewed as proper and beyond approach, at the same time could disguise and enable overt racism and bullying or hostile practices in school, in the perspective of liaisons. Thus, the professionalism of educators could be misleading and deceiving, in ways that could not be labeled 'unprofesssional,' yet at the same time somehow failed to be professional in a deeper sense that extended beyond an individual or situation.

One day in 2011, Sandra decided to get involved in a conflict over a bus driver who was making black kids sit in the back of the bus. The 10 African American students were being bused from North Minneapolis as part of legal ruling on voluntary racial desegregation of schools, and were the only black kids in the predominately white elementary school.

When Sandra shared this situation with other liaisons at a regular training, the liaisons were not surprised but immediate understood its historical and cultural

significance, given their knowledge of urban Minnesota schools, the Montgomery bus boycott and Rosa Parks. In fact, Sandra had been proud of putting a Rosa Parks poster up at her school. But the racial significance of the situation didn't seem to register in the same way with staff at Sandra's school, including her white principal, Sandra said. She recounted a long story of how her involvement had somehow led to more difficult racial relations at the school, stating,

> A bus driver was writing up only black students, and he asked them to sit in the back of the bus. He would yell, "Shut the hell up!" to the kids – really inappropriate interactions with the kids. He'd literally pull the bus over and read two chapters before he picked up one student he didn't like, and the students would get here quite often late at 9:30 am and didn't have time to eat breakfast. That's when my principal got involved. But the bus driver said, "You have no authority over me." The principal sent me an email she was sending to transportation, and (transportation officials) were really defensive. I said to myself, "Why don't I just start riding the bus?" Those are the kinds of things I've put my energy around.
>
> By the time I started riding the bus, they got a new bus driver, an African American woman. Everybody was very appreciative when I offered to ride the bus. It wasn't in anyone's job description to travel an hour before and after the school day. I did it because it gave me an opportunity to see my kids outside of school, and I wanted the bus driver to see he was accountable to an adult. The principal had given me copies of her write-ups about the previous bus driver's

> behavior and bullying, and I followed up with interviewing the students and parents.
>
> White parents at the school had been complaining about the kids I dealt with from North Minneapolis, saying they have been cursing and picking on their kids. I found some things were accurate and some things not accurate. The North Minneapolis kids have really strong personalities, like a group of girls who would respond to the original bus driver, "We're going to get you fired."

Shalom interviewed African American students and their parents, and found a consensus that she thought was interesting. African American students and parents thought they weren't causing trouble or misbehaving, and four parents thought school staff was condescending and dismissive of their concerns. One girl, for example, wasn't allowed to leave class for her asthma by the school nurse. She continued,

> I wrote a letter to the principal, stating these are the conversations I've had, and here is the general consensus. And after that, it seemed like I was the enemy. And I noticed a very different energy from the front office people, the principal, and the assistant. Quite honestly I have a feisty personality and I don't mind a little pushback, but this is exhausting. I have no ally. Initially every meeting I had with the principal was just me and her, and now others are involved. I don't know if they thought I was going to try to get them into trouble with the school district. (Fieldnotes 12/11/11).

Sandra's experience in this vignette shows how a racial incident, in this case an incident that was symbolically significant in at least two ways – being forced to ride in the back of the bus during the pre-civil rights era, and the perceived necessity of busing

black students to address racial disparities during the post-civil rights era – was handled in a technocratic manner that in Sandra's view was professional, yet deceptive. Sandra thought school officials were more interested in containing and controlling an issue, instead of using the situation as an opportunity to address underground racial conflict in the school

I visited Sandra in her school a few months after this incident had occurred. Sandra had a small, windowless office, not far from the principal's. But she never casually dropped by the principal's office any more, Sandra said. Her marginalization at the school had increased, to the point she felt she was hiding in her office. But Sandra was still struggling to understand why. Her 'professional' actions, such as being proactive and documenting issues transparently, had been rejected, even though none of the parents planned to make "an issue" out of the incident Sandra guessed that the principal feared she could harm the school's reputation for being a well-run schools with a caring, professional staff. This ironic realization cast an on-going shadow during Sandra's remaining time at the school.

"I felt stupid": Professionalism as needing the 'other.' The collective historical legacy of lived experience as an African American in the U.S., my co-participants argued in different ways, underlay the topic of educator professionalism. Since many school staff could not claim this experience (at least in a common-sense way), the recognition of the need for professional assistance or mediation – more than an expectation that staff themselves should change in way that was impossible - seemed to be a theme that arose throughout the study. Indeed, my co-participants were generally less critical of staff at hard-pressed urban schools than many education researchers, although individual staff

could come under harsh scrutiny. At the same time, this lived experience – including Lea's claim to having a living relative who had been a slave and Regina's claim to having traversed the Atlantic Ocean and seas of oppression a second time – was different and undefinable for each of my co-participants, an 'other' with an ontological, but unknowable, face.

Many liaisons worked in racially isolated, low-performing schools, where staff turn- over is high, public in-fighting between leadership and teachers is not infrequent over issues such as suspendable offenses (e.g., defiance, disrespect, insubordination, gang affiliation, harassment, bullying, physical contact, property damage, and use and/or possession of alcohol and drugs) (Pulling, 2014), and racial academic disparities across a range of indicators such as discipline and academic assessment are the norm. A little over 25 percent of Black students in Minnesota were proficient in math on statewide tests in 2011, for example, compared to 56 percent of students overall and 63 percent of White students. Similarly, only about half of Black students were proficient in reading during the same time period, compared to 74 percent of students overall and 80 percent of White students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015).

These racially charged educational disparities have fed into a rancorous public education politics involving the corporate reform-pro charter school movement and public education, in which the professionalism of public education teachers and their training programs have been increasingly disparaged. For example, local education activist and education reform blogger Lynnell Mickelsen of *Put Kids First* has called for "fixing white liberals," not urban kids. Mickelson also compared Minnesota's mostly White, middle-class teachers' union – Education Minnesota - to the National Rifle

Association (Mickelsen, 2015a) and Christian fundamentalism for demonizing opponents, resisting change, and denying challenging data, among other claims (Mickelsen, 2015b).

Such claims have been fiercely contested by public school system proponents, who have noted the vast amount of money behind groups such as Education Reform Now (Lahm, 2014), and some of whom eye with suspicion local attempts to find a middle way (e.g., the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers's sponsorship of the Minnesota Guild, a charter school authorizer, as a means to champion for 'teacher-led' schools) (Panning-Miller, 2015).

My co-participants, however, had a different view of professionalism at such schools, one that for the most part did not locate itself within current public debates over teachers and education reform. Instead, my co-participants perceived professionalism in more situated and multi-dimensional historical terms, as a long-standing manifestation of racial, cultural and class issues that were located in assemblages of people and circumstances, not just individual capabilities and dispositions. Lea, for example, had moved to a new school district by 2014. Although her old district, located in the metro suburbs, had comparatively low educational indictors for students of color relative to nearby districts, her new school district had a reputation as especially challenged. Lea expressed trepidation about working at such a difficult district, where the 20-plus liaison staff had until recently been expected to serve as after-school athletic coaches, as was the norm at some other districts. It would take at least several years to build the type of relationships with students and to a lesser extent staff that would result in widespread positive behavior change, she felt, and she expected to take on a chaotic situation.

Indeed, Lea's new high school, which had primarily African American students, was "out of control," Lea reported, with demoralized staff and diverse leadership who were in conflict with the central office, including the equity director. Lea described the boys at her school as refusing to stop when they were called, openly swearing at staff, refusing to follow dress codes, and insisting it was their right to make out with girls in the hallway. Similarly, girls were "off the chain," Lea said, describing them as acting out new gender identities, ways of behaving, and ways of talking that pushed the boundaries of 'safe' and socially acceptable behavior. The other day, Lea said, an African American dean had received a threat from a Black student who couldn't have stood over four feet tall. Lea heard the student tell the teacher, "They make coffins your size," a threat that she felt was very troublesome, and even more alarming in that the student was allowed to get away with it. In her new district, Lea said many of the principals, teachers, and liaisons alike shared a concern that "kids don't respect us anymore."

Lea felt much of the staff her new school, regardless of race, ethnicity and role, weren't skilled or competent enough to work with urban students. Over the course of a year at her new school, she had taken several teachers under her wing, teaching them pragmatic pedagogical skills – a role she had increasingly grown into over the last several years. But even as she received praise from a growing number of teachers, Lea could also run into conflict with some principals and teachers for being too rough and somehow harsh, as Lea and other liaisons described it.

Lea, for her part, felt many White staff had no sense of racial history – a racial history that was engulfing today's African American youth. At the same time, she felt Black staff in many cases also lacked a sense of racial history, either because they were

too young and had grown up in an education system that didn't give them a sense of identity, or they had temporarily lost it in assimilating into a White educational culture, or they were too middle-class to understand the struggles of the majority of African Americans over the decades. To be professional in ways that mattered, Lea believed, school staff needed to be communicating to students the urgency and danger facing the next African American generation, particularly boys.

In this context, even 'good,' hard-working and well-meaning educators couldn't be professional without the active mediation of someone who lived the situation – a situation I understood as surviving the challenges of being or being from a low-income African American family -, however much it dynamically changed on the surface. Often these type of discussions with Lea moved into stories. These stories were usually about Lea's small successes with enabling White teachers to reach Black students, or the successes of African American students such as herself in an unjust system.

Reflecting on her educational experiences growing up in Chicago during one occasion, several years after I had first gotten to know her, Lea pointed out that she had dropped out of school in 11th grade.

Although I had since heard Lea tell of dropping out publicly in other settings, I sensed a wariness as Lea shared this bit of information. Lea had always, since I had known her, taken pains to highlight her successes and achievement in the education system, including teaching adjunct classes at the post-secondary level. Identifying herself as a high school drop out, even though she had achieved many successes in the education system, might have seemed risky, I guessed, given my often White, middle-class gaze and uptightedness (to some of the liaisons I knew) over spelling and the use of citations.

Indeed, I reacted to Lea's shared information with surprise and shock. Lea then told me why she had dropped out – she had been sent against her will to a special education school in Chicago, after schools were forced to integrate in the 1960s. She remembered experiencing time in school as psychologically dangerous. She stated,

> I can see it vividly. I couldn't stay there. There was nothing of me there. I felt dumb. I felt stupid. I just couldn't be there, so I just left. My reason for going to school was so I wouldn't feel dumb around White people. The day I dropped out of school, I thought, I'll be back. And I'll study what I feel won't make me feel dumb (Fieldnotes, 11/7/14).

Lea said "dumb" with force, a force that signaled, I thought, a pain that was present yet wasn't present, and a place that she – or I – could and couldn't go. The limits of empathy, not only for others but for oneself in terms of even 'being' and perceiving oneself in situations of degradation and dehumanization, has been famously explored by Giorgio Agamben (2002), among others. African American students were experiencing the same inadequacy in schools currently, Lea thought. Understanding feeling inadequate, as part of a historical and collective sense of inadequacy, was a topic Lea often dwelled on, I realized during this discussion, but it was normally through the terminology of self-esteem. I had seen Lea often talk to educators at public events about promoting self-esteem and racial pride. While the mention of self-esteem generally garnered approving nods, the mention of racial pride generally garnered alarm. But for Lea, the concept of self-esteem couldn't be disentangled from racial pride, given the lived experience of race in the U.S.

Lea then bought up a student we both knew, Trisha. Trisha was a tall and physically imposing African American student who had fled gangs in Chicago to live with a relative in the Twin Cities. At the time Lea met her, Trisha had only three credits, was in 11th grade, and was visiting the school nurse more than twice day with stomach problems. Trisha was suspended from class frequently, particularly by a young teacher who found her insolent and insubordinate. Lea said Trisha only knew Black English, or African American Vernacular English, at the time. After two years of mentoring and getting involved in a student group, Trisha – who told me she didn't like Lea at first and thought she was too mean and harsh – planned to graduate from high school, and was enrolled in a post high school transition program. Lea was proud of this fact, and stated,

> Here's a young girl with no self esteem, not progressing according to Minnesota school standards. There's no person who looks like her, nobody can understand her cultural perspective. But here comes somebody who can help her – and now look at her. She's flying solo. That's what's missing in our schools – the curriculum is not geared toward them, tests are biased against them, you've got to have the confidence to do it. Who can better tell you than someone who looks like you? (Fieldnotes, 2/17/14).

For Lea, Trisha was an example of the strange aporia of professionalism. She had seen a multitude of Trishas come through the education system, which was set up to professionally accommodate them, with medical care, alternative schooling, and the processing of paperwork for mobile and transient students. But of all the education professions within this system, only she, Lea pointed out, had seen the very tiny, very

slim prospect of Trisha actually graduating from high school – and had taken the get-tough measures that turned Trisha's educational progress around.

At the time Lea did not describe her actions as being that of a 'warm demander, an effective style of professionalism for African American females, it has been argued (Ware, 2006). It was later, after reading an article for her higher education special education class in 2014 about effective African American teaching styles, that Lea began describing herself as a 'warm demander.' This became a bit of a running joke among the liaisons who knew Lea, and even for Lea herself, who was able to laugh at her own tough persona – a persona that could obscure a caring and sensitive demeanor - and the irony of fitting into a model of professionalism she had long endorsed, but which was being 'taught' to her in a predominately White institution. Even so, Lea's 'unprofessional' views of what constituted educator professionalism, such as the limitations of subjective experience in understanding, prioritizing, and enacting collective African American racial pride, continued to rankle many of her education colleagues.

"We're just throwing the babies in the water": (Un)spoken perspectives of professionalism. Views of educators professionalism could be so unspeakable, in some instances, that that weren't 'spoken' – at least in normative ways, as performances of coherent thought and rationale discourse. In assessing the practices and beliefs of school staff as professionals, one theme that emerged was the 'unspoken' perspectives or not-quite-spoken hints and silences that sometimes surrounded this topic.

One day Regina was complaining to me on the phone about a student, a 7-year-old black girl who was being referred for a special education assessment. Regina believed the girl needed some firm but caring discipline from her teacher or her father, who was an

older man and unexpectedly in the position of raising children. She was angry with the teacher and school staff, who she felt didn't want to take the time to work with the girl.

> She's a very spoiled little girl, who when she doesn't get her way, blows up. She like a little princess. That doesn't mean she has mental health issues. She's a little brat. She starts screaming, and she knows if she screams loud enough, she doesn't have to work. I had a dream last night. We're just throwing the babies in the water, and we are at the bottom (of the stream) and all we are doing is pulling them out. Some of them are surviving. But we are not doing anything to stop them from being thrown in the water.

In her dream, Regina was at the top of the stream, where the babies were still alive. But she was throwing them into the stream, hopelessly calling out to the rest of the staff.

> You need to find out what's happening at the top of the stream. But you don't even care, you're too lazy to go up the steam. You just pull (the babies) out, and put them to the side, and bury them. I'm at the top of the stream, calling people to "come, come, come" and they're looking at me like I'm crazy. They're looking at me like, I've got a really nice view here. It's easier for me to stay here (Fieldnotes 7/21/14).

Regina's dream symbolizes a darker vision of professionalism, where what she perceived as the hidden professional dispositions of her colleagues could not be spoken about openly. Working in a school district where significant racial disparities persisted, Regina spoken openly about what she perceived as problems, and had described staff as wearing masks as they "made propaganda" against Black students and staff. But in her

dream, the masks were replaced by actual malice. The murder of the most innocent of symbols, babies, was vivid. It is not terribly unusual for the imagery of death, and even of racial genocide, to come up in professional development events around racial disparities, such as at urban school workshops and at education conferences.

At one professional development event for special education directors I attended in 2013, a black equity director in his early 30s passionately proclaimed to the group, "Black children are dying every day in the classroom." One of the participants, a white woman in a stylish animal print blouse, began crying. Most of the other participants remained stony faced and/or professionally composed, at least through non-verbal facial and body language. Such rhetoric had come to have an almost ritualistic component, a declaration of institutional ideology. Although educators could admit to feeling angry, hurt and ashamed in semi-informal spaces, as some did in this case after the meeting, the professional norms for educators in large, complex, publicly scrutinized urban school districts 'allowed' such discourse.

Regina, by contrast, was voicing an 'unprofessional' perspective of accountability that laid blame at the feet of individuals, not an anonymous education system. In her dream, she was both a witness and a judge. The ontology and meaning of traumatic dreams and visions can be understood in a Freudian way as encounters with a past that has not been processed by the individual, or in Laconian terms as almost existential encounters with being human. But used in the context of education and racial injustices, such stories dangerously, it could be argued, challenge dominant education discourses, such as the idea of professionalism, the ahistorical rationality of education, and meritocracy.

Meritocracy, the idea of progress based on individual ability, has long been one of the core ideologies behind the idea of mass education. But for African Americans, education has had a much more troubled history in collective memory. As sociologist William Watkins has pointed out, African American education historically has been scaffolded in ways "that became a central policy instrument in consolidating the unpredictable newly freed slaves, re-annexing the South, and guaranteeing a pool of cheap semiskilled and unskilled labor." This was a political project done not by "evil" men, but men of vision inspired by Christian patriotism and nationalism (Watkins, 2001, p. 180-181).

Similarly, African immigrants in Minnesota, as they became structurally immersed in low-paying jobs such as nursing aids and lost hope of economic integration and the American Dream, were being entrapped through their identification as Black, thus becoming part of the African American legacy, Regina felt. Although education has been a pathway for a significant number of African American to the middle class, most Black students had become mired in public education, Regina believed. Regina, in common with a not in-frequent theme within Afrocentric and indigenous scholarship, resonated with the dangers of and the notion of cultural and physical genocide.

At a lecture at a college in the northern suburbs of the Twin Cities in spring 2014, African American critical scholar Joy DeGruy's joked about having a passport and a "Plan B" in case black Americans became further oppressed, drawing nervous laughter from many members of the diverse audience. It was a relief to publicly be able to at least reference outright fear, several cultural liaisons who were at the lecture told me afterward. Such discussions were usually whispered within the education institution,

where a climate of intimidation around politicized discussions of race often prevailed. DeGruy herself, the author of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*: *American's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*, and university professor, stated during her lecture and in post-lecture conversations that education institutions were often leery of what she had to say.

By comparison, liaisons felt their perspective was even less likely to be welcomed in schools. "They're going to treat you like an 'N' anyway. Don't believe them." Being in schools was like "being in the belly of the beast," liaisons would occasionally comment. But from this standpoint, they also alluded to the need for schools to become more civilized – to grow from the 'unprofessional,' yet professional, perspective they could offer.

Summary. This chapter has offered explanations and evidence for how liaisons perceive the notion of professionalism and professional dispositions in education. I used six examples to explore this theme– 1) professionalism as perceived 'from below', 2) professionalism as involving alternative qualities, such as 'toughness', 3) professionalism as involving an orientation toward social justice and the complexity of its practice 4) professionalism as also involving the practice of deception, 5) professional as open-ended and needing an 'other' beyond racial categorizations and taxonomies, and 5) and aspects of professionalism that can't be directly spoken about. Together, these themes indicate liaisons hold a particular, and sometimes unwelcome or 'unprofessional' view, of what it means to be a professional educator. They also may be more empathetic to the professional dilemmas of urban educators than many education researchers. I use the term 'unprofessional' to highlight how the valuing of certain professional norms and

dispositions can be a self-referential process upheld by technologies of power, such as education boards, education unions and associations, and education teaching programs.

In the next section, I will explore how liaisons' perceptions of educator professionalism inform their lived experiences of equity training, conflict and negotiations of power.

Section Five: Equity Water Wells and Unruly Corridors

In this section, I will demonstrate how the liaison role is incorporated into schools' organizational management of marginality, racial inequities, and educational progress. Because maintaining the secular myth of equitable, educational progress, apart from the 'reality' of progress, is a core function of mass education, as I have already discussed, liaisons play a complicated role within schools as potential 'allies' of schools' public identities as racially just and caring institutions. They are also potential 'fifth columns,' unmaskers of an identity central to the governance of gaps between discourses and practices around race, as well as what Ahmed has called sticky objects of affect (Ahmed, 2001)– living flash points in which white staffs' pent-up frustrations over being 'shamed and blamed' – a common reaction to school diversity trainings - can land. I am drawing on the imagery of an equity water well, and of unruly corridors, to explore how liaisons along with other educators participate in and even benefit from the institutional management of professional learning around equity, while being in some ways further positioned and marginalized as a complex subject-object – professionals who also walk around in "monkey suits," a term ironically used to denote and identify the conflation of dark skin with primitive, debased forms of humanity.

The veneer of racial harmony and multicultural practices that often characterizes U.S. schools has long been a subject of educational scholarship, as has the use of equity racial programs to maintain the status quo powers of educational institutions (Ahmed, 2011). Drawing on previous work in this area, I will explore 1) the experience of liaisons in school equity professional development programs, 2) the experience of liaisons within equity departments, which are often closely associated with school district-wide equity professional development programs, and 3) the experience of liaisons practicing equity professional development lessons in school spaces outside official training sites, such as hallway encounters with teachers and administrators. These include a sub-section on common types of conflict.

Equity water wells. In the last half dozen years or so, diversity trainings in larger school districts have grown more comprehensive and institutionalized, often involving multi-year plans and hundreds of thousands of millions of dollars. Most of Minnesota's metro school districts in have had multiple contracts with out-of-state, for-profit, professional development organizations that offer, in most cases, scaffolded curriculum, leadership training and sometimes out-of-state retreats and conferences. Equity departments within school districts have also started to play a larger role in staff development around diversity and to a lesser extent, social, mental health, and disability issues.

Over the course of time I worked with them, liaisons regularly attended trainings on cultural competence, equity, trauma-sensitive schools, and other subjects. But while liaisons generally found the subject matter itself valuable and even fascinating, their experiences around such trainings was often mixed, involving a complex play of

performances that revealed and concealed forms of school power, and social control, over the issue of marginality and race.

Equity training for all: "Overly" knowledgeable school staff. When a three-year, district-wide cultural competency program was instituted in her district, Melinda had been one of its most enthusiastic supporters. Melinda had an avid interest in global cultures, and tried to incorporate visual symbols and stories from around the world in her work with students and teachers. Melinda had faithfully saved all the handouts from the training. Melinda had also volunteered to attend extra sessions as a trainer-of-trainer, and bought extra books inspired by what she learned.

But over the course of three years, Melinda regarded the equity trainings at her school district with growing disillusionment. When I spoke to her after three years of training, at a point where she had been let go from her school district and was looking for a new liaison job, she described with frustration having to talk "equity talk" in job interviews. Instead of being inspired, she had come to see such jargon as imprisoning. Reflecting on the training she had experienced, she expressed frustration with her relative inability to professionally master the vocabulary and express herself. At the same time, she had been forced to embody "bad news" as the token black person. She stated,

> In (my school district) they're overly trained. I was part of it, but I got frustrated. Paras (and us) are like guinea pigs, we have to follow along with the program. What happens is when you have these liaison positions, whether you like it or not, especially, nobody wants to talk about race. Our next training was around White Privilege. Do you think anybody wants to hear about that? Do you think they are

really saying anything like, "I want to hear what you have to say?" (Fieldnotes 7/3/14).

What happens in a group situation is, people may agree with you or not. It's not written in stone…but I think that people are generally afraid to talk, its almost like they don't want to lose their jobs if they tell the truth….Sometimes they even see something is wrong, they discuss it, like they discuss things that aren't right, but they never address it, because of fear, like being reprimanded by the principal.

I think what it is is, I'm sick of this race thing. I'm just so tired of analyzing everything. Then with all these jobs, you've got to prove yourself, be politically correct and everything. I want to be a creative teacher. I don't want to be in no monkey suit, be the bearer of bad news, you know what I mean? (Fieldnotes 7/21/14).

Like Melinda, for the most part the liaisons I met had had few opportunities to learn about concepts such as the social construction of race, institutional racism and internalized racism. These topics appeared to be of great interest. Yet they also found this knowledge was performed and enacted in specific ways, in which 'authentic' feelings were contained. Liaisons also perceived themselves, in ways that were not always quite clear, to be further disadvantaged in the context of collective staff training. Since most liaisons already feel linguistically disadvantaged in the bureaucratic context of schools, with its explicit valuing of "academic" language and formal education, liaisons experienced this new vocabulary about race in complicated ways. They also felt their lived experiences of racism in schools was devalued, in relation to the materialized

‘professional’ vocabulary and content being introduced through equity and diversity trainings.

Courageous Conversations Around Race, for example, was a book that was used in many of the school districts where liaisons worked. Regina’s district, for example, had budgeted $400,000 during the 2014-2015 school year for district-wide equity training with an out-of-town consulting organization using the book, a fraction of the roughly $5 million that was spent in a neighboring district on a five-year contract with a different consulting organization, with a similar book. – and in which, ironically, roughly half the district’s black liaison staff had been laid off at the end of the contract, as part of a publicly proclaimed anticipated budget shortfall in integration revenue that never materialized. The *Courageous* book includes a section on the possibility of constructing “healing communities” in which educators can learn how to listen and give attention while others heal (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 269). It also describes how to develop a *Courageous Conversation Compass*, a personal navigation tool that helps people to process racial information and events in four ways: moral, intellectual, emotional, and social (2006, p. 135). Walking away from conversations involving the compass is to “willingly partake of White privilege,” since “there is no grey zone in anti-racist work” (2006, p. 46).

In deconstructing the materiality of bureaucracy in Pakistan, anthropologist Mathew Hull drew on science studies in calling attention to that way that materials can constitute modes of sociality as embedded objects, not just the way they may supersede or point to a gap between ideal and “real” worlds. He states,

> Writing establishes the stable relation between words and things necessary for bureaucracies to effectively implement regimes of control. In both the self-understandings of bureaucrats and classic accounts of bureaucracy, documents represent or engage with autonomous entities, realities "in the world" independent from the process through which they are produced (Hull, 2012, p. 25).

Equity training materials, similarly, help constitute a stable relationship between contentious words and things in schools, such as racialized bodies, the compilation of racialized statistics and data in the form of student records and data analysis, and everyday discourses that invoke social constructions of race, such as designations of "white," "black," "African American," "people of color," or more derogatory terms and racial slang such as the "N" word. Paradoxically, even as race in more recent and progressive equity material such as *Courageous Conversations* advocates a deconstruction of essentialized use of race, it at the same time excludes more experiential understandings of race – such as race as historically and politically grounded - that had more meaning and significance for my co-researchers. Looking back at her experience in *Courageous Conversation* workshops, Lea reflected,

> I couldn't explain how I felt, because you can never have the conversation. It never goes outside the box. That really pissed me off, because… what's the purpose of (the training)? It doesn't go anywhere. This is going to be a courageous conversation, because I'm going to take it back to the origin of this stuff. Like the lighter skinned you are, the better your life. You can also take it back to the whoopings and beatings during slavery. You can take it back to black

> men and women being separated from each other. And now you're doing the same to our kids – you can do whatever you want to them (Fieldnotes, 10/13/14).

The sense of never going "anywhere," of never being able to talk about "real" problems involving race in schools, was a re-occurring theme in discussing equity trainings. This sense seemed to persist, regardless of the length of time of the training, how frequently it occurred, and how often cultural liaisons tried to bring it up in the course of their work. Lea, who had moved from one metro school district to another one during the course of this research, commented,

> Just like at (a previous school district), there are so many meetings, you can't get any work done. Meetings happen every morning – on the leadership team, the literacy team, on everybody's damn team. I think they kind of black out what I'm saying. "You're never going to close this achievement gap until you look at language and culture," but they move on to something else. They don't want to hear that. Look at the money been thrown at (the achievement gap). They already have their way of doing things. I'm not going to worry about it, because one of these days they'll have to look at it – achievement gap not gong anywhere (Fieldnotes, 10/13/14).

Equity as business. As professional development around equity became a greater part of liaisons' professional lives, the commodification and institutional uses of equity – including the organizational visibility and growth of equity departments – became an issue of greater critical scrutiny for the liaisons I worked with. Equity training as a form of material exchange, or business, was a them liaisons frequently commented upon. The perceived commodification of equity training was frustrating for several reasons. One,

the businesslike undertone of trainings around race and ethnicity allowed school districts to divert funds from their 'real' purpose, and to position students of color as objects that could be converted into statistics, with financial undertones. Furthermore, the commodification of equity trainings helped constitute more complicated environments in which competition between liaisons intensified, and it became more difficult to know how to 'stay in your lane.' Some equity directors encouraged their liaisons to become more outspoken advocates for social justice and racial equity, "setting them up for failure" while benefiting from their willingness to speak out. Others penalized their liaisons for taking the trainings too literally, liaisons felt, and interfering in school district management of their images, which could involve financial repercussions.

Regina exemplified the complex feelings that many liaisons spoke about over the growth of equity trainings and equity departments as institutional modes of business. Regina was an avid learner at and consumer of equity related learning opportunities. She was adapt at using the *Courageous Conversations* compass, and unlike some other liaisons, quickly incorporated equity jargon and vocabulary into her discourse. However, she also perceived the equity trainings as helping to cover up more self-serving, perverse practices at her school district. It gave institutions a "pass" to do "dirty work," which she described as crony corruption and the continued exploitation of students of color. She described her perceptions as,

> They're bringing in their friends to do professional development. They brought in an ex (administrator) as a consultant. That's above my pay grade. You have a retainer. A lot of dirty stuff takes place in these schools, and they say there's no money. They lie about what they do with the money. Even if it's just $80,000,

> you should be able to show something. You tell them you're calling a parent, and their eyes get big. Especially black folks. They don't like talking to us. "Her mother is so rude, she screams at me." So what? Talk to the mom. It's such a mess…. If you listened to the stories of these black educators, then maybe they'd make (this cultural competency training) money more accountable. Instead the district can spend the money how they want, loosey goosey. They look at us with their eyeballs. They know what they're doing is wrong (Fieldnotes 4/11/14)

Regina described another time that her colleagues on a special education committee subverted processes of training around equity by exploiting, she felt, black students. This incident occurred toward the end of her third year sitting on the district-level committee. Special education, because it was under scrutiny for racial disparities in placement and discipline of special education students, disparities that special education officials often argued began in general education, led some of the equity initiatives at Regina's district. Regina was "very discouraged" at the "millions of dollars" the district was getting from special education, but district officials' constant refrain of "there's no money." She stated,

> Everybody seems to be listening. They shake their heads, "Hmm, hmm. Yeah, I understand what you're saying." But it is really like, "We're going to do what the heck we want to do." They talk about moving forward, but all these things - it's so discouraging being on these committees now, it's wasting my time. We keep dancing around the issues. The last one they did, they decided they were going to bring in special ed kids to tell their story. I'm like, "Really? So they could talk about how frustrated they are?" But so what? It's not like you're bringing in a

> bunch of sponsors. You've got principals sitting there. These are principals, directors, coordinators. You're telling me you've been here 20 years, and you're a leader? Why do you have to parade these kids in front of people? … I think hauling those kids in to tell their story is ridiculous. Go to them. They were dressed nicely. They came in, in little suits and ties. They were all African Americans, all male. They way they set it up, they came and sat at tables. "Tell us your story. We're not really putting solutions in place." It's like you're selling a product, looking for someone to buy it. A display. Like is someone comes, you do a performance (Fieldnotes 4/11/14).

Regina believed that the African American special education students in this incident had been exposed to the ridicule of adult professionals who were performing a school script of racial and cultural inclusion. This performance, in Regina's view, was intended for other members of the committee and school authority figures, in which the youth's "little suits and ties" were a sort of neo-colonial, exotic costume, such like some 18th century house slaves in the U.S. wore wigs or styled their hair to look like wigs in imitation of upper-class white owners (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). While school officials may have argued they were providing an empowering and valuable opportunity to learn how to appear and speak within a dominate mainstream setting, Regina perceived a deliberate act, similar to a notion of performances as "preexisting movements, executed with a sense of heightened awareness in the presence of observers" (Covington-Ward, 2013).

Unruly corridors: Courageous or crazy conversations? Participating in equity trainings, where conflict and personal beliefs were often concealed, also led to liaisons

experiencing equity training as that much more unruly or explosive, in contexts outside the surveillance of supervisors and trainers.

The introduction of equity as a legitimate topic in schools, one result of equity trainings, produced situations that could morph unexpectedly once equity facilitators left the scene and previous power dynamics re-stabilized. This was a type of "craziness," a realization that the social reality of the school was other than it was momentarily imagined, in the spaces of visionary diversity trainers.

Lea, who unlike Melinda avoided district cultural competency trainings whenever she could, described a conversation about 'White Privilege' that turned into an on-going conflict that lasted for years. One day, Lea said, a teacher who was white walked up to her and said, "I need to ask you a question. Promise you won't get mad." Lea recalled telling the teacher, "I don't get mad at people who ask me a question." Lea said the teacher then asked her why black people at the food shelf at her church could afford to buy cigarettes but not food. Lea explained that the people may have bummed a cigarette, or paid for just one from the Arab stores. Then she asked the teacher if she was being naïve.

> And she said, "What do you mean, am I being naïve?" And I said, "It sounds a little be naïve to me." She said, "You think I'm being White Privilege, don't you?" I said, "Let me explain something to you. That cigarette might help that parent from beating the hell out of their kids." She said, "Well, I don't understand why." I said, "Because you've never lived in poverty. I have. In poverty, they advertise cigarettes and alcohol on every corner. They sell to poor people. I smoked – I smoke for 23 years, stress reduction." She said to me, "I guess I'm

just White Privilege, aren't I?" I said, "If you care to put it that way" (Fieldnotes, 8/26/2013).

The conversation grew more heated, Lea said, and the teacher ended up crying. Later, every time they passed in the school's hallway, the teacher would sarcastically accuse herself of White Privilege, Lea said. Later, the teacher accused her of stealing some school supplies, Lea said, which then contributed to further incidents throughout the next few years, including grievance filings.

This recollected memory suggests the complicated ways in which equity training could be re-interpreted as a struggle for dominance within an already racially charged school climate. A seemingly rationale, friendly inquiry morphed into an inter-personal struggle, where conflict between staff entered the bureaucratic processes of schools, in which liaisons – as non-unionized, temporary employees – were disadvantaged.

Breanna similarly felt at times like she was drawn into "thin line" situations through equity trainings at her school district. Staff, who thought they were cultural competent and or thought equity training had enabled them to decide for themselves how to work with students of color, were more willing to exert their power, Breanna said. Breanna described one situation where she had had a conflict with a white teacher. The teacher had yelled at an African American 3rd grader who had banged a pencil machine outside her classroom, after he had put in a quarter and nothing had come out. The teacher had "come out of nowhere," yelling and swinging a key in the student's face, Breanna said. The teacher belittled the student, and made him practice asking for help during a two-minute rant. Breanna walked the boy, who was stunned, back to his classroom, she said, and was nearly in tears herself.

Days after the event, when I met Breanna for coffee and to reflect on her work during the past week, she was still upset. She told me something terrible had happened, but didn't want to say what had occurred. After some time had passed, during which I could feel the emotional turmoil she was in, Breanna decided to share the story. At that point, she still hadn't decided whether she should talk to anyone at the school about it. Breanna felt she couldn't talk to the teacher, who had just been at a two-day cultural responsiveness training at the state department and had shared her opinions of it. More than a week later, Breanna decided to gingerly tell her supervisor part of the story. She explained,

> If I had gone to that teacher, she would have gone to someone else, and me and this other person are not feeling each other. They would have had a big pow wow over it, and it would never have gone anywhere. And I already know that person's character. I heard her say, "I don't know why we have to teach a different way because we have different cultures in our school," meaning black. So I knew what I was doing when I went to my supervisors. I had a whole week, and I prayed about it. If it goes anywhere, who knows? You have to wear two different faces. One for acceptance, and one for survival. It feels like that in school. You have to do what you have to do to survive, because if I had said the wrong thing, and it wasn't so nice, who knows what could have happened? (Fieldnotes, 11/13/13).

A fear of the consequences of crossing teachers who felt emboldened by equity training, reinforced through shared experiences and re-stories of events, lay behind many of the stories I heard around equity trainings from my co-researchers. Even when a

cultural liaison such as Lea claimed to not be intimidated, the traumatic consequences of getting equity "wrong," or not being "PC," was clear.

"Getting sucked in": The diversity of conflict. The ways liaisons experienced conflict in schools was difficult to capture in a way that made sense to them, I found, because it had a history and repetitious quality that single incidents failed to convey. Liaisons experienced conflict within physically bounded institutional spaces where a relatively stable set of agents interacted daily over the course of years – leading to an ostracization on top of other ostracizations that could be profound. They also experienced conflict as a confusing part of trying to do their job Calls to "speak truth to power" and resist silenced dialogues co-existed with organizational pressure to "stay in your lane" and "tone it down," liaisons felt. Taking a parent concern about fairness over the head of a principal or equity director to higher authority figures could be perceived as organizational insubordination. As one cultural liaison said during a focus group conducted by an equity worker of color,

> Administrators, no matter what their color, get sucked in. They're not going to go out on a limb for anybody (Focus Group, 4/1/14).

Liaisons considered themselves passionate about their jobs and professional, but often staff "didn't have a clue" about what they did and perceived them as negative and complainers – a charge difficult to refute, given their role as student advocates to some extent, such in forming and finding rooms for student of color groups. They also, they thought, were perceived as offering one-dimensional perspective on race in schools – views I had also come across. "We already know that they are going to say," one teacher

coach who had extensive experience in urban schools told me. An African American liaison stated,

> Even if you have a job description, they still don't value it. Even if you have a voice, it's still not validated, this place is so hostile (Focus Group, 4/1/14).

I will describe four ways in which cultural liaisons experienced conflict – as direct aggression, as hidden aggression, as disengagement, and as dehumanizing. These patterns aren't exhausting, but rather are intended to depict how extensive trouble could be in the seemingly orderly and neutral spaces of school.

Overt conflict: Teachers who "breed trouble." Institutional racism, school climate, racial fatigue syndrome and micro-aggressions (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007), and bystander behavior (Scully & Rowe, 2009) are useful in understanding the dimensions of conflict my co-researchers experienced in schools. Still, they don't fully capture the lived experience of social isolation and conflict with the same people over weeks, months, and often years, in racialized, relational networks of circulating information and power. This explains why, I believe, liaisons most often experienced conflict with colleagues as their primary difficulty, compared to conflict with students, parents and community members.

One day at the beginning of the week, Lea called me with what she said was a quick update. It wasn't anything huge, just a passing annoyance – a too-typical event that made working in schools tiring. I was pretty sure whatever Lea had to share, it would be overtaken by the fresh events of the coming week. In my experience, conflict with staff seemed to happen on a daily basis. "Are you ready?" she asked as I scrambled for a pen

or my laptop. I usually had one chance to get a story, and even that one chance usually lasted less time than I needed to get what I felt were the full details.

Two weeks ago, Lea had taken a summer substitute teaching job at a low-performing urban elementary school. There, she had encountered a "foe nest," an informal gangs of teachers. As Lea described it,

> When I began at the school, I didn't meet anybody. I got my keys and the paperwork and went straight to my classroom, and that's where I stayed. I know these kinds of things happen in (the school district), and you need to mind your business. If you don't, you're asking for trouble. Everybody in the hall was like, "Good morning, how are you?" I went back to my classroom, not hanging out.
>
> I had a 4th grade classroom. I had to really establish myself with the kids. "I'm the teacher, you're the student." They were all Hispanic and black kids.
>
> These two white teachers, 1st and 2nd year teachers, would walk by my classroom. The door was open, and there was no noise, other than loud noise during 10 minutes of games…. This one teacher, every day she would come in three or four times a day, and interrupt the class, peeping in. One time she asked, "Where is your phone – can I use it?" Then, because I was sitting at my desk, she said "Oh, you have a desk phone. That OK, I'll use my cell phone." But she had a phone in her classroom. The other teacher would come in and say, "This is going to be my classroom next year. I'm going to start moving my stuff in now. Is this OK with you?" I said, "That's fine, as long as it's during the bathroom break or something like that." She would come in two or three times a day moving things, disturbing us (during the regular class time.)…. Then a third teacher came up to me, and

said, “I need to put some in the classroom for this other teacher.” So the next morning when I go there, the door was blocked, and I had to push the boxes aside (Fieldnotes 8/4/14).

But what was really problematic, from an equity perspective, was that the teachers involved the students, Lea said. One day a fourth staff member, a white behavioral specialist who was friends with the two teachers, began holding meetings with two of Lea’s students, 9-year-old Hispanic girls. The girls, the behavior specialist told Lea, had been emailing one of the teachers, complaining about noise and a “scary” African American boy in the class who was preventing them from doing their work. Lea denied there was a discipline issue in her classroom. She was proud of the classroom order she had quickly established through 10-minute, ‘core values’ training she did every morning.

Eventually, the principal, who was white, and an African American behavior specialist became involved. The behavior specialist defended Lea against accusations that she had raised her voice, and alleged the teachers were upset because Lea’s data had showed no out-of-classroom discipline incidents, which was making them look bad. The principal promised to take the issue of inappropriate interaction with students to the union.

This story, a subjective account of school-based conflict, illustrates an environment of uncertainty that Lea perceived as common. As a black teacher, Lea believed she couldn’t help but be involved in circulations of unruly and uncontainable “trouble.” She stated,

> There's teachers in every school who are worse than the kids. They got this breeding thing going on – they breed trouble. It multiplies – trouble multiplies with them (Fieldnotes, 8/4/14).

Toxic organizational cultures have been studied by researchers from different disciplinary frameworks. In a study of modern school cultures across 34 schools in the U.S., for example, educational researcher Anthony Muhammad found educators could be divided into Believers, Tweeners, Survivors, and Fundamentalists. Fundamentalists not only oppose change initiatives, but organize to resist change efforts, and "can wield tremendous political power," Muhammad noted (Muhammad, 2009, p.29).

The story Lea told suggests a parallel with such studies, but calls attention to what Melinda referred to many times as "teacher bullying" – networks of teachers resisting not policies or programs, but individuals such as substitute teachers of color and cultural liaisons who embody professional threats. This threat can be seen even in the way Lea re-storied the event. In her telling, she was the professional, rational, capable educator, a contrast with 19th century historical depiction of blacks as belonging to "savage races," as noted by historian William H. Watkins (Watkins, 2001, p. 57). The teachers were subtly depicted as savagely animalistic, working in a pack-like way. They were violating the professional script for social interaction in schools, one that emphasizes the ability to work as a team for the welfare of all students and to leave behind the overt racial divides of Jim Crow education and Brown v. Board of Education (1954).

Hidden conflict: "They don't speak to me." Conflict could also be largely hidden. Such conflict consisted of not just racial micro-aggressions or covert or implicit biases, but actions such as accusations made behind the scenes. Regina spoke frequently

about conflict with a diverse range of people, something she expected as an equity advocate. But conflict with many white teachers and administrators had a hidden dimension, she said, unlike conflict with staff of color, which tended to involve some dialogue. The conflict with white staff was often characterized by lack of dialogue, in Regina's view, and was constantly in motion, liable to pop up unexpectedly at any time.

Earlier that year, for example, Regina had told me about a teacher in the staff lounge who had commented, "Why is (Regina) still here?" Unbeknownst to Regina, the teacher had earlier reported Regina for threatening a student. Regina found out about the comment in the staff lounge through someone who shared it with her, and then found an accusation had been filed against her with the human relations department by her principal, without her knowledge. She decided to confront the principal.

> I went to the principal right before winter break, and asked him, "Do you have any problems working with me in this building? Do you have any complaints form parents?" He said, "No." I said, "If you are concerned about my work, I would appreciate it if you would come and talk to me, because there is gossiping going on in this school." He said, "What?"
>
> Chicken shit, he didn't have the balls to tell me. He denied everything. I said, "Hey, I need to know, has someone complained about my work in this school?" I did it in a very nicey, non-accusatory way. But he made a bald-faced lie. I think the staff went to him and complained. I think I know what it is – those people are just being racist. My personality, I'm very vocal, I call them on behavior, and I have no problem going to the district (leadership), and I talk to my parents, too. They don't like that. And they don't want that. I go into the building, and half

don't speak to me. This is how (the district) is, and how Minnesota is, when it comes to black people, and I'm not the only one (Fieldnotes, 2/18/14).

Regina had grown up well-off, in a family that had its own plane. Before she fled war in her country, she had lived a life of cosmopolitan experiences that her colleagues had no idea of, since they thought of her as 'one of those people' – a black, she said. Still, in her school district, she was part of a circulation of discourses and practices that positioned her as subject to uncertainty and backlash, in an economy of managing equity in particular ways.

Dodging conflict: "She wouldn't retire." The anticipation of trouble, and trying to be aware of situations that would lead to frustration and inter-personal struggle, was another way liaisons envisioned conflict. Sometimes, cultural liaisons tried to deliberately avoid situations that could 'blow up' without a clear way out. But, given the structural nature of issues such as increasingly diverse students and different views of the need to adapt professional practices or make accommodations, employing practices of avoidance could turn into an everyday effort and experience.

During a lunch one day with Melinda and one of her close colleagues, for example, I became involved in a discussion about the turbulent goings-on and perceived cronyism at an integration district – Minnesota has three, voluntary regional integration districts that are supposed to provide programs and support to member schools following Minnesota's overhauled desegregation program in 1997. Suddenly, Melinda and her colleague began laughing about a popular and well-liked African American cultural liaison, who worked in one of the integration district's member school districts, who was

invited out for a drink after school by his administrators, all White, and who declined the invitation.

> It was the good ol' boy network… He said, "They are not going to set me up. I'll probably get pulled over by police on the way home." He doesn't share any personal information with anybody at the school (Fieldnotes, 4/1/14).

Regina also avoided certain situations, despite taking pride in her willingness to speak out and confront higher-ups, including her superintendent. One of these situations was a teacher at one of her elementary schools. Regina described the teacher as an older and experienced European American woman who was unpopular with students and staff alike, but who didn't seem aware of it. The teacher repeatedly asked Regina to help her with her racially and ethnically diverse class, Regina said. But Regina said she always declined the request. She stated,

> Her students hated reading, hated writing. I sat in her classroom, and got a headache after five minutes. They (the administration) allowed her to sit there for eight years. She wouldn't retire. Finally last year, she had some health issues. The last day before school, she announced she was retiring. Everybody rejoiced. She was so detrimental I'm not kidding you. She had 20 kids in her room, and I saw all the kids disengage… She was probably in her early 60s, I don't know. The principal tried to get her mentored. They organized her room differently, but she's the kind of person when you do that, she takes everything down and puts in in the trash. The (staff) tried to share some teaching strategies. The substitute teacher would say, "I'll tell you what really works with kids," and she'd look (at the notes), and say, "It doesn't work for me." She had hip surgery. She was gone for a

month. When she came back, the 2nd graders were crying, because they missed their substitute teacher. I think it really, really hurt her feelings. I think she decided to really retire then (Fieldnotes, 7/2/14)

This vignette demonstrates Regina's avoidance of conflict in a situation that she viewed as powerless to improve or change, and that she felt was unjust. A teacher had tried to remove *her* for being outspoken about race, Regina continued, but nobody had tried to remove this teacher who was widely perceived as inept, especially with students of color. It wasn't that the other teachers at the school weren't 'helpful and nice,' Regina said, and concerned with what was going on. But nobody had been willing to engage in actual conflict with the teacher, Regina said, and in this case, she decided to also dodge the situation.

Sally Campbell Galman (2012), in writing about the homogeneity that she perceives among teacher dispositions at the early childhood and primary level, has described the demeanors of "nice" that pervade education. Nice is a part of a "valued identity of contemporary white, middle-class femininity" that indicates being a "good teacher," (Galman, 2012, p. xiii). But in feminized professions such as teaching, 'nice' is part of a hegemonic message of ideal Western feminine norms, which weeds out diversity even among the White women who dominate the field of teacher preparation and teaching.

Regina, like all of my co-researchers, had a skeptical view of 'nice,' seeing it as a demeanor that allowed White females, in particular, to avoid accountability and shield themselves from accusations of aggressively participating in the struggle for influence and resources, such as jobs and easier classrooms. But she largely kept her views to

herself while at school, she said. When one day I asked Regina to estimate what percentage of staff she got along with, she quickly told me, 'none.' Then she paused, and said a few. Since I knew Regina had been at her district for six years and had always struck me as an out-going person who liked and got along well with people, I had expected Regina would tell me at least 50 percent. She explained,

> After 34 years of working in this country, trust is the number one issue for me. I don't play that. You can't say, because I say this and this, people are going to believe me. You have to learn how to earn it. Trust is like having faith in someone, that's what trust is. I believe in your integrity – that's how I see it. In school, I don't trust a large percentage of the staff. Most Black people don't trust White people, they don't trust White colleagues, because they don't have their back. We laugh and talk, but at the end of the day, you better have my back. I can tell you time and time, how I have been burned. That's my truth. The minute you show me that you aren't (trustworthy), you'll never know, my behavior toward you will never change. I will not dog you or anything, but I know how much I will support you (Fieldnotes 8/4/14).

Regina's demeanor, Regina was saying, could be as opaque and complexly masked as that she perceived among her staff and colleagues, who as members of the dominate White and middle-class society within education, tend to be depicted discursively as 'transparent' compared to the essentializing constructs of the 'Black subject' famously theorized by Frantz Fanon (Fanon, 2008). Besides turning this image on its head, Regina indirectly was also introducing an unknown into the situation, the equalizing possibility that any interaction – including ours – could be a deliberate

performance of deception and masking depending on the reliability of an individual. On the one hand, Regina's story of conflict could be considered in light of the comparatively high staff turn at schools with large numbers of urban and diverse students. Cultural liaisons tended to be placed in racially isolated and high poverty schools, the schools that research has shown also tend to have a greater share of more inexperienced or less-sought-after teachers (Igersoll & May, 2011). Still, Regina said she distrusted almost everyone, with racial dynamics a key part of the equation. Regina left open the possibility that this type of conflict, a conflict based on expectations of lack of integrity – the Latin *integer* meaning whole or complete – could be avoided, but it would take effort. This type of conflict was thus socially constructed as an imaginary reality of potentiality, which afflicted everyone, to the extent they did not reveal their true selves.

(De)humanizing conflict - "I never saw a White person so hurt before." Among my co-participants, Breanna, who was the youngest, tended to be the most comfortable and relaxed in her position, at least in terms of her working relationships with colleagues. Although she had numerous conflicts with some administration and teachers, she also often took the school staff's perspective in dealing with issues, and rarely explained events using a racial lens. Breanna raved about her son's school – a school that was outside the district and had mostly White staff – and she liked working with some of her colleagues, including some principals, teachers, specialized staff, and the counselor. So I was surprised one day, after Breanna, who liked to both dress professionally and vary her style, told me with wonder about a White school counselor whose feelings had been hurt by a Black person. She stated,

> The (African American) grandmother came in and told (my colleague), "You're problem is you don't know how to work with black people!" She was SO hurt. I never saw a white person so hurt before her. Just looking at her, she wanted to cry. She followed me around the building all day. When she came into my office the third time, I asked her, "Are you OK about what (the grandmother) said?" She said, "No, I'm hurt. That (what she said) means there is something wrong."
> She mainly works with African American kids, and they really love her. They're always talking to her, and coming and saying hi to her. She's helping me out with Black History Month. She's the sweetest person. I said, "Girl, you're OK." She said, "I needed to hear that." I said, "You have to understand, once emotions get so high people will say anything. Don't take it personally." I was just shocked. That's the first time I've ever seen that. I'm surprised she took it so much to heart. I think the reason why is, I've never seen a white person get hurt by what someone says, especially a person of color. That showed me she had compassion. Many people I run into, rarely show compassion. I kind of looked at it, she's hurting the way I get hurt when people say things against me, like belittling me, it's the most awkward feeling you carry all day, you can't sleep, you can't look that person in the eye, it's the most awful feeling. And that teacher had built a relationship with the little girl, and since that incident, the little girl would give her a weird look (Fieldnotes 2/6/14).

This vignette raises the underlying perception of dehumanizing processes in school. This includes the perception that many staff regard people of color – particularly African Americans – with such a lack of empathy, or 'otherness,' that they are in essence

dehumanized. Breanna's surprise challenges the widespread normative and ideological assumption that most school staff "care" about African American students and families. This was a contentious issue, one that I had regularly seen surface in diversity trainings where people of color predominated. Teaching as a caring profession where every student is equally valued is one of the core assumptions underlying modern education, similar to the ideology that provided the rationale for early humanitarian work, such as that of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

But in seeing compassion in a White teacher for the first time, Breanna was indirectly saying she had seen its absence previously, an absence that suggested the institutional dehumanization of 'others.' Developmental psychologists Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey have argued that the covert dynamics of organizations operate much like the anxiety-management systems of individuals. Core assumptions, often reflected in organizational heuristics – scripts, frameworks, ideologies, etc. – reduce complexity and increase social cohesion but can limit growth. As Kegan & Lahey stated,

> At the heart of any epistemology is the subject-object relationship, the distinction between that which we can regulate and reflect upon (object) and that with which we are so identified and caught up we cannot see it, and are run by it (subject) (2010, p. 434).

Breanna's observation of a conflict that did not involve her, but which she empathized with across perceived racial boundaries of boundedness, suggest a conflict that is dehumanizing in its very absence. In this sense, conflict itself could be humanizing, in that it acknowledged an inter-subjective capacity to engage a human other.

Summary. In this section, I have argued that diversity and equity trainings, instead of empowering my co-researchers, in many ways further disempowered them. I demonstrated three ways in which this occurred – 1) through the professional co-option of language and asymmetrical empowerment of already privileged staff, whose educational backgrounds as well as affect enabled them to capitalize on trainings in ways that coincided with institutional norms, 2) through the perceived commodification of equity as an institutional process tied to material resources, and 3) through the relative position liaisons felt they were put into, such as occupying token positions representing race, and through having to shoulder affects and emotions around equity training in out-of-the-way locations within schools, including ubiquitous forms of conflict.

For my co-researchers, the experience of and tensions around equity trainings was intense and personal. It was bound up with their everyday work and encounters around race, bias, and institutional marginalization, as students growing up and negotiating education as a hope and reality, .and as adults again experiencing the hope and reality of schools as complexly racially segregated institutions yet symbols of imaginary possibilities. Liaisons could "see, smell, and breath" racism in specific ways in their everyday work, in ways that paradoxically, the growth of 'equity' as an educational project enforced. Yet this made, in a strange way, education all the more important as a social good and hope for the future. In the next section, I will explore the way liaisons, empowered by the educational injustices they perceived through their unique and liminal roles, asserted their moral and cultural expertise.

Section Six: Contesting Moral and Cultural Expertise

In this chapter, I will explore how liaisons built upon their beliefs and experiences in school to assert their moral and cultural expertise. First, I will make an argument for why moral and cultural expertise is an important source of power within educational organizations.

Moral expertise, although it is an abstraction, has powerful normative meanings within the education field, which since its beginnings as a mass movement in the 19th century was tied to nation-state and religious ideals such as citizenship and reformation-era conceptions of literacy, such as the ability to read the Bible. As the bureaucratic practice of mass education evolved, understandings of education as a moral practice became increasingly codified and systematized in ways that privileged hegemonic understandings of "legitimate" moral expertise. This expertise was differentially distributed through existing power dynamics involving normative assumptions – such as the power of teacher development programs to ask for and otherwise forefront criminal histories of applicants, a process that potentially creates barriers for marginalized groups, such as the approximately one out of three African American adult men who have felony convictions (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010).

Using another example of the construction of educational moral expertise, Mary Diez and Peter Murrell (Diez & Murrell, 2010), have argued for the importance of professional dispositions related to the moral and ethical foundation of teaching and education. The responsibility for ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students, a moral foundation within education, is at "the heart of the teacher's role in society" (2010, p. 11). New teachers need to develop a self-aware moral stance, or internal compass, that stems from proper education and reflection and from their

"profoundly personal beliefs about the world, including the pursuit of desirable ends, the sanctity of all persons, and what is right and what is wrong" (2010, p.12).

Cultural expertise has also emerged as a source of authority in education. The embrace of educational multiculturalism and inclusion in the 1960s, described by education reform scholar Christine Sleeter as originally embracing broad social and political radical struggles rooted in a radical structuralist understanding of oppression, later fragmented and relied heavily on ethnicity theory, rather than structural racial struggle (Sleeter, 1992). Cultural knowledge itself, as constituted through modern institutions, has moved away from being discussed as a largely subconscious and bodily habitus (i.e., the "iceberg" notion of culture) to becoming more of an object of reflection, critique and debate. But that object of reflection within education institutions has most often been marginalized others or 'white' culture, not 'acultural' institutional culture. Within much scholarly work, 'acultural' generally is understood as hegemonic, normative, and naturalized, meaning acultural bureaucratic systems may decide what counts and doesn't count as culture (Gershon, 2012).

In the section below I will describe five strategies liaisons used in Minnesota to assert claims to moral and cultural expertise: Using "power language," resisting tokenization, disrupting racial stereotypes, emotional resistance, embodied presence, and resisting the double tokenization of peripheral departments such as equity departments, and those of cultural groups, which are always in flex.

The use of powerful language: "Your leaders are pretending." The liaisons I worked with were all skilled, in different ways, at using powerful language as a form of moral expertise. Such performances often took place in situations involving an audience

of peers and institutional power brokers, and could be perceived as courageous and passionate performances of moral integrity, or a show of aggression and power. The use of "powerful language," a language worthy of being believed by state agents (Bourdieu, 2003, p.69), was also a way to break through what one cultural liaison described as being "white-balled" within the education institution. To be white-balled was to go along with the flow, to yield. This was different than being a "sell out" – someone perceived as openly out for personal gain – and someone who could also be the target of powerful language, as in accusations of "not being black enough."

Regina, for example, described how a principal at one of her schools had requested cultural liaisons to openly share critical perspectives of teachers and racial inequity issues. Most liaisons regarded this as an impossible request, Regina said. Most liaisons were afraid to say anything, because teachers tended to cry – a defensive response often perceived as insincere, or "crocodile tears." But Regina was often willing to engage in the use of powerful language, she said. She described confronting the district supervisor at a staff meeting, recalling,

> Our district is really big on that – using (equity) tools. Some of my personal conversations with people, it does make a difference. But I don't know if all the principals are on board. That is a conversation we had this morning at our staff meeting. I flatly told (the superintendent), "Your leaders are pretending." I told her, "I'm sorry, I tend to be very outspoken."
>
> Everybody is getting very frustrated. You work around and around and around, and you're going in circles. That's how they do things. The HR director is black, but she might as well be white. She carries their agenda. The black people in the

district are like, "Forget it. We won't talk to (the HR director) no more." She has to keep her job – she doesn't want to get fired. It's like a joke. We're doing this work forever. Do you see any progress? (Fieldnotes, 2/28/14).

In this vignette, Regina is recalling an example of her willingness to question the moral integrity and authority of principals, even at the risk of losing her own job. Furthermore, she is making a point a point of including a Black school official in her critique, indirectly calling attention to the institutional construction of Black on Black conflict, in that the HR director could lose her job.

As an African and U.S. citizen racialized as Black, Regina asserted a moral expertise in schools based on her understanding of racism as an immigrant to the U.S. In groups that could include school officials and African American colleagues, she often spoke of the realization that being 'Black' is not something she would ever be able to "get over" or walk away from, as long as it existed in the fabric of schools and the community.

But Regina's moral discourse around race could also be contested by discourses that emphasized the importance of particularly African American experiences in the U.S., and the history of struggle around emancipation and civil rights. Lea often challenged groups using this argument.

At one fall event with a racially diverse mix of social workers, teachers, and activists, Lea asserted, "We need to take back our kids. We need to teach them from kindergarten through 8th grade." An older, white man in the audience asked, "What do you mean by 'take back?' Lea looked momentarily stunned, but then explained, growing more passionate, that African Americans needed to teach African American students –

racial segregation needed to be reversed, for the sake of installing racial pride among students who were growing angrier and angrier, within inequitable, white-led education institutions. The audience reacted with trepidation at first, and then warmed to Lea's argument, an outspoken challenge to shared perceptions of institutional oppression. Another time, recalling an outspoken argument with school officials about the need to hire more Black staff, Lea commented,

> That's' the bottom line – school employees include a lot of people, but not the right people. We're not going to have a Black community if things don't change. We're going have a civil war (Fieldnotes, 10/13/14).

As these vignettes demonstrate, powerful language was a strategy that some cultural liaisons used in particular places and times. It was a form of moral expertise, based on a historical imagery of racial injustices that challenged school-based moral expertise in important ways. These included emotionally and creatively calling attention to gaps between discourse and actions at leadership levels, and the racialized structural allocation of resources, evidenced by continuing racial disparities among school staff employees. Performed within the context of schools and school-related events, however, these isolated and visible discourses, unconnected to concrete situations of decision-making, also arguably served to enhance the institutional claims to being democratically rationale and equitable.

Resisting tokenization. Resisting tokenization – refusing to be used as a symbol of race - was another way my co-researchers challenged the cultural and moral expertise of school officials. Tokenization, generally understood as a symbolic effort toward the accomplishment of a goal, or in technology terms, the replacement of sensitive data with

unique identification symbols, often haunted the professional experiences of cultural liaisons in complicated ways.

Melinda, for example, became increasingly critical, during the course of the time we worked together, of what she saw as a recent trend to use liaisons and other Black staff, such as assistant behavior deans, as disciplinarians. Using Black staff to discipline Black students, many liaisons felt, put them in a position of being a sort of 'house slave,' someone who had to do the dirty work of managing students of color. Melinda felt discipline should be handled by all staff, many liaisons felt, regardless of race and ethnicity, as an enactment of 'true' multiculturalism and respect.

One day during the summer of 2014, Melinda described attending a job fair in Anoka County for the prison industry. To her surprise, the people who seemed to be hiring and applying for jobs were the same people she saw being hired in urban schools. Hiring "rough and tough" men, she said, was a way to facilitate the continuing employment of white women from small towns, who made up the majority of educational job seekers. Black disciplinarians and "Minnesota Naïve" – a play on the more common "Minnesota Nice" – was "kind of the same concept." She stated,

> When I talked to them, it was those guys from Chicago – big Black men from Chicago. So the whole institution, to deal with these kids (from school to prison) is that gang mentality. I was just kind of like, "Oooh." It's kind of this hard-core, bouncer type of attitude. If (the students) have behavior problems, they have behavior problems because they need to learn rules. I think its kind of contradictory.

> When you teach kids about humanity – if you're trying to get everybody on the same page, it's about humanity, not the school of hard knocks. We'd got to teach the kids how to love, the love that is human being (Fieldnotes, 8/21/14).

For Melinda, school districts were accomplishing two goals at the same time – hiring Blacks as racial tokens to diversity their workforce, and using them as "goon squads" instead of as humanistic educators, a complex understanding of tokenization in which she challenged the moral discourse of hiring practices.

Disrupting racial stereotypes: "She was visibly shaken." Purposefully disrupting stereotypes of the "raw," inarticulate, visibly angry Black school employee or parent was another way some of my co-researchers asserted moral and cultural claims to expertise within schools. This was also a strategy that Sandra, Breanna, and Regina said they learned through being a cultural liaison, and watching the interactions of schools staff with parents of color, and the comments of staff afterward. Sandra, for example, told of using her newfound knowledge in a conscious manner in order to be moved to the "good parent group" in her son's school, which was mostly White.

It happened after her 14-year-old son, who had changed schools several times during the course of our study, began receiving frequent suspensions from a teacher at his new school. He also was receiving demerits of talking in the hallway, and one time, for having his shirt untucked. The family frequently shopped at Goodwill, Sandra said, and her son was embarrassed to tell his teacher he had holes in his shirt.

The new school was an elite, mostly white charter school that focused on traditional academics and seemed to progressively embrace diversity. Sandra had been excited about being a part of the school at first, since expectations for students were high,

and school officials encouraged parents to think of the school as a long-term relationship that would last until graduation. But she had grown concerned, especially after her son had called one day complaining that "everybody was riding him so hard and he was going to go off and snap." Sandra decided to ask for a meeting with the principal and her son's white teacher, who was giving most of the demerits. She dressed as conservatively as she could, toning down her urban hipster look, and mentally prepared to rationally assume a moral high ground that would disrupt the teacher's racial profile of her. She stated,

> I said to the teacher, "There is a huge gap between your perspective and (my son's). I'm wondering if we can sit down with the principal and talk this through. Otherwise, this situation is going to escalate." It was very evident this teacher had this idea of who I was going to be. My ability to articulate in a way that made her accountable, she was visibly shaken. Her skin was like shiny and white. We talked about another student (who hadn't gotten a demerit for the same behavior), and she was like, "Oh yeah, that's true." And I'm like, "Well, I'm sure you can understand what that looks like and how that feels." And then she just got all a twitter. And the principal was like, "We want (the boy) to succeed. When he gets a demerit, you need to send me an email. And the teacher was like, "He got the paper." And I said, "He's not bringing the paper home. Like a lot of 14-year-olds, he's not going to tell me." I had to ask over and over again, can I please be in the loop here? Everything changed with that particular teacher. She was far more careful about giving drastic punishment. Instead of this rebellious kid whose mom

doesn't know what's going on, it was like, "I don't want to be called into THAT again." (Fieldnotes 7/2/13).

Sandra had deliberately used her knowledge of what the teacher's stereotypical vision of a single Black parent would look like, to unsettle and reclaim a position of moral expertise. But it was like 'shadow boxing,' she said, an exhausting and unending battle that required different hats. At the time, Sandra was going through two family foreclosures on homes. She had had to work two jobs for a time to pay rent, meaning she didn't have as much time for her children. Her previous experience with school officials had been largely negative. This included the time a school tried to refer her son for an EBD assessment to place him in special education, sending her paperwork while she had a health crisis, she said. Shocked the speed of the process, Sandra had ignored the school and the school had "eventually let go" do to her non-response. This time, Sandra felt she had successfully contested the moral expertise of school officials and the white institutional establishment, by strategically enacting racial stereotypes.

Moral gridlocks and emotional resistance: "Like I gave a damn." Cultural liaisons often encountered situations they perceived as sites of moral and cultural struggle in schools. But when dealing with entrenched roles and power hierarchies, such as that represented by supervisors, emotional resistance was a powerful recourse and form of largely unspoken challenge.

One week in in the middle of a winter school year, Breanna was having a particularly tough time. Her supervisor, who she sometimes greatly appreciate and sometimes resented, had been "hanging her out to dry" by competing in looking 'diversity friendly,' she thought. Her supervisor, who was White, would 'take over'

projects that made her popular with community members of color, such as the distribution of clothes and household items as part of school give-aways. Then an evening arrived that Breanna had been looking forward to. The principal at one her of her schools, who she described as an elderly White man who she had at first thought was distant and cold, had invited her to do a video Facebook presentation with him as part of a fundraiser aimed at the community. The presentation was intended as the first of a series of monthly events, a public outreach effort directed at parents, including parents of color.

Breanna had been excited when I first talked to her. She had been flattered to engage in a cross-racial experiment in collaboration with a white authority figure who she suspected didn't much like having a Black woman at his school. But the event had not gone well.

> He had come up with 10 ways to engage parents, and had all this stuff way over my head instead of us coming up with things together. The first one was Book and Movie Night, which means read a book and watch the movie and have a conversation. I thought it was boring. Who wants to do that? I'm sitting with him on the camera, listening to him talk, since he's doing most of the talking. He starts to name this book that he read, and says he loves, and gave the author. I didn't know the book, and acted like I gave a damn. "Oh yeah, that sounds interesting." He finally chimes in a little bit. "You have a couple of good book on your list too, Breanna." I said, "I have *Romana and Beezus,* and I said the author was something like Higgins. And he said, "Oh, ah, ah, Higgins is a character in the book." So he corrects me on the camera, that's by such and such.

> You friggin' idiot! Why did you do that, you should have let me roll with it! You don't say that on camera. I had to roll it off, use my personality to cover up. It looked corny to me. I didn't feel comfortable. It was all about what he already had. I had to come into your fold. Normally I'm good at flying by the seat of my pants when it comes to improvising, but that was a tough one for me. But it was cool – it worked. He said we got 189 hits.

Breanna discussed doing more events with the principal, who agreed. But when she tried to follow up, the principal had inexplicably, in Breanna's opinion, dropped the idea. She tried to have a discussion about whether race was a factor in his decision. She recalled,

> I said to him, "You know this district is kind of racist." I think (he thought) if (parents) saw him on Facebook page having this dialogue with a black girl, he's afraid parents might say, "Why do you have this Black girl on here talking?" He said, "I don't think it's like that here now." I thought, "Don't take me for stupid." (Fieldnotes ,11/13/13).

This vignette demonstrates a challenge to school moral and cultural expertise, in re-telling a story that symmetrically positions a school leader as technically correct but morally wrong, in comparison with a liaison who was technically wrong but morally correct. Furthermore, Breanna was challenging the cultural expertise of the principal in relation to low-income members of the community, by instigating a "boring" book and movie night without her input. Breanna had restrained herself from challenging the principal further, she said, in the interests of helping students, particularly marginalized black students. But she also emotionally resisted an encounter she perceived as racist, in

that she felt she was being judged as a raced and uneducated, a type of morally 'unfitness' in the moral calibrations of education. This invisible struggle resulted in a moral dialogue that reached a standstill, but continued in Breanna's heightened emotions and sensitivity to perceived modes of exploitation in the school.

Contesting moral expertise through being there. One hot summer day in July, Lea attended a funeral for a colleague, who she described as an African American assistant principal who had had long-standing health problems. It had been more than a year since Lea had been let go from her cultural liaison position. Over half the liaisons had been removed from their jobs that year, most of them "non-docile," liaisons of color. Although she had had conflicts with some of the staff at her school, Lea had grown to love her job and the students she worked with, and had even formed a gospel choir that had performed in high-profile locations, such as sports events. On the day of the funeral, Lea contacted her formal students, some of whom had graduated, and arranged for the gospel choir to perform at the funeral, which was being attended by many of her former school district colleagues.

At the funeral, Lea sat at a table with a petite, blonde administrator. It was someone Lea believed had been instrumental in laying her off, and with whom she had had conflict in the past.

> I sat at the table with her, at the funeral. She just about let me know that she missed me. They all did. You could see the way they walked up to me and hugged me and started crying. I said (to myself), "You are all full of shit" (Fieldnotes, 7/31/14).

A short time later, Lea recalled the funeral again. The administrator who sat at the table with her had been friends with an assistant principal. Lea had also fought with the assistant principal, who was white, and had even filed a formal grievance after what she believed was six years of harassment and being shouted at in public. Although she had also had her fights with the assistant principal who died, she also recalled that on his deathbed, when she had visited him in the hospital, he had recalled, "We really helped some students." She said,

> When they let me go, I was hurt, because I put a lot into that district. I found out why (I was let go). It was the principal… This principal was mad at me because I had advocated for myself, and that's a buddy of hers… But I had to protect myself, because if I didn't file, they were coming after me. But they came after me anyway. I was damned if I did, and damned if I didn't. When I went to (the person's) funeral, I sat at the table with her. That's what I do (laugh). I wanted her to see, you know what I mean? At the same time, it's her conscious, not mine. I even had a conversation with her. I'm not sitting around, holding a grudge against nobody, mopping. This is what I said (to another cultural liaison). You have to let it go. It's over (Fieldnotes, 8/23/14).

This vignette, which can be read in different ways, shows a deliberate use of embodied presence to symbolically contest a perceived moral injustice. At the time Lea didn't know how or who had made the decision to lay her off – a decision that was attributed to lack of anticipated integration funding, and which later proved to be untrue. As raced individuals within an institution with its own semi-closed networks of power, solidary, and reciprocity, grappling with ambiguity and uncertainty occurred frequently.

But Lea perceived a larger moral universe, in which the death of someone else who had deeply cared about students, as she did, was in a way an issue of justice for which school officials were accountable. Her embodied presence, as an African American, needed no explanation, but was a silent protest of larger school policy.

Locating authenticity: "Speaking in tongues." One evening, sitting at Regina's house with several other educators, someone brought up a former equity director I hadn't thought about for years. He was a former school district administrator who had moved to Africa, where he was garnering some controversy.

"Don't you remember? He was so awful – he was so corrupt."

But I only remembered him vaguely. I had assumed he must be a moral authority on issues of racial inclusion and justice. This was partly, I believe with hindsight, a reflection of my willingness to ideologically align myself with an institutional lens that rationally compartmentalized "issues" such as racial inequality, while turning a blind eye to the messier realities of practice around racial disparities and equity. It also reflected the de facto racial segregation that existed within educational institutions at all levels, from PK-12 to higher education. For liaisons, this psychological and material compartmentalization of racial "issues" within schools posed especially difficult dilemmas in challenging moral and cultural claims to expertise.

While providing some relief from hostile racial climates, equity departments could also place liaisons within institutional "pony shows," in the words of one cultural liaison. While signaling a commitment to diversity and equity, equity departments had an uncertain status within school districts, funded primarily through the unstable dispersal of state integration money and grants. Additionally. most equity directors oversaw liaisons

who had dual reporting lines to principals, who could remove them from schools. This had the paradoxical effect of corralling people of color into a department that could potentially unite the "voice" of several to hundreds of people – depending on how the department was structured – yet in practice, collectively silenced them.

Melinda believed many liaisons were afraid to lose their jobs given the institutional positioning of the work. Some "hustled to be professional," an ad hoc mimicry of White norms of educational professionalism. Equity departments were places people "spoke in tongues," forced by economic circumstances or strategic considerations to enact performances of equity that they knew were inauthentic. She stated,

> In our (equity group) the people who have some voice, "Its my way or the highway." How are we going to change the achievement gap? Look at it this way – you probably never have to talk about race a lot, unless you're researching it. I want to prove myself as a beautiful person, you're not trying to be a bitch, being powerful in this way.
>
> The people who have a job, are still walking on eggshells. (The director) doesn't really have a voice. All of them are speaking in tongues, because they are comfortable in their positions. The problem is, everybody is afraid, and they have all this fear built up in them, because everybody has to be get paid (Fieldnotes, 9/22/14).

Liaisons tended to view the moral expertise of equity leadership staff with varying degrees of admiration, sympathy, and frustration. To some extent, equity directors were perceived as gatekeepers who were institutionally constrained and constraining – modern-day members of the "Big House," a slavery metaphor education scholar Gloria

Ladson-Billings has used to describe the ambivalent position of many African American teacher educators in the academy (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Gatekeeping, generally an invisible control of information and resources, had been explored in the literature as having both beneficial and "dark" sides, in that it can lead to abuses of power. Since many liaisons I worked with had little confidence in the ability of their supervisors to advocate for them or support them within the larger organization, they sometimes challenged equity leaders, in quiet and largely non-obtrusive ways.

During her second year as a liaison, Sandra began to believe her equity supervisors, who were African American, had become too close with her principal, a white woman she perceived as racially insensitive. At one point earlier in the year, Sandra had spoken to her principal about the cultural inappropriateness of calling African American students "little monkeys." The principal had used the expression during a public meeting in which hair touching had been discussed. When Sandra had brought up the episode, as gently as she could, she said, the principal had turned bright red, but said nothing. Not long afterward, Sandra was called into an uncomfortable meeting with her equity supervisors. She stated,

> They called a meeting. It turned into a work review. "What are your goals?" kind of thing. They said, "You'll have to re-apply for your job." I said, "The contract has already been accepted." They didn't know that. (But the district) had dropped it from $20,000, to $15,000. It was just a bunch of bullshit. I lost a lot of respect (for an assistant equity director) not just as a friend, but as an advocate for the kids. I know they are overwhelmed with work, but she only came once to the school. And knowing the climate of that school! (Fieldnotes, 6/2/2013).

After this meeting, Sandra ultimately decided to decline to work for a third year as a liaison. She had been offered the job by the school, and then offered the same job for lower pay by the district's equity department. She felt her decision showed integrity and authenticity, but she kept the reasons for her decision – lack of support within the school and the equity department – among a small group of acquaintances, not wanting to cause create difficulties for colleagues and friends in the field. Black male equity directors were "an ambitious group," Sandra later reflected, but she recognized they also faced a steep uphill battle for recognition in an institution with few opportunities for moral leadership by people of color.

Summary. In this section I have argued that liaisons, drawing upon their beliefs, experiences, and 'unprofessional' perspectives of schools, assert particular forms of moral and cultural expertise. They are able to exploit gaps between institutional public rhetoric and practices, and gain some authority despite their disadvantaged status within schools. In this way, liaisons joined the circulation of diverse technologies of authority. Although claims to moral and cultural expertise were in many ways already constituted through the structure of the school system and its use of race to solidify racialized and institutional hierarchies of power, liaisons destabilized practices of establishing and embodying moral expertise.

In the next section I will demonstrate how liaisons don't just challenge or complicity support and work in public schools, but undertake creative projects of cultural production and *liaisoning* on their own. Although this work is important, it is often unacknowledged, undertaken within the surprisingly vast expanse of public secrets – part of the metaphorical work of institutions.

Section Seven: Illusions of Transparency

In the previous chapter, I discussed how education liaisons contested moral and cultural claims to expertise within education institutions. In this chapter, I will focus on how liaisons occupy liminal roles in the darker, less transparent corridors of education institutions. In these areas of educational functioning, involving complex system-level links with community and other governance institutions (i.e. child protection, juvenile justice, disability services, foster care, child support, etc.), black students and families are disproportionately represented. In a mirror-like reversal, liaisons who work with black families and students are at the same time disproportionately *underrepresented* in the professional functioning of these powerful, inter-related systems, where hegemonic norms of governance and established bureaucracies overlap. Yet liaisons, despite or because of their complex marginalization in school settings as Black unlicensed staff, play an important, trickster-like role in this more obscure area of school-community bridgework.

The many cracks in the governance systems charged with the support and oversight of children and students has been recognized as a problem by psychologists, educators, and others. There is often a "pass the buck" approach to students, especially students with complex traumas, by the multiple professionals who work with them, given conflicting professional biases and the reality of financial incentives structured through institutions (Bennett & Bennett, 2012).

Liaisons, in largely unacknowledged ways, mediate and broker this complex and unregulated space created by overlapping governance institutions – a space which is often physically located in schools. This 'work,' I will argue, is both pragmatic and

metaphorical. It is also largely hidden, involving subtle maneuvering, input based on 'unprofessional' perspectives, and strategic silences and deceptions that allow institutional illusions of transparency to continue. Paradoxically, liaisons in this way articulate spaces of separation or difference between the worlds of modern schools and the worlds of marginalized students and families. These spaces – a gesture, a word, a phone call, a suppressed observation – create ethically and practically important opportunities to resist and rearticulate notions of educational progress for both school staff and community members.

"It's too big a disconnect." I will begin this section by recalling my attendance at a conference, where Lea was presenting a session on racial disparities in school discipline, from an African American perspective. This vignette demonstrates how school-based, cultural notions of transparency – such as the therapeutic practice of "active listening," a tool increasingly being used in equity training and in spheres linked to education– can re-position marginalized others, especially people of color, in ways that are perceived to be oppressive. This is the type of incident that involves liaisons in invisible 'brokering.'

Lea's session on "Healing from the Tragedy of Slavery" had filled the room at a local college one Saturday with a wide range of students, school practitioners, and mature community activists and organizers, most of them people of color. Lea planned to speak about the Adrian Peterson case and the African American experience of oppression related to the institutional handling of corporeal punishment, especially when it involved African American parents and caregivers. The description of her session stated,

Some young Blacks struggle through this racial period, having a disconnect with who they are, not understanding their history, not understanding why they are so angry. This is an opportunity to grow and heal, instead of continuing violence and persecution. Open dialogue and healing creates a better society for everyone.

Near the beginning of the session, Lea asked me to discuss a handout, which included an activity on word associations around "foster care, child protection, social welfare, and juvenile justice." Participants were asked to consider whether differing reactions, such as "beneficial" or "fearful," indicated wider social differences in how mainstream and marginalized populations may perceive social institutions related to education. A woman in the audience spoke up.

You're triggering me! This is triggering horrific stories for me. My family suffered in terrible ways (Fieldnotes, 11/15/14).

The woman proceeded to recount how social service institutions had been deeply involved, in what she perceived as destructive ways, in her family. I asked the woman if she would agree that "fearful" was an accurate word association choice. The woman angrily replied, "No. I would say, 'genocide'." I then re-stated my question, and asked if she would agree with the marginalized view of social service institutions. She again said, "No. I said 'genocide'."

The woman was insisting on what she perceived as an important point, and one that she felt I was missing. Genocide could not be placed on my taxonomy of attitudes and feelings, she was saying. Lea told the woman she "heard her," while other participants began sharing their views. One woman, an African American mother of two, said she dared her children to call Child Protection. In fact, she offered to take them there

herself. I felt the point of 'my' lesson rapidly being lost, but for Lea it was moving forward, into stories of school abuses of African American dialect. Instead of "airing out" and revealing state definitions and enactments of determining child abuse, Lea seemed to be relying on a visual of the whipped back of an African slave, relating to the participants on a different – and more meaningful – level, I could see. As Harding has written,

> Modern sciences and technologies profit from their monopoly of the production of information ("truths") and thus on the continuation of the production of further risks which their epistemologies and philosophies of science made possible in the first place….Decisions that will affect how we live are made on scientific and technological grounds that bypass the democratic process to which political decisions are supposed to be subjected (Harding, 2008, p. 55).

Looking back, the session led me to reflect on the presence of dominant social powers and histories of collectively experienced social powers, and the gaps between professional listening and knowing. To what extent was I furthering a monopoly of the production of truths, in Harding's sense, even as I thought I was promoting democratic processes by questioning the production of truths?

"Do you think it goes in her professional portfolio?" One of the ways liaisons perceived their work was in mediating inter-locking layers of institutional governance. These layers often had a cultural dimention to them, but one that liaison felt was largely invisible and hard to describe.

One winter afternoon, about 25 diverse cultural liaisons were gathered for a professional development training. Lili, an African American cultural liaison in a high-poverty school district, was telling about the time she had fixed an African American

young girl's hair. The girl had been "acting out." That day, her hair had been covered by a scarf, a violation of school dress codes, and school officials had been about to call the girl's mother and send the student home. Lili had stepped in with her makeshift hair supplies, using ribbons that she had bought herself, and that she kept in her desk, which was in the middle of a heavily trafficked, general purpose, "time out" room.

The next winter, I was surprised to hear my co-researchers still re-telling this story, which seemed to reflected so many stories of their own. It was an appropriate story of culturally responsive practice and proactive thinking, I thought, but I didn't see any particular significance to this particular story. Why were my co-researchers remembering and re-telling it, when it seemed like a strategy any caring educator would use? An African American participant who was there that day commented, as we talked about it later,

> Black people don't just walk in and say, "Do my hair." It takes a grass-top, to get the approval of (African American) parents to let someone touch their children's head. You can't touch (my daughter's) hair – she's sensitive, she starts crying. You get close when you're doing a child's hair. They're vulnerable, they're sitting in your space for a long time. Lili had to go out and buy the bows to keep in her desk. Do you think it goes in her professional portfolio? I doubt it. Lili probably doesn't even keep the receipts. (The school district) boast of being a community based school, but they make the liaisons go out and form (the community) relationships, and they don't get a dime – they're discredited in the school. Yeah, you brought the community in, but you're supposed to bring them in (Fieldnotes, 8/21/14).

This brief dialogue suggests the ways racialized experiences within education institutions remain unacknowledged in a post-racial era, and within the professional cultural and moral expert repertoires of schools. By suggesting Lili was a "grasstop," a play on the word "grassroots," the cultural liaison was suggesting Lili occupied a place of influence, respect and trust within a marginalized community. But this status was not acknowledged in the school, where she was regarded almost as a "babysitter" or para. Her emotional strength in bridging a disregard for her anticipatory and empathetic actions such as having black hair product supplies, which urging people who feared, distrusted, and even hated the school to send their kids there, resonated with other cultural liaisons of color.

"She acted like she recognized me." The perceived invisibility of her work, and of her embodied self, was something Melinda both resisted, and made use of in her creative outreach with African American parents and students. Melinda liked to position herself as an easy-going team player, someone who tended to like everybody. Still, sometimes Melinda felt like she had to force her presence upon people, and that being around school district staff was like being a ghost, she said. At one winter workshop, run by "Lucky," an African American acquaintance, she said, she ran into a white school administrator who didn't seem to recognize her.

> She was there when (Lucky) made her presentation. She couldn't look me in the face. I made sure I got up to her and looked her in the eye. I think she thought I was (Lucky).
>
> The time we all got laid off, she would come up and always look at me, like I was the one who was approachable, and have a conversation with me. She acted like

> she recognized me, but you would think she would say, "How are you doing? Are you looking for a job?" It was real weird (Fieldnotes, 1/21/14).

Melinda, confronted with a form of dehumanization in which her individuality was not recognized, responded by physically moving into the administrators' space and making direct eye contact, among the most powerful forms of communication among humans, beginning in infancy. But Melinda also negotiated a dehumanizing system, I found out gradually, carefully, by selectively engaging with knowledge systems and people who worked with marginalized communities, such as low-income African American.

One summer day, Melinda described working for an African American woman who had two foster kids, ages 2 and 4. The woman kept the kids on the floor of the dining room of her two-level duplex and wouldn't let them play outside, despite the presence of a nice playground and sandbox. She swore at them whenever they did something wrong. Nobody really played with them and they were becoming disrespectful. Yet Melinda, despite feeling sorry for the kids, felt like she couldn't go back, as if "a vampire had sucked off all of my blood." She stated,

> The next day, I was exhausted. As much as I work with kids, I was exhausted. It's a system, and it's sad. So you say, who is the system protecting? Schools end up getting these types of kids now….. And all the people I knew at my school. A lot of our mental health stuff is pretty weak (Fieldnotes, 7/6/14).

As this vignette demonstrates, Melinda saw a bigger picture in which system and institutional indifference to the plight of African American children contributed to a situation in which isolated problems, such as the quality of foster care, was just one part

of the picture. But part of the difficult in having such discussions, for Melinda, was the tendency to blame African Americans, in this case an African American woman, for larger social issues. The power of people such as her supervisor to selectively turn a blind eye to her presence, was linked to the system's willful ignorance of the school readiness of foster children of color, and the quality of mental health services available to them. In turn, Melinda selectively disengaged from situations and discourses she felt she could not impact, and that diverted her from other forms of positive engagement.

Strategic silences. Confronting stereotypes, such as the use of monkeys on flyers designed for low-income people of color, was some of the work liaisons regularly undertook. But confronting other stereotypes, such as the trope of "welfare queens" who game the system or families receiving social service benefits who seemed to be living and dressing beyond their means – discussion my co-participants and other liaisons reported often over-hearing in staff lounges and other school sites - involved a different kind of work for liaisons. This was maintaining a strategic silence around what liaisons perceived to be concealed for different reasons, or known in part but not openly discussed.

I discovered this gradually through my own work with a professional development program for addressing racial disparities in special education. The problem of racial disparities in education has been the subject of much scholarly research. But such research missed the bigger picture in important ways, in the perspective of liaisons. "You're only dealing with 50 percent of the picture," one liaison eventually hinted to me, after several years.

An assumption of training around racial disproportionality in special education placement and disciplinary suspensions and expulsions is that school staff racial bias is

involved in multiple ways, including in subjective interpretations of behavior leading to discipline, (Skiba, 2002). The role of institutional racism is not well understood, but has been described recently as involving complex linkages between identification and placement in special education, within zones of political, normative, and socio-historical factors (Sullivan & Artiles, 2011).

But such research usually skirts how commodity economies shape and are perceived to shape the issue of black students in special education. All the liaisons I knew except Breanna, I eventually discovered, were aware of community perceptions that special education was the hidden "cash cow" of the education system, a lucrative trade based on exploiting vulnerable children, especially low-income, African American students. Parents were also involved. Recent changes to state policy, for example, meant guardians of students with mental health issues – a complicated system in which school and medical diagnosis could be separate – could be eligible to receive SSI and other medical benefits. These benefits, which all but one of my co-researchers had heard was currently $668, dangled before low-income parents, many of whom were already entangled in the oversight of social support systems related to the education system, such as juvenile justice. One cultural liaison stated,

> When they changed the welfare system, you had five years to get your act together, and as a result of that, a lot of families started being very creative about getting services. They knew if their kids was diagnosed with a special need, they would receive money probably for the rest of their life, and a lot more money than if they were just getting welfare checks. I've heard they have taught their kids to play crazy. The parents really push it, because they know it's a survival

> mechanism for them….In one sense they're beating the system by being clever…But sometimes the systems in place, people wouldn't have jobs. We wouldn't need social workers, psychologists, a lot of these people, and they look at us like we're so bad, being lazy. But who can raise kids on minimum wage? (Fieldnotes, 5/9/14).

These ambiguous practices, sometimes referred to as "survival skills" or gaming the system, were 'public secrets' that some educators would take advantage of. Teachers could deliberately "set students up" to receive a mental health diagnosis in order to avoid working with difficult students, Lea said, guessing that economically distressed parents would easily go along with the agenda. But because black students and families were already targets of deficit thinking, the liaisons I knew were leery of bringing this topic up in public meetings and spaces. They also showed an awareness of the need for the appearance of institutional order and control, along with the need to support already stigmatized parents, and to be in a position to provide information that could give them as many options and ways of thinking as possible.

As this vignette shows, liaisons generally had a reflective, informed, and sophisticated understanding of marginalized populations and their immersion in powerful and contradictory social systems of assistance, control and surveillance. But these paradoxical tensions and ambiguities largely remained out of public education discourses in which they participated. My raising such issues, even in the context of doing research on experiences of dealing with racial disparities in schools, I sometimes felt, bordered on being unethically intrusive, an issue that has long been a topic of concern in anthropological fieldwork (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

"Whose side are you on, really?" Being in the position of seeing multiple worldviews, each of which had situated logics that drew on partial information, could be unsettling for liaisons, who often felt they were alone in trying to negotiate ethical and moral pathways in situations in which there were few opportunities to share information, given the asymmetrical power dynamics between hegemonic institutions and marginalized communities. Liaisons were often involved in situations that involved crisis and required fast decisions and responses.

Breanna, reflecting on her job over the course of a school year, described frequent occasions when she attempted to talk to low-income African American parents in private, out of earshot of school officials and supervisors, who were all white. She relied on this strategy even when she felt conflicted or sided with a school's interpretation of events.

One time, a white, "social activist" type elementary school principal invited her to join him on an early morning, surprise visit to a parent's home. The parent hadn't been sending her kindergarten daughter to school, after the school had called Child Protection to investigate the child's claim she had been left at home alone. Breanna privately thought the mother had come under the negative influence of her own mother, who "had lived the life of racism and discrimination" and was bitter. By refusing to let her daughter attend school, the mother wasn't acting in the best interests' of her child.

But too much angst had built up on both sides, and the visit didn't go well. Breanna said she signaled to the mother with her eyes, when the principal wasn't looking, to urge her to call after the visit. Breanna thought patience, empathetic listening, and institutionally "inappropriate," (i.e., non-politically correct) dialogue was needed, built on shared and unpleasant memories of white-dominated schools. The principal's well-

intended, educational activism, based on a child-centered, individualized framing of equality, missed the bigger picture of long-term family life, Breanna thought. In reflecting on the difference between empathy and the possibility of translating empathy into meaningful action in a racially inequitable environment, Breanna stated,

> Our stereotype is that white people just don't know how to teach us, they don't understand us. There will always be someone who will reinforce (that view) in your family and friends…You may look in the mirror and see you're black, but if you don't have the communication to listen, to hear, to articulate what you feel using your words, not your anger, that what I have to say to you has to be culturally competent, it's hard. The only way I can, is I was forced to grow up in this, in this (education) institution, so it's easy for me (Fieldnotes, 2/6/14).

After two weeks, the mother brought her daughter back to school. She was probably stressed and afraid the state (i.e. Child Protection) would get involved and take her child away, because she only lived a block from the school, Breanna thought. But by that time, Breanna had lost access to the mother. Despite several out-of-school conversations and even bringing the mother a gift, the mother had cut off all communication with the school by the time she brought her daughter back, including refusing to answer Breanna's calls. Breanna stated,

> That's the thing about being a liaison – you gotta' know your boundaries. Some black people feel you're against them, because you're at the school. You have to let teachers know, just because you're black, you can't reach all black people. I think sometimes teachers don't understand that. I can probably reach them because of a different dialogue, but when all is said and done, they're going to

> make their own choice. I can't get personal, because if I get personal, I could jump in so many ways and go both sides, but I can't, I gotta stay neutral. It's hard sometimes. Sometimes I want to go, "No, don't listen to (a principal!)" Not even principals, just students, when you're dealing with students who are disruptive…. I can have a conversation after school, but I can't do it when I'm on the school premise. Whose side are you on, really? (Fieldnotes, 2/20/14).

Breanna's story suggests an isolation in understanding a set of complex risks that her colleagues and the people she works with might not be able to appreciate, and that she can't fully communicate either from a position of subjectivity or objectivity. Being Black and working for a school gives her insights others don't have, she said, but also leads to assumptions about where she 'belongs,' or is perceived to belong.

Institutional talk: "She made it sound all good. *"*Liaisons often recognized the murkiness of working within a powerful institution such as education on behalf of students and parents of color, yet subject to the same racialized institutional practices and environments of racial mistrust they helped generate. One way this recognition was practiced was through communication techniques that were mindful of not just place, but of the ways 'institutional talk' –including their own - could obscure asymmetrical powers and come back to haunt people.

Breanna, for example, used eye language and looks to signal to parents in IEP meetings that they could talk later, out of range of the IEP school team members, who were invariably middle class and white. During one IEP meeting for a 4th grade boy, she recalled, the African American mother didn't know she was in an IEP meeting. Her older

son, in 9th grade, had already been placed in special education with a disability in another school district. Breanna recalled,

> Like I had a conference the other day, and the teachers were talking about an academic assessment for reading. The mother was saying, "Oh, ok." (The teachers) sounded like of professional, like something big, like something outside of the whole specialist box. (One teacher) kept saying, "We're going to do a little light testing, see where he's at." She made it sound all good. I had to reassure (the mother) after the meeting what (the teacher) was saying, because I don't think she fully got it (Fieldnotes, 2/20/14).

But Breanna, similar to the concerns of most of my co-researchers, was concerned that she could be seen as 'interfering' in school business, especially when it came to the complicated legal landscape of special education. Melinda, Sandra, Regina, and Lea also cautiously relied on conversations out of earshot of school staff to impart important information to parents.

Lea, for example, described her strategy to me one day as "the QT." I didn't know what "QT" stood for, and she explained it to me, slightly amused and irritated at my ignorance, as usual in our conversations. "Quiet tip. It means you are tipping off parents that this is not something that should come back to the school administrators," Lea explained, adding that she tries to stay neutral. But being completely open and honest with either side was impossible.

> Administrators are always suspicious of what you say to the parent, they're always looking for you to cover their butt…If I go back to the administration and say, "Listen, here is what I'm seeing, and this is what I'm trying to get (parents)

> to understand. But I never say exactly what they think I'm saying. If I tell the QT, I don't think something is going to happen like that. I let (parents) know I'm speaking for myself, not for any administrators. So nobody can get mad, because I didn't say it came out of your mouth (Fieldnotes, 6/18/13).

Among the liaisons I knew, Lea was in some ways the most openly reflective about her experiences, and feelings about, social service systems. A foster care provider, one summer Lea explained her frustration with two high school girls who had complained about lack of supplies, a charge that was totally false, Lea said. It wasn't the girls who bothered her, but what she felt was the over-reaction of the foster care agency, and the power conferred on state agencies to make judgments about claims of abuse or neglect – claims that even if untrue, could lead to judgments, and the loss of her right to work in education – the only career she had known. Lea would speak openly about her fear of law enforcement and police, not least because her brother was shot six times in the back and killed by a policeman in Chicago and her childhood home was brutally raided by law enforcement, she said.

Lea, who had acquired higher education credentialing, self-consciously claimed a position of experiential authenticity and "legitimacy" as an African American woman born into a U.S. inner-city ghetto more than half a century ago. She had known two relatives who were slaves, she said, and she made an effort to tie her views to a macro historiography of African American historical and structural injustices. As part of a special education licensing program she had joined after being laid off as a cultural liaison, for example, Lea wrote about an uncle who was killed by his nephew when the nephew returned from Vietnam, the nephew's sister who burned her house down, and a

niece who married a pimp. Lea tied all the stories to fleeing violence in the segregated South.

Yet the hard-fought lessons of the civil rights era, Lea thought, were being forgotten as youth became more entangled in institutional forms of control and coercion and marginalized communities disempowered. Lea tried, for example, to write a letter-to-the-editor about the colorblind enforcement of state policies around corporeal punishment. In Minnesota, spanking is allowed, but "emotional abuse" and spanking that are administered with an object and leave a mark involve the beliefs of mandated reporters. Lea told me later she didn't know if the letter was published since she doesn't get the newspaper, but told commented,

> We learned to whip our kids like the master taught us, and that was successful in a way, because during the Civil Rights (era) our kids went to school. And now it is like too successful, so now you can't whip them. Now you're taking the kids and putting them in foster care, snatching them right out of the house. That's a pipeline to prison. Kids understand it. I used to work in (juvenile justice), and the kids were acting like fools. Because the white staff would rather restrain them than drag them around (Fieldnotes, 9/10/2013.

Yet Lea's out-spoken and often contested views, which as a form of "powerful language" led to requests to speak before diverse groups in the community, schools, and prison, could also marginalize her within decision-making stratas of schools, higher education, and state governance. These exclusions were not explicit, but voiced in back-channels or apparent in conferrals of responsibility. Lea's efforts to create an 'imagined intimacy' across time and stark racial divides in experiences of structural and other

violences in the U.S. were thus in many ways successful. But they also became entangled in thin lines of power, where 'unruly' forms of voice were quietly silenced.

Disengagement: "I really don't have nothing to say to you." By contrast, other liaisons described "choking" on the silences that surrounded race in school contexts, and unlearning information they had once known, a literal letting go of shared meaning in order to imagine new, cosmopolitan communities and ways of being together.

Melinda, for example, did not so much strive to acquire, but to unlearn, some of the facts related to social institutions and bureaucratic procedures. She used to know, but no longer kept track of, the different medications special education students were on, she said. She had come to regard the medication of most students as ethically corrupt, turning healthy kids into "doggone zombies." She believed parents, especially low-income African American parents, were coerced into complying with the medication diagnosis and monitoring process by social system gatekeepers. This was particularly problematic for students of color living in precarious living conditions, such as vulnerable girls, and students likely to be tempted by a booming, illegal prescription drug trade, she believed.

Melinda's beliefs and views sometimes led to turf battles and power struggles with social services providers, struggles from which she sometimes found it difficult to disentangle herself. Melinda described one situation, recalling,

> I had one social worker in particular, she didn't want me talking to her kids. She would come up to me and say, "If they need to talk to somebody, they can talk to me." I said, "As a mandated reporter, I would have reported what I needed to. But if a kid is talking to me confidentially, and I'm in a position to give advice, and it

> might be a cultural issue, I should be able to talk to that kid." She started crying, because she couldn't handle what I said.
>
> For about a week, she'd say, "I want to talk to you." She'd be standing outside my car door in the morning, knocking on my car window. I said, "What do you want?" She said, "I want to talk to you." I said, "I really don't have nothing to say to you." But she had a reputation of being very protective of her kids. I said, "This is not *your* kid" (Fieldnotes, 3/13/14).

This vignette demonstrates how institutional power dynamics could enter into an inter-personal relationship, and spill over into the space of a parking lot and a car door. Feeling unable to assert her views, Melinda retreated into strategic silence. Melinda distrusted many of her colleagues, who she saw as too burnt out, too patronizing, or too mentally unfit to be working with vulnerable and marginalized students. Yet she felt she had to find work-arounds to encourage safe community participation in her school, given the prevailing educational discourse of competence, teamwork, and progress – a discourse that her colleagues claimed as professionals, and which blindly enabled them, she believed.

This discourse of competence and progress struck me one day, when I was listening to a public radio discussion featuring two mental health executives working with public schools. The goal of schools, they said, was to "raise healthy children, effective in the workforce." Education professionals were described as on the side of the parents and working with "the full consent" of parents, in a future of bright possibilities - "we can make this work together" (MPR, 20014). This was an image of orderliness, of an "ideal world," as social policy theorist David Lewis and anthropologist David Mosse described

it. In a critical deconstructionist framework, this image of order can be understood as "an instrument of cognitive control, social regulation, or exploitation" (Lewis & Mosse, 2006).

This image of school staff working together with parents to raise healthy children could be read as an inspiring form of governmentality, a productive use of power by empowered individuals. But Melinda's very different perspective of mental health programming in schools threatened a disjuncture with this reality. Strategic silences, in Melinda's, perspective, was a means to navigate this disjuncture and create an "imagined intimacy" between school staff and marginalized community members, where working together could take relatively safe, if somewhat illusory, forms.

Melinda's perspective on the role of silence sometimes took concrete form in her description of staff and students at her school over the course of two years. Parents of color would play into the stereotype of disabilities and low IQs – "young and dumb." School staff, most of whom were "Susie Homemakers," bought into the idea of the regulation and management of student trauma, disability and disorderly lifestyles, Melinda said.

One of the students Melinda described was a young male African American student from Chicago. Melinda viewed the student as becoming increasingly engulfed by a predatory environment. Despite his charm and street smarts, Melinda worried he and his mother were ill-prepared to defend themselves within an education institution. Melinda privately tried to warn them to keep their distance from school staff, she said. By 9th grade, the staff had started to "play hard ball" with the student, who had a record of discipline suspensions and expulsions at the school. Then, later that year, the student

committed suicide – an act sandwiched between a recent arrest at school for stealing marijuana from a neighbor, a court-mandated new medication, and the anniversary of his father's homicide in Chicago, Melinda said. Melinda had tried to warn the student's mother that overly friendly and curious teachers had set up a paper trail for Child Protection intervention. But the mother, in a school parent group, and her son, talking to counselors, were already "spilling their guts," Melinda said. Melinda described the family as participating in an underground urban economy – a lifestyle the teachers believed was traumatizing. But she also saw a loving, extended family at the funeral. Family member had been involved in the young man's life, and thought they had achieved a good life in Minnesota, compared to the violence of Chicago.

> Special education is a cutthroat world. I think people know that, but they try to act like it's not true. Teachers are not going to say that. Parents got social workers who come to their house. Everybody is in on the mix. People are con artists. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out (Fieldnotes, 2/20/14).

This story demonstrates how Melinda tried to create an imagined intimacy that took into account differing social realities and epistomologies. By trying to warn the student and his mother of an institutional exercise of power that she thought they did not fully comprehend, Melinda was trying to produce a sort of intimacy that could be based on strategic silences. This would have enabled the student's continuing attendance at an institution that claimed to embrace racial diversity and inclusion in an ideal world, but fell short, at least in her perception.

This story also problematizes assumptions around collaboration in schools, and different perspectives on how and when to share information in the context of differently

perceived risks and dangers. The recent embrace of active or therapeutic listening in schools, for example, which has been described as involving an attitude of openness and expectancy - a humanistically oriented listening without an overt agenda (Lee & Prior, 2013). Yet both theoretically and as implemented in schools, this technique is arguably based on cultural assumptions underlying dominate health care models for children in the U.S. As Gary Thomas and Andrew Loxley discuss in deconstructing how deficit and disability perspectives permeate schools and the scientific models they use,

> The knowledge of psychology and psychiatry have infiltrated our everyday understanding of disorder and deviance so that they are now almost as one: disorder has somehow become melded with disturbance in such a way that thought about behavior that is out of order at school can hardly be entertained without the collateral assumption of emotional disturbance and special need (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 53).

Melinda perceived possibilities of collaboration as shaped by the constellation of power inequities in her school, particularly those between primarily white, culturally homogenous school staff, and low-income African American families.

Their collaboration in turn co-constituted different social realities, in which in some ways their understanding of each other's social realities grew more distant, even as in other ways inter-subjective understanding increased. Melinda tried to serve as a mediator through the purposeful use of silences and non-transparency.

Summary. This section has demonstrated how liaisons broker hidden aspects of the educational institution, in ways that involve bridging the often unspecified and undocumented links created by inter-locking systems of governance. Because black

students and families are disproportionately embroiled in complex systems of surveillance and interactions with multiple professionals, liaisons as school insiders and outsiders play important but largely invisible roles. Liaisons can offer pragmatic – if largely below-the-radar –forms of assistance, guidance, and communication between schools and communities. Liaisons also, through shifting modes of transparency surrounding institutional and system processes, enable different philosophies and cultural meanings of 'good parenting' and education-as-progress to emerge. This is metaphorical work, an understanding of the meaning of education racial equity from below.

Section Eight: In the Girls' Education Trenches - Gender Liaisons in Pakistan

In this section, I will draw on experiences of liaisons in Pakistan, to demonstrate how their experiences and understandings of girls' education complicate 'modern' notions of girls' education. I have focused in particular on my work with a liaison in the Allai *tencil* of Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, a fairly settled if remote mountainous area where girls' education appears to be unfolding relatively smoothly, and with four liaisons in Quetta in Balochistan Province, where opposition to girls' education in refugee camps has been more overt. In both places, Pashto tribes predominate, although the social environment in each location is very different. Much like liaisons in Minnesota, liaisons in Pakistan are hired to help expand the scope and quality of education in hard-to-reach, out-of-the way places where modern governing institutions have a tenuous hold. In Pakistan, liaisons took on assignments such as tracking girls' enrollment and graduation rates, documenting functioning girls' schools, establishing school-parent committees, and in the refugee camps around Quetta, holding five-week teacher training programs every year, along with follow-up observations. Men also participated in this work, but partly

because of strict gender segregation norms, female field staff primarily interacted face-to-face with girls and women, and did the bulk of gender sensitivity training.

I will focus on five ways liaisons expose tensions inherent in the idea of including marginalized girls' in school. These include gendered experiences of professionalism, doing 'gendered,' cross-gender work in masculine realms, functioning as ambiguous role models, negotiating gendered meanings of girls' education, and unmasking essentialist conceptions of gender in interacting with subaltern classes.

Working among the wolves: Perceptions of gendered professionalism. Achieving professional status is a somewhat ambiguous achievement for many women in rural Pakistan, particularly in the Pashto-speaking areas where I worked. From lady health workers with basic education, to licensed teachers, administrators, and psychologists, professional women introduced each other with a mix of formality and informal recognition of belonging to a still-exclusive club. I found this 'club' membership signaled in various ways, such as a brief reference to family members who disapproved of working women, feeling different, or somatic bodily and psychological problems attributed to the stress of combining professional and family responsibilities.

Although scholars have noted that there is a growing acceptance of women working outside the home in these areas and that Western-influenced modernity and interpretations and reinterpretations of religion are major sources of change (Ahmad, 2010), the professional women I met, including liaisons, described experiencing professionalism as something almost timeless, a hard-to-locate combination of old forces in new guises. These experiences exceeded changing norms such as balancing work with altered *gham-khadi* practices – the semi-obligatory practices around birth, death, illness,

and other events that have traditionally played a central and often time-consuming role in Pashto women's lives (Ahmed, 2010). For at another level, liaisons alluded to navigating their professional lives in a way that suggested chaos and risk continued to profoundly constitute the experiences of gender, whether they followed 'traditional,' 'modern,' or evolving, altered lifestyles. Stories about past female family members – such as a husband's aunt who ran away from beatings with a donkey whip and eventually immolated herself – seemed to be not so much about the past as the complicated hauntings and risks of the present.

The ghost of her husband's aunt tends to use the swing in her courtyard, Mona told me one dusky evening, as we stood in her home's large, stone-flagged enclosure, which felt half wild with the bare winter branches of fruit trees and unused crooks and corners. Mona said she had met the aunt only once, after arriving in Quetta as a refugee and before marrying into a *Shite* family. After her marriage, Mona had discovered she was living in the same room as her late husband's aunt, who had died after a few months as a divorcee. Now a slender, energetic young widow supporting her seven children as a liaison, Mona said she prays for the aunt, especially when she uses her former blanket. But she thinks it would have been better if she never seen her. Sometimes she sees her aunt, who had been a beautiful 17-year-old bride, in her former room. Some days she is not happy. She was the fourth wife to run away from her husband, joining other ill-fated runaways in the family – such as Mona's mother-in-law. "They tried to do the same thing to me, but I was strong," Mona commented, attributing her inner strength, rather than her university degree and professional credentials, to her ability to survive and fight

for her inheritance with her female and male in-laws. “Why from generation to generation, should we be repeating this?”

Liaisons weren’t the only women in their families to grapple with changing gender roles. Economic and refugee migration to cities such as Karachi, Islamabad, and London meant most of the liaisons had a wide range of extended family members in diverse locations, living different gendered lifestyles. But with the exception of Zarbannu, whose late mother had been a university graduate, the five liaisons I worked with were the first females within their families to work outside the home. This meant intense scrutiny and criticism from both male and female relatives, who worried about liaisons’ reputation, safety, and comportment, liaison said. Being part of a Western-affiliated organization involved additional scrutiny, as if they were carriers of a gendered contagion.

Mona, for example, joked that one of her daughters had the family nickname of “Grandma.” I had noticed “Grandma,” a bright and endearing 10-year-old, seemed to shoulder a great deal of responsibility on her young shoulders, helping watch over the youngest children, who were still toddlers, till Mona returned home from work. She would sometimes sternly, and sometimes worriedly, tell us and other women to cover their hair. Once, during high tea at a packed, upscale hotel restaurant one afternoon, we watched “Grandma” ostentatiously fix a long, burning glare at an unveiled brunette headed to the buffet line in an expensive orange blouse, tight jeans and high heels. “We think she’s a bitch,” her dreamy, sloe-eyed older sister joked to me, laughing at “Grandma’s” antics.

Liaisons countered this constant scrutiny in part by narrating their professional selves as both virtuous and courageous. In Quetta, for example, I met a middle-aged Punjabi woman co-directing a local NGO who proudly noted she was the only female driver in the city. During a formal introductory meeting with a number of male and female senior NGO representatives, the co-director, who was sitting behind a large, highly polished desk, recounted the stares she generated as she drove around Quetta, a wordless act of courage and boldness not just because she was challenging gender norms, but because she was asserting herself in a city whose political and ethnic enclaves were partially marked by army checkpoints surrounded by sandbags and the very real dangers of bombs, armed attacks, and targeted kidnappings. The listeners in the room appeared impressed, as was I, and everyone temporarily sat in wonder, shrugging off the bureaucratic formality of the occasion for a moment. But while these semi-public stories of gendered accomplishment and empowerment circulated freely, especially in professional education circles, stories of more ambiguous experiences of being a professional and a girls' education advocate circulated in more concealed ways.

Zarbannu, for example, had been born in Quetta, to a politically prominent and educated family with a mixed ethnic background. As a native Pakistani citizen, Zarbannu described herself as having more freedom than the other liaisons she worked with, who were from Afghanistan and subject to the legal restrictions that permeated refugee's lives, such as temporary residence permits. Zarbannu exhibited a cheerful presence and confidence, flaunting bright jewelry and new outfits as she moved about the NGO compound. Her confidence meant even international staff had difficulty intimidating her, the other three liaisons often joked, imitating the 'kiss, kiss, kiss' of an airy, cosmopolitan

embrace. Zarbannu would laughingly agree, and proclaim she intended to enjoy her time as a single, professional woman – a time, as it turned out, that was rapidly drawing to a close.

During the time I was in Quetta, Zarbannu became engaged and got married, holding a huge wedding to which hundreds of people were invited. Because of security concerns I didn't attend, but another liaison sent me photos of Zarbannu in her wedding dress looking downcast and sad, as a Pashto bride was expected to act. Weddings and husbands were bittersweet events, the liaisons had all repeatedly warned Zarbannu, slyly in a morbidly joking way, predicting the advent of turbulence, no matter how 'good' the husband and man - an observation which usually succeeded in wiping the smile off Zarbannu's face, if only briefly. Life, including how she was treated at the office and even whether she would be allowed to work, was about to slip out of her control, they warned further. The photos I had been sent thus had an ironic, double meaning – the ritualistic performance of a gendered norm of sacrifice and suffering, along with a 'modern,' professional reality that would ironically provide justification for the ritualistic performance.

It wasn't until years later, reflecting on her experiences after she had left education development work and had moved abroad, that Zarbannu and I had a chance to discuss some of the more hidden difficulties of being a gender liaison. By that time Zarbannu struck me as still bravely animated and confident, but also more openly defiant and angry.

Just holding a job outside the home was unusual for women in Quetta, said Zarbannu, who had watched her divorced mother struggle with finances and had decided

to work hard, learn computer skills and English, and "bring change to the family." After starting as a secretary, after six years she was able to help her younger brothers get into a good school, bought a family car, moved the family to a big house, and brought a smile to her mother's face. Still, it took about six to seven years before some of her family members accepted her as a professional woman, Zarbannu said, and that was only after they saw nothing happened and she remained "a normal woman."

Females who aspire to be professionals are generally considered rebels - rebellious woman who will damage society and introduce bad values. Even given the economic pressures of inflation, only about 10 percent of women she knows work outside the home, Zarbannu said But in some ways the fierce resistance Zarbannu faced in education development offices was even worse, and grew more difficult, not less, with time, she said. She recalled of her time working for several education development organizations in her 20s,

> When it comes to me, I struggled like hell, you have no idea. I had to fight conspiracies every other day. Like if my (women) colleagues apply for a job, there will be stories. "She did something for the boss." Nobody would see the talent inside. That's the thing that really made me cry. All your accomplishments are based on, you dress well, you try to look good…. If I'm not covering my head, covering my face, people do a lot of damage after that, like working among the wolves. You don't know who is a wolf, your password is hacked, your emails are hacked, your Facebook page is hacked, it's a constant battle. I tried to send email to different people, "Stop it, get out of my life!" They will do everything to try to get you to resign.

> It's colleagues you are fighting. You just look them in the eyes, and say, "Yes, we (women) are doing better than you. You couldn't get a job – a woman did it better." And they can't stand it. The only thing they can do is ruin your reputation and character. They can't compete when it comes to knowledge and skills (Fieldnotes, 12/22/14).

Much of the professional and inter-office struggles Zarbannu described had escaped my direct observation in Quetta. This wasn't surprising, given I was a linguistic and cultural outsider, and blinded, with hindsight, by my own assumptions about development and education as a universal value, at least within an NGO. Still, even as someone perceived to be a naïve outsider – in fact, I was often reminded I looked a lot like a nice Australian woman who had passed through a few years earlier - I had been included in passing references to the difficulty of being a female professional and a gender advocate.

Yet during the weeks I spent in and out of the Quetta office over the course of a few months, the daily, inter-personal challenges liaisons faced seemed to be fairly uneventful, involving minor personality clashes over struggle over resources like time off or getting a driver. Like in any organization, a flow of daily rhythm and activities – the arrival of company SUVs carrying employees through guarded gates, the serving of morning beverages, lunch, and afternoon tea, daily security updates – structured the day. Daily power outages, during which a generator provided minimal electricity, and office closures in response to emergencies close down the office for days on end added to the pressures employees had to negotiate, but the liaison team seemed to me as seamlessly

interwoven into the daily activities as the dozens of mostly male staff, many of whom struck me at the senior organizational levels as experienced, well-educated and gracious.

Most of the stories I heard about gender harassment and barriers to education, such as verbal threats and lack of safe routs to school, was about the girls and women in the refugee camps. The liaisons oversaw conventional refugee, satellite, and home-based girls' schools with about 10,000 enrollees, of whom an estimated 300 girls actively attended school. Our conversations, often held around the lone electrical heater in our basement-level, temporary office, strayed less often into stories about gender-related harassment and work challenges related to being a liaison, perhaps largely because my focus was on gathering data to better understand the experiences of girl students.

Crossing gendered spheres: Transgressing girls' education work. In the development field, the implementation of girls' education has often been framed as a logistical and technical challenge, albeit one with socio-cultural, economic, and gendered dimensions. Building more schools, training and placing more teachers, and enrolling and retaining more students is time-consuming work involving multi-year planning and logic-models, regardless of the sub-populations involved, such as girls. This seemingly rationale and objective approach to education development has been argued by science studies feminist scholars such as Sandra Harding to reflect a scientific paradigm with deeply embedded gendered symbols and gender systems, such as the 'idealized masculine models of modernity' (Harding, 2008, p. 222) supported by World Bank policies and both Liberal and Marxian institutional practices and policies.

While liaisons arguably implemented girls' education in alignment with such an 'idealized masculine model of modernity,' they also paradoxically transgressed this

model by as female-gendered bodies and subject positions within traditionally 'masculine' systems and spheres of influence. This included interfacing with differing, mostly male-led political groups and mostly male-led governance organizations, such as government departments and the local branches of transnational organizations such as the UNHCR. In this section, I will suggest that the veneer of girls' education as a rationale, objective, masculine process obscured important cross-gender work liaisons undertook that went largely unnoticed, since it was paradoxically situated. This cross-gender work was both within the education development institution, as challenging interlocutors within patriarchal-modern organizations, and on the outer fringes of what constituted girls' education, such as community based advocacy.

During the time I was in the field, the question of how to create culturally sensitive gender programming was an area of on-going discussion. But it was one that generated little disagreement or debate, as if the roadmap – already laid out through oft-cited international development research – was already clear. Culturally sensitive interventions had included, for example, recognizing norms of *purdah* by attempting to build girls' schools close to homes, and tracking the state of boundary walls and bathrooms at girls' schools as part of an assessment of quality schooling. Occasionally, incidents occurred which suggested the roadmap, while clear, remained deeply inscrutable. During on visit to a girls' school outside Quetta, a young female teacher quietly confessed she and her colleagues had learned to clean latrines before international staff arrivals. It seemed to be a peculiar Western fixation, she said, clearly relieved that I had turned out not to be an inspector, but rueful that her proactive bout of energized cleaning had been a wasted effort. The gender liaisons I was with were also amused. But

they refrained, as often-savvy observers of cultural difference and hierarchies, in offering a direct opinion. Norms of sanitation had gendered, but also much more salient group norms based on geographic and social histories that made the issue of latrines a distant, almost disconnected issue, I learned over time during discussions with them. It was definitely too sensitive, I was both assured and invoked as a woman in a masculine dominated institution, for open discussion or documentation within the NGO's official sphere.

Other 'culturally sensitive, gender interventions' in education included the use of female teachers, the distance girls walked to school, and reducing girls' household chores. These interventions received little attention or commentary from the liaisons, or from our male colleagues, in contrast to terms and concepts around women and girls' rights and human rights, which generated passionate discussion and sometimes outbursts.

Liaisons also interceded between public aspects of girls' education, and the less public aspects of girls' education, which involved venturing into spheres of influence and activity dominated by men. Toward the end of my stay in the field in Quetta, for example, the question of how – and whether – to thank local families for participating in our research project arose. We discussed what we had available in the budget and what would be appropriate. An international staff member suggested we gift families with soap, a generally high-demand item in the refugee camps, where scorpions, scabies, and dust plagued residents. But Hamida and Lena adamantly objected to this suggestion, protesting that families would be highly insulted, even if they could use the soap. Mona then suggested prayer rugs, an idea she repeatedly brought up over a number of days. The other liaisons and I danced around this issue, unable or unwilling to specify the line

between secular and religious activities, especially given the complicated history of humanitarian, development, and military aid in the region. The liaisons occasionally teased me, slyly and sometimes more seriously, about the infamous, pro-jihadist, American-supplied textbooks they still remembered from a reportedly $60 million USAID-funded project in the 1980s and 1990s (Spink, 2005). But I could see Hamida felt strongly about the inappropriateness of giving out prayer rugs, a feeling she largely confined to facial expressions and discouraging tonal utterances.

Yet I gradually realized, listening to Mona's persistent stories about her family lineage as a *Sayeed* and her extensive and brave intersessions with religious leaders in the refugee camps, that negotiating secular-religious de facto divides was an important, yet largely unacknowledged, dimension of liaison work. For Mona, advocating for girls' education meant actively facilitating discussions around the moral ethic of accepting gifts from an enemy - of thinking through what it meant to have sons on the battlefield in Afghanistan, subject to American bombs, and girls in American-funded schools.

Mona recalled one time when she and a colleague had met a religious leader, a *Maulvi,* in one of the camps. The *Maulvi* had accosted her male colleague of not wearing a beard, and Mona had defended him, arguing that Islam does not require the wearing of beads. The *Maulvi* had then leveled accusation against her, she recalled, and had stated,

> Because of the dollar, you left your mother, you left your sister, father, family in Peshawar, and you are roaming her in our camp. Because Americans are paying dollar to you. That's why you are doing all these things. But I said, "Wait a minute. When the Taliban leaves their family, who pays for them?" He said, "For the sake of God they left." I said, "For the sake of humanity, we left our family.

To help other people. If you think we are taking the dollar, you are right. We are working for our Afghanis. But we are not slaves of the Americans. You are the real slave of the Americans. Because you are living in this camp. The Pakistani government takes money for this camp. And you are living free. Tell me, who is the slave? Are you the slave?"

And he was quiet. And my colleague kept telling me, "Quiet, quiet, quiet."

Later he brought the jeep for us, and he said, "Sorry, the whole day we are reading Sharia books, the whole day sitting in our homes, seeing the same students, saying the same things, we lost our sense."

When I got back to the office, the boy (there) saw me, and said, "Are you still alive?" At night when I was sleeping, I was scared. That night we stayed alive from the hand of the Taliban. In their home, it was a terrible place. One very big house, and corridor, inside another corridor, and inside another house. Very far from the road. Dark rooms, no ventilation. I was also emotional at that time (Fieldnotes, Jan 2009).

Other times Mona showed a surprising, to me, vulnerability. Once, while visiting a local NGO to coordinate field visits to local government-run girls' schools, Mona looked visibly shaken and intimidated during a meeting with about 10 mostly male staffers. Sitting next to Mona, I realized she was too nervous to talk – even though she had been eager to accompany me to the meeting and was normally self assured and even assertive. Balochistan has long been at a geo-political crossroads, with multiple insurgencies, political conflict, and tribal and ethnic conflicts that manifest as dangerous or no-go areas – even for liaisons and local development workers. But the political

dimensions of working as a liaison on girls' education remained a sort of 'public secret' in development work, a secret that was more visible, awkward, and professionally risky at the ground level

The difficulty of modeling 'gender empowerment': Boxed poems and Pandora boxes. My co-participants functioned as role models on many occasions in interacting with girls and their families, and understood an important part of their work as demonstrating through their own daily lives what education could mean for women. I often saw my co-participants mindfully embodying gender empowerment, narrating their own lives and successful experiences of education as something girls and other women could perceive and strive for. The concept of gender rights, closely associated with education, came up fairly often during my discussions with mothers in the refugee camps. But the illusion of empowerment, a making and re-making of professional identity, was one the liaisons handled with care, and often difficulty. By giving too convincing a performance of empowerment, they knew, they risked opening a Pandora's box of other issues, endless complication which like the metaphor in ancient Greek mythology, appear to be deceptively simple.

On another day just before sunset, during a time of heightened security concerns that kept me bound to my guesthouse and the office, Hamida and Lena returned from a field trip to a refugee camp. I was glad to see them safely return, as being on rural roads and highways after dark was dangerous, even for locals. Even daytime car-jackings and high-speed crashes on the lorry filled Kandahar-Quetta highway regularly made the news.

Like all the liaisons I knew, Hamida and Lena appeared to handle the physical risks of their job with bravery and composure, and at times a dare-devil-like aplomb.

They would urge me to take risks the male drivers disapproved of, like stopping along the road for freshly picked pomegranate fruit, or visiting a home in a part of the city's suburbs known for suddenly erupting into demonstrations. The security director at the NGO would sometimes break into frustrated observations directed at the liaisons, as if he was scolding childlike disobedience – "Yes, the pomegranate is cheaper there, but is it worth your life?" This appetite for risk, a sort of embodied or rebellious knowledge, I often felt, existed mischievously alongside an often mature, gendered performance of dignity. So I was surprised to see Hamida and Lena, both of whom had grown children, appearing in our office that day red faced, dabbling at tissues as they tried to hold back tears.

They had been surprised by an event, they said. While they were driving to a refugee camps, two male colleagues in the front had suddenly turned on them. The colleagues harangued Hamida and Lena, and told them if they were their own wives and sisters, they'd have cut their throats, the two recalled. The event shocked Hamida and Lena. They had spoken of how male colleagues – including drivers – often placed their own lives at risk as male guardians of the liaisons, a layer of risk on top of the risk of working as NGO employees. But this event demonstrated that tensions around gender roles could surface unexpectedly, in unexpected situations. After they arrived at their destination that day, Hamida and Lena took refuge in an empty office at the camp, they said. They sat holding hands and crying until it was time to get back in the vehicle, with the same colleagues, and return. Lena explained such events had to be swallowed. The pressures faced by liaisons had to be faced in ways that were culturally appropriate, regardless of their professional position and responsibilities. She stated, with tears in her

eyes as she recollected other traumatic event that involved combatting drug use and assaults on teachers,

> No one encourages us…We are Afghani, we have Afghani culture. You should keep quiet, not share your story with anyone. Maybe you can be killed, maybe your husband can be killed… I was scared…. No one encourages us in our work (Fieldnotes, Jan. 2009).

Lena and Hamida, as I found was typical, didn't want me to say anything, at the time, about their experience in the SUV. It was a semi-concealed event that posed a dilemma. They wanted to speak out about the oppressions faced by women in order to help others, but they didn't want to point fingers or cause problems, which could reverberate in ways that exceeded organizational boundaries. I found stories, and even material objects were often shrouded by this aura of passing something important on, but in ways concealed as half-truths and rumor, untraceable to specific places, times, and people.

For example, when I first arrived in Quetta, the liaisons had quietly brought out a painted wooden box full of melancholic poems. They had chosen a time when we were alone. The poems were by a girl who had graduated from elementary school – the highest formal level of mass girls' education available at the camp – and who was bitterly lamenting her fate as an educated girl, with no prospect of being understood by her family, especially her mother. The box had appeared when no one else was around, and at the sound of approaching footsteps, had been wrapped up and made to disappear again. I never saw the box again, although I had recorded some of the poems. It was a message the girl wanted relayed to the larger world, the liaisons told me. But it was a project

wrapped in layers of concealment, made possible through the work of liaisons and their access to schools and families in the refugee camps, and contained within certain organizational channels of the NGO.

This understanding of the issues around gender and education was further complicated by the gap between practices of girls' education as part of an organizational mission, and diverse understandings and experiences of girls' education. The liaisons in the NGO I worked with had been required to attend staff development trainings on gender empowerment and development issues related to women. Some, in their previous jobs, had even attended international conferences. But the liaisons in Quetta found the trainings around gender confusing in many ways – inspiring, but leaving them even more frustrated and disempowered, aware of differences they hadn't previously seen. As Zarbannu stated,

> They talk about gender empowerment, but we don't have it in the organization. They (liaisons) know it (gender empowerment), but they don't know how to do it. It's one thing in the book, and one thing practically. I knew everything to do, but what I could do is nothing. It's just in the manual. But how do you practically exercise it?
>
> And I was the manager of the gender empowerment project, where it happened to me. We had to train government officers and policy makers, but I was laughing inside. We are empowering the women, but look at me. It was so funny (Fieldnotes, 12/22/14).

The "it happened to me" reference referred to Zarbannu's description of being driven out of her job as a liaison, an event she said occurred to three other girls who

"were not strong enough to defend against it" during the six-year period she worked for several development and education organizations in Pakistan. Women are hired because of their gender and perceived ability to work in a modern institution, but the institution itself is not 'modern' enough to accommodate and protect its female employees. It is a vicious cycle, a dilemma into which some liaisons fall into and disappear.

After getting married, Zarbannu said, her position in her NGO became more precarious. As a single women she had had the social latitude to work alongside men, and accommodate the ever-present sexual harassment from some men by skillfully invoking the opacity of her status as ambiguously mobile – a potential member of any number of families with their own allegiances and power. After she was married, the scrutiny of Zarbannu's actions, behavior, and words became much more intense, despite having the support of her father and new husband, she said. She recalled of one office meeting,

> He (my boss) said, "Can you pass me a glass of water?" I did it, and he touched my hand. Everybody saw it. These are small things, a very tiny thing, but very scary. You have to let it go, be quiet for your reputation, or take a stand, and say, "I can't stand it."
>
> In that society, reputation is everything. If it comes to your family, they won't allow you to work. If they hear these stories, they're going to get mad, and your life will be over. Unless you have a really, really supportive family, which I have. A normal family will tell their daughter to stop it (the work) and come back and sit at home. The easiest thing to do is to destroy a reputation, so they enjoy doing it – taking the position the woman has taken from them.

> So they would do anything, and they're men, they have that power over you, and they're united. Men sit together at the coffee shop, the tea shop, and gossip, The woman (liaison) goes back to her house, alone, and she doesn't have that social support, to say this is what's happening to me. That's the thing that bothered me so much (Fieldnotes, 12/22/14).

Zarbannu decided to take a stand, she said. She confronted her supervisor in front of the entire office, and told him she wasn't scared of him. They had a big fight, and Zabannu salvaged her reputation, she thought. Although many of the male staff saw her as a young, pretty girl who got ahead by wearing high heels and imitating the cosmopolitan glamour of elite women in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi – social media permeated Quetta, and even many of the girls I met in refugee camps knew of popular female TV celebrity figures – Zarbannu was confident in her skills as a manager. Indeed, I observed that international development staff, during transient stops, commented favorably on Zarbannu's quickness and competent handling of documentation. But the supervisor eventually framed her for embezzlement, Zarbannu said. Lacking clout in the organization, she resigned. She recalled,

> I had to do that. But he made my life hell. He went to the higher bosses, and he wrote letters to them, and he left all the documentation in my name – he literally did everything bad in my name. And I was too young, I didn't understand what he did to me. I thought maybe he'd forget (about our fight), but didn't – he was vengeful. All the financial embarrassment was in my name.
>
> I applied for a few jobs…. Senior officers told me, "Sorry, we can't hire you. You're a woman, you're young, we can't let you go out (of the office) and meet

> with me, it's going to create some problems for us, I apologize." They said it politely, but I knew what they meant. They just wanted to be comfortable with other men.
>
> I've been victimized so bad. I cried every day, I couldn't work, I couldn't breath, but I had to work. Even if the boss was mean…. Even if you say yes to the harassment, if you start flirting, your boss is trying to be nice to you, and your boss is giving you all the favors. If you don't do it, get rid of her. You're doing a dance. You're in the middle. There should be training for women, on how to deal with it, in different ways. The best way is to resign, but it pushing half of the generation back, too. There should be support and training, to tell these girls how to fight it, not to go back behind those doors. Once she's gone, she's never coming back (Fieldnotes, 12/22/14).

The irony of working within girls' education, but feeling devalued as a gendered professional, was a sensitive topic. My own belief in global ideological tropes – such as that of gender oppression as a matter of literacy, numeracy, and schooling – perhaps blinded me to more complex understandings of girls' schooling as a situated practice involving vulnerable, largely isolated, female professionals. Yet even if I had been aware enough to question the liaisons about their experiences of gender as professionals more directly, I risked increasing an already precarious situation. Not every family was supportive, and some of the liaison I had met were working without their families knowledge, pretending to go to school. Organizational needs, masquerading to a certain extent as ideologies around gender, complicated the situation of liaisons.

Constructing gendered meanings of education attainment: "Your husband is promising you education." Hamida, the mother of six children, held a senior position among the four gender liaisons I primarily worked with in Quetta. One day during a down time at work, when the electricity had gone off and we sat in semi-darkness, Hamida began recounting the story of her life-long ambition to study medicine.

Hamida had grown up in Helmond Province during a time when American development money had flowed freely. When Hamida's father had became ill and was on his deathbed, he made Hamida's mother promise to send all their girls, as well as their boys, to school – an unusual, gender-equitable approach at the time, Hamida said. Hamida continued to attend school after her father's death. One day, at a school function when she was in the 7th grade, the head of a boy's school spotted her. He instantly fell in love, Hamida recalled. Although the man was 32, a school headmaster more than twice Hamida's age, he sent a "marriage-threat" proposal to her mother, who was uneducated. Her offered 10 lak, a great deal of money at that time, Hamida said, or said he would kill Hamida if her mother refused the money.

We were sitting in our basement office with its large black leather sofas and huge wooden desk. Most of the other rooms in the basement were empty, except for a kitchen down a long hallway, and the liaisons were able to express themselves more freely than they could in more public spaces. Mona, who like Lena was half listening as she organized her papers, cracked a joke.

"Now I come to know about her love story," Mona commented, throwing us all into fits of unstoppable laughter.

Innuendos and jokes around the topic of gender and gender relations as equitable functioned as a constant sub-text, a language that even in the relative privacy of the basement office or during home visits was filled with metaphors, elusive references, and indirect meanings. Gender violence was often very near, but it was complicated, complicating understandings of girl's education, and vice versa.

Just recently, after I had returned following the New Year, Hamida had passed around her cell phone showing a video of a black-haired, white-clad girl. The girl had fallen in love with her sister's son, and had taken refuge in her sister's house. But during the holidays, the girls' "uneducated" family, Hamida said, had dragged her out and beaten her to death, and shot and killed her sister's husband when he opened the door. Her nephew had fled to Afghanistan. I met Hamida's sister a few days later on a field trip to a refugee camp. Hamida had introduced the smaller, black-clad woman as her "sister," an expression I assumed at first must be metaphorical, since I assumed the real sister would be at home grieving. But Hamida's sister, who also worked for an NGO, said she had to work. On that drive, I noticed tears occasionally running down Hamida's cheeks, silent tears that spread among the women in the back of the SUV, along with occasional jokes.

But on this day, Hamida gathered herself, half amused and half affronted, and continued her story of education, love, and marriage.

> My mother refused. She said, 'We are not animals. I don't need your money.' She didn't take a single penny. Then my husband put down two conditions.
>
> If you don't give your daughter and don't engage your daughter to me, I will kill her or kidnap her. If you give your daughter, I will complete her education, I will

> buy a house and car for her, and give 10 lak rupees, and she will be really comfortable.
>
> Really, he bought me one house in Kabul. But my mother didn't get a single penny. At that time I was a child – 14. (laugh). If I was older, I would take every penny. Now I know what is going on. At that time, I was just crying…. My sister was telling me, why are you crying, are you in love with someone else? Your husband is promising you education. (Fieldnotes , Dec. 2008)

The importance Hamid and her family attached to education, and its almost tangible quality as a good which could be controlled by the men in Hamida's life, was part of Hamida's narrative. Hamida said her husband, a man from a conservative nomadic tribe, had supported her efforts to go to medical school in Kabul. But later, she dropped out to care for her two children. After becoming a refugee, she was able to use her education to work for development organizations and earn a salary, which was suspicious behavior for women in her husband's tribe. Hamida proudly told us her husband supported her by sometimes sweeping the room and making tea and letting her sleep in on the weekends. This was extremely unusual among her in-laws, she said, where by custom women were supposed to avoid talking to their husbands during the daytime, and use body language. She had even become a role model in some ways for her in-laws, such as through introducing the use of soap and 'city' standards of cleanliness. The association of education and bodily cleanliness frequently came up in discussions with girls and women in the refugee schools.

We pondered Hamida's story. Hamida's husband allowed her to do anything she wanted, she said, except color her hair. Hamida jokingly concluded she had become fat as

the result of love, a joke we understood as complicated. This wasn't a story of gender empowerment as told in the NGO's gender sensitivity trainings, as Mena had indirectly pointed out in *her* joke. Hamida was too insistent on crediting her husband as her education enabler, a modernizing narrative that even her younger Pakistani colleagues found outdated. Yet Hamida had pushed the boundaries of education as a gendered role model who had at great risk bridged deep cultural and generational gaps, and was doing the same for her older daughter. Hamida worried her daughter may end up unmarriagable as the result of going to university, but at times supported her, despite some family opposition.

Hamida's perspective of girls' education as a form of empowerment was different than that of the NGO – in her narrative, empowerment was in its exchange value as a symbolic marker of honor and respect. Although her husband appreciated her salary, Hamida emphasized its symbolic exchange value, rather than her 'success' in terms of goals such as a medical degree. This aspect of the meaning of girls' education, one that different from that of more modern, Western-oriented ideas of democratic citizens and functional participants in a labor economy, I found in many guises throughout my time in Pakistan.

Hamida's older daughter, for example, during a visit to the office, shared a story about her cousin's experience of education. The cousin had been very beautiful, an MBA-educated woman who wore jeans and was vibrantly social. She had become engaged to a doctor, and had gone on a vacation to Afghanistan before getting married to visit his village. When she came back to Quetta, Hamida's daughter said, she was crying.

> She said, "Over there in a village, how can I live?" But our family said, "He (the doctor) is very intelligent, he has a good sense of humor, he will keep you very happy." So she said, "OK, my parents selected him, he might be good."
>
> …On the 6th day of her marriage, when her mother-in-law came into her room, her two sisters-in-law came into her room too. They said, "Now you are a woman of our home. This will be your work. You will have to wash the clothes." She said, "Of course I will." They said, "Do you know the work of a cow? Do you know how to make dung cakes?" She has never touched such things. She said, "I will do my best to do such things." Then they said, "You will cook." On the same day she went and started the work. But that thing was very new to her. It was very difficult for her. She was saying, "There are always 24 people in the home. It's a huge family there" (Fieldnotes, Jan. 2009).

Hamida's daughter went on to tell a long, detailed story of her cousins' descent into near madness. The cousin was regularly beaten by her in-laws, who deeply resented her educational aura. Her husband had taken a younger, uneducated second wife. On her last visit to Quetta, the cousin had dragged her two clearly malnourished daughters along with her, her skin red and rough. She had almost completely forgotten her education, Hamida's daughter said, and spoke like a village woman.

Narratives of suffering have been documented as a prevalent form of Pashtun women's culture, a form of gaining respect and honor among other women and the wider society (Grima, 1991). In this story, the meaning of education is framed as part of a gendered experience of suffering. It led not to individual empowerment in economic terms, but perhaps empowerment at a more metaphysical level, as a marker of

contribution to family reputation and honor. I couldn't tell whether Hamida's daughter thought her cousin's decision to marry the doctor and stay with him was something she admired, given her birth family had encouraged her to return to them. But she clearly understood the arc of educational empowerment and disempowerment as a woman as complicated, and much more than a linear progression of knowledge and skill acquisition. Not only physical appearance, but mental capacity and knowledge could be 'lost' – a loss, however, that had an ontological existence with its own meaning and exchange value.

"I want my tenants to be educated": Navigating socio-economic divides. The conceptualization of girls' education in the NGO where the liaisons worked, and the one I brought to the field, largely revolved around cultural understandings of the barriers to girls' education – largely the place of women and girls in patriarchal cultures. As a result, their professional training and discussions tended to eschew socio-economic structural issues.

My co-participants described their gender training at health and education workshops, for example, as revolving around issues such as cleanliness, the value of education across pragmatic and moral domains, and human and gender rights. When issues involving economic and social class, such as hereditary tenants, arose, they generated lively discussions among my co-participants, as well as other staff at the NGO. But such issues were difficult to operationalize as practical strategies or tactics, although I saw my co-participants attempt to bridge this puzzling conundrum in different ways.

Pakistan is characterized by economic and social inequality. Pakistan's political society in many ways continues to dominate Pakistan's extensive subaltern classes in

evolving ways, some scholars have argued (Martin, 2014). My co-participants, who had relatively privileged social backgrounds, faced huge social divides in doing their work. Many of these social divides problematized the notion of gender, understood in neoliberal terms as an essentialized component of individual personhood.

Zarbannu, for example, was typical in describing the challenges of effectively building relationships that included all girls, including families surviving at the lower socio-economic rungs of the economy. Talking about visiting refugee camps and the difficulty of building relationships across social status, she stated,

> It's a constant battle to bring change to that society. Even if you are working, they (other women) want you to dress the way they are – village women don't wear any make up, they don't smell good. They come from a different background, they aren't educated. Their hair isn't done (Fieldnotes, Jan. 2009).

From the perspective of girls and women in the camp, the liaisons – let alone international female staff – stretched the boundaries of gender. Differences could almost be framed as surreal or other-worldly. One group of young teacher told me, for example, they suspected Western foreign women remained youthful looking because they would fly back to England every time they wanted to bath, and only bathed in special salt baths. Other liaisons had a greater understanding of economic and social gaps, and of the small ways women tried to survive and improve their situations. Both Mona and Hamida spoke often about the hardships of the very poor camp women and girls, usually in the guise of over-coming injustices through vengeance or inter-generational economic independence.

Mona laughingly and kindly urged me to notice, one day, three women who came to our office with bare feet despite the winter cold, curling their toes around the coffee

table in our office. Clad in black, ragged clothes, the women were extremely sharp and quick witted, lambasting tottering, old husbands who still beat them, sons who failed to send money from garbage collection work because they had become addicts, and daughters for not studying hard enough or being afraid to attend school. Several of the women had decided they wanted their daughters to become teachers, in order to earn money, and beat them when they tried to avoid school. Some of the best students, a male teacher who worked in one of the camp's refugee schools had told me, were the poorest students.

Liaisons dealt with the complexities of social class in the refugee camps as, I observed, part of their unofficial work. In one camp they described, a landlord and his family made decisions for the entire camp, who were his tenants. The struggle to control resources such as land, schools, and teaching positions shaped girls' education in ways not captured through enrollment and attendance figures. The influence of liaisons could be limited, but this limitation was spoken of obliquely, often through jokes. After one field site visit, during which a man had lavished hospitality upon us at his family home, Hamida roared with laughter. "He thought you were going to give him a school!"

But the fuzzy overlap posed by neoliberal conceptions of girls' education and the existence of dominated, subaltern classes didn't become clearer to me until on day in Allai *tencil*'s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, when we added a last-minute field visit to an 'extremely' poor family – a category that was curiously kept separate from poor families, when described by the NGO field workers. I assumed extremely poor and poor families could be placed on an economic continuum, not realizing that 'extremely' poor

was a euphemism for a type of economic bondage that was political and social as much as economic.

The Allai *tencil* was fairly remote, a long, winding valley cut through by the wide Indus River. In winter, it was surrounded by snow-capped mountain peaks. Each of the more than a hundred villages with girls' schools had a specific history and fairly established population, and a complex political network of religious leaders, business owners, small and hereditary landowners, and increasingly mobile population of economic migrants and government workers such as teachers contributed to the socio-cultural environment. At the time I visited, Allai *tencil* was on a sort of unofficial front line, bordering the on-and-off-again, militant controlled Swat valley.

The issues around girls' education were different in many ways than those in Quetta. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where most girls were Pakistani citizens, the NGO worked closely with government officials in building, refurbishing, and monitoring schools. The barriers going to school that girls faced in the camps around Quetta – having stones thrown at them, being followed and harassed, being abducted – seemed much more subdued in Allai *tencil*, where pressure to drop out of school, when it existed, seemed to come mainly from inside the family. Some of the girls I met also seem more assured about their right to an education, or even to a teaching post. One village girl, for example, spoke about taking on the village's teaching jobs, regardless of whether she could read, write or do math. In the camps around Quetta, by contrast, where refugees faced an uncertain future as repatriation pressures ebbed and flowed, literacy and math skills – in Dari, Pasthto, and Urdu – appeared to be a larger concern, and some girls spoke of pressuring teachers to perform.

In Islamabad one day, Shaheen, one of the liaisons I had worked with, invited me to lunch. To me surprise, she had offered to introduce me to a friend, a high-ranking hereditary landowner. I had found Shaheen to be avid advocate for girls' education, especially that of marginalized girls. Shaheen had struggling to stay in school herself, since as a socially high-ranking *Sayyid,* her need for education was questioned, she said. Shaheen described the plight of a cousin, whose wealthy family in Karachi had not sent her to school. The cousin had become hostile toward educated girls and even her parents, who she blamed for her uneducated state, Shaheen said. Many girls of her age, in their 20s and early 30s, were struggling to negotiate modernity, education, and marriage. Shaheen stated,

> I know many girls unhappy didn't get an education. Even if they married. Even my own sister-in-law. Now she has two children, but when she married to my brother, she had passed her intermediate. It was a love marriage, but we didn't say anything. Now she wants to get more education. At the time she was getting married, she had said, "I don't want more education." She was very brave, very bold. "No, I like this guy. I will marry with him."
>
> My one cousin married, and went back to home after three days. Even our own family is more educated, if we find her, we will kill her. It was a very difficult situation at that time. At that time, I was in (grade) 8. When I recall my memories, I become very afraid (Fieldnotes, Jan. 2009).

Shaheed's friend, it turned out, was a prince and hereditary landowner who was a national parliamentary member. We met the prince in a crowded restaurant in Islamabad. Charming and gracious, the prince ordered two platters of rice-covered chicken and

inquired after Shaheed's finance, who was also his friend. When I used a pen to open my pack of powdered milk, a move that Shaheen thoughtfully echoed, he joked that we were "people from the hills." Class and social performances of class and power through education and etiquette was important in Pakistan, as elsewhere.

We had recently met one of the prince's tenants, a sickly mother who was disfigured on one side of her face, and who lived in a smoke-filled, barely furnished shack above a rural *malik* village. She held a baby with signs of malnutrition, and said she hadn't heard from her husband in years, and didn't know where any of her male relatives were located. She had tried to send a 12-year-old daughter to first grade, but the daughter had dropped out after families in the village encouraged her to return to doing their housework, the mother said, fearfully warning us to not share certain information. Shaheen had cried in sympathy during the interview, and I had also found it sad, to the extent I could understand what was being talked about. Even the lone chicken and a goat, who had stuck a tethered head out from behind a curtain, seemed grateful for a bit of camaraderie around the small pit fire, which barely gave out little heat in the mountain cold.

Recalling this scene, to my surprise, Shaheen aggressively questioned the prince about the women in his family and why they weren't in school. Their participation in education would be symbolic. Shaheen also asked the prince to compel his 2,500 tenants, who couldn't leave their land without his permission, to send their daughters to school. The prince, equally energetically, defended his stance on girls' education. He couldn't interfere in family matters, he said firmly. He had to delicately negotiate with the *Maulvis*, who had an influential voice on matters of girls' education and had certain

demands of their own. He had to deal with ordinary people with rigid cultural mores outside of Islamabad. And he had little say in the programming of INGOs, which in his opinion were wasting precious resources on irrelevant ideas, such as teacher time management.

> You can't build Rome in one day. Why are you sitting here, why aren't you there, it is your job (as an education development worker) to mobilize (the people). You must mobilize tenants. I will give you a guarantee, no one will cause you problems. I want my tenants to be educated. I will be proud, because I'm the owner of that valley. If they leave, there are plenty of others in the hills. (But) we are doing education slowly… I will not compel tenants to send their daughters to school tomorrow (Fieldnotes, Jan. 2009).

Shaheen, and the prince were discussing girls' education at an unofficial policy level. But the discussion was confusing to me. Shaheen was appealing to the political power of an entrenched patriarchal authority figure, one whose family had had the same tenants for over one hundred years. Yet she was also drawing on knowledge she had gained working in a modern education institution, where neoliberal norms of 'personhood' and individuality– such as painstaking field visits to visit individual families to convince them to send their children to school – had enabled her to 'meet' a poor tenant woman in a capacity that was new for her, as a professional education advocate.

In the NGO's reports, the prince's 2,500 residents were not identified as indentured tenants, but as low socio-economic families. I'd been introduced to the tenant woman we'd met as a member of the school management committee member. Without

contradicting this version of educational social reality, Shaheen was also doing a sort of 'end run' around the modernity work of the NGO. In Shaheen's re-constituted version of girls' education, the tenant mother was both a 'traditional' gendered and classed woman, and a 'modern' woman with education rights, in a moral, imagery form. Shaheen clearly felt strongly about the importance of both social realities. Yet she struggled to translate this multi-reality into the NGO's public discourse of girls' education.

Summary. In this section, I have demonstrated some of the means by which gender liaisons in Pakistan experience, engage with, and socially construe meaning out of girls' education, in ways that can inadvertently challenge dominate institutional ideologies, and global myths, around education development.

I have used examples that show liaisons face gender oppression themselves, even as they strive to embody and implement initiatives that foster gender empowerment. I have also demonstrated liaisons stretch dominate understanding of gender agency and identity, through doing cross-gender work in male-dominated spheres of influence and in negotiating masculine, 'Western' notions of developmental progress (Harding, 2008). This includes the contradictions of neoliberal conceptions of gender as an individual, autonomous property of the self in the context of historically located - and not well understood - changing communal and patriarchal notions of belonging, obligation, and empowerment as not only individual, but relational.

In all these examples, liaisons ventured into somewhat murky, 'off the grid' areas of official INGO education development work, scouting roadmaps of possibility through risky and unstable terrains. The work of liaisons' paradoxically exposed, while enabling, many of the unstated assumptions of global models of how to implement girls' education.

This includes the assumption that gender parity and universal inclusion can be observed, measured and used to show 'progress,' as part of empirical or even more constructivist or post-structural approaches to doing development work. That some girl students vanished signaled a need for better data collection and auditing in this global model, rather than the possibility of disappearance as an aporia, a doubt whose social pursuit will lead to further puzzlement within the inescapable corridors of education development within a field of on-going power struggles and logics, including the self-justifying, scientization logic behind the organizational growth of global education - a Weberian reading of world society theory (Myers, 2010).

The experience of gender liaisons also demonstrate that dominate hegemonic understandings of ethnic and national culture, gender, religion, marginality, and other concepts of social difference and shifting identities, while perhaps unavoidable as part of the policy making process of identifying, funding, and designing education development programs, can lag behind large-scale, situated, shifts in meaning taking place in 'real time' and under conditions of social turmoil and public secrecy. The competition for securing teaching jobs in girls' schools by mothers who varied in socio-economic circumstances, including abandoned heads of households and well-connected wives of important landowners, demonstrate female agency within patriarchal systems has taken new forms, and may be under-acknowledged.

In addition, liaisons' more textured, alternative ways of understanding local realities can be obscured. Intra-family power struggles and allocation of resources, on top of particular village dynamics, politics, and micro histories, created historiographies that appeared much more fluid and complex than traditional sociological and variable-based

explanations of causality. While gender liaisons could narrative these historiographies in way that often involved process causality - a realist linkage of events as interpreted in particular contexts (Maxell, 2004) - such stories were often overlooked, their unpredictable and promiscuous political imaginaries fitting disjointedly with WID, WAD, GAD, post-structural, and human development approaches to women' and girls' development.

Therefore, gender liaisons expanded the imaginative arena of girls' education through their everyday activities and stories of events. But this imaginative work, a type of political social imaginary, went largely unnoticed in a professional context, due to its lack of easy fit with prevailing, institutional and bureaucratic modes of understanding and operation.

CHAPTER 7 - PARALLAX REVISITED

Reading Liaison Experiences Against and With World Society Theory

One day, about a year after Melinda had lost her position as a liaison in a special education school, she reflected on events at her new job, where she was working as a temporary health consultant in a chaotic middle school. Although she loved interacting with the students, the new job was even more insecure and temporary than her last job, Melinda reflected, going on to discuss mermaids as an art of imperfection.

Melinda had introduced me to the Black mermaids and fairies publishing genre, a collection of material that spanned continents and stylistic approaches, but I had never quite understood why Melinda seemed so fascinated with mermaids, given, perhaps in my mind, its association with invariably long-haired, Whiter-than-white femininity in 19th century, White, sea-faring European countries. Yet listening to Melinda's description of mermaids this time, I wondered whether mermaids as ethereal, phantasmal creatures who could be beyond color resonated with Melinda's perspective of the reality of liaisons – school figures who were neither really rewarded and institutionalized in schools nor had been professionally phased out, who were neither just symbolic tokens of diversity nor given much decision making powers, and who embodied tantalizing mirages of hope and the possibility of racial 'harmony,' but also unknown dangers as perceived members of 'other,' potentially powerful marginalized communities.

This interest in the imaginative, in education for marginalized students and communities as an uncannily human possibility, reflects an important aspect of liaison work - the metaphorical work of challenging global political social imaginaries. This

includes the political and social institutionalization of modern mass education as both a mythic and actual global collective good and, in world society theory terms, a marker of governing legitimacy.

In this section, I will analyze education liaisons by loosely reading their experiences both with and against world society theory. This is because world society theory, at least as theorized by Meyer (1999) and others, pays attention to the ways in which Western cultural myth arguably plays an important role in the spread and continuing re-construction of modern mass education as legitimate in a self-evidentiary way, through the embrace of 'modern' values of individual empowerment, rationality, and scienticism. This theorization of the ambiguous interplay of institutions and culture spread through and by mass education on a globalizing scale, which has been at the center of much work in comparative education development, can be better interrogated through the roles of liaisons.

I will focus on four core analytical themes – marginality and its imaginations as an institutionalized expertise; the importance of 'awkward' political social imaginaries in relation to educational myth-making as everyday liaison work; understanding institutionalized manifestations of power and silence as enduring practices of bewitchment, and the tensions of engaging with particular legacies of racial and gender oppression, while constructing imaginative possibilities and social identities in institutional contexts. I will propose that the first two themes can be read alongside world society theory, while the remaining two can be read against it.

Marginality and its imaginations as institutionalized expertise. In a certain sense, liaisons in both Minnesota and Pakistan conjured both 'real' and 'abstracted'

marginalized students and families, making them visible and invisible in ways that arguably facilitate the epistemological underpinnings of modern education as rationale and legitimizing. This included interacting with teachers and social workers in Minnesota, such as facilitating the perception of Black students as multidimensional individuals with complex individual needs as well as invoking the concept of racial equity, and interacting with INGO staff, some of whom, due to travel, security or cultural issues related to the seclusion of females, had limited contact with actual girl students in Pakistan. Cosmetic contextual differences, such as the existence of hallway cameras or mud-brick boundary as instruments of control, were less important in this sense than insuring an epistemological understanding of schooling, in which students could be both interchangeable units of measurements and occupy distinct subject positions, such as particular 'others' with shifting, sometimes raced and gendered identities. Liaisons in both locations thus constantly re-imagined 'real' and stereotyped marginalized students within the rationale and scientist logics of education and its goals of racial equity, gender parity, and similar discourses.

In this way, liaisons in both locations, despite very different contexts, undertook in core ways the modern, bureaucratic work described in world society theory (Meyer, 2013). They functioned as modern actors authorized to act within a rationalized education institution in very different socio-cultural locations, in similar ways. This is a form, it could be argued, of "culturally devolved agency," part of a "panoply of authoritative sciences and professions" built "around relatively pure agency for high and universalistic collective principles" (Meyer, 2000, p. 117). This imaginative work could both enable

previously hidden, or semi taboo topics to be addressed, and could legitimize education through critiques of its perceived failures.

For example, liaisons in this study drew attention to politically sensitive educational topics, such as functionally illiterate teens in the U.S., and female students and teachers who were part of *badal* exchanges – the practice of giving a girl in marriage to resolve serious disputes. They also frequently did so in ways that were overly challenging, and even passionate. A recent approval of Minnesota's four-year waiver application to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (EASA), for example, in which the state pledged to cut the achievement gap in half by 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015), establish Regional Centers of Excellence, and use a new accountability system knows as the Multiple Measurement Rating (MMR) system, was regarded as a charade, by one African American liaison trainer who had left the field two years ago.

> The gaps are widening, and now they're going to cut it in half? They're misleading the community – they're preying on them. Narrowing the achievement gap isn't the same as giving (students) an on-ramp into the economy. They're attacking the accountability system, versus the people the accountability system is reporting on. You're making Centers of Excellence, instead of Centers of Assholes? What is that, but run by people who are recommending the new accountability system? It's the same old thing. It's attacking the damn population. It's make you dizzy if you listen to it, because it's going nowhere. They act like the waiver is an award. (Fieldnotes, 3/1/15).

From this perspective, it can be argued that even when liaisons critiqued their schools and institutions, which was a frequent occurrence, it was a manifestation of modern, institutional actor empowerment, rather than subversion or resistance to the modern education institution. This conjuring and imaginative work, fueled by beliefs and experiences in the modern education systems, could 'demystify' educational settings, a process that can also bed linked to even greater mystification and power (Taussig, 2003). The 'scientific outlook,' as Meyers (2013) has argued, is an incorporation of domains such as psyches, religion, nature and society that has a public authority even when individuals may have little faith in scientific knowledge.

But liaisons also in both places also shared positions of professional liminality, their 'expertise' often questioned. Driving back from a village one day in northern Pakistan, one of the male fieldworkers, a hard-working man who had garnered respect among most of the gender liaisons for shouldering issues of gender parity with integrity and sincerity, questioned our deconstruction of a conversation with a tenant village woman. The mother had complained about spending a lifetime behind 'four walls' – a popular Pakistan phrase being *chador chardiwari*, behind the veil and behind four walls.

"If women were really oppressed, why didn't they all just run away?" he said with exasperation. The other five fieldworkers, three of them women, remained silent, unwilling, for reasons I could only guess at drawing on cultural generalizations, to seriously engage in a discussion about perceptions of gender-based oppression. Male NGO staff did not meet face-to-face with village women, and gender liaisons' on-the-ground reports of gender-based issues in education were sometimes greeted with skepticism. This skepticism also extended at times to reports of gender violence, such as

a girl student in a refugee camp who was thrown down a well following a sexual assault, and a teacher who was threatened with death. Incidents were difficult to verify in an environment of contested authority and armed violence, and organizational norms of accountability, including those of INGO and other international organizations, meant gender liaisons were not always believed.

The experience of liaisons in Minnesota, contrasted with that of gender liaisons in Pakistan, deepens the possibility of understanding liaisons as actors within a global educational culture, as per world society theory. If liaison accounts of girls' education weren't quite trustworthy or 'understandable' in Pakistan, they were in different ways suspect and 'too' understandable in Minnesota. "We already know what they are going to say," said one teacher-coach in Minnesota, comparing Black liaisons to paras, and turning down my suggestion to include liaison voices as part of a school district listening session. School special education administrators in Minnesota, similarly, sometimes voiced concern that liaisons would do nothing but vent and repeat unverified, uninformed, and subjective opinions, if given the opportunity to talk.

Thus, the contrasting experiencing of liaisons in Minnesota and Pakistan, located in very different contexts, point to how social realities around marginality and education are culturally produced and structured, as Meyers has noted, by 'disinterested' others reflecting "the peculiar structural idealism of the modern system" (1999, p. 115). Although liaisons are arguably not 'disinterested' in a normative sense, they are positioned in different ways as liminal, trustworthy and non-trustworthy experts on marginality within education systems. Given the contrast between 'real' and 'ideological' encounters with marginality, this is imaginative work.

'Awkward' political social imaginaries in relation to educational myth-making as everyday liaison work. An important part of the work of education liaisons in both Minnesota and Pakistan, I found, was re-interpreting and re-working dominant social imaginaries of education. This includes, arguably, world society theory's description of mass education institutions as diffusing a rationale, modern cognitive worldview, which as a socially constructed theory has been argued to be a means of 're-enchanting' the world through the myth of educational progress (Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012).

Liaisons bridged 'on-the-ground' perceptions of meaning around education, and its global understandings, in often 'awkward' ways that enabled belief in mass education as a global process of enchantment. I am glossing the term awkward, from the previous English usage *awke* or 'turned the wrong way,' in a positive sense to denote the heterogeneous creativity and flexibility of liaisons' work in making sense of powerful forms of governing and incommensurate logics, such as parent engagement as neo-colonial intervention, and students as objects of care in classrooms and as objects of commodification in the economics of education and social welfare.

Liaisons in both Minnesota and Pakistan, especially in spaces outside of work time or outside of the earshot of colleagues, reflected on these conundrums and the significance and meaning of education for those they worked with, such as students, families and relatives, and imagined communities (e.g., African Americans, women, etc.). This re-storying of understandings, I argue, represented plural means of re-constructing the dominant myth of educational progress, in which the contextualized significance of education assumed new dimensions. But even in a context of neoliberal globalization and

rising income inequality and precarity for marginalized populations in both locations, liaisons constructed individual student 'successes' and 'failures' as mythologized narratives, more than as statistics or indicators of abstract concepts.

This focus on particularity, as a lived experience that was re-narrated as often heroic or tragic in myth-like terms, introduced an opaque, true-and-not-true quality into understandings of education – the chance encounter, the unfortunate incident, the courage and triumph of a particular student against great odds. These situated, social understandings of the profound challenges of education, also enabled and re-constructed the dominant myth of modern education progress, since political myths are living social constructs that respond to the need for social significance, as Bottici (2011; 2014) has argued.

This 'living myth' quality could be grasped in how gender liaisons, for example, positioned stories of past and present girls' and women's suffering, including their own stories. These were mythic, indirectly gendered narratives that belonged neither solely in the past or future. They were about particular girls and women who were 'real,' but who also represented truths and social meanings that could not be quite captured in concrete ways. These could also assume materially symbolic forms, like the painted box liaisons kept in their office, and which was covered on the outside and inside, with written cries of distress by a girl lamenting her own future, and the 'past future' of her mother.

This mythic imaginary also involved stories of physical and metaphorical modes of death, a theme that contrasted with the optimism of much educational discourse. Death was an underlying issue for liaisons in both Pakistan and Minnesota. This included violent crime and beheadings in Pakistan, and in Minnesota deadly arrests and assault by

authorities and the law enforcement community, medication, and incarceration. These stories of violence were often mythologized, and for the most part not included in this study - in part because en masse they could seem affectively overwhelming, in part because I screened out 'irrelevant' data and within the initial bounded parameters of my study, and in part because the stories were situated within fields of institutional power which included myself, as much as liaisons. The mandated reporting requirements for professional educators, for example, posed a constant dilemma for liaisons in Minnesota, who often operated within a grey area of mandated reporting situations, which in turn could be based on fuzzy conjunctures such as 'belief.' But individual stories, as part of a larger, mythic social imaginary, provided a means to weave historiographies in which certain social truths, embedded in other (i.e. non-truths), emerged.

This busy, myth-amending work also was institutionally experienced in different ways in Minnesota and Pakistan. In Minnesota, liaisons often spoke of feeling invisible as real people, as almost haunted and imaginary beings. One liaison, who spent a great deal of time supervising a student 'time-out' room, described an imposed school identity as an earthy, kindly, authentic, African American community figurehead. She embraced this identity, while, as in discussions with me, hinting that she had other, much more meaningful identities. She stated:

> The first thing they tell us, is we're not a therapist, we're not a social worker. But everybody comes in this office and dumps. All the adults come in here and have their breakdowns. I want to pull my trump card out of my purse, and say, "I'm a Licensed Past!' I just sit there and say, "You really don't know me at all. You think you do, but you don't." (Fieldnotes, 5/1/13).

The experience of gender liaisons in Pakistan was, in some ways, the reverse. Gender liaisons fought being 'overly' exposed, of gender-based harassment, of being regarded as too 'modern' - figures of fear and contamination, when they were respectable, hard working, in many ways socially and culturally traditional females. They re-narrated such experiences as part of a social imaginary of the obstacles facing women, even within an education organization that supported and made girls' education improbably possible in schools in rural villages and refugee camps.

Thus, the 'awkward' political social imaginaries that liaisons in both places undertake in relation to educational myth-making can be read as a function of expanding mass education systems and the logic of legitimacy as a form of governmentality. In two different contexts, experienced in different ways, liaisons practiced, but also were coerced into practices, forms of congruent role behavior that could be read as envisioned in world society theory.

Power, silences, and institutional practices of bewitchment. Liaisons, as I have argued in the findings chapter above, encountered multiple dimensions of organizational life in schools and INGOS that produced, and in which they were co-producers of, silences and forms of institutional power, especially around issues of marginality. Histories, spaces of social affect, language, modes of intervention, and modes of avoidance all could reinforce particular perceptions of reality, and of the 'reality' of racial and gendered educational inequities and oppression. This arguably resulted in not only numerous and divergent forms of silencing and 'othering' – through avoiding certain school locations, through experiencing reifying conflict, through maintaining public, education-related 'secrets' - but perpetuated ritual ways of understanding difference and

marginalization that pre-dated, and in turn shaped, the emergence of modern global education systems.

Such widespread silencing has been analyzed as a form of bewitchment (Siegal, 2006), where possible sources of articulation have already been established, meaning subjects of accusation or exclusion – such as 'witches' in East Java, Indonesia (Siegal, 2006) or institutionally placed, 'insider-outsider' liaisons who uncomfortably blur epistemological borders – are not heard even when they speak, unless it is to confirm their own bewitchment, or alien 'otherness.' Those who are bewitched can't speak. Even if they speak, nobody can hear them, because they have already been positioned as non-subjects – outside the bounds of a social reality in which causality has already been signified in ways that can't be proven or disproven, and provides a "magical articulation" of belief (Siegel, 2006, p. 47).

Paradoxically, it was often liaisons' enthusiasm for implementing the educational goals of inclusion, equity, and equality and the promises of educational opportunity that seemed to most lead to situations of epistemological ambiguity and blurring. This was not a case of offering alternate or plural understandings, such as arguing educational equity from the standpoint of critical race theory, but of engaging with school practices on their own terms. Examples included attempting to partner with a school principal on a social media platform to discuss books and reading to low-income children as an experience of unexpected mutual embarrassment and shame, and reaching out to a feudal landowner to 'allow' daughters of bonded tenants to be educated and their parents – unable to leave their employ without permission – to sit on school-parent committees. This led to a 'partial bewitchment,' I argue, in which liaisons practiced educational advocacy in often

creative and bold ways, but failed to break through invisible barriers of institutionally dominant perceptions of reality, in which they and their attempts at change in some ways 'disappeared.'

This does not mean schools are stable islands of ideal-type, neo-Weberian rationality and bureaucratic sterility. Far from being monolithic institutions, the situated and particular cultural fabric of schools and education institutions, which vary not only by country and region but from school to school, has long been the subject of exploration by education anthropologists and others. Even the gap between what Meyer has argued is the ideologically driven, Western-centric, cultural self-perceptions of modern education institutions, and the 'reality' of irrational non-modernity, is core to Meyer's concept of an expanding world culture. According to Meyer and Jepperson (2000), schools are in reality increasingly irrational in their lack of perspectival depth about their own culture, creating a temptation to confuse realist with phenomenological and constructivist imagery. This is especially when trying to understand large-scale, cultural phenomena, such as institutional and bureaucratic forms of 'modernity' (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000).

But the experience of liaisons in two different locations calls attention to the endurance of social constructions of reality around modes of difference such as race and gender. By calling attention to the irrationality of school practices and a discursively constructed image of educational progress, liaisons also draw attention to an educational environment that is not just irrational at a point in time, but perhaps rational in its historical consistency - a vastness of possibilities and doubt conducive to magical practices. This is a 'magic' not in the sense of discursively used understandings of magic in school professional development trainings, such as avoiding 'magical thinking' when

deconstructing difficult special education student behavior, but a pattered use of magic as a socio-cultural practice, raising the uncanny prospect of an unclear school reality.

This lack of clarity can appear differently in different geographic contexts, such as the blurring of prison-medical institution-school in the narratives of liaisons in Minnesota, and the 'empowerment' of girls as wage-earning beasts of burden in some rural patriarchal families, where opportunities to live apart from an extended family are slim and extended family needs and priorities – especially in relation to a new daughter-in-law or a family with multiple sons to be married - can mean schooling can be both a trap and ambiguously experienced opportunity, according to gender liaisons in Pakistan.

Practices of magic have long been a central object of study in cultural anthropology, and have been more recently used to explain and reflect upon modern constructions of reality (Camaroff, & Camaroff, 2000; Taussig, 1999; West, 2007). The dynamic of revelation and concealment is central to magic, which often involve rituals and rhetorics of mystification (Taussig, 1999) and discursively produced 'truths,' which are subject to metadiscoursive transformations that blur what is spoken of and spoken, symbolism and the thing itself (West, 2007). Yet even powerful forms of magical practice can be displaced and undone. Taussig (1999), drawing on Walter Benjamin, has argued that 'truths' are not readily accessible, but they can be artfully revealed through a process of masking and unmasking that does not expose the secret so much as do justice to it (Taussig, 1999).

Liaisons, as has been demonstrated, both mask and unmask elusive 'truths' through their storied engagements with social imaginaries of education and myth-making. But they are also in a position of constructing truths as partially bewitched staff. This

could be a reading of "modern interested actorhood" and "waves of conforming non-decision" as theorized by Meyer (2008, p. 805) that is socially constructed, more than an individual process of forming a cognitive worldview of reality that corresponds to a dominant and self-fulfilling rhetoric.

But bewitchment is a dialogical process to the extent that objects and subjects of a discursively produced truth share a social and tangible reality. Thus, the experience of liaisons could also be read as agentic in ways not supported by world society theory, in that these process of so-called bewitchment, arguably a social process not well understood within educational frameworks of individual agency and empowerment, appear to be profoundly connected to racialized and gendered legacies of power which pre-date usurp the appearance of institutional isomorphism.

Claiming the past, constructing the future. Education liaisons occupy complex subject positions with schools and INGOs. While embodied representatives of marginalized populations (e.g., urban Black communities or rural, Pakistani villages and refugee camps), they are positioned as institutional champions of norms of modern personhood, with its emphasis on individual agency and reflexive forms of self identity, as relatively low status employees.

This modern personhood can be conceptualized in Anthony Giddens' (1998) notion of a reflexive modern self capable of autonomous thought and reflexivity within the context of a world increasingly constituted by globalization and information rather than pre-given, traditional modes of conduct. This notion of personhood arguably sits easily within modern, neoliberal education institutions in the U.S., with its emphasis on student test scores and achievement, even as institutions continue to fund decades-long

multicultural programs and events to promote ethnic and racial historical knowledge and diverse curriculum and pedagogical practices, at least for the most part in discourse.

Liaisons, like many school staff, often spoke with mixed feelings about the growing emphasis on individual achievement and standardized testing in the U.S., practices rapidly being instituted in Pakistan through electronic data gathering systems. But liaisons also spoke with pride of helping students succeed academically, despite the odds. This included low-income, semi-homeless students suffering from anxiety in Minnesota, and girls in refuge camps who braved long distances and harassment to attend upper elementary, or even middle and high school, in classes taught by male teachers.

These accounts could also highlight tensions between past and future-oriented understandings of educational progress, given the differential impact of global forces such as neoliberal shifts in the economy. In Minnesota, for example, speaking of the need for racial pride - a frequent topic of concern for Lea - often posed tricky 'post-racial' issues of terminology around other liaisons of color or administrators such as equity directors who were younger, or had recent graduate degrees. 'Racial pride' often appeared to raise the fundamental issue of 'educational progress' as regressive, or possibly backward moving. Two of the fives co-researchers I worked with in Minnesota spoke often from the vantage point of having participated in the civil rights movement, the Black pride movement, and Black feminist movements, eras which they felt, despite the turbulence of the times, represented more opportunities for Black students and communities.

In Pakistan, by contrast, gender liaisons often spoke of educational progress as forward moving for girls and women. Each generation, compared to previous

generations, had more plausible opportunities, despite the dangers lurking for individual girls and women. But they also spoke of educational opportunities as dangerous and as parallel to past forms of entrapment. Having 'too much' education relative to in-laws, or having too much education in terms of the decreased cost-benefit of marriage versus a paying job, raised questions about gendered progress.

Furthermore, my few tentative attempts to bridge conversations with my co-participants about their shared liaison roles and issues across geographies seemed to generate limited interest, perhaps due to the vast differences in circumstances and my own fumbling portrayals of 'sameness,' and perhaps also due to the lingering existence of neo-colonial and neo-liberal racialized social orders as forces of divergence rather than convergence.

Gender liaisons in Pakistan, social elites even if they perceived their gender as in many ways oppressed, appeared reluctant to identify with marginalization in other forms such as race, although skin color among tribal groups, and its impact on girls' educational opportunities and preferences, was a topic that arose from time to time. In Pakistan and South Asian culture, where white or fair skin color is often associated with beauty, class, power, and movie-driven positive characteristics (Ismail, Loya & Hussain, 2015), 'race' also has acquired globalized meanings through social media, such as the hip hop radio programming available in Quetta.

In Minnesota, by contrast, I found an interest in exploring common gendered experiences. But the liaisons I spoke with indicated hesitation in being compared to the developing world 'other,' especially given the long struggle, despite having longer family histories as U.S. Americans than most American citizens - as Lea and others would point

out - to acquire full citizenship rights, such as in the *Dread Scott v. Sandford* case (1857) involving Minnesota, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Maintaining focusing on African American issues, as opposed to a perceived preference by White educators for working with English language leaners and other more 'respectful' and 'approachable' populations of color or difference, was a theme that frequently surfaced among liaisons who were from low-income, African American backgrounds.

Liaisons thus provide an insight into not just the realities of education on the ground for marginalized communities, but the largely unspoken fears generated through neoliberal economic and globalizing forces, in contexts of advanced capitalism inequalities and developing world progress. This metaphorical work around past-future conceptions of race, gender, and its oppressive intersections is an important part of liaison work that delved into particularities and exceeded, do to ontological realities, the isomorphism apparent at perhaps other levels of the global education system.

Implications for Practice

In this section, I will highlight three implications for practice. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of implications that could be drawn from this study, but as a place to start considering how the role of education liaisons could contribute to more meaningful and effective schools, particularly for marginalized populations for whom educational inequalities and significant disparities remain a reality, despite deeply entrenched rhetorics of progress.

First, education liaisons should be allowed the space and support to re-conceptualized their role in 'post' (e.g., racial, gender, etc.), non-reifying terms, and as one shaped by and shaping individual and social imaginations and imaginaries. While

racial, gender, and other knowledges rooted in particular histories and identities are important, too often, the underlying assumption behind the institutional role of liaisons is only of cultural and phenotype-like congruence. These in turn are usually based on bureaucratically defined norms of race, ethnicity, and language.

This places liaisons into essentializing identity categories that are often stereotypical. It also, inadvertently perhaps, puts staff of color into the position of competing with each other as already relatively isolated and powerless employees, incentivizing the claiming of racial or ethnic or gender 'authenticity' based on ill-defined and out-dated concepts of color and sex, and of comparatively 'greater' experiences of marginalization and/or suffering and victimization.

It also rewards institutionalized forms of 'fitting in,' even when alternate perspectives, especially those that don't fit into pre-existing logics of value-as-pragmatic or value-as-critique, could lead to much-needed insights. Conquer-and-divide tactics have long been used against marginalized communities (Minha-ha, 2014), and through complex mimetic processes, within marginalized communities (Mafeje, 2011), as has been noted, and the balance between respect for social experiences and inclusive social possibilities and uncertainties, or imaginaries, is a delicate but important process.

A 'navigator' type of liaison definition also misses the much more important work liaisons do, as not only navigators and 'translators' between bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic environments and forms of authority (Lareau & Munoz, 2012), but as metaphorical 'workers' on an unfolding mythic tale of educational progress that itself draws upon the ontological realities and symbolisms of oppression. This includes the imagery of educational institutions themselves, in which power has been argued to be re-

produced in different ways (Foucault, 1977; Bourdieu, 1988) along class, race, gender, and other intersectional axes of authority and influence. As this study has demonstrated, being a liaison is often demanding and intensive work, which involves empathy, insights from being in the trenches of lived experiences of marginality, and persistence in engaging with issues as a generalist across silos of classroom teaching, counseling, special education, administration, the judiciary and other systems of governance, and socially rooted communities and family networks. Thus, an imaginatively expansive definition of liaisoning is key in order to be aligned with the nature of the work.

Second, in relation to the first recommendation, liaison work should be re-oriented, I believe, toward a Deweyan-style, pragmatic mode of educational work that involves meaningful commitment to collaboration by leadership and other staff. Instead of assigning liaisons specific tasks, which often reflect empirically unsupported institutional assumptions – that diverse staff can conduct multicultural trainings for other staff from positions of relatively low status and less formal education, handle diverse student discipline problems that are difficult for other staff, or advocate for parents of color within special education meetings as 'pop up,' relatively uniformed team members – liaisons should be given the support and room, in collaboration with other school staff, to develop pragmatic forms of school practices that work for students and families, particularly marginalized students and families. This emphasis on pragmatic flexibility is important, given the dominant, cultural self-perception of institutional rationality and neutrality when in reality many school practices may be irrational, as argued by Meyer (1999) and other world society theorists. Liaisons, as epistemological 'free agents,' so to

speak, are ideally placed to help schools innovate and disrupt rigid and bureaucratic cultural habits.

Third, because of the pressures that result in widespread forms of silencing among liaisons, as has been explored in this study, processes to undue 'bewitchment' and the walls around 'public secrets' should be considered by institutions. This means taking a structural, systems-level view of educational disparities and marginality that does not overshadow socio-cultural phenomenon that are perhaps not as easy to empirically map. With regard to liaisons in particular, economically secure, 'disruptive' spaces with upwardly mobile professional career paths could be created for liaisons to speak not just 'uncomfortable truths' a euphuism in education circles that often implies bureaucratically frowned upon discourse, but seemingly 'irrelevant' or awkward stories. These are the stories that often 'do' more important work, as has been explored in this study, than they are given credit for.

As demonstrated by the stories of liaisons in Minnesota and Pakistan, these stories can deflect the exotic tropes of marginality such as simplistic depictions of oppressed girls, while re-enchanting a 'too-familiar other' such as disillusioned discourses around 'failing' urban students. For making senses of the 'failures,' as much as the 'successes' of mass education, is much more complicated work than it may appear within education institutions and systems, where even modern, empirically vetted versions of silver bullets (e.g., the Institute of Education Sciences' 'What Works Clearinghouse) and progressive and critical multicultural initiatives continue to run into the ambiguities raised by diverse and increasingly neoliberal flows of political power, such as the growing privatization of public school systems and a flattening of global labor markets. An ability to re-order

accepted causalities, as in the discoursive practices of traditional healers who 'heal' by allowing the ambivalences of power to be intuited in subtle performances of metaphorical and ontological meanings (West, 2007), is one of the advantage of an insider-outsider position and a potential asset to education institutions.

But too rigid a prescription for educational change or critique misses the continual process of constructing and re-constructing a common narrative such as the myth of educational process, and the silences and shadows that surround it. As Bottici and Challand (2006) have argued, the more power is concealed, the stronger it is. If political myths are understood as socially powerful cognitive and aesthetic mapping devices in which the struggle for people's imagination is increasingly more important than physical coercion, especially in the pervasive reach of a global village, the more difficulties that arise from critical discussions, the better. They further stated,

> … the concept of significance helps point out that between a simple meaning, such as that which can be provided by a scientific theory, and the question of the ultimate meaning of life and death, which is answered by religion, there is a space – it is in this space that the work on myth operates (2006, p. 318).

Liaisons, as educational advocates in the complex epistemological spaces where educational myths meet on-the-ground realities in different, but discursively linked geographic spaces, are ideally placed to contribute to difficult critical discussions.

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSION

This study has explored the lived experiences of education liaisons in Minnesota and Pakistan in the context of cultural myths of modern educational progress, as envisioned in world society theory. It has envisioned the idea of political myths and social imaginaries of education that operate even within our time, and are perhaps harder to grasp.

Liaisons turn out to do much more than cultural bridge-building and translating work between education institutions and educationally marginalized groups, such as urban Black communities and rural Pakistani villages. As I have argued, they cannot be reduced to forms of professional agency within a bureaucratic system, products of an originally Western and now global cultural model in which scientism and individual empowerment and belief in educational progress is arguably being disseminated through the rapid spread of mass education institutions. Neither are they situated, fully agentic, unique advocates challenging the oppression of marginalized populations and exploitive forms of power as critical reformers, following in the footsteps of intellectual leaders and critical scholars such as Carter G. Woodson, W.E.B. Du Bois in the U.S. and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan in Pakistan, whose non-violent Pashto movement, Khudai Khidmatgars, was an early proponent of boys' and girls' education in the early 20th century (Banerjee, 2000).

Instead, liaisons' lived experiences, and their telling and re-telling of lived experiences and struggles in schools and education organizations, is a historiography that both escapes and is shaped by institutional processes. It is also, I argued, a sort of bewitched historiography, in that in both geographic locations, liaisons inadvertently

trouble the social reality of educational progress and the meaning of education, especially in light of on-going racial and gender oppression and educational inequities. This can be seen more clearly, I have argued, through the juxtaposition of different geographies and socio-cultural contexts, such as that of schools in the urban center of Minnesota, and the rural fringes of Pakistan.

In both Minnesota and in Pakistan, for example, liaisons called into question the notion of progress, at least as a modern, forward progression of improving education opportunities for Black students and rural, Pashto-speaking girls. This is the modern, Enlightenment-era belief of human progress, one whose dark undertones have been pointed out by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 2005), and, in different ways, by world society theorists such as Meyers (1999, 2008).

The liaisons I worked with in Pakistan, for example, had complex views of their own progression as educated females and modern professionals, as well as that of girls and women in the schools they worked with. Becoming 'educated' and functionally literate was a process that could be undone, through marriage or a number of life events that had a historically circular quality, instead of a uniformly progressing one.

In Minnesota, the experiences of liaisons also problematized the linear nature of educational time. Despite a plethora of 'evidence-based' educational interventions and sophisticated instruments to diagnose mental and behavior issues, liaisons in Minnesota often pointed to the ways their schools turned out functionally illiterate and socio-economically marginalized students, especially African American youth. One liaison withdrew her own 14-year-old son from public school, afraid his frustration at feeling increasingly ostracized for clothing that marked him as a defiant African American male

would lead to his incarceration. This disruption of time as a progression from backward to modern in both places, also called into question 'time,' as the process of national education systems evolving from less to more developed systems.

Furthermore, liaisons in both Pakistan and Minnesota had very different experiences of marginality. Liaisons in Minnesota who were Black, unlike other liaisons, tended to shadow the work of predominately White licensed educators, given the racial demographics of schools, in ways that invoked uncanny racial echoes of past centuries. This semi-invisible, subservient, relatively low paid presence of Black liaisons within a predominately White, hierarchically arranged bureaucratic structure in some ways parallels Toni Morrison's reference to the "Africanist presence" that haunts U.S. literature. As Morrison has argued in her book, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literacy Imagination*, the preponderance of White male views, genius, and power has subtly drawn on, without acknowledging, the deep relationship to more than four hundred years of African and African American cultural presence (Morrison, 1993).

In Pakistan, by contrast, the liaisons I worked with held a visible leadership role as public role models of emergent forms of gender equity. But this visibility was itself elusive, a professional performance that highlighted forms of continuing gender inequities at work and in their personal lives. As individuals, they were often relatively comfortable with landlords, religious leaders, government officials, and other traditional sources of patriarchal power. Gender liaisons could travel and meet with both men and women in diverse communities in ways women in lower-status positions would find more difficult. Working in a salaried professional position was itself unusual for women from rural and conservative backgrounds. But this comparative visibility, in the context of

Pakistan, also posed its own dangers, much as invisibility did in Pakistan. These contrasting understandings and experiences of educational progress and invisibility and visibility, enrich understandings of global education processes as both empirical facts and social myths. This is a problem of objectivity that centers prominently in world society theory, as well as theories of magic, myths, and social imaginaries.

Liaisons, in often unexpected ways, undertake important work as 'true believers' in education and its social reality, especially for marginalized communities. In doing so, they help mediate past and ideological constructions of educational futures and diverse temporal and geographic meanings of marginality. They are thus shaped by, and re-construct and re-circulate, both local and global social imaginaries of modern educational progress within fields of on-going power and oppression.

In both Minnesota and Pakistan, I wasn't sure whether to leave 'the field' feeling optimistic, or alarmed. The liaisons I met all, without exception, enchanted me with a complicated, nuanced story of mass education as a very human and almost mystical process that involved incredible faith, perseverance, and hope despite on-going and immense structural and cultural challenges. But their efforts contribute to an on-going process of social and political imaginaries that has poorly understood, yet real consequences, especially for oppressed individuals and groups.

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