Studying Movement, Hybridity, and Change: Toward a Multi-sited Sensibility for Research on Learning Across Contexts and Borders

SHIRIN VOSSOUGHI

Northwestern University

KRIS D. GUTIÉRREZ

University of California, Berkeley

This chapter brings together cultural-historical approaches to human development with interpretive and multi-sited ethnography in order to: (1) develop ethnographic tools that attend to the ways young people learn within and across multiple contexts; (2) draw from and contrast the methodological insights of single and multi-sited ethnography; and (3) glean principles that help constitute a "multi-sited sensibility" appropriate for taking a more expansive approach to learning that advances conceptions of learning as movement.

As scholars of the cultural nature of learning and human development, we are invested in understanding the relationships between the academic and the everyday, as well as the specific qualities of learning across microgenetic, ontogenetic, and socio-cultural planes (Rogoff, 2003). As equity-oriented researchers and methodologists, we are also concerned with how reductive conceptions of culture and traditional forms of research and assessment portray the practices in which young people and their families participate—particularly those of migrant, immigrant, and diasporic communities—as being deficient or aberrant from dominant cultural practices. We challenge ahistorical understandings of youths' repertoires and

skills and instead focus our analytical lens on the repertoires of practices that are developed, extended, and leveraged across settings. This focus requires a shift from a methodological gaze on students' perceived skills deficiencies toward the design of new tools and sensibilities that better account for youths' history of involvement in practices, as well as what takes hold as young people move in and across settings. In particular, we call attention to the ways youths' practices are developed across time and space, in boundary and border crossings, and across hybrid spaces and activity systems.

From our theoretical perspective, a phenomenon should be examined across a minimum of two activity systems (Engeström, 2005). While we recognize the practicability of this principle, we argue in this chapter that a "multi-sited ethnographic sensibility" (Marcus, 1995) undergirds the methodological imperative of understanding learning as "movement" within and across activity systems—a sensibility central to equity-oriented and humanist research on learning among youth from non-dominant communities. As third-generation activity theorists, our work is organized around the principles that people are part of multiple activity systems, and that learning should be studied accordingly. Drawing on Engeström (1987), Gutiérrez and Arzubiaga (2012) write, "the relations among and contradictions that exist between activity systems are central to the analysis of human activity" (p. 205). Understanding people as part of multiple activity systems, and, as we elaborate below, attending to the relation between everyday and school-based expertise, can help problematize common dichotomies of home/school, formal/informal, academic/everyday (Gutiérrez & Larson, 2007; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), and enable us to discern what *takes hold* as people and practices move across time and space (Gutiérrez, 2008; Street, 2005). Unsettling normative definitions of learning that rely on simple and static categorizations of cultural communities moves us beyond reductive dichotomies and orients us toward methods that focus on the multiple activity systems in which people develop repertoires of practice.

Organizing our discussion into four sections, we elaborate the concept of a multi-sited ethnographic sensibility by highlighting analytical frames and lines of inquiry as we move from (1) the emergence of multi-sited ethnography, (2) cultural historical approaches to learning and human development, and (3) interpretive educational ethnography, to (4) developments and possible future directions in multi-sited educational research. We are interested in the conceptual and methodological resources offered by each for studying learning as a central phenomenon of interest, and in the ethnographic tools that emerge at the intersection of these approaches for researching learning across settings. We argue throughout that a "multi-sited sensibility" draws on the analytic power of ethnographic

approaches to study and advance conceptions of *learning as movement* (Gutiérrez, 2008) in ways that call attention to cultural repertoires that are necessarily co-constituted and leveraged across places, spaces, and time scales. We are drawn to the notion of a methodological "sensibility" as we believe it connotes and invites us to develop a *disposition* toward equity-oriented and ecologically valid research that can be generative for both single and multi-sited ethnographic studies.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN/OF THE WORLD SYSTEM: THE EMERGENCE OF MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY

What do we mean by multi-sited ethnography? In his earliest articulations, Marcus (1995) defined multi-sited ethnography as:

> [moving] out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. This mode defines for itself an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation. It develops instead a strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects. This mobile ethnography takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction, for example, between lifeworld and system by which much ethnography has been conceived. Just as this mode investigates and ethnographically constructs the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects, it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites. (p. 96)

We draw from this definition a sense of the researcher as deliberately seeking out additional sites and lines of inquiry in the pursuit of a more complex and layered understanding of the phenomenon or cultural practice under study. As Marcus (1995) argues, this involves "expanding the ethnographic picture" (p. 102) in sometimes unexpected ways to gain a deeper understanding of the multiple environments that shape people's everyday experiences; and, as we return to below, *studying*, rather than taking for granted or simply treating as "context," broader connections, ecologies, and historical and structural conditions.

This approach is markedly distinct from focusing intensively on a single site and *then* working to contextualize the happenings there in the broader

world system (Marcus, 1995). While traditional single-sited ethnography emphasizes localized everyday practices, understanding the experiences of immigrant and diasporic communities in particular involves defining everyday practice as the "interplay of transnational, national and local processes" (Hall, 2004, p. 109). In this sense, multi-sited ethnography is not merely defined by the addition of new sites, but also involves a "theoretical rethinking of field work itself" (Marcus, 2009, p. 185)—one that is experimental, and we would add, playful in its willingness to imagine and pursue questions in unconventional ways.

Situated in the context of globalization, migration, and post-colonial critiques of anthropology, Gustavson and Cytrynbaum (2003) identify a core set of issues that mark this shift in ethnographic practice: reflexivity; movement, change, and the interconnection of culture; representation; and a critical reevaluation of how the field is constructed—which includes ethnographers moving to additional sites that are "powerfully registered in the local knowledge of an originating locus of fieldwork" (Marcus, 1998, p. 120). All of these issues incite methodologies that interrogate the traditional notions of difference as deficit common in colonial and otherizing discourses. As Fortun (2009) writes, the value of multi-sited ethnography lies in its analytical capacity to set up self-critical perspectives. Similarly, Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) argue for grounding "observations across multiple settings and communities and [assuming] various vantage points to understand the complexity of human activity" (p. 23).

Of particular significance to our work, multi-sited ethnography understands itself as an ethnography of movement, borderlands, hybridity, and change: "the habit or impulse of multi-sited research is to see subjects as differently constituted, as not products of essential units of difference only, but to see them in development—displaced, recombined, hybrid in the once popular idiom, alternatively imagined" (Marcus, 2009, p. 184). What are the affordances of thinking about ethnography as "movement"? How does this approach resonate with our notions of learning? How does it contribute to the goals of equity-oriented and ecologically valid research? These questions provide the first guiding frame for our inquiry into the generative intersections between cultural-historical approaches to learning, interpretive educational ethnography, and multi-sited research. In all three traditions, human beings and their cultural tools, practices, and communities are not only understood as being fundamentally *in development*, but also the very processes and shifts that constitute this development are treated as privileged objects of analysis. As Erickson (2004) notes:

the moment-by-moment tactical moves of the social actor are constituting a *field-as-experienced,* and such a field is penetrable by local practice; the activity of practicing is reconstructed in part with its local doing. Taking a walk, cooking something, going to the store, talking at the family dinner table, in the school classroom, in the academic advisor's office, with the clinical medical supervisor, when viewed as continuously accomplished *practicings* appear in a very different light from the way they appear when they are treated as a 'tunnel' or black box preceded and followed by an analytic snapshot. (p. 139)

We see a strong resonance between Erickson's perspective and the multi-sited conception of the researcher as "an ethnographer of movement rather than stillness" (Hage, 2005, p. 467). Both problematize the analytic "snapshot" as the endpoint of inquiry, seeking instead to craft a moving picture of social practice and human development as it unfolds, genetically, in real-time. From a methodological perspective, we are interested in the relationship between treating the dynamic and developmental quality of social life as a central analytic concern, and making visible the practicings (Erickson, 2004) and forms of human ingenuity (McDermott & Raley, 2011) that constitute the "field-as-experienced," as well as the "wiggle room" available for improvisation and change (Erickson, 2001).

The second guiding frame woven throughout our inquiry is concerned with the following: How can a multi-sited sensibility help make visible the complexity and ingenuity of human development, particularly in the context of migration, diaspora, and other forms of transnational and intercultural movement? We argue that multi-sited perspectives contribute to this discussion by urging us to pay equal attention to the practices and forms of human ingenuity that emerge in and through the connections/ tensions/contradictions *within* and *across* various social spaces and activity systems—particularly for non-dominant youth. Building on Erickson's argument, the points of connection, overlap, and tension between the practice of "talking at the family dinner table" and "in the school classroom," for example, would be treated as their own emergent field-as-experienced. Understanding how participants' actions in a given setting *make sense* requires inquiry into the history of social action (Cole, 1996)—a history that often takes shape in and across multiple settings. In this way, researchers can substantively trouble the common dichotomies of home/school and academic/everyday by studying, rather than presuming, points of continuity or rupture across social settings.

Defining multi-sited research as centrally concerned with displacement, hybridity, and multiply constituted subjectivities also helps to unsettle

normative assumptions about culture and learning, and to sensitize our interpretive lenses to the intellectual work involved in navigating modern borders and their myriad macro- and micro-political manifestations. As discussed below, this approach to research includes attending to the ways young people forge new connections and forms of resistance, and participate in the creation of hybrid environments and tools (Pacheco, 2012). These lines of inquiry help illuminate how educational researchers might draw from the assertion that "any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system is also an ethnography of the system" (Marcus, 1998, p. 83). In working to develop a multi-sited sensibility, we task ourselves with the experimental and "radical ethnographic-ing of the terrain of the social" (Marcus, 1999, p. 11), such that research on learning can offer a deeper understanding of the connections between political economy, colonial and neo-colonial structures, social relations, and everyday educational experience. These connections align with the value we place on historicity in educational research, helping to move away from studying schools, for example, as bounded spaces disembodied from the history of neighborhoods, homes, cities, local and global politics, business, and popular culture (Nespor, 1997; Pierides, 2010).

Our inquiry into the affordances of a multi-sited sensibility (Marcus, 1995) in educational research also draws on the conceptual and methodological insights offered by learning theorists and ethnographers invested in deepening our understandings of learning within and across contexts. By methodological insights we refer to those working assumptions, lines of inquiry, and analytic tools that help develop our perceptive capacities in particular directions: toward a more democratic and equitable definition of intellectual activity (Rose, 2005, 2012), a more expansive sense of human potential and possibility (Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), and a more dignified and humanizing analysis of young people, particularly those explicitly or implicitly framed from a cultural-deficit perspective (Valencia, 1997). In our own experience as researchers and educators, actively cultivating new forms of perception can open up new ways of imagining and organizing environments for transformative and consequential forms of learning—a fundamental premise of our work on social design experiments (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010).

CULTURAL-HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO LEARNING

In this section, we define key terms and outline the theoretical and methodological contributions offered by a cultural-historical approach for studying learning within and across the social settings young people experience in their everyday lives. We also begin to elucidate the ways this

theoretical orientation resonates with and contributes to the development of a multi-sited sensibility in equity-oriented research. From a cultural-historical perspective, learning is understood as a deeply social *process* whereby tools, practices, and habits of mind are developed through joint participation in culturally mediated and organized activity (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). A view of learning as a cultural process, located in time and space, helps us to understand that people and their cultural practices both develop and transform through participation in the routine activities of relevant communities of practice. This cultural approach highlights important affordances of a multi-sited ethnographic frame, from its accounting of the relational, co-constituted nature of human learning activity to its focus on repertoires of practice developed in people's movement within and across activity.

By understanding the individual and his or her cultural means in relation to his or her contexts of development, this approach understands learning as a distributed phenomenon and, thereby, contests the tendency to create the Cartesian divide between the individual and the social (Engeström, 2008; Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010). Rethinking culture as dynamic, instrumental, and co-created also takes us beyond deficit and essentialist views about cultural communities and provides a way to understand what is cultural about learning across the activities of people's lives, as well as how culture and the individual are both transformed through the process of learning (Gutiérrez & Arzubiaga, 2012). Taking a dynamic, rather than static, view of culture also means understanding learning as an ongoing process of shifting participation within a cultural practice—one that contributes to the continued development of practices and communities (Rogoff, 2003). *Learning as movement* involves deploying repertoires of practice that can be leveraged across time, space, and activity toward the object of experiencing possible futures (Gutiérrez, 2013; O'Connor & Allen, 2010). From this perspective, the work novices do to enter a practice, and the work all learners do to gain new understandings, tools, and expertise, is also the work of reinventing that practice (see Vianna & Stetsenko, this volume). Such reinvention can open up new understandings of the self, and of possible trajectories.

ADDRESSING VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL TRAJECTORIES OF LEARNING

As we have argued, a multi-sited sensibility aligns with and necessitates more expansive understandings of human learning, including the ways everyday and scientific or school-based knowledge can be productively reorganized to deepen participation and understanding. Yet there is a tendency for research on learning to emphasize the "vertical" movements,

that is, linear trajectories from novice to expert, often within a single setting or set of educational experiences. The risk here lies in overlooking a world of developmental experiences and processes that scholars within this tradition refer to as "horizontal" forms of learning (Engeström, 1996; Gutiérrez, 2008). As elaborated below, this perspective draws attention to the opportunities for learning that emerge as people, tools, practices, and interests move across settings *and* across the social contexts or activity systems that constitute any given setting. Documenting the ways people leverage everyday knowledge is instrumental to understanding both what is cultural about learning, as well as how everyday knowledge is central to deep and consequential learning.

An example of work that seeks to deepen participation by attending to the horizontal dimensions of learning is found in a recent study of afterschool and out-of-school science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education (Bevan & Michalchik, 2013). The authors make a case for research that takes a contextual, rather than additive, approach to studying the development of interest and engagement in STEM learning across settings.[1] Challenging additive models that treat interest as a steady construct, "if it got stoked in one place, it would catch fire in another" (p. 2), Bevan and Michalchik argue:

> Rather than counting on the direct transfer of knowledge, skills, or interests from one setting to another, researchers must identify the multiple and contingent ways in which children express their growing fluencies with science. These fluencies will look different in different settings and may not appear at all when *conditions do not support or invoke them.* (p. 5, emphasis added)

Here, resisting the Cartesian divide involves analyzing the conditions which do or do not "support or invoke" students' emergent fluencies, interests, and prior experiences with a practice or domain, rather than focusing on the individual learner in isolation. Further, attending to horizontal forms of learning challenges traditional notions of "transfer" by making central the hybridization and transformation of practices, rather than their mere reproduction or application. Expertise itself is thereby widened to include the negotiation of various contexts and the development of hybrid solutions: border and genre-crossing practices that demand their own distinct skills and strategies. Research that makes central the mutual constitution of vertical and horizontal forms of learning can contribute to developing the documentation and assessment appropriate for afterschool and out-of-school learning, *and* identifying points of leverage and coordination such that the interests, questions, ideas, practices, and tools sparked in

one setting can find creative developmental pathways and resources in another. As Dewey (1938) asks, "What kinds of experiences live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences?" (p. 28), a question reflected in new work on "connected learning" (Ito et al., 2013). In this view, a multi-sited sensibility may be useful for capturing the socially embedded, interest-driven trajectories of youth, for example, in order to better leverage their passions, interests, and forms of engagement in academic, work, or civic domains.

By attending to both vertical and horizontal forms of learning, a multi-sited approach works to recognize the developmental demands young people encounter as they move across various spaces and spheres of interest, the *additional* set of developmental demands involved in boundary and border crossing, and the cultural and intellectual work of creating hybrid or liminal social spaces. As educators and researchers, we assume that the production of hybrid educational environments or "third spaces" (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejeda, 1999; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995) requires active participation on the part of teachers and students. For young people whose experiences of schooling involve everyday encounters with racialization and its attendant demands for assimilation, taking up a teacher's invitation to draw on the full range of linguistic, intellectual, and cultural tools within one's repertoires of practice may involve varying degrees of risk and vulnerability. In our experience, drawing on one's home language or hybrid language practices as legitimate tools for reading and writing within a summer academic outreach program, or citing one's personal experience as a form of evidence within an argumentative essay (Espinoza, 2009; Gutiérrez, 2008; Vossoughi, 2011a, b), entails the development of trust, the emergence of new intellectual tensions and possibilities, and the potential for deepening one's sense of cultural and educational dignity. These are the kinds of developmental movements and experiences that go unrecognized when we fail to move beyond narrow or normative definitions of what counts as learning.

A multi-sited sensibility can help widen and deepen our analysis by working to bring students' histories of participation and experiences with various educational ecologies into the interpretive frame. For example, a student who seems comfortable and confident from the outset with the use of hybrid language practices within the official spaces of a bilingual educational setting may have had prior experience with such an environment. Working to gain a deeper understanding of this history may illuminate not only her or his participation and experience, but also the potentially generative relationship across a series of learning environments within an individual's trajectory.

In this sense, a multi-sited sensibility can also serve as a pedagogical tool. Developing lenses and methods that help us recognize emergent

opportunities for learning—what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the "buds of development"—along vertical *and* horizontal dimensions is essential for learning how to *cultivate* such opportunities in the moment-to-moment flow of educational activity.[2] Of particular relevance to equity-oriented educators, challenging deficit views of what counts as learning can help us develop the eyes and ears that bring into relief a whole range of buds of development that may otherwise go unrecognized (Diaz & Flores, 2001). As Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) write, "grounding observations across multiple settings and communities is a way to identify a course of action that would help ensure student learning rather than to define who a child is or that child's future potential" (p. 23).

CHALLENGING DEFICIT FRAMES

Cultural-historical approaches to studying learning within and across settings hold a number of implications for research that challenges deficit frames (Valencia, 1997, 2002) and makes central the educational experiences and needs of students for whom intercultural/transcultural movement are part and parcel of everyday life. First, defining learning as an ongoing process that emerges across settings challenges assimilationist discourses on culture, race, and education. These discourses uncritically and sometimes "unknowingly"[3] measure intelligence and educational achievement according to normative (often white, middle-class) ways of speaking, knowing, and being in the world. As Gutiérrez, Ali, and Henríquez (2010) write:

> One strategy for leveling the community towards a 'common culture' is to eradicate any vestiges of non-dominant communities' cultural past and the cultural artifacts that mediate everyday life; a form of erasure (Rampton, 1995a). Such practices are part of a larger process of 'modernizing' non-western communities. In essence, through punishing speakers or prohibiting the use of non-dominant language, individuals and communities are 'disciplined' into 'appropriate' ways to engage and speak in 'civilized' society (Heller, 2008). (p. 361)

Working against such "erasure" requires educational research and practice that treats the social spaces young people experience outside of school—home, community spaces, peer groups, work, online, and afterschool and out-of-school activities—as rich arenas for learning and development.

A multi-sited sensibility would, therefore, involve approaching the out-of-school spaces young people occupy and create with the guiding assumption that one will find complex intellectual activity, and then staying long enough to gain a deeper understanding of the developmental

demands participation in such settings requires. This kind of research can help challenge the "fallacy that school-like learning tasks necessarily require greater capacity for higher order thinking than do everyday tasks in home, community and work-like settings" (Erickson, 1984, p. 531; see also Scribner & Cole, 1981). This shift is particularly pressing for students whose out-of-school lives are treated as deficits or obstacles to be overcome, rather than resources to draw upon (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Lee, 2001), or whose interest-driven practices and expertise are devalued in school (Ito et al., 2013). At the same time, there is the danger within equity-oriented research on learning of treating out-of-school spaces as static reservoirs that provide resources to be extended and leveraged in school. Research that focuses on learning across settings can help avoid this pitfall by treating out-of-school learning environments as dynamic social spaces, equally in process and under-construction (Massey, 2005).

We are, therefore, interested in the potentials for multi-sited approaches to disrupt and reimagine dominant ways of seeing or "framing" learning across contexts. As Hand, Penuel, and Gutiérrez (2012) write, "Frames elicited (and assembled) in and across educational contexts shape the interaction that takes place within them and, hence, shape both access within learning opportunities and access to them" (p. 251). For example, while some scholars have theorized the differences between in-school and out-of-school learning in terms of "match/mis-match," such frames perpetuate assimilationist models by maintaining the cultural practices valued in school as normative and those that do not "match" as "different" (Gutiérrez, Paguyo, & Mendoza, 2012). As Gutiérrez and Orellana (2006) ask, "In what ways can we explore the issues, needs, and concerns of non-dominant groups without reinforcing the idea that these students are fundamentally (and irreconcilably) different from 'main-stream' youth, and different in ways that are inevitably linked to pathology?" (p. 506). Similarly, scholars like Heath (1983) argue that educational change requires a two-way path, whereby schools not only "take into account" students' backgrounds, but also become transformed by their authentic engagement with students' social worlds and practices—a contrast to models that aim to "fix" students' families and communities.

Despite decades of scholarship challenging deficit views, such perspectives persist and shape-shift, emerging in old and new ways. At a recent meeting of researchers and educators engaged in developing more expansive and meaningful approaches to STEM education, we heard multiple participants comment, rather assuredly, that students historically under-represented in STEM disciplines/fields do not come from "science rich homes" or backgrounds. Here, creating a "two-way path" between school

and communities that rebuts such views would require: (a) meaningfully engaging with students' lives and experiences, with researchers positioning themselves as learners, willing to reflect on their assumptions, and (b) questioning normative definitions of "Science" (with a capital S) as more academic or valuable. In this case, the definition of Science as a "uniquely valid approach to knowledge disconnected from social institutions, their politics, and wider cultural beliefs and values" (Lemke, 2001, p. 297) was not questioned or unsettled. We cannot adequately study learning across settings if some settings and experiences are treated, from the outset, as inherently less "rich" with intellectual complexity and potential (McDermott & Raley, 2011; Rose, 2005).

As a challenge to such deficit assumptions, the work on funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005), hybridity (Gutiérrez et al., 1999), cultural modeling (Lee, 2001), socio-critical literacies (Gutiérrez, 2008), and syncretic approaches to learning (Gutiérrez, 2012a) argues for reframing students' linguistic, intellectual, and cultural practices as powerful resources for learning. However, this work does not merely valorize local literacies (Gutiérrez, 2007), nor does it simply draw on the everyday as a scaffold for academic achievement, traditionally defined. Rather, these scholars treat school as a space for developing a conscious, expanded awareness of everyday concepts and practices. In Lee's (2001) work, African-American students worked with their teacher to examine the cognitive resources embedded within African-American English Vernacular, including historically developed practices such as signifying. Uncovering and naming everyday tools, such as symbolism or metaphor, students then used these practices to analyze canonical texts, developing new ways of seeing and using the language and literacy practices of their communities.

Inspired by Vygotsky's (1986) claim that "scientific concepts may therefore grow down into the everyday" (p. 219), syncretic approaches to learning seek to address, if not rupture, the gap between in-school and out-of-school learning by leveraging youths' repertoires of practice across nodes of interests and influence, including peer culture and academic domains of inquiry. Of significance, syncretic approaches privilege horizontal expertise and recognize its role in developing more rigorous learning in disciplinary domains, as well as civic and social life (Gutiérrez, 2012a). Similarly, Nasir, Rosebery, Warren, and Lee (2006) suggest that recognizing the overlap between everyday activities and the "official" activities of science can highlight valuable access points to science for learners who might not otherwise engage in scientific activities. As we elaborate below, a multi-sited sensibility would be interested in close, detailed analysis of these "access points" and what they open up

both in terms of student learning *and* the continuous re-interpretation/development of "science" and other disciplines and practices.

Thus, research on educational environments that fuse the academic and the everyday can highlight how these practices challenge deficit frames *and* potentially rupture the disembodied or abstracted nature of academic learning by embedding the development of new ideas and tools in meaningful practice (Cole & Griffin, 1983; Engeström, 1991). Similarly, research on learning outside of school (Lave, 1988, 2011; Rogoff, 2003; Scribner & Cole, 1981) has played a fundamental role in reimagining and re-organizing learning in school-like settings to reflect approaches that emphasize participation in the cultural practices and activities valued by a community (Matusov, 1998). In these settings, learning is not the primary reason for engagement; rather, learning is continuous with experiences encountered in everyday life (Gutiérrez & Larson, 2007). By engaging deeply with learning across a range of settings, and challenging the dichotomy of in school/out of school, the cultural-historical tradition thus offers a set of tools we find particularly useful for developing a multi-sited sensibility, challenging deficit frames, and studying learning as a continuous process that unfolds across time and space.

INTERPRETIVE EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

In this section, we consider both the affordances and limitations of traditional, single-sited ethnographic work, and how this tradition contributes, perhaps unexpectedly, to the development of a multi-sited sensibility. We take a generative approach to expanding our methodological toolkit by re-appropriating conventional tools for new and dynamic educational realities. As researchers, we are grounded in the tradition of interpretive educational ethnography. This approach offers a powerful set of tools for studying the depth and complexity of social practice in a single setting or community—the classroom, school, neighborhood, or educational program—particularly when research is historicized and connected to larger social structures and processes. This toolkit includes: (1) a central concern with learning the meanings of social action for the participants involved (Erickson, 1986), grounded in, but not limited to, participants' own cultural terms—themselves always shifting and poly-vocal; (2) the deliberate search for tensions, contradictions, and counterexamples—a resource for developing adequately complex renderings of cultural practices and the people who engage in and reshape them; and (3) making the "familiar strange" in order to surface assumptions and make visible the ways participants in all settings, including those that are treated as normative, "live culturally" (Ingold, 1994; Moll, 1997). This type of ethnographic inquiry requires

> getting up close, as we continually visit and revisit the sites, our relations, our assumptions, and how we represent what is learned. . . . In cultural-historical terms, to understand behavior is to understand the history of behavior; to understand human activity involves studying it in an ongoing cultural practice in order to provide a description of the structure and the flow of activity, including what gives meaning to people in the course of activity. (Gutiérrez, 2012b, p. 18)

Engaging deeply with the meaning perspectives of participants in a setting also involves engaging with the range of settings, activity systems, and constraints that are implicated in human activity. Identifying the connections and settings that matter requires learning from the participants whose experiences one is working to understand and represent, and, we would argue, developing a parallel kind of sensibility as a researcher and educator. Though ethnographers never completely discover or communicate the vision of the world as it is held by members of a given setting, and rarely is there a single vision shared identically among those that are studied, reflexive and tentative efforts to approximate the meaning perspectives of participants are a defining characteristic of interpretive ethnography (Erickson, 2010). As Marcus writes (1999):

> In multi-sited work, the anthropologist does take the native construction of the social seriously, as something to absorb, critique, and extend, but in moving beyond an initial site where situated knowledge is very literally probed in relationship to its referent elsewhere, the anthropologist produces his or her own construction of the social within reach. This construction based on fieldwork in other sites is played back eventually within an initial one, often as a critical challenge or intervention to so called native sociology found there. (p. 13)

We find this dialogue between emic and etic perspectives particularly generative for research that seeks to meaningfully intervene and inform educational practice. As we have written elsewhere, "the researcher as a collaborative, reflective 'observant participant' may help make visible the practices, meanings, and contradictions that often become invisible to those closest to the action. In this sense, 'neither the outsider nor the insider is granted immaculate perception' (Erickson, as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. ix)" (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010, p. 101).

More broadly, interpretive ethnography challenges behaviorist and positivist approaches that define rigorous, evidence-based research as limited to causal analysis by means of experiment (Erickson & Gutiérrez, 2002), a

perspective that often fixates on narrow "outcomes" at the expense of pedagogical and cultural processes. As ethnographers, we emphasize social action and meaning—the dynamic *what* and *how* of educational activity—focusing on the nature of classrooms and other learning environments as socially and culturally organized, and the nature of teaching as one, but only one, aspect of the environment. In studying the concrete details of educational practice, we therefore attend to the quality and functions of pedagogical discourse, the shifting roles of "teacher" and "student," manifest and hidden curriculums, official and unofficial spaces (Cazden, 1986; Erickson, 1986, 1998, 2010; Gutiérrez et al., 1995).[4] For us, pedagogical discourse offers a substantive window into the continuous making and remaking of contexts and opportunities for learning, and of the mutually influential processes of becoming across students, teachers, classrooms, and communities (Rogoff, 2003). This attention to the depth of everyday practice also reflects our broader commitment to studying equity-oriented educational change as it is subjectively *experienced* in and through face-to-face interaction (Erickson et al., 2008; Erickson & Shultz, 1982).

We also recognize and wrestle with the historical complicities of our field. As a discipline, and set of socio-political practices, anthropology has drawn from and/or contended with a classic ethnographic "template"—one characterized by an emphasis on holism, the bounded-ness of a small, local community, and the researcher as outsider (and *researched* as "other," often non-Western groups). This legacy tends to align with the goal of saying something definitive, at the end, about the "culture" being studied (Erickson, 2010).[5] As Erickson (1996) writes, "Such description too often portrays people as weightlessly following cultural rules and effortlessly enacting social customs, rather than struggling with and making sense of these as they enact them" (p. 7).

As we return to below, post-colonial criticisms (Clifford, 1983, 1988; Hymes, 1972; Said, 1979), and the anti-colonial movements that preceded, accompanied, and often informed them, played a crucial role in unsettling this template, raising fundamental questions about the interests, practices, and authority of ethnographic research. In response, Pierides (2010) writes, "anthropologists either moved to focus their work on the concept of culture itself . . . or they moved the fieldwork home to the study of their own modern societies" (p. 182). Drawing connections to educational research, he elaborates:

> The move from native culture to just culture did not automatically mean a clean break from the colonial past. One of the problems that soon became apparent was that "fieldwork was brought 'home' and applied to minorities at the margins of the metropole,

> just as it was to the 'natives' of colonial times" (Hutnyk, 2006, p. 352). Education is one of these fields where minorities and subalterns were to be found. Thus, ethnographic research in the field of education can be understood as a site for producing and performing, at home, the colonial practices and representations of centre and periphery with subjugated others. (p. 182)

Despite post-colonial criticisms, oversimplified and deficit-oriented portrayals often found a new "home" within education—a field that has historically reproduced and contended with "culture of poverty" frames (Leacock, 1977). As Pierides suggests, such frames are not dismantled by shifting locations, but by shifting assumptions and practices.

Before inquiring into the resources offered by multi-sited ethnography to make visible and challenge colonial/neo-colonial representations, we revisit some of the tools offered by interpretive educational ethnography and consider how they may be applied toward new ends. In other words, we argue that crafting a multi-sited sensibility in ethnographic research on learning may draw from both single-sited and multi-sited traditions. This includes identifying the ways of looking, listening, relating, and knowing developed by critically minded educational ethnographers in the effort to move beyond the hierarchies and limitations of the classic ethnographic template.

MEANINGS OF SOCIAL ACTION

We return to the emphasis on learning the meanings of social action for the participants involved in a given social setting (Erickson, 1986). As a number of anthropologists have argued (Asad, 1993; Erickson, 1998; McDermott & Raley, 2011), the interpretive task is not merely to uncover what participants say or imply about their experience—but to do so in ways that illuminate how "all persons are busy, active and making sense" (Erickson, 1998, p. 1172). McDermott and Raley (2011) are worth citing at length here:

> Even if unaware of the full implications of their activities, people are usually ingenious, both locally in their most personal circumstances and collectively in their most distributed consequences. In coordinating with each other, people show themselves, *to those who would look carefully,* to be orderly, knowledgeable, and precise. . . . *If we can stop overriding each other with privileged categories, we might instead see accomplishments, critiques, and frustrations where others have seen only disorder and stupidity.* The complexities of the world are more available—not easily available, but more so—to those willing

to look again and again at the varied ways people put their lives together. Assembled by human ingenuity, and drawing on an immense intelligence, the social world is there to be seen, operated on, and reassembled. To proceed with preset ideas—i.e. to ask before looking, to insist that current categories are prescient enough to identify what must be changed, to probe with interviews and questionnaires before knowing what and how to ask, and all that without identifying grounds for appreciating answers—may be exactly the wrong order. (pp. 372, 375, emphasis added)

This assumption of human ingenuity—and the commitment to looking and asking in ways that make that ingenuity visible—is particularly relevant to education, a field which has often been invested in the belief that some students are "fully on task" while others are less active or "motivated" (Erickson, 1998). Young people, especially young children, are particularly susceptible to the pejorative interpretation that their activity does not make sense. As adult researchers, it is therefore especially important to privilege the meanings of social action for young participants, and to develop methodological tools that reveal the work they are continuously doing to figure out, struggle with/against, understand, and learn how to navigate and reshape the social world (see Vadeboncoeur & Murray, this volume).

Put differently, our ability to meaningfully interpret and represent another's perspective or activity is always mediated through available cultural lexicons, and guided by particular social, political, and ethical relations and concerns. Interpretive research, therefore, involves working to understand participants' meaning perspectives *on their own terms*, rather than imposing external or normative categories (Rosaldo, 1993). As Erickson (1984) writes, the method is

not one of objectivity, but of disciplined subjectivity. . . . I must stay around until it makes sense and report it as it makes sense. I may still choose to condemn or not, but I am obliged to make it intelligible as seen from within and to portray the actors as humans, not as stick figures or monsters. (p. 61)

MULTIPLE AND EXTENDED CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

Educational ethnographers have contended with the limits and boundaries of work in a single setting by reimagining the social relations, breadth, and contexts of research. For Erickson (2006), collaborative participation in the social practice one is working to understand—"studying side

by side" with teachers and students—allows the researcher to experience and more meaningfully describe its weight or "social gravity." Sharing in pedagogical responsibilities and struggles is one way for researchers to experience the "prestructured constraints that people face when they are actually working in the world" (Erickson, 2006, p. 243), and to identify the wider social and institutional influences, rather than causal or deterministic effects, on educational life. Long-term and longitudinal studies can also challenge atemporal or ahistorical descriptions and allow for the kinds of extended study that unearths new perspectives, providing insight into the dynamics of individual, social, and institutional change over time (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Holy, 1984).

In addition to longitudinal studies and research that draws linkages between everyday activity and wider social influences, questions of context and movement across settings may attend to the moment-to-moment shifts that emerge *within* a single setting (Erickson & Shultz, 1997). Close, detailed attention to discourse and meaning can elucidate the ways people constitute environments for one another's learning (McDermott, 1977); multiple experiences and activity systems co-exist within the same moment or classroom (Erickson, 1996; Gutiérrez et al., 1995; O'Connor, 1996); participation structures are co-constructed, inhabited, and changed (Cazden, 2001); and opportunities to learn are opened up and/or restricted. As stated above, third-generation activity theory asserts that people are part of multiple activity systems, and that the relations and contradictions that exist between activity systems are central to the analysis of human activity and experience (Engeström, 2009; Gutiérrez & Arzubiaga, 2012). This insight becomes especially important for learning to recognize and meaningfully leverage the multiple activity systems, histories, and experiences that are present in a given educational setting, particularly those that may be marginalized or dormant in terms of their potential role in expansive forms of learning.

A multi-sited sensibility for studying learning across contexts may therefore inquire into the ways people, ideas, tools, artifacts, and questions move and become reconstituted across the boundaries of school, home, and community spaces *and* across multiple contexts and environments within a single setting. As equity-oriented researchers, we emphasize the fact that such movement is always mediated by questions of power and politics. In this vein, we ask: Whose linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources are free to move across settings or hybridize, and whose are prohibited, devalued, and marginalized? How do teachers and students enact, disrupt, and reimagine these borders and checkpoints in everyday practice? How might the borderlands create particularly rich opportunities for students to syncretize and ply their learning? We consider how

developments and debates in multi-sited ethnography offer tools for grappling with these questions, and for challenging the imposition of normative cultural categories on the learning experiences of young people from migrant, immigrant, and diasporic backgrounds.

MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Having outlined the contributions of cultural historical theory and interpretive educational ethnography to the development of a multi-sited sensibility, we now return to the literature on multi-sited ethnography. Extending the conversation across these three approaches, we engage with some of the debates and tensions that have emerged within the literature on multi-sited ethnography, and consider their implications for the design and practice of equity-oriented educational research.

Multi-sited ethnography has been met with a number of important critiques and methodological concerns. We highlight two that are particularly relevant to the present discussion and respond to them throughout the remainder of this chapter: (1) a concern that the shift toward analytic breadth compromises (or makes difficult, practically speaking) the kind of depth that typically characterizes ethnographic research; and (2) a concern that multi-sited approaches risk reifying the very bounded and holistic definitions of culture they seek to disrupt by adding new sites and delimiting/constructing the field in ways that support comparative analysis, or drawing connections across settings based simply on the researcher's a priori interests (Burawoy, 2003; Candea, 2007, 2009; Gille & Riain, 2002; Hage, 2005).

In response, Fitzgerald (2006) cautions that the "'field' *never* simply guides research" and suggests that "precisely because of the dangers of stretching time and resources too thin, successful multi-sited fieldwork is even more dependent on a clear theoretical orientation and strategic site selection than work on a single site" (p. 4). Falzon (2009) argues that the real distinction is in language (and, we would add, its attendant orientation toward practice): single-sited can often focus on *containing* and multi-sited on *extending*. Marcus (1999) approaches the question of breadth/depth by contending that "field work in the second site may be less intensive than the first" (p. 8), with its relation to the first site sometimes serving as the central question. He elaborates:

> the project would end with some strategy of bringing back the ethnography at the second site to the first site, as some effort at cultural critique, that would involve re-engagement with one's original subjects from whose imaginaries and regimes of representation the impetus and strategy for moving the project literally elsewhere were derived. (p. 8)

We find value in these contributions and consider them essential resources for the reflexive practice of both single and multi-sited ethnographic research. Like Fitzgerald (2006), we know that all research is guided by particular theoretical assumptions and interests. As stated, ethnographic work involves the development of a "disciplined subjectivity" (Erickson, 1984), designing inquiry in ways that generate new questions and understandings grounded in both a "complex interdependence with as well as independence from" (Marcus, 1999, p. 8) the meaning perspectives of participants.

We want to be careful to note here that multi-sited approaches alone do not guarantee a shift away from deficit perspectives or static definitions of culture—any more than single-sited studies guarantee interpretive depth. In both cases, it is the continuous work of the researcher to "set up self-critical perspectives" and draw on a range of methodological and theoretical tools to develop interpretations that reflect the complexity and depth of human learning, and allow us to see and hear in ways that meaningfully inform equity-oriented educational research and practice. In line with the cultural-historical approach outlined above, we also question the presumed reification of spatial, linguistic, and geographic boundaries by understanding all learning as situated in multiple activity systems; some of these may be more overt and others of which may be less readily visible, but no less powerful in their organization of an experience. Indeed, this inquiry into the range of activity systems implicated in a given setting lies at the crux of our emergent articulation of a multi-sited sensibility for research on learning.

We also notice an interesting parallel between debates on ethnographic depth and breadth across single- and multi-sited approaches and ongoing debates about which forms of knowledge should be privileged (as outlined above in the discussion of the vertical and horizontal forms of learning). If we understand the researcher as a learner, there is a similar privileging of vertical forms of learning and expertise at play. Treating the work of the ethnography as akin to the linear movement from novice to expert—gaining "mastery" of a single setting—appears to reflect both the assumptions of the traditional ethnographic template and more reductive definitions of learning. Thus, the aforementioned critique regarding the analytic superficiality of ethnographic movement across contexts may overlook potentially new forms of depth.

Our efforts to reframe this either/or approach (breadth versus depth) emerge from our commitment to studying and asserting the intellectual richness of vertical *and* horizontal forms of learning, and our belief that "*what* the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with *how* she finds it out" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 11, emphasis in original). From this

vantage point, a "multi-sited sensibility" may be understood as making central the new forms of learning *experienced by a researcher* in her movement across settings, as she becomes increasingly attuned to the ways people's repertoires of practice are constituted across and within multiple activity systems. As Fitzgerald (2006) argues, "The object of this comparative ethnography is not only to follow people or things as they move, but also to understand the influences of different kinds of boundary crossings and ecologies on their experiences in multiple domains" (p. 20).

A number of educational scholars have been conducting research that speaks to the goals of such comparative and multi-sited work. The work on "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez et al., 2005) and "repertoires of practice" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), for example, engages deeply with the cultural and intellectual tools and practices young people develop within their families, neighborhoods, and other out-of-school spaces, often with the goal of tracing how these resources may be more meaningfully recognized and leveraged in school-like settings. This work resonates with research on everyday literacies (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 2000) and mathematical practices (Nasir, 2000; Scribner & Stevens, 1989). Recent research on connected learning (Ito et al., 2013) and learning ecologies (Barron, 2006) maps the formation of young people's interests—and the opportunities or barriers to cultivating those interests—across informal and formal settings, and across the lifespan. We are interested in the sensibilities, questions, and tools offered by multi-sited approaches for the continued development and expansion of this type of ethnographic practice.

Multi-sited studies frequently employ approaches such as tracing, mapping, threading, or constructing a chain of meaningful connections across sites. Strategies might include following people, objects, metaphors, stories, biographies and conflicts through time and space (Marcus, 1995). Similarly, researchers working in afterschool or out-of-school settings may trace the lifespan of artistic, literary, or scientific artifacts developed in an educational program with the goal of gaining insight into the ways meanings and interests sparked in one setting may spill out/endure/change across time and space. Where will the artifact live? In what ways is the artifact shared, cherished, or discarded? If and how do participants introduce or describe the artifact to their families and friends? Do learners continue to work on or change the artifact over time? Following young people's questions and ideas may also provide a fruitful interpretive path. Do the questions raised in one setting by educators or peers become resources for learners' expanded participation in another setting? When and how do young people make connections across seemingly distinct academic and/or extra-curricular domains (across settings, or across contexts within in a single setting)? Are these connections recognized or cultivated by

educators, peers, and family members? Are the forms of participation valued in one setting met with disciplinary responses in another? If so, how might young people subsequently interpret their own roles and capabilities differently across settings?

These questions may be pursued by moving across settings, as well as developing ways to engage with children, parents, and educators that have unique insight and expertise on particular contexts. At a recent culminating event of an afterschool science program organized around Tinkering/Making, one of the authors remarked to a parent that she and the other educators really appreciated her (elementary-aged) son's participation in the program, particularly the way he consistently walked around the room and offered feedback and praise to the other children as they worked on their projects. In response, the boy's mother remarked that it was precisely this kind of behavior that gets her son in trouble in school; she seemed pleased, and surprised, to see it treated as a strength in the afterschool setting. Within the practice of multi-sited research, such moments offer insight into the nature of relationships across sites that may be experienced by participants as "disjunctive" (Marcus, 1999, p. 7)—as well as opportunities for reframing participation (Hand et al., 2012) in ways that mediate new relationships with others and self. Indeed, in our experiences designing and studying alternative educational settings, we have found that new understandings, contradictions, opportunities, and barriers emerge as students compare their experiences across settings and work to navigate the distinct roles and forms of participation valued therein. This is an important area for further research.

The question of "disjuncture" across settings also speaks to the critique of multi-sited research as reifying the very cultural boundaries it seeks to disrupt. We see a difference, for example, between *assuming* a "disjunctive" experience between learning in school and out-of-school settings, and *studying* learning across settings in ways that make experiences of disjuncture visible in specific ways. Analytically, this involves *dwelling in,* rather than *downplaying* data that challenge the researchers' prior assumptions about the nature and experience of learning across different kinds of settings. This approach can also help surface overlaps and pathways where disjuncture is commonly assumed. As Hull and Shultz (2001) caution, problematizing the view of out-of-school learning as "frivolous" or "incidental" does not mean that we should swing to the other extreme, "relegating all good things to out-of-school, with school only seen as a repressive space" (p. 83). This is particularly important for ethnographic research that seeks to understand learners' experiences of educational exclusion and inclusion. Do the boundaries of certain educational contexts or academic domains, inside or outside school, feel more or less

permeable for particular learners? Are there specific patterns of pedagogical practice that make a setting intellectually safe or unsafe?

Similarly, efforts to study hybrid and syncretic forms of learning do not deny the hybrid and syncretic nature of all cultural tools, genres, and practices. Rather, we are attuned to the social and political forces that create boundaries and borders with real, material consequences for young people, and seek to study how these boundaries are *experienced* as well as reproduced, ruptured, reimagined, and reshaped. For example, Spanish and English are themselves historical, heterogeneous, and polyvocal language practices. However, it is the use of Spanglish and other hybrid language practices within schools in the specific historical location of the U.S. Southwest that has become marked as intellectually problematic or deficient (Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland, & Pierce, 2011; Martinez, 2010). As Asad et al. (1997) argue:

> the modern world is surely full of boundaries, and bounded units, although these are often very different from those the world has known in the past. Sovereign states are perhaps the most obvious examples, for their boundaries exclude and include in several ways. . . . Apart from social and political boundaries, there are intellectual boundaries. What does or does not count as knowledge, as explanation, as truth or falsehood, what counts as belonging to one tradition as against others: all of these criteria presuppose the setting up of boundaries . . . to the extent that people identify such traditions or argue over what is or is not legitimately part of them, they also recognize boundaries between them. And to that extent boundaries do exist in the real world that anthropologists study. (p. 720)

Understanding the ways material/intellectual borders function to shape and constrain young people's experiences and developmental trajectories is also essential to recognizing the spaces available for generative transgression and remediation (Cole & Griffin, 1983; Gutiérrez, 2008).

These questions reflect only a few of the lines of inquiry we believe could be opened up through a deeper engagement with a multi-sited ethnographic sensibility. Like Marcus (1995), we recognize the power of focusing more intensively on a focal setting and drawing connections and comparisons with additional sites. Indeed, developing generative questions to ask parents about their children's experiences outside a school setting, or to ask youth about their experiences learning in one classroom in comparison to another, or noticing how questions and connections made in one setting spill out into another necessitate a deep understanding of local practice and experience. Often, intensive focus on one site is fundamental to identifying which artifacts, questions, tools, or ideas to follow.

At the same time, we believe that engaging with a small group of learners across settings, or studying the learning experiences and encounters of one student across the lifespan, can afford its own kind of interpretive depth. Our broader interest lies in developing methodological and theoretical resources for the expansion and creative development of equity-oriented educational research and practice. To this end, we have articulated the contours of a multi-sited sensibility as an emergent tool, one that we hope offers new ways of seeing, listening, understanding, and working to identify spaces for potential and possibility across the settings young people experience and traverse in their everyday lives.

Notes

1. Additive models also lead "us to false measurement strategies (such as holding OST STEM programs accountable for school outcomes) which in turn shape (and potentially narrow) program design and implementation. Moreover, it diverts our attention from the central issue of making rich learning opportunities (whether in or out of school) more equitably available across local learning ecologies" (Bevan & Michalchik, 2013, p. 6).

2. For Vygotsky (1978), "good" learning is aimed not at what the student already knows, but at what she is in the process of knowing. The assistance of more expert or experienced others creates a context for students to "act a head taller than themselves" and for teachers to "see" and therefore support developmental changes (p. 102).

3. See Gutiérrez (2006).

4. Here, we want to be careful not to conflate classroom ethnography with ethnographic research on learning. As Espinoza (2011) writes, "Complicating the practice of field work is the constant memory of the space where many ethnographers of education ply our learning: the classroom" (p. 8). Citing Lave (2011), he continues, "The study of apprenticeships . . . is complicated because the life-world of the tailor (or the mechanic, or the hairdresser) is observed under the 'shadow of the school-like [setting].' A massive amount of un-learning must take place for classroom ethnographers to become ethnographers of education" (p. 8).

5. Citing contemporary anthropologist Harold Conklin, Erickson (2010) writes: "[ethnographic data] derive ultimately from the direct observation of customary behavior in particular societies. . . . [An ethnography] requires a long period of intimate study and residence in a small, well-defined community, knowledge of the spoken language, and the employment of a wide range of observational techniques including prolonged face-to-face contacts with members of the local group, direct participation in some of that group's activities, and a greater emphasis on intensive work with informants than on the use of documentary or survey data" (Conklin, 1968, in Erickson, 2010, p. 322).

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SHIRIN VOSSOUGHI received her PhD in education from UCLA in 2011. She recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University and the San Francisco Exploratorium, where she led an ethnographic research project on the development of scientific dispositions through tinkering activities that blend STEM learning and the arts. She also taught a course on culture, learning, and poverty. More broadly, her work centers on the anthropology of learning, equity, and social change. As an educator and second-generation Iranian immigrant, she is also personally invested in developing humanizing and intellectually rich educational contexts for migrant, immigrant, and diasporic youth. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University.

KRIS D. GUTIÉRREZ is Professor of Language Literacy and Culture in the Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley. Previously, she was Professor of Learning Sciences and Literacy and the Inaugural Provost's Chair at the University of Colorado, Boulder and Professor Emerita of Social Research Methodology at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Professor Gutiérrez is a national leader in education, with an emphasis in literacy, learning, and interpretive approaches to inquiry. Her research examines learning in designed learning environments termed social design experiments, with particular attention to students from non-dominant communities and English learners. Her work on third spaces examines the affordances of syncretic approaches to literacy learning and remediation of functional systems of learning. Professor Gutiérrez's research has been published widely and she is coeditor of *Learning and Expanding with Activity Theory*, with A. Sannino and H. Daniels, published by Cambridge University Press in 2009.